

# Poetry Prompts & Assignments for Teachers

## Compiled, edited, or otherwise stolen by Taylor Mali

### Poem from a List of Prompts

**What you'll need:** Paper and pens for each student.

**Minimum time required for this exercise:** 45 minutes

**Directions:** This is an exercise that will produce unique identity poems from your students. For each prompt, read an example and give the students enough time to write something. You don't have to use all the prompts. Spend a little time at the beginning of class talking about writing honestly, artfully, originally, and musically. At the end, have the students share at least five in a row *without saying anything between prompts* (such as, "Um, okay, and now here's the next one.")

#### PROMPTS:

1. Write a line that begins with the following phrase but fills in the blanks: "Before I knew how to \_\_\_\_\_ I used to \_\_\_\_\_." For example, "Before I knew how to sing without caring what anyone thought of me, I used to sing only into my hairbrush." Use more than one word to fill each blank. Be honest. Take a risk.
2. Write a line that begins with the following phrase but fills in the blanks: "People think I'm \_\_\_\_\_ but I am \_\_\_\_\_." For example, "People think I'm a loose cannon, but I am anything but loose; I'm a sniper with my cannon."
3. Write three relatively short sentences that all begin with the words "I am the one who . . ." For instance, "I am the one who used to wish my brother would die. I am the one leaves dishes in the sink, but not for someone else to wash. I am the one who keeps thinking he can speak Chinese."
4. Write a sentence that begins, "In the circus of my family . . ." For instance, "In the circus of my family everyone has to walk the tightrope, tame the lions, and clean up after the elephant."
5. Write the most honest observation you can about yourself. Take a risk. Put it out there. "I thought the feeling of being a fraud would go away as I got better and better at what I do, but it hasn't. It's like all I've really become better at is being a bigger fraud."
6. Write about the exact time and circumstance in which you will come back to haunt the living if you were to die tragically. Or write about how and by whom you are haunted. "Rebecca comes to me most days at exactly 12:34, which I told her was the hour I would come visit her if I died first. She's not trying to scare me, just say "Hi. I'm here. And I forgive you."
7. Pick one of the prompts you responded to and revise it so as to include a vivid color.