

## Oppositional Poems – A Dialogue in Contradiction

### The Challenge:

Write a poem that takes the form of a back-and-forth conversation, argument, or debate between two voices. These voices could be:

- Text messages between two people (friends, lovers, enemies, strangers).
- A phone call or overheard conversation.
- A debate between two opposing ideas.
- A person arguing with their past self, future self, or subconscious.
- Two perspectives on the same event, each seeing it differently.

This poem should highlight contradiction, miscommunication, or tension. The two voices may never fully agree, but the space between them is where meaning happens.

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### Requirements

- The poem must be structured as a conversation, argument, or alternating perspectives.
  - The two voices must feel distinct—this can be done through tone, formatting, or word choice.
  - The contradiction can be subtle or direct—are the speakers misunderstanding each other? Fighting? Remembering differently?
  - You can format it like text messages, a dialogue script, a phone call, or even overlapping thoughts.
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### Tips for Strong Writing

- Use real-life conversations as inspiration. Ever reread old texts and noticed how two people seem to be having different conversations? That’s poetry.
  - Play with formatting. Try staggered lines, italics, bold, or spacing to show interruptions, delays, or misalignment.
  - Let the opposition build. The best dialogues don’t just state differences—they reveal tension over time.
  - Consider gaps, silences, and subtext. Sometimes, what isn’t said is just as important as what is.
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### Examples of Oppositional Conversations

- Text messages between two exes remembering the same night differently.
  - A person arguing with their younger self about a mistake.
  - A parent and child struggling to understand each other.
  - A person debating their own mind—logic vs. emotion.
  - Two people reacting to the same news in opposite ways.
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### **Model Poems for Inspiration**

- Amanda Gorman's dialogue poems in *Call Us What We Carry* (fragmented, text-like communication)
- Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (poetry shaped as dialogue and conversation)
- Eve L. Ewing's poems styled as online conversations and records

## Unread Messages

**Grandfather:**

Happy birthday, grandson. I hope today has been filled with joy.  
I have sent you a book that changed my life.  
It is **Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal***—a collection of poetry  
that first showed me the power of words.

**Grandson:**

bro u got me a BOOK 🤡🤡🤡  
what is this the 1800s 🤡🤡🤡  
coulda just sent \$20 like a normal grandparent 🤡

**Grandfather:**

Money disappears. Poetry lingers.  
And I have chosen this book **very carefully**.  
Turn to page 45. Read "**A Carcass**."  
Then text me again.

**Grandson:**

🤡🤡🤡 u picked a poem called *A Carcass* for my bday 🤡🤡🤡  
u good grandpa???

**Grandfather:**

Read it.

(**Five minutes later.**)

**Grandson:**

What vision is this? What putrid perfume drips from thy gift?  
I opened thy cursed tome, expecting boredom, expecting drudgery,  
but lo! A carcass, bloated and resplendent, festering under the merciless  
sun.  
I am sickened. I am forever changed. I am... reborn.

**Grandfather:**

Ah. So you've read it.

**Grandson:**

O rotting glory! O maggots, those vile craftsmen, those sculptors of bone!  
I tremble, I rejoice, I grieve for the fool I was mere moments ago.  
Why didst thou withhold such wonders from me until this day?  
I must feast upon more of these words, these wretched, holy words.

**Grandfather:**

Excellent. You are beginning to understand.

**Grandson:**

Tell me, wise keeper of forbidden verses,  
is there more such beauty in filth? More ecstasy in decay?  
What poet shall be my next dark shepherd?

**Grandfather:**

Ah, my dear apprentice of the abyss,  
we have only just begun.

**Grandson:**

I await your guidance, O prophet of the grotesque.  
Also btw can we still get McDonald's? 🍕