

Resources on my website: <https://poetry.rueckberg.com/classes/> or go to the main page and scroll all the way down to the Resources section.

- [Link to materials](#)
- [My books](#) (coupon: freeshipdr)

1. Introductions:
 - a. A writer you like.
 - b. Someone who influenced you as a writer.
 - c. Why you're here.
2. Survey: A few questions about your writing habits to use for discussion.

What usually gets you writing? (Mark all that apply.)

- I generally have a regular time.
- I generally have a regular place.
- Mainly when I'm inspired by something I read.
- Mainly when I'm angry.
- Mainly when I'm sad or depressed.
- Mainly when I have an assignment.
- Other....

If you have a time and place where you usually write, when and where?

Do you have a way of getting started? (Jumping jacks, coffee, reading, journaling, freewriting, etc.)

When you're trying to write but you get stuck, how have you gotten unstuck? (Mark all that apply.)

- Writing anyway, no matter how bad.
- Reading.
- Watching a video.
- Listening to music.
- Doing physical activity.
- Talking to someone.
- Waiting.
- Doing other creative activity.
- None I just stay stuck.
- Other...

Do you have a particular medium you like to write in or with? (First draft writing.) (Check all that apply.)

- Pen or pencil.
- A notebook.
- Looseleaf paper.
- Any kind of paper, it doesn't matter.
- The computer.
- Phone, tablet, other handheld.
- Voice or video recorder.
- It doesn't matter, whatever is available.
- Other...

Why do you write? (1-3 reasons) (e.g. for yourself or others, to relieve stress, to get published, to change the world, etc.)

What gets you stuck? 1-3 things (lack of time, no ideas, inner critic, outer critic, etc.)

3. Getting unstuck

- a. “Lower your standards” (paraphrase of [William Stafford](#))
- b. Acknowledge, then ignore the critic. Don’t edit yourself (until after you write your first draft).
- c. Write fast (Alicia Hoffman).
- d. Write every day: one line, or a lot of them.
 - i. “There are only two useful rules I can think of for aspiring writers: learn your craft, and persist. The rest, as Henry James said, is the madness of art.”—[Kim Addonizio](#)
 - ii. NaPoWriMo: <https://www.napowrimo.net/>
 - iii.
 - iv. The Grind
 - v.
- e. Journal.
- f. Use prompts.
- g. Read.
- h. Take a walk.
- i. Push through.
- j. Take 10 minutes to do nothing.
- k. Have a conversation with a child.
- l. Expand your comfort zone. Find your area of “Optimal Anxiety.” Set a do-able goal.
(<https://lifehacker.com/the-science-of-breaking-out-of-your-comfort-zone-and-w-656426705>)
- m. [Collect language](#)
 - i. Nye: “Valentine for Ernest Mann.”
 - ii. Tony Hoagland: “Commercial for a Summer Night”
- n. “I trick myself into telling myself I’m not working, I’m playing.”
- o. Find or make a writing buddy or a group. Maybe someone in this group. In a day or two I’ll send around the class list. Please [let me know](#) if you do not want me to include your name and email on this list.

Prompts (or Google your own: that’s what I did): Don’t necessarily feel constrained by the guidelines of the prompt. After all, it’s just a prompt--something that *prompts* you into getting the pen moving. On the other hand, if you usually resist guidelines, it might be interesting to try. Expand your comfort zone.

Websites

- Poets & Writers <https://www.pw.org/writing-prompts-exercises>
- 125 Of The Best Poetry Writing Prompts For Poets | Writer’s Relief
<https://writersrelief.com/2018/12/14/125-of-the-best-poetry-writing-prompts-for-poets-writers-relief/>
- Writer’s Digest <https://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/poetic-asides/poetry-prompts>
- Writers Digest: 30 Poetry Prompts for the 2019 April PAD Challenge
<https://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/poetic-asides/30-poetry-prompts-for-the-2019-april-pad-challenge>
- A Selection of Poetry Prompts from 1200 Creative Writing Prompts
<https://www.writingforward.com/writing-prompts/poetry-prompts/poetry-prompts-from-1200-creative-writing-prompts>

- Sample: Use all of the following words in a poem: tapestry, sings, eye, din, collide, slippery, fantasy, casting, chameleon, lives.
- Some from Rueckberg
 - [Three prompts to get out of the box](#)
 - [Shared secret](#)
 - [Our own Hugo prompt](#)

Books

- [The Practice of Poetry](#), by Robin Behn and Chase Twichell.
- [The Triggering Town](#), Richard Hugo.

Make your own prompts

- Re-read a poem that you enjoy or are intrigued by. What is the writer is up to? Do you connect with the subject matter? Is the form of interest?
 - [Things To Do Today](#), by Joe Wenderoth
- Make a list. I think it was David Ignatow who said, “Every poem is a list poem” (or something like that).
 - Make a list of memories. Make that your poem, or choose one and write about it.
 - Making any list will trigger more ideas. Once you start writing images down, it will generate more. Just get started.
- Pretend you’re about to teach a writing class. What would you suggest to aspiring writers? Teaching is a great way to learn something.

Start or join a writing group, or find a writing buddy

1. In person:

- a. Take a class and contact members.
- b. Go to poetry readings and meet people.
 - i. Writers & Books website, City News, etc.
 - ii. Just Poets: See their calendar for readings, meetings, and workshops.
<https://www.justpoetsinc.com/>
 - iii. Open mics:
 1. New Ground Poetry Night. Equal Grounds Cafe, 750 South Ave, Rochester. First Tuesday of the month. 7:30 pm.
https://www.facebook.com/pg/newgroundpoetry/events/?ref=page_internal
 - iv. Sea of Coffee, Canandaigua: Sunday, November 27th, 1:00 - 3:00

2. Online:

- a. Email, Facebook group, or other forum.
 - i. Facebook: Join “ROC City Writers & Readings” group. (Only for posting announcements, but if you want to contact people, you can PM them.)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1471441406416343>
- b. Poets and Writers Groups: <https://www.pw.org/groups>
- c. Meetup.com
- d. Internet sites: Be cautious. In addition to creeps and trolls, there are a lot of people out there hungry for adoration, but not as interested in giving helpful feedback. I’ve never joined an online group, but this one might be good: <https://allpoetry.com/group>

If you join a group, decide ahead of time what your ground rules are.

1. Regular meeting time, place, and duration.
2. Ground rules: What is your purpose in meeting? Positive comment only? Constructive criticism? Brutal honesty? “Descriptive analysis”?
3. Parameters: one poem per meeting? Two or three? It can take 20-30 minutes to discuss one poem.
4. Writing from prompts or on your own?
5. Send poems around ahead of time, or read them cold when you meet?
6. 3-5 people is a good number. Too many becomes a committee.

If you decide to work with a writing buddy, decide on your process.

1. Check in regularly, or just call when you’re stuck?
2. Exchange work, or just encourage each other?

Events

Publication

[Writing and Publishing FAQ](#), Academy of American Poets

Site	Comments	Cost	URL
Duotrope	Search by genre, topic, contest; track your submissions	\$50/year	https://duotrope.com/
New Pages	Calls for submissions (usually by topic), contests, etc.	Free	https://www.newpages.com/classifieds
Poets & Writers	Search by genre, topic, contest, etc. Also how to promote, meet others. List of readings, workshops.	Free	https://www.pw.org/literary_magazines
Submittable	Site that most online journals use to manage submissions. They also have announcements of contests, tips for writers, etc.	Free, though journals & presses usually charge reading/contest fees.	https://discover.submittable.com/

The following prompt is based on Richard Hugo's. Add two words to each list (six total). Come up with words that are specific and have a nice sound. Strive for concrete, sensory words, but you can include a few words that are abstract, though still evocative. When everyone's done, share your words, and feel free to add words others offer that get your attention.

Don't look at the rules (on the back) until you've generated a few words.

Noun	Verb	Adjective
goblet	murmur	dusky
refuge	elaborate	amber
street	whisper	glistening
susurrus	muddle	vast
shrubbery	daydream	adequate
eyes	breathe	shallow
flower	shout	shiny
hawk	float	regal

Rules: Use three nouns, verbs and adjectives from the above lists and write a poem as follows:

- Four beats to the line (can vary)
- Two stanzas
- Change verb forms as you like.
- Four lines to the stanza.
- No end-rhymes, but strive for internal rhymes.
- Clear sentences. Sentences must make sense.
- The poem on the whole must be meaningless.

(modified from “Stray Thoughts on Roethke and Teaching,”
The Triggering Town. New York: W.W. Norton, 1979.)

“What I’m trying to tell you is that by doing things like this I was able to get off the subject and write the poem. The fact that “suicide” sounds like “cascade” is infinitely more important than what is being said. It isn’t, of course, but if you think about it that way for the next twenty-five years you could be in pretty good shape.”

—Richard Hugo, “Writing Off the Subject,” from *The Triggering Town*

John Keats: “Negative capability”: a writer’s ability, “which Shakespeare possessed so enormously,” to accept “uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.”