

THE PLEASURE IN COMPOSITION

By Chung-lin Wang

If good writing does not differ really from good talking, and we find pleasure in expressing ourselves in speech, then the task of composition on paper should not be distasteful. Just as soon as we learn to use the pen without thinking about it, we shall find delight in writing. Composition is a voyage of discovery, a perpetual experiment. Every word is a new element; every phrase or sentence, a new compound. Since we can vary these infinitely at our pleasure, we can have forms to express each new idea. And no one is without ideas to express. Our thoughts may be simple and commonplace, but they are worth expressing well.

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

1. The important test of whether a subject is a proper one for a writer is his interest in it. He can not interest others when he, himself is not interested, or when he can not interest others when he, himself is not interested, or when he has only a pretended interest. If, after genuine effort to arouse his mind, the subject remains distasteful, he should avoid it.
2. A good subject may be spoiled by attempting to treat it in too limited a space. Judge beforehand whether you have sufficient information about it and sufficient space in which to treat it.
3. Avoid general and abstract topics, such as war, peace, science, poetry, and the like. The more specific and special your topic is, the more you will find to say about it.
4. Cultivate observation; find interesting topics in the event of the day.
5. In taking a subject from a book, beware of writing a mere summary; try to put some of your own thoughts into your theme.
6. In writing draw upon the knowledge you have gained in other branches of your school work.

WAYS TO FIND NEW SOURCES:

1. If you have no direct leads in the field, you will probably look up your subject first in a general reference work such as the Encyclopedia Britannica or the Encyclopedia Americana. At the end of article you will probably find a list of other sources.
2. Index to magazine and newspapers should be consulted for articles relating to your subject.

3. A list of sources that furnished data for the book is appended to it. The bibliography assists readers who might want to examine the extent and accuracy of the writer's investigation or to secure additional information on the subject.
4. The source of every quotation and of every paraphrased or summarized passage are acknowledged in the books. Specific identification of each borrowed item give authority to the writer's discussion, and permits readers to verify the accuracy of his research. For this identification of sources, footnotes are used. Information from additional sources may be obtained from them.

DIFFERENT METHODS OF WRITING

There are many ways of setting about the labor of literary composition. Every writer has to find out for himself what method is the best one for him to use. Usually, when anyone has decided what he wishes to write about and has got together in his mind the necessary information after thinking the matter over for a time and sorting his ideas in his mind, he takes his pen and paper and proceeds to write a few sentences, and then starts afresh. Sometimes he crosses out part of what he has done. After he has finished this rough draft, he takes a fresh piece of paper and copies the best parts of what he has written. If the writer has had a good deal of practice in composition, and has a clear, orderly mind, this method may succeed well enough, especially if he takes the trouble to rewrite a number of times. But, for most of us, especially in beginning our work in composition, this is a poor method, — wasteful of time and energy, and unlikely to bring out all we have to say. A better method, at least for beginners, will be described in the following sections.

PRELIMINARY WORK UPON THE THEME — NOTES

Instead of trying to write out at once a complete theme, the first step is to make notes. The writer jots down, quite at random, a few words to describe the different facts or ideas that have occurred to him. These notes need not be expressed in complete sentences; sometimes a single word or a brief phrase will be enough to describe a number of ideas. After he has made as many notes as occur to him, he arranges them on a second sheet of paper, this time rejecting those that are not to the point, filling out those that are incomplete, and expanding the broken phrases.

COMPLETE DRAFTS

The next step is to write out a connected draft. Most writers find it advisable to do this without pausing to hunt for the words, or to make corrections. It is easier to keep the mind steadily on one thing at a time than to do two things at once - to give their whole attention, first, to telling the story; next to improving it.

TITLES

Every theme should receive a title, which should stand at the head of the first page. It makes little difference whether a writer gets his title first and plans his work, or finds the title after the completion of his composition. But we should understand clearly that the title and the subject are not necessarily the same thing. The subject may be so phrased as to make a good title, but as a rule any complete statement of the subject is too broad to be used as a title. The title is the special name which an author gives to his treatment of the subject. Thus from the general subject of a Taiwan trip, we may derive a number of titles, as "From Taipei to Tainan on Bicycle" or, "How I Saw Hongkong" or, "Six Weeks in Taichung" The selection of a good title is important, because by means of the title the writer marks out the field of his composition, and also engages the attention of the reader.

In seeking for an entertaining title, do not select one that is merely sensational. A sensational title is deceptive, and it is cheap; it classes work with the writing of superficial and vulgar writers.

DIVISIONS EASILY PERCEIVED IN GOOD WRITING

As soon as we have a subject in mind, the ideas related to it will begin to arrange themselves in groups. For instance, if we are describing a visit to a large factory, certain natural divisions suggest themselves at once: first, the building, or "plant"; second, what was seen in the factory; and, third, the information about the factory gained from the visit. Of course, few subjects divide themselves as easily and naturally as this; frequently the best divisions are discovered only after some experiment; and a topic often admits of several different schemes of division. Some division of a subject into too minor groups, however, should be made before the last draft is attempted. A trial scheme should be kept in mind after the preliminary work of making notes. Otherwise unless the writer has an exceptionally logical and orderly mind, it will be impossible for him to keep his thoughts well grouped while writing.

PARAGRAPHS

These divisions of the topic are commonly made plain to the eye by a mechanical device. The first line of every division is indented (begins in from the margin) about a quarter of an inch in a printed page, and an inch or more in manuscript. The group of sentences thus set off by indentation is called a paragraph. Paragraphs, it must be remembered, are not breaks in the page made arbitrarily by the printer to relieve the eye in reading. They represent to the reader the divisions that the author has made in his subject, and thus they are extremely useful, both to the reader and to the writer.

THE LENGTH OF PARAGRAPHS

If a paragraph represents a division of thought in the subject, its length will vary with the number of ideas that are expressed in each part. Sometimes it may consist of a sentence, and again it may cover several pages. If we look at the paragraphs of good writers, however, we shall learn a few general facts about the length of the paragraph that will help us in forming our own units.

In writing conversation, usually whatever is said by one person, together with the comment of the writer on the speech, and the writer's statement of action (he said, " " replied, " " moved," etc.) is placed in one paragraph.

In simple subjects, such as short stories and descriptions, because the topic changes frequently, paragraphs are usually brief: they contain roughly from two to ten sentences, or from thirty to one hundred and fifty words.

In more difficult subjects, such as long essays, where there is much to be said on each topic, paragraphs are longer: they contain from five to twenty sentences, or seventy five to three hundred words.

If the writer finds himself making a great many paragraphs of one or two short sentences only, he may safely decide that his divisions of thought are too small and are not important. On the other hand, if he finds that he writes two or more manuscript pages before he comes to a division of his thought, he may infer, as a general rule, that he has not found all the chief divisions of his subject.

If there are many paragraphs in the first part of a theme and a few at the end, or vice versa, the writer may infer, usually, that his thought-divisions are not in proper proportion to each other.

EMPHASIS IN PARAGRAPHS.

Emphasis is a noticeable attribute of a good paragraph. In a forcible paragraph, the arrangement brings the most prominent ideas into the most prominent places; that is, the beginning or the end. Very often a paragraph can be given emphasis by stating the subject at the beginning and making the rest of the paragraph a series of examples or illustrations ending with a summing up. Now and then emphasis is secured by varying the process. A paragraph should be a collection of sentences treating one subject, or one view of a subject. A well-constructed paragraph has unity, coherence, and emphasis. It has unity when it contains no matter foreign to the main subject, and contains all the matter necessary to an understanding of the subject, or the special side of the subject, it presents. Unified paragraphs can generally be summed up in a unified sentence. A paragraph has coherence when the relation of every

sentence in it to every other sentence, and to the paragraph as a whole, is clear. To gain coherence, the different sentences must be arranged in logically consecutive order, and connectives must be freely used. A paragraph has emphasis when the important thoughts are put in the important places, that is, either at the beginning or the end.

THE RELATION OF THE PARAGRAPH TO THE WHOLE COMPOSITION

A paragraph must be a complete composition in itself. A small subject may be fully treated in one unit. Usually, however, we understand by the term "whole composition" a composition containing a number of well-marked organic divisions called paragraphs. No matter what may be the nature of the subject, these divisions should represent steps in the thought, and as they stand in the finished work form a whole composition, which like the single paragraphs of which it is composed observes the rhetorical principles.

UNITY IN THE WHOLE COMPOSITION.

Though the unit in the case of the whole composition embraces more topics than can be treated properly in the single paragraph, the principle of unity in the whole composition is precisely what it is in the paragraph. Unity may be violated by the introduction of too many topics, or by the incomplete development of necessary topics. Matter that, although related to the subject, is a digression from the main purpose of the theme, must be excluded. A good plan, or outline, of the whole composition will aid the writer in preserving unity.

PROPORTION IN THE WHOLE COMPOSITION

Closely related to the principle of unity is that of proportion. The different parts of the whole composition must be planned with reference to each other, no one division being given an undue prominence. The outline will often reveal the fact that too many paragraphs have been devoted to one portion of the theme, perhaps the introduction or the conclusion or some subordinate point in the body. These inequalities, when they occur in the final draft of the theme, necessitate recasting the whole. In the outline, or first draft, however, it is easy to strike out or subordinate unimportant topics. Every piece of writing should leave with the reader an impression of balance or proportion.

THE ORDER OF THE PARAGRAPHS IN THE WHOLE COMPOSITION.

In this larger unit the most important matter is the order of its parts. The whole composition may be likened to a chain of which the paragraphs form the links. To gain clearness, the writer must include in his chain of paragraphs every essential link, and he must place the links where they properly belong in the development of his ideas. If he omits links or misplaces them, the reader will miss the order of thought and become confused. The proper order for paragraphs in the whole composition is a question of logic. Sometimes there is

a choice among several methods of arranging the parts, and the best arrangement can be found only after experiment.

CONTENT OF THE SENTENCE

How much can we put into one sentence? We find in our reading sentences of all lengths; we also know by experiment that we can enlarge a short sentence almost indefinitely, as in this illustration:

1. America is a commonwealth.
2. America is a commonwealth of commonwealths, a Republic of republics, a State which is composed of other states.
3. America is a commonwealth of commonwealths, a Republic of republics, a State, which, while one, is nevertheless composed of other states even more essential to its existence than it is to theirs.
4. America I call it America (leaving out of sight South America, Canada, and Mexico) in order to avoid using at this stage the term United States America is a commonwealth, a Republic of republics, which, while one, is nevertheless composed of other states even more essential to its existence than it is to theirs - Bryce.

Form one contains four words; form two, eighteen; form three, thirty-two; form four, fifty-six. All four forms make complete grammatical statements. The original idea is expanded, however, by adding to its other ideas until instead of four words we have one of fifty-six.

By examining a number of sentences taken from different writers we shall find that the length of the sentence may vary from two words to a hundred or more. The average length of a single sentence, however, among modern writers is about thirty words. But there are many shorter and many much longer sentences in every writer's work, this fact does not help us in determining how long to make any given sentence. For example, in the final form of the illustration given above, there are eleven distinct statements and fifty-six words, yet it is as good a sentence as the first form, where there is but one statement, made in four words. However, if we should try to add to the last form many more words, we should soon find that the mind would not grasp quickly all the ideas - the sentence would not be clear. A single sentence, then, may contain as many words as can be related grammatically, and further, as many ideas as can be expressed clearly in one unit of thought.

VARIETY IN SENTENCE FORMS NEEDED

The use of many short simple sentences and of straggling compound sentences, where the statements are tied together loosely by "and's," "but's," "or's," "which's," and similar conjunctive words, shows that the writer does not possess the necessary variety of forms or molds

in which to cast his thought. Out of a number of nouns and verbs, with the aid of a few conjunctions, usually coordinate, he builds sentences that are monotonous and awkward. To remedy this fault he must make himself familiar with the many different sentence-forms used by experienced writers. At first these will seem difficult to manage; but after sufficient practice in using better constructed sentences they will come unconsciously when required by the thought to be expressed. A variety of useful forms may be learned by copying into a notebook any sentence the student finds that illustrates a new arrangement of the simple elements, and then imitating the form in a new sentence. This exercise may seem artificial at first, but with the form once thoroughly known, it will no longer be necessary to think of the model.

A few of the sentence-forms most commonly used are given below:

1. *As we expected our landlord the next day, my wife went to make the venison pastry.*
—Goldsmith.¹

This contains an introductory causal clause, followed by a simple declarative sentence. The same kind of thought may be expressed by a clause following the principal statement; as, "My wife went to make the venison pastry, for we expected our landlord the next day." Similar sentences may be constructed with the causal conjunctions "since" "because," "for the reason that," and "inasmuch as," and also with the participles; as, "Having found out the easiest way, we arrived at our destination before dark."

2. *If I go with him, if I do make the sacrifice he urges, I will make it absolutely.* —
Bronte.²

Here a conditional clause precedes the main statement. The second conditional clause is an explanation of the first, and is in apposition with it. The sentence may be expanded by adding phrases or clauses to either part; as, "If I do go with him, as you have urged, —" etc.

3. *This, and other measures of precaution, I took.*

For the sake of emphasis, the elements of this sentence are transposed, the object coming first. This form is useful when the writer wishes to make an emphatic statement.

1. Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) British poet, dramatist, novelist. He is in the same class as Addison and Steele as an essayist; he belongs with Gray and the rest as a transition poet (with one foot in the classical school); and his one and only novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, has long been a classic, one of the really popular, evergreen English novels, in which domestic life has been given an enduring romantic interest. It is free from that vulgarity and coarseness which we find in the novels of Smollett and Sterne.
2. Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), the most famous, outlived her sisters, but all of them died early in life. She is remembered chiefly for her *Jane Eyre*, still a favorite in spite of its melodrama and emotional unbalance. It is the story of a governess who courageously goes through all kinds of trials that affect her sensitive nature.

4. *By such exertions as we have described. Johnson supported himself till the year 1762.*
– Macaulay.³

A part only of the predicate is transferred to the first of the sentence for emphasis.

5. *He was chiefly marked as a gentleman – if such, indeed, he made any claim to be – by the rather remarkable whiteness and nicety of his linen – Hawthorne.*⁴

Here the predicate is interrupted by a clause which is wholly parenthetical. This form serves to bind together matters not closely related, or digressions.

6. *Men, like nails, lose their usefulness when they lose their direction and begin to bend; such nails are then thrown into the dust or into the furnace.* – Landor.⁵

This compound form – consisting of two short sentences – is useful where the two statements are closely connected in thought and may be made parallel in form.

7. *The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.* – Lincoln.⁶

This is similar to number six, except that the two parts are contrasted in thought instead of being parallel.

8. *The street is Pyncheon street; the house is the old Pyncheon house; and an elm tree, of wide circumference, rooted before the door, is familiar to every town-born child by the title of the Pyncheon elm – Hawthorne.*

This is an extension of form six. Note how easily one member of the compound sentence may be expanded, as in the last member of this example. The conjunction “and” between the last two members may be omitted at the discretion of the writer.

9. *He ransacked his father’s shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull – Southey.*⁷

3. Thomas B. Macaulay (1800-1859) British essayist, historian, politician. Macaulay achieved celebrity with an essay on Milton in the *Edinburgh Review*. In it we get a clear historical outline of the times, with Addison present clearly and generously among his contemporaries. His style is lucid, serious, and workmanlike. He takes his subject, analyses his qualities, and surrounds him with the circumstances of his day so as to give us a finished picture of the man and his time.
4. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). The first American writer of fiction to combine notable literary talent with deep moral seriousness and a strong sense of the specifically American scene.
5. Walter S. Landor (1775-1864) English poet, literary critic and prose-writer. Landor’s fame rests upon the 150 *Imaginary Conversations* – a series of discussions between historical figures on a variety of subjects. He is known for his interest in the Greek and Latin classics.
6. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). The 16th President of the United States was known as “Honest Abe” “The Great Emancipator,” and the “Rail Splitter”.
7. Robert Southey (1774-1843) British poet. Brother-in-law of Coleridge, he planned with him and others, the establishment of a “Pantisocracy,” or ideal commonwealth, in America, based on the ideals of the French Revolution. He wrote actually far better prose than poetry; his admirable *Life of*

This form is useful one for the rapid narration of a number of coordinate events. One subject answers for a number of verbs with their objects and modifiers. The tenses and the phrases should be kept uniform.

10. *Imagine a cottage of two stories with a bench before the door, the stable and kitchen in a suite so that the donkey and I could hear each other dining; furniture of the plainest, earthen floor, single bed-chamber for travellers, and that without any convenience but beds.* – Stevenson.⁸

This is an imperative sentence, where all the expansion occurs in the predicate.

11. *It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.* – Lincoln.

One simple statement is amplified by a number of explanatory clauses, which are coordinate in thought and form and are separated by semicolons.

12. *Her aims were simple and obvious, – to preserve her throne, to keep England out of war, to restore civil and religious order.* – Green.⁹

This form is similar to number eleven; but phrases, instead of clauses, are arranged in parallel form. Either eleven or twelve may be varied by transposition, the proposition being stated at the close, as in the following form:

13. *Thus not to follow your leader whithersoever he may think proper to lead; to back out of an expedition because the end of it frowns dubious, and the present fruit of it is discomfort; to quite comrade on the road and return home without him: – these are tricks which no boy of spirit would be guilty of* – Meredith.¹⁰

Nelson remains a classic. He was made the Poet Laureate in 1813 and after his death in 1843 Wordsworth held this title.

8. Robert L. Stevenson (1850-1894) wrote some remarkable poetry and was a master of the short story. His numerous personal essays and delightful letters have been considered as important literary works.
9. Thomas H. Green (1836-1882) British idealist philosopher. Deeply influenced by Hegel, Green opposed utilitarianism, positivism, agnosticism, believed that man's inability to produce from sense-experience the categories in which he thinks and the relations between perceptions proves he possesses a rational self.
10. George Meredith (1828-1909) British novelist and poet. He develops in his novels the theory set forth in his *Essay On Comedy* life on the whole is full of possibilities; an acceptance and understanding of Nature are the keys to the good life; human fellowship is the paramount good. Meredith's comic spirit expresses itself in a style peculiar to him: brilliant paradoxes, allusions, epigrams; concentration on rapid exchange of ideas.

14. *The great barns at the wayside had their doors thrown back, displaying the dark cool space within. — Pater.*¹¹

In this form, a participle is used to subordinate a statement of minor importance. The sentence can be varied by placing the participial phrase before or after the main statement.

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A LARGE VOCABULARY.

When common words are repeated frequently within a few lines, the reader quickly feels the monotony and narrowness of the writer's vocabulary. Most of us, indeed, feel vaguely to distinguish different ideas that resemble each other superficially. Some common exclamations betray this: "You know what I mean," "I can't think of the right word," or, "The word I am after will come to me in a moment." The right word will not come, however, unless the speaker has at some time seen or heard it, — unless he has lodged it in his brain, and also used it.

Again, even if we have some sort of word to answer for our idea, it may not be the exact term that will separate our thought from many others nearly like it. For example, let us try to find a word that will describe a poor man; he is not merely poor, this man; he is so habitually and absolutely without means that the general term is not strong enough. Is he, then, a beggar? No, because the term "beggar" indicates something besides poverty; it indicates a particular way of supplying the man's needs. This man, who is habitually and absolutely poor, who belongs to a class of the poor that will always be poor, supplies his needs in another way; he is a pauper. That shade of meaning is now firmly established.

Moreover, the writer is not the only one who needs a large vocabulary. If the writer must have many words to define his thought, the reader must have a corresponding number of words in order to get all the distinctions that the writer intends to convey.

To sum up, we should try to get a wide vocabulary: first, because words represent wealth of thought — the more symbols the more ideas; second, because if we have several words which represent very nearly the same thought, we can express exactly what we do mean more clearly than if we have only one (e.g., woman, lady, mother; house, residence, home; contrive, make, experiment); third, because variety rests the reader's mind and gives enjoyment; fourth, because the possession of many words aids us to understand exactly writers who use many words to express their ideas. When the reader has only a vague idea of the words used, much valuable thought is misunderstood, or but half understood. In short, add to your store of words in order that you may have a richer mental life.

11. Walter Pater (1839-1894) British writer. He was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin. Pater gradually himself became a leader of Aestheticism with such disciples as Oscar Wilde. His novel, *Marius the Epicurean* is a sensitive study of a young Roman who comes into contact with Christianity.

COMPOSITION OF RHYMED VERSE

If you know the fundamentals of English poetry, it would be interesting to try to write some rhymed verse. The best thing to do is to forget the rules for writing until after you have written something.

Get yourself a subject first, some concrete thing that has aroused your emotions. It does not matter much what it is if it is real and has been a genuine part of your own emotional experience. The suggestions below are merely intended to recall to you something that you have felt strongly.

Have you felt a keen joy in some physical experience, walking, running, climbing, dancing? Can you describe that pleasure in rhythmical lines?

Have you ever been moved by a Memorial Day Service? A Thanksgiving Service? By Christmas carol singing at night?

Have you a tiny baby or every young child in your home? Have you noticed the lovely texture of skin and hair, the contour of the little hands? Can you describe a baby in verse?

Have you ever noticed your mother's hands? Can you describe them and their significance in life?

Have you a dog, annoying, absurd, but lovable? Can you picture him in one of his customary attitudes?

Have you ever been close to the experience of death, and lost some dear friend or relative? Could you tell of that simply?

Do any of these suggestions start you to thinking of some other definite experience of your own that you might use as material?

You will no doubt have some difficulty in getting your ideas into rhythmical form. Write down your first line, your first concrete picture. If the line does not "beat" correctly in the form in which you first write it, if the accents of the words do not correspond with accents of the rhythm in which you are writing, change the wording of it. If the lines do not rhyme as you originally write them, change the wording so that they do.

Suppose you begin, "The dust creeps up over the garden." Try beating it out with your pencil. You will see that the rhythm is not well marked. Why not say, "Across the garden creeps the dusk"? Are you going to tell of the fragrance of the garden? What flower with a strong fragrance rhymes with dusk? Write a line with that word at the end; for instance, "Fragrance of lavender and musk."

Professional writers who encounter difficulties in rhyming often use what are called rhyming dictionaries, but it is rather easy to make an amateur substitute. If you are writing,

rhyming verse and find that you need a word to rhyme with time, for instance, simply follow this procedure. Begin at the beginning of the alphabet and try all the possible consonant combinations with the sound of time. Combinations with b and c do not form words, but dime does, although not a word that will be likely to fit into the thought. The consonants f, g, h, j, and k are useless but lime is a possible combination. A diphthong combination lime is possible here too, and we have clime, also lime. The letters m, n, p, and q are not helpful, and rhyme will fit, also grime and prime. Then s, v, w, x, and z are not usable, so the list of possible rhyme words is as follows: dime, lime, climb, rhyme, grime and prime. A rhyming dictionary would give you others, but these perhaps serve your purpose.

Most of your lines will need some rearrangement. You should say the thing you want to say first, and then work to fit it into your scheme of rhythm and rhyme. Some students find it easier to write their first verses in couplets, but most of them find that they have more room to express their ideas in a quatrain with the second and fourth lines rhyming.

Can you see that the second stanza is better than the first?

Waking from sleep, I listening lie
I know the train will soon go by.
The clock strikes one, the bell again,
I wait the coming of the train.

Waking from sleep, the clock I hear,
The bell strikes one, and then again
I turn my head and listening lie,
I love the coming of the train.

Do you notice that a great deal of verse is written in the present tense? What is the chief advantage gained from that?

If your subject is one in which you have a chance to use color, make the most of that. Color in poetry seems to have a special appeal to young people. Notice the marvelous use of color in this poem by Walter De La Mare.¹² Have you not seen just this kind of night?

SILVER

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers and sees

12. Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) British poet. His poems reveal nostalgic, whimsical grace, and, at best, an original verse movement.

Silver fruit upon silver trees;
 One by one the casements catch
 Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
 Couched in his kennel, like a log,
 With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
 From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
 Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;
 A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
 With silver claws, and a silver eye;
 And moveless fish in the water gleam,
 By silver reeds in a silver stream.

Write two or three or four stanzas, according to the nature of your subject. Use your own ideas, no matter how simple; do not borrow the expressions or phrases of others.

Here is a poem which is simple, rhythmical, concrete, and emotional. Try to keep to those qualities and your work will be satisfactory.

SPRING FEVER

I want to get out in the country
 Away from the dust and grime;
 And wrap my arms round a crooked tree
 And climb – and climb – and climb!

I want to get out in a new plowed field ----
 Where the world and sky are big;
 And fill my hands with the steaming earth
 And dig – dig – and dig!

I want to get out in an open place
 Where my soul can see the sun;
 And drink deep draughts of the scented air
 And run – and run – run!

I want to get up on a high, high hill
 Besides a bubbling spring;
 And lift my arms to the God of Life
 And sing – and sing – and sing!

I want to get out 'neath a forest's dome
 Oh, far and far away;
 And kneel beside a purple pool
 And pray – and pray – and pray!

Try writing a short poem. Select your own subject and the stanza form you wish to use. If you would like to try blank verse or a sonnet, do so. If you liked the little poem *Street Lamps* by Harry Kemp, could you not write a poem on the factory lights at night, if you live in the city, or on the distant lights from homes on the hills about, if you live in the country? The feeling or impression would probably be altogether different. You need only use these poems to suggest another experience. If you are at all interested in continuing the writing of verse as a pastime or source of pleasure to yourself, it is a good idea to keep a few pages of your pocket notebook for possible subjects. When you note a lovely thing, or an ugly but interesting thing, write your impression down and use it at your leisure. If you are fond of humorous verse, would you like to write a limerick?¹³ Try to write some if you have time. This is an example.

A charming young lady name Rose
 Had an almost impeccable nose.
 She'd a wondrous blue eye
 And her eyebrow was high
 But her I.Q. was lowest of lows!

If you have been interested in studying the old fifteenth century ballads, you would like to write a narrative poem of that type. Note their chief characteristics: Their abrupt beginning, their very suggestive wording. You might use some local or school event for a subject. Or, if these seem too trivial, some of the Old Testament narratives make excellent ballad material, particularly the stories of Joseph, or Daniel, and of Samson.

13. A limerick is a five-line stanza with a rhyme scheme aabba, the first, second and fifth lines being anapestic trimeter, and the third and fourth anapestic dimeter. There are frequent substitutions of iambic feet at the beginning of the lines.

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