

# GETTING INTO POETRY by Barb Miller

## Poetry Workshop 3: Free Verse Memory Graphing

### Theme

Free verse has no rhyme scheme and no meter to worry about, but that does not make it easier to write. You still have to weigh and choose your words carefully.

In order to give your free verse some structure, invent a graphic metaphor for your poem. Example: A poem about going downstairs might change in mood from the top to the bottom. This would depend on whether you are going down to a dingy basement or down from your bedroom to greet your prom date.

Arrangement of words can enhance the mood and add to the impact of the poetry.

Look at “Fog” by Carl Sandburg or “Eagle Flight” by Alonzo Lopez. Figure out a way to write the lines that relates to the meaning of the poem. Sample:

Green Gage (which can be read from bottom up or top down)

Melting in mouth  
Like honey  
Sweet nectar  
Ignoring bees  
Sun-drenched fruit  
Always the ripest  
Risking mine  
Grasping hers  
Limb by limb  
Measuring my worth  
The greengage tree  
I climb

– by B. Miller, 2003

Can you find a simile in this poem. What is the graphic image?

Think of a graphic image for your poem. Does it rise or fall? Is it a roller coaster, a maze, a fraying rope? Does it turn in a circle or wrap around a maypole? Write the first four lines of your graphical poem. Sample:

Falling

I fall

Down in my heart  
Like thumping down  
Broken steps  
Each disaster  
A blow  
This one is ill  
That one died  
Am I to blame for not  
Spending time with them  
As though I could hold back  
Two of the horsemen  
On my own  
But I would have if I could.  
I have their words and wishes  
And will not forget them.  
– by B. Miller 2003

Do you see the simile? Remember, it uses the word “like” or “as.” Do you see a literary illusion in this poem?

A **literary allusion** is a reference to a myth, legend, or element of a well-known work. The author alludes to the four horsemen of the apocalypse: Death, Famine, Pestilence & War.

Which of the horsemen was the author probably talking about?

Poems do not have to always be written on paper. They can be written on leaves, seashells, bones, wood in the shape of a tree, clay tablets, flower pots. These would all be ways to demonstrate the graphic image of your words.

They need not be written from left to right and top to bottom. In fact, some languages are written from bottom to top or from right to left.

A poem need not be read sequentially to be enjoyed. When there are multiple sequences in which to read a poem, you increase the variety of the experience.

Example: You could write a never-ending poem, one that circles back on itself and starts over again. It could be written as a circle or a mobius strip.