

How to Write a Pantoum Poem

Stanza 1: ABAB

- 1 First line (A)
- 2 Second line (B)
- 3 Third line rhymes with first (A)
- 4 Fourth line rhymes with second (B)

Stanza 2: BCBC

- 5 Repeat the second line (B)
- 6 Sixth line (C)
- 7 Repeat the fourth line (B)
- 8 Eighth line rhymes with sixth (C)

Stanza 3: CDCD

- 9 Repeat the sixth line (C)
- 10 Tenth line (D)
- 11 Repeat the eighth line (C)
- 12 Twelfth line rhymes with the tenth (D)

Stanza 4: DADA

- 13 Repeat tenth line (D)
- 14 Fourteenth line rhymes with first (A)
- 15 Repeat twelfth line (D)
- 16 Repeat the first line (A)

EXAMPLE
OUTLINE

Best Pantoum Topics: History, memories, family issues, and grief.

ORIGIN

Once an oral form of poetry, the pantoum is a poem from 15th century Malaysia. Popular among French poets.

STRUCTURE

A rhyming poem of 12 or more lines, written in quatrains (four-line stanzas). Each line is usually 12 syllables long.

REPETITION

The Pantoum is one of emotion that features repeating lines throughout the poem. The 2nd and 4th lines of the first stanza become the 1st and 3rd lines of the next stanza. The last line is the same as the first line of the poem. Since a pantoum has this echoing effect, it's important to make sure the duplicate lines are worth repeating.

Check out a Sample Pantoum and Simple Fill-in-the-Blank Template!



Sample Pantoum Poem

My Eyes Are the Color of Secrets and Lies

My eyes are the color of secrets and lies.
The cornflower blue of a stranger's sly wink.
My skin, like his, a milky shade of moonrise,
lips, a soft watercolor brushstroke of pink.

The cornflower blue of a stranger's sly wink.
His smile, his laughter, his welcoming glance.
Lips, a soft watercolor brushstroke of pink,
a band on her finger, he asked her to dance.

His smile, his laughter, his welcoming glance.
Neon sparks flickered from one to another.
A band on her finger, he asked her to dance.
That forbidden night she became my mother.

Neon sparks flickered from one to another.
She held her little secret close to her chest.
That forbidden night she became my mother.
Who was it who said that a mother knows best?

She held her little secret close to her chest.
My skin, like his, a milky shade of moonrise.
Who was it who said that a mother knows best?
My eyes are the color of secrets and lies.

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Pantoum Poem Worksheet

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____ repeat line 2

6 _____

7 _____ repeat line 4

8 _____

9 _____ repeat line 6

10 _____

11 _____ repeat line 8

12 _____

13 _____ repeat line 10

14 _____

15 _____ repeat line 12

16 _____

17 _____ repeat line 14

18 _____ repeat line 3

19 _____ repeat line 16

20 _____ repeat line 1