**How to write a Neo-Formalist poem**



Step 1: Know what a Neo Formalist poem is:

**Neo-Formalist poetry**= Typically Neo-Formalist poems separate the speaker from the poem and the speaker’s emotions are not implanted within the poem. These poems tend to be about philosophical or religious ideas that are controversial.

It is different from **free-verse poetry** because of this and because in Neo-Formalist poetry there are rhyme schemes and usually the lines are written in Iambic Pentameter, or some other pattern.

Examples:

**Neo-Formalist poem** **Free Verse Poem**

**The Endless Conversation**  
by Michael R. Burch  
  
Here the living and the dead convene,  
and here the Book of Life is read.  
Each fallen grain of wheat, life's bread,  
and the trampled grape, love's wine. Serene,  
the clouds of witnesses, the Host,  
speak to the heart. They seem, almost,  
like mortal men, their eyes more keen  
for having wept yet seen, half blind.  
  
There is no rancor; they are kind.  
In childhood man was ever green,  
if prone to pine. They only say  
such words as men at close of day  
might say—of distant visions seen  
beyond themselves: ahead, afar . . .  
Can they be wiser than we are?

### Fog by Carl Sandburg

The fog comes

on little cat feet.

It sits looking

over harbor and city

on silent haunches

and then moves on.

Step 2: Get familiar terms found in Neo Formalist poems

Meter= pattern of syllables within a line of poetry

Foot= basic unit of measurement in a line of poetry.(<http://www.lisgar.net/hale/lit_terms/literary_terms_f.htm>)

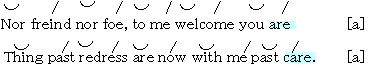
Iamb= a metrical foot that has an unstressed then stressed syllable

Iambic Pentameter= 10 syllables per line= 5 unstressed, 5 stressed. It is also a foot of verse. Iambic Pentameter is the most common form of meter in English verse and William Shakespeare is commonly associated with this form.

Example 1: I wish I were a shooting star so far

up high into the sky without a care

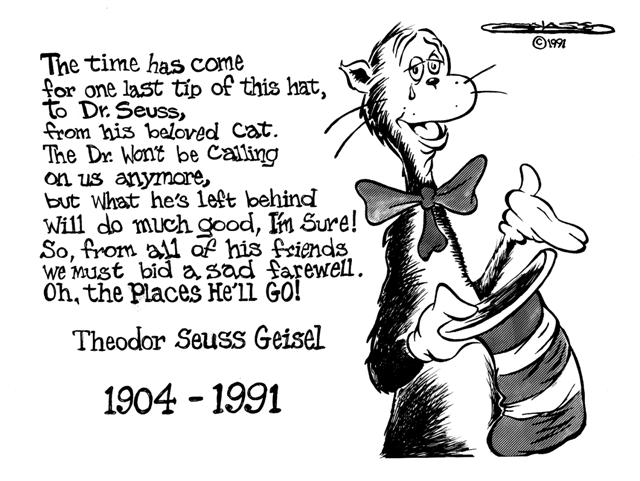
in the world.

Example 2

* **In the first example the first two lines are both 10 syllables and are unstressed, stressed. They are in Iambic Pentameter. The second example is also in Iambic Pentameter and the syllables are unstressed, stressed.**

**Example 3: da DUM | da DUM | da DUM | da DUM | da DUM**

**This form is an example of Iambic Pentameter as well, with unstressed, stressed syllables.**

**Other forms of meter are:**

monometer = one foot to a line  
Dimeter = two feet to a line  
Trimeter = three feet to a line  
Tetrameter = four feet to a line  
Pentameter = five feet to a line

(<http://www.lisgar.net/hale/lit_terms/literary_terms_f.htm>)

**Other forms used in Neo-Formalist poems besides Iamb:**

There are several forms which can be used in Neo-Formalist poems.

They are:

* Trochee

Example: **DA dum or (BREAKfast)**

* Spondee

Example: **DA DUM or (Black HAT)**

* Anapest

Example: **da da DUM or (like a HOOF)**

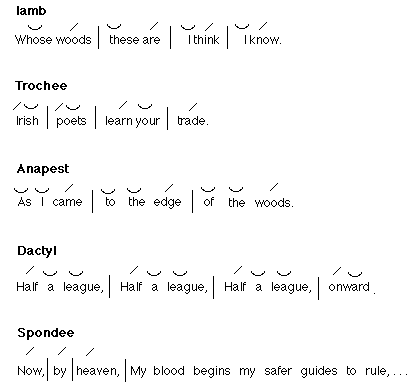
* Dactyl

Example: **DA da DUM or (CUT the SASH)**

* Pyrrhic

Example: **da dum or (and the) (-ing the)**

**More examples of the forms:**





Step 3: Know about **Rhyme Schemes**

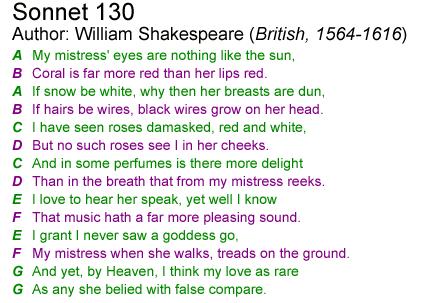
For example:

The True Story of Humpty Dumpty   
by Anna McKeay

**Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, (A)  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. (A)  
All the king's horses and all the king's men, (B)  
Couldn't put Humpty back together again. (B)**

**The main Rhyme Schemes in poetry are:**

**Cinquain:** ABABB

**Clerihew:** AAB B

**Couplet:** A, A or B,B or C,C, or D,D etc.

**Enclosed Rhyme:** AB BA

**Keatsian:** ABABCDECDE

**Limerick:** AABBA

**The Raven:** ABCBBB

**Rondelet:** AbAabba

**Forms specifically in Sonnets:**

**Petrarchan Sonnet:** ABBA ABBA CDE CDE

or ABBA ABBA CDC DCD

**Shakespearean Sonnet:** ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

**Spenserian Sonnet:** ABAB BCBC CDCD EE

Step 4: Pick which form you want to follow for Neo-Formalist poem.

Step 5 : Decide what you want to write about

* Come up with a list of ideas that you would want to discuss in your poem. It helps if you decide to write about something you are interested in/ or have strong feelings about.
* Try not to put your emotions in the poem, but to convey the message about what you are discussing.

Step 6: Write your poem in the closest way possible to your form. Make the syllables match up with your form and make sure they follow the rule on the stress of the syllables for the form you chose.

Step 7: Make sure the line endings match which form you wanted. Adjust the lines endings if they do not.

Step 8: Reread your poem several times and get the kinks out of it. Try to use some figurative language, similes, metaphors, and other literary techniques. Also, make sure your language is not repetitive and use a variety of words.

Step 9: Share your poem and or try to get it published.

Works Cited

Unknown. Literary Terms F-R

<http://www.lisgar.net/hale/lit_terms/literary_terms_f.htm>