

IS A DEADHEADED SUNFLOWER AN UNFLOWER?

Deadheading is the term used for the removal of flowers from plants when they are fading or dead. It is done to keep plants looking attractive and encourage more blooms.

Deadheaded Poems use deadheadings of words that can have their first letter removed to leave another new word - for example, when the word *pear* is deadheaded (*p/ear*) it becomes *ear*. Here is an example using this word,

Eating a Pear

*Hold a pear
to your ear
and hear the tone
of just one
sound: the slow
rhythm of a low
and steady beat
you're able to eat.*

You do not have to make your lines end with deadheadings. You can try writing with the deadheaded words anywhere in a following line, for example,

In the Night

*Somewhere in the black of night
there is a lack of anything good.
Here is the absence of a bright idea
to show what is right or wrong,
and in the swish of its darkened air
you'll hear a wish for something better.*

Can you work out the deadheading in each pair of lines?

Both of these poems are examples of 'stream of consciousness' writing - this is writing which is done spontaneously and without planning. By using deadheadings these can act as prompts for subsequent lines because you know what the word is that has to be used in that line.



Writing the Poem

First stage: If you are going to attempt 'stream of consciousness' writing you will simply need to select your first deadheading and see where this takes you!

However, if you feel you need more back-up and support, you can begin by building up a collection of words that can be deadheaded before you begin writing your poem (and you can, in fact, use these to support 'stream of consciousness' writing as an acceptable cheat).

Second stage: You need to decide where you want to place your deadheadings. These can be at the ends of lines, as in the first example you have seen, or consecutively in pairs of lines, as in the second example.

You can, of course, be more relaxed than this and have the deadheadings occurring anywhere in the poem, as long as they are still consecutive.

Final stage: It is useful to have some idea about what you want to write, even with a 'stream of consciousness' approach. The poem about the pear is about eating it, so this is a fairly obvious idea! The poem about night explores negative ideas associated with this, for example the *lack of anything good* and the *absence of a bright idea*.

Be prepared to edit your poem carefully. If a deadheading has taken you away from what you really want to write, get rid of it and start again! Sometimes you have to be prepared to sacrifice a good-sounding phrase if it doesn't actually fit with the overall tone and meaning of your poem.