

Halloween Poems [for Teachers]

Here's a resource to encourage students to experiment with rhyme. As we know, end-of-line rhyming is notoriously naff in the hands of the novice but students will persist in attempting this if not threatened with the severest punishment!

That said, exploring the potential effectiveness of rhyming, and looking at alternatives to the end-of-line variety, can be a rewarding if challenging focus.

These *Halloween* poems provide a model for experimenting with rhyming at the beginning of lines. Whilst linked to this 'darker' festival [and some caution in presenting the theme might need to be observed, in particular if the example 'Vampires' is used which is the relatively more explicit] the idea of beginning line rhymes can be extended to other themes/topics, for example Animals. There are, however, enough examples in the classic literature of myths and legends with their monsters and magical horrors to fully justify the creative relevance and impact of exploring a macabre theme.

In addition to the three poems provided, there are the following possibilities [though some more 'risky' subject-matter to consider], and you'll add your own ideas –

- Incubus
- Troll
- Changeling
- Ghoul
- Wizard
- Succubus
- Spectre

Encouraging some leniency in exact rhyme/sound will be useful! For example, *ghoul/jewel* is near enough for jazz. Also, allowing rhyme in varying syllabic patterns gives more freedom, for example *black/attack*.

All good writing gets produced through crafting and editing. Students must be encouraged to compile rhyme banks before launching into writing a complete poem – which they are usually keen to attempt! For example

ghost host most toast roast

If appropriate – and this task is aimed at older/assured writers – more technical aspects of the language used can be explored, for example the potential noun/verb/adjectival variation and use of the above words [including made-up verbs like *brooming*], as well as a key device of this idea which is enjambment: the examples

provided use a minimal narrative, but many students might find it useful to add more sentence structuring to push those rhymes meaningfully to the beginnings of lines.

For younger writers, or in developing this idea, further themes can be used. As mentioned, *Animals* is excellent with a range, for rhyming purposes, of *dog* and *cat* to *antelope* and *alligator* and beyond! The 'narrative' of these poems can be as metaphoric and/or surreal as possible. Here's one example:

*These
Antelope chomp
Cantaloupe then
Devour green tree
Bowers to suddenly
Squeal as this huge
Meal makes them
Tumble in their stomach
Rumble as a last
Ditch eating
Hitch before crackers and
Cheese*

As a final point, modelling these for students is an obvious, effective stimulus. You can either project/share one already printed, or have the craftily prepared but apparently unplanned one to compose [though such subterfuge shouldn't be encouraged!], or, as with the 'Antelope' poem above, grab the/bull by its/full horns and spontaneously model with class contributions to fully discover the creative process of this simple but effective idea.