
Dinéah Drama Festival

Poetry Prompts and Generators

These are some ways to generate some new poetry and can be used for poetry in English or in Diné Bizaad. You might try writing in both languages to experience their different sounds and rhythms and how that shapes your poetry or the experience for the reader.

Start with writing for 10 minutes and build from there. This list isn't exhaustive and feel free to make up your own prompts and write them on index cards. Then, choose a new card each day or each writing session.

1. A first sentence or a title from a poem by a Diné author. Use it for inspiration. Transform it into something else original. Some first lines as examples:

"We walk the lengths of this land." Dwayne Martin

"Grandma sat in the back-most room." Paige Buffington

"You've come for me twice before." Jake Skeets

"Fourteen ninety-something, *something* happened..." Sherwin Bitsui

"The earth gently releases its roots." Shonto Begay

"In the people's memory are the stories/This we remember:" Laura Tohe

2. Visit the Navajo Nation Museum and select an artwork or object and use it to start a poem. This could also be done in an art gallery or art center as well. Or, very simply, look around your house or at neighborhood murals for inspiration.
3. Use the Resources section of [The Diné Reader](#) to stimulate your poetry. Learn more about order and literary form, sound and other sensory devices, and humor. Explore writing about racism, prejudice, and intergenerational trauma; resilience and cultural identity; relational identities; and education. Share cultural knowledge and creation stories, the Navajo Long Walk, and the sacred mountains and the homeland. Explore gender and identity.
4. If appropriate, use lines from the Navajo Creation Myth or related songs. Here are a few as supplied by and translated by Hasteen M. Klah:

"The moon is looking at me."

"There is no water, there is no water."

"He moves with the lightning."

"Beautiful – I wander about."

"That which is good."

5. Look to the themes or lessons of the great stories for inspiration and connect them to your life now: slaying monsters (poverty, greed, jealousy), birth, travel and pilgrimage, coming of age, gaining strength and power, food, language, conflicts, objects. Explore these along with your own life and identity.

6. Search online for additional prompt collections or ideas. Some examples:

<https://azhumanities.org/poetrywritingprompts/org> – Poetry writing exercises from Laura Tohe for National Poetry Month.

<https://azhumanities.org/poetry-writing-prompts-april-1-10/> Other National Poetry Month prompts from AZ Humanities.

<https://www.pw.org/writing-prompts-exercises> Poets & Writers prompts

<https://sites.austincc.edu/lgrant/alternate-poetry-prompts/> Austin Community College Alternate Poetry Prompts

7. Additional resources:

Former National Poetry Laureate Joy Harjo’s project “[Living Nations, Living Words](#)” contains some resources. Diné poets represented in the project are Laura Tohe, Luci Tapahonso, Sherwin Bitsui, and Jake Skeets.

8. Once you have a theme in mind or a subject you would like to explore, try writing in different poetry forms (free verse, rhyming, haiku, etc.) to challenge yourself and to learn how form and content come together or don’t. Check out these 168 forms:
<https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-poetry/list-of-50-poetic-forms-for-poets>