

Three Minute Poems (from “Put Your Heart on Paper” by Henriette Anne Klauser)

Give everyone a pencil or pen and paper. Set a timer for 3 minutes. Everyone shouts out topics and the leader writes them down. When time is up, the group selects four of the topics. Run the timer again for 3 minutes. Everyone writes fast and furiously for the three minutes, incorporating all four selected elements in one poem. The more mismatched the topics, the more serendipity in the combinations. It doesn't have to rhyme, but rhyme pops up.

Write until the timer goes off. Then each reads her poem out loud to the group, without qualifying or defending it. You will feel mellow and amused just hearing them. And you might even get a tinge of pride reciting your own.

If people give a response like “I don't do poetry.” Or “No way can I write a poem in 3 minutes”, the author says to advise them not to panic. Remind them it will all be over quickly. It will only take three minutes. And if it doesn't go well, you can always say “It's not my best work, but I only had three minutes!”

Here are some examples the author offers from a workshop she led with a group of people who worked together at a bank. The topics were “wedding gift,” “Saturday,” “running,” and “friendship.”

Example 1:

Saturday
Saturday
What a day for running
Running here, running there
Too many tasks, too much to do
Where's an end?
Where's a rest?
Think of all the list of things
Don't forget the weekend wedding

Of your friends
Get a gift, a special gift
Let it tell of your friendship.
Saturdays
Saturdays
Where is Sunday's blessing?
Where is peace?
Where is quiet?
In the vows of a couple
In their bond and their troth
I renew my own life.

Example 2

Saturday's early morning light
Marks and shines around the reservoir.
Running, marking the pace with the
heartbeat and feet,
Matching my pace to my friend's beat,
hers to mine,
Musing about the many gifts she's given
me.
Feeling in my palm the smooth polish
Of a stone. A gift for my daughter
On her wedding day.

Example 3

My friend Mandy gets married Saturday
eve
I'm running to capture a gift to relieve
My frustration and anger and increasing
vex
You see, Amanda is wedding my ex !

