**Poetry from Daily Life: You can follow a form and make it your own**

By Sandy Asher

*This week’s guest on “Poetry from Daily Life” is Sandy Asher, who lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. When she was in 2nd grade, Sandy began making up plays for her friends to act out with her. Her first publication was a poem in a small, literary magazine in 1964, for which she was paid two contributor’s copies. She writes for preschool through adult audiences — “anything that moves me deeply” — and her work includes plays, poetry, stories, books, and articles. She calls chocolate ice cream her drug of choice and wants us to know that she once “jumped up and down on a dance floor with Paul Newman.” Two of Sandy's favorite picture books are "Too Many Frogs" and "Chicken Story Time." "Sophie’s Monster Goes to Shul" is due out in March 2024. ~David Harrison*

**Try a guided poem**

Hundreds of writing workshops into my long career, I'm still amazed by one particular phenomenon:  Whenever I give a single writing prompt to a group of people — of any age! — they will always come up with a roomful of unique responses. No two alike. Ever!

It's a perfect metaphor, and proof, of our uniqueness as human beings. Every story, every poem, is part of our human tapestry. If they are never created, there's a hole that cannot be repaired.

One of my favorite prompts is the Guided Poem, an idea I've borrowed from Springfield native Joyce Pyle, a retired 4th and 5th grade teacher formerly at Bingham Elementary School. Joyce has a special love of poetry and inspired many of her students to publish their work in local and national collections.

I invite you to create a Guided Poem of your own, on the topic "My Favorite Place." After you've done one, you can reuse the directions to create any number of poems on other topics. You can also revise the directions to lead you in a different direction altogether. I've used this prompt with children and adults. I've enjoyed responses featuring everything from the beach to a bathtub. An especially striking response came from a participant in a workshop for incarcerated women at Lancaster County Prison. First, she wrote about New York City, her favorite place. That night, in her cell, she turned the guidelines around to write a second poem about her LEAST favorite place: Lancaster County Prison.

Unique? You bet! Your response will be unique as well. Try it!

"My Favorite Place" is a working title. You can change it later. For now, put it at the top of your page. As you answer each question, begin a new line in your poem. You may answer in simple phrases or in full sentences.

**MY FAVORITE PLACE**

* What is your favorite place? (Be specific.)
* What is your favorite kind of day there? (Rainy? Autumn? Windy? KIND of day. Write a word or two or more.)
* What is your favorite time of day there? (10 a.m. or dinnertime? A word or two or more.)
* What sounds do you hear? (Include as many as you like, on as many lines as you like.)
* What do you see? (Include as many things as you like, including people, on as many lines as you like.)
* What do you most enjoy doing in this place? (Use as many lines as you need.)
* When will you go to your favorite place again? (Never? Tomorrow? Next year?)
* How does that make you feel? (Happy? Sad? Eager? Something else?)

Now, you can edit your poem any way you like. And write others, using the same guidelines.

It pleases me no end to think that this poetry-writing prompt that I've used all over the country is now coming home to Springfield. Thank you, Joyce Pyle, David Harrison, and Springfield News-Leader!

*During her 36 years in Springfield, MO, Sandy Asher taught creative writing and ran many workshops as writer-in-residence at Drury University. She also founded and directed Good Company Theatre for All Ages, which performed at Drury, the Vandivort Center Theatre, and the Springfield Public Library.  Most recently, Springfield Contemporary Theatre presented the world premiere of her play "Death Valley: A Love Story." Visit Sandy at* [*http://sandyasher.com*](http://sandyashercom)*.*