

ONE WORD POETRY CHALLENGE

To write a poem starting with a single word is an entertaining challenge that exercises our imagination. Here's how to help young poets (or adult poets) get started.

Let's say the word is **time**. Think it over for a few minutes but don't waste a lot of "time" doing it. Do the quick stuff first. What does time make you think of? Here are 6 steps you can take.

- 1 Make a list of the first things that come to mind

Telling time
Losing time
Time out
Lunch time
A good time
A sad time
A funny time
Once upon a time
Hard times
Prehistoric times
Time zones
Daylight Savings Time
The time of your life
In no time
(You'll think of a lot more in the next few minutes)

- 2 Look up some things about time and make notes

The earliest efforts to keep track of time
Stonehenge
Tracking sun and moon
Following constellations across the sky
Sundials
Modern time pieces
Making a watch
Measuring distance in light years

- 3 Pick a subject that interests you and think about what you might write about it. Begin with random thoughts, whatever comes to mind.

I'll choose LUNCH TIME from the first list.

What would I have to say about lunch time? I might write about eating lunch in our school cafeteria. Some kids are noisy and talk to their friends while others sit quietly and eat their food. Some days we get so noisy that teachers and even our principal have to stand up and give us the quiet sign until we settle down. Some days the food is good but I don't always eat everything on my tray.

I could write my poem about the day the lights went out during lunch period and some of the little kids didn't like it but some of the bigger ones threw stuff and no one could hear anything over all the yelling.

Or maybe I can write about how we have to line up to go to the cafeteria and walk down the hall behind our teacher. One time someone stepped on my heel and my shoe came off. Sometimes we get giggly and can't seem to stop even when our teacher gives us "The look." One time we got so out of control that our teacher made us go back to our room and start all over, and then we had to wolf our food down.

- 4 Pick an idea from the random description and list some points you might want to include in your poem.

I'll choose getting "The look" in the lunchroom.

THINGS THAT CAUSE US TO GET "THE LOOK"

Making too much noise
 Shoving in line
 Dropping a tray
 Poking someone
 Not being polite
 Not listening
 Running

- 5 Try a first draft.

GETTING "THE LOOK" IN THE LUNCHROOM

Beware "The Look,"
 It will turn your hair white
 Teacher's always watching
 You mustn't poke or run
 Or shout
 Or drop a tray
 Or forget to listen
 Or else you might get "The Look"
 And go home white-headed.

6 Revise

GETTING "THE LOOK" AT LUNCH TIME

Better behave at lunch time,
Kid, I'm warning you,
Teacher keeps her eagle eyes
On everything we do.

Lunch time is the wrong time
To run or drop a tray,
You mustn't poke
Or yell or tease,
You must remember manners, please,
You must say thank you to the cook
Or else you'll get "The Look."

It fries your hair and turns it white
So you go home an awful sight
And give you little sis a fright!

BEWARE!
BEWARE
"The Look!"