

Concrete Poetry

Sources: Poetry Foundation, Academy of American Poets

Concrete Poetry

- Poetry that emphasizes nonlinguistic elements
 - font, size, spaces (extra space, lack of space, negative space)
- A fusion of word and image
- Bypasses the importance of sound

Concrete Poetry

- Simple: poems in recognizable shapes
- Complex: ideographic visual art made with words
- Ideograph: a picture or symbol used in a system of writing to represent a thing or an idea but not a particular word or phrase for it.
- The picture or symbol represents not the object pictured but an idea that the object suggest

Examples of Ideographs



Examples of Ideographs

冰川

glacier

冰 ice + 川 river

Examples of Ideographs



flute



to assemble or gather together



depicts holes



bamboo used to make instruments

DO...

- Pay attention to nonlinguistic elements
- Use visual tools:
 - Font, size, spaces (extra space, lack of space, negative space)
- Choose between a shape or a more abstract structure (waves, odd spaces, etc.)

DON'T...

- Forget the connection between the poem and the visual structure
- Forget to put effort into the actual words of the poem itself
- Try to overdo it by using too many visual tools; simple can be powerful

Easter Wings by George Herbert

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne
And still with sicknesses and shame.
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

Sonnet in the Shape of a Potted Christmas Tree by George Starbuck

*

O

fury-

bedecked!

O glitter-torn!

Let the wild wind erect

bonbonbonanzas; junipers affect

frostyfreeze turbans; iciclestuff adorn

all cuckolded creation in a madcap crown of horn!

It's a new day; no scapegrace of a sect

tidying up the ashtrays playing Daughter-in-Law Elect;

bells! bibelots! popsicle cigars! shatter the glassware! a son born

now

now

while ox and ass and infant lie

together as poor creatures will

and tears of her exertion still

cling in the spent girl's eye

and a great firework in the sky

drifts to the western hill.

[Buffalo Bill 's] by e.e. cummings

Buffalo Bill 's
defunct

who used to
ride a watersmooth-silver

stallion

and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat

Jesus

he was a handsome man

and what i want to know is

how do you like your blue-eyed boy
Mister Death

The Pillar of Fame by Robert Herrick

Fame's pillar here at last we set,
Out-during marble, brass or jet;
Charmed and enchanted so
As to withstand the blow
Of overthrow;
Nor shall the seas,
Or outrages
Of storms, o'erbear
What we uprear;
Tho' kingdoms fall,
This pillar never shall
Decline or waste at all;
But stand for ever by his own
Firm and well-fixed foundation.

The Cloud Confines by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

The day is dark and the night
 To him that would search their heart;
 No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light:
 Only, gazing alone,
 To him wild shadows are shown,
 Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
 Still we say as we go, i
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
 Nam'd new, we name it the old;
 Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead;
 Whether at all they be,
 Or whether as bond or free,
 Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
 Still we say as we go, i
 "Strange to think by the way,
 Whatever there is to know,
 That shall we know one day."

Fountains of Aix by May Swenson

Beards of water

some of them have.

Others are blowing whistles of water.

Faces astonished that constant water
jumps from their mouths.

Jaws of lions are snarling water
through green teeth over chins of moss.

Dolphins toss jets of water
from open snouts

to an upper theater of water.

Children are riding swans and water
coils from the S-shaped necks and spills
in flat foils from pincered bills.

A solemn curly-headed bull
puts out a swollen tongue of water.

Cupids naked are making water
into a font that never is full.

A goddess is driving a chariot through water.

Her reins and whips are tight white water.

Bronze hoofs of horses wrangle with water.

Marble faces half hidden in leaves.

Faces whose hair is leaves and grapes
of stone are peering from living leaves.

Faces with mossy lips unlocked
always uttering water,
water

wearing their features blank
their ears deaf, their eyes mad
or patient or blind or astonished at water
always uttered out of their mouths.

[in Just-] by e.e. cummings

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

it's
spring
and

the

goat-footed

balloonMan whistles
far
and
wee

Valentine by Lorna Dee Cervantes

Cherry plums suck a week's soak,
overnight they explode into the scenery of before
your touch. The curtains open on the end of our past.
Pink trumpets on the vines bare to the hummingbirds.
Butterflies unclasp from the purse of their couplings, they
light and open on the doubled hands of eucalyptus fronds.
They sip from the pistils for seven generations that bear
them through another tongue as the first year of our
punishing mathematic begins clicking the calendar
forward. They land like seasoned rocks on the
decks of the cliffs. They take another turn
on the spiral of life where the blossoms
blush & pale in a day of dirty dawn
where the ghost of you webs
your limbs through branches
of cherry plum. Rare bird,
extinct color, you stay in
my dreams in x-ray. In
rerun, the bone of you
stripping sweethearts
folds and layers the
shedding petals of
my grief into a
decayed holo-
gram—my
for ever
empty
art.

Water

I
blink
a levee
of lashes
over liquid eyes,
a troubled awakening
in pools of bitter brown,
borrowed from elemental
seep in puddles waiting
for deepest pourings
of broken waters
blink

Like a Butterfly

I
stretched
my wings
only to
have you
trap me

relax
me with
gin and
fingers

I
never
felt the
pins
holding
me down

as you
added me
to your
collection