

Prison Poetry Project

A collection of Creative Writing Workshop ideas and poetry by Rod Martin

Dedication

Inspired by prison poets of Hawaii,

this book goes out to inmates everywhere

who have something to tell us all.

Why you should take a good look at this Prison Poetry Project guide:

This book can help anyone interested in leading poetry workshops in a prison setting.

There are many men and women in prison who have a lot of poetry in them,
who have something to say
and these activities will help them develop open and honest self-expression.

I call them Creative Writing workshops; it sounds more official.

The activities are primarily poetry but you can try your hand at short stories, dialogues, plays,
songs and even some improvisational theatre.

It might help some of the inmates. It could do wonders for you.

Ideas are powerful agents of change.

You'll end up writing more.

Here's hoping this book will help you help them express their experiences and concerns.

Comments from inmates participating in the Poetry Project:

I have really enjoyed myself in this class. It has allowed me to freely express myself in ways that I never could have while with the rest of the population. There hasn't been a time when I didn't go back to my unit feeling refreshed.

This class will open your mind to a new way of thinking, where you can express your creativity and learn more about yourself.

This course provides me with an opportunity to hear, discuss, and write about ideas that are not usually verbalized in 'the quad', in a safe environment. I'm exposed to the creativity of others, and receive feedback on my own writing. It's nice to not be treated punitively, but to have help learning a new skill.

The Poetry Project has been incredibly enlightening and edifying. I hope this class is still in existence next time I come back to prison.

This class will light the fire underneath your poetic butt and get it moving to new lyrical heights. It has inspired me to express my creativity in new and innovating ways. Mui Excelente.

This creative writing class helps me to actively participate in writing skills that help me cope with the moral decay of negative attitudes that has ultimately pervaded our prison rehabilitative structure. I can for once come to a class that reinforces positive intellectual thinking and encourages inmates to be creative, poetic, and positive during a very discouraging time. I hope this class will continue to be offered to inmates who are aspiring writers.

We just need an outlet
Someone to trade wit with
Getting better at putting words together
Word play and rhymes
A metaphorical metronome keeping time
Pencil taps and knee slaps and abstract raps rhythm

We have a place to share this: call it Creative Writing Class

A day to look forward to

It is to me what holiday is to you

Could do this thrice a week

(but Teacher needs his sleep)

But we need to speak

This class is better than buddy bars and pop tarts for lunch

And that's sayin' a bunch

Thanks for your time, your spirit

And giving us a time and place to spit these lyrics.

Contents

First Session Page 9

Writing on a topic
Five finger poetry
Alliteration and Assonance
Haiku
It's All About Me
Poetry if "If"
Sense poems
Homework: Haikus

Second Session Page 26

Sharing Haiku homework
Acrostics
Finish the Phrase poem
Rapid Rhyme
Homework: Repetition poem

Third Session Page 40

Share Repetition homework
Given a phrase
Free Verse from starting line
Homework: Starting line poems

Fourth Session Page 48

Share starting line poems
Deal Me In
The Poet as Someone Else

Lines Entwined/Poem from a Quote

Homework: Letter poem

Fifth Session

Page 61

Share letter poems

A Simile (Love You Like That)

Can I quote you on that?

Homework: Poems from quotes

Sixth Session

Page 73

Share poems from quotes

Drama Games:

Pass the phrase

Circle story

Questions only conversation

Poem of exaggeration

Someone else's voice

Homework: A writing inspired by a song (or)

What were your favorite things when you were a kid?

Give seven examples (similes) of what a broken heart is like.

Seventh Session

Page 81

Share poems inspired by songs

God or no god, your thoughts

Poem from a starting line

Someone Else's voice

You may be an inmate if...

Song writing

Homework: write more 'you may be an inmate if...' examples.

Write a poem that uses repetition of phrases for emphasis.

What are some of the little things that happen in a prison setting that bring you joy?

Eighth Session

Page 92

Share “You may be an inmate if...” ideas for collective poem.

Seven ways to say something

Writing for kids

Questions that make you think

Homework: Answer a few more of the questions

Ninth Session

Page 103

Share writings inspired by questions

Circle poem

For What It’s Worth

Partner poem inspired by a quote

Partner poem from starting lines

Homework: Collaborate with someone this week and bring partner poem to share

Tenth Session

Page 111

Share collaborative writing piece/partner poems

Alliteration poem

Poems inspired by quotes

Homework: Write a poem from a different quote

Eleventh Session

Page 116

Share poems from a quote

Deal Me In warm up

Writing the blues

Dialogue Poem

Metacognition

Homework: Writing a blues verse or two

Twelfth Session

Page 124

Share blues lyrics

Images: photographic inspiration

Childhood days

Motivations

Homework: Functions of language

Thirteenth Session

Page 128

Share functions of language poems

Our journey's end

Finish the phrase

For what it's worth

Homework: Write on the topic of justice

Fourteenth Session

Page 135

Share ideas on prison reform

Collaboration (Love is...)

Emotion Poems

Alpha-betcha (Prison Life)

Family member memory

Homework: Questions and answers

Fifteenth Session

Page 144

Share prison reform compilation

Warm up: share questions and write on one question.

Rules that can go.

Circle poem
Partner poem
Teacher time
Small stuff
Homework: Lessons learned.

Sixteenth Session Page 154

Share writing on lessons learned.

Freedom's fears

Money

Doing time: what works

Poem inspired by a story

Certificate of completion examples Page 166

Deal Me In ideas for phrases or words Page 167-180

Poems for Poetry reading Page 181-408

First Session

The speech: Share these ideas if they work for you in the early stage of your workshops to or to lay the groundwork:

I'm glad you've joined us for these creative writing sessions. Our main focus will be poetry, though stories, speeches, essays and letters are fine as well. You can write in any style, about any topic you want. In each session I'll give you some suggestions for styles to try or topics to ponder, but the choice is ultimately yours. I just want you to write.

I believe we get better at things by practice and that's why I want to encourage you to write as often as possible about things you care about or want to remember. It can help you understand issues you're going through by writing it out, not just thinking it through. You may find when you start writing about a topic or experience that you end up with unexpected conclusions. The very act of writing can surprise you.

I hope you'll be willing to share your work by reading it aloud to the group. I believe poetry is meant to be spoken aloud, not just read silently. You can always pass on sharing which is totally voluntary, but most poets, you may find, like being heard. I encourage and insist that you listen carefully and respectfully to each poet as they share their work. Try to remember or write down any phrases that impressed you and then give them that feedback after they're done. We can all benefit from constructive criticism.

If you're proud of your work, you can turn it in to me and I'll type it (or find someone to help type our poems) so we can give each of you a copy or collection of our original writing. If you want help with spelling or grammar or editing, I'll do my best but it's fine if you want it typed word for word. I would usually avoid censoring your work but I should let you know I'm not a fan of swearing, violence or lewd material. I prefer poems that encourage and uplift the human spirit, but it's OK to express the fears and heartbreak that come from being human.

I'll suggest topics or styles you can write on your own between sessions. These are not mandatory, but sometimes it helps to have more time than just a class session, and you may find it helpful to find a quiet time when it's easier to concentrate and you can hear the sound of the poetry in your head.

Finally, I hope you will enjoy yourself and freely share your thoughts, ideas and opinions and I welcome your ideas for writing topics and anything we can do to make our writing sessions more meaningful.

Warm up by writing on a topic:

These poems can be rhyming or free verse. Copy and hand out the list of topics and mention that the list can be used at any time they've got time on their hands and feel like writing. Be aware that having paper to write on may be an issue. Even recycled papers with one clear side can be useful. Tell them that everyone is free to share aloud their writing. If they are shy, offer to read it for them.

Prison Poetry Project Topics:

Racism, Anarchy, Space Exploration, Favorite Movies and TV shows, Alien Visitation, Alone on the Ocean, Hiking in the Mountains, Freedom Plans, How to Treat Others, Different Kinds of Drugs, Channeling the Sex Drive, Jealousy, Relationship Troubles, Communicating with Others, All Kinds of Music, Poverty, Adultery, Lying, Frustration, Monotony, Depression, Encouragement, Curiosity, Silliness, Introverts, Show Offs, Health, Mental Health, Prison Friendships, Adult Correction Officers, Perseverance, Relaxation, Conjugal Visits, Medical Marijuana, Peace, Challenges, Obstacles, Mind Games, All Kinds of Pain, Beauty, Death, Saying Goodbye, Humility, Tattoos, Actors, Government, Fighting, God, The Soul, Fakes, Nature, Romance, Salvation, Wind, Rain, Sand, War, Peace, Earth, Friends, Fun, Sun, Music, Swimming, Bikes, Toys, Fear, Love, Sorrow, Joy, Pain, Loss, Holidays, Water, Heaven, Clouds, Computers, Acting, Fighting, Teachers, Parents, Relatives, Travel, Animals, Sports, Players, Art, Technology, Internet, History, Heroes, Sunsets, Flowers, Gifts, Jealousy, Anger, Space, Crime, Confusion, Exhaustion, Power, Beaches, Hurricanes, City Lights, Halloween, Christmas, Summer, Sailing, Diving, Hate, Work, Honesty, Wild Animals, Accidents, Nightmares, Snow, Sight, Churches, Faith, Lightning, Cars, Airplanes, Sickness, Cartoons, Paddling, Waterfalls, Dirt Bikes, Donuts, Tennis, Kids, Ghosts, Death, Skateboarding, Rock and Roll, Memories, Stars, Scars, Movie Stars, Money, Monsters, Happiness, Vacations, Hurts, Babies, Goals, Responsibility, Respect, Pollution, Resourcefulness, Reading, Rap, Religions, Volley Ball, Hiking, Kayaking, Fishing, Camping, Praying, Meditating, Prayer, Headaches, Dentists, Clouds, Fire, Eating, Games, Sports, Embarrassing Moments, Mistakes, The Cosmos, Space Travel, Jobs, America, Cities, Country Living, Boredom, Hope, Grief, Time, Scars, Silliness, Jokes, Pranks, Aging, Relatives, The Future, Thanks, Forgiveness, Global Warming, Terrorists, Questions, Driving, Fireworks, Failure, Deforestation, and Freedom.

(And of course, you can always write on a topic of your own choosing.)

Example: Poem from the topic, 'scars'

Got some scars
Some you can't see
Scars that are inside me
Scars from the time someone said,
"You can't love; your heart is dead"
Scars from lies
Scars from pain
Tears and fears of being insane
Scars from words that cut me deep
Made me doubt
Disturbed my sleep
I can handle how hurt makes me feel
I am strong
Scars show I heal.

Example: Poem from the topic, 'love'

A Prayer for My Girl

I'm missing you so terribly, it's making me sick
I thank God for you, my beautiful Ride or Die chick

Even though I'm in here, you're still out there holding it down
I shall dedicate the rest of my life to making sure you never ever frown

You light up my life like the sun and its rays

You make me a better man in a thousand plus ways

The Love we share is priceless and it can't be replaced
Only made stronger by the problems that we have faced

Being in here has shown me that I need you more than water, more than air
So I dedicate my heart and soul to you as I close my eyes in prayer:

Lord, please watch over this amazing woman. May no harm come her way.
Let her find peace in all she does as she goes about her day.

Let her find Love and Consolation in the letters that I write.
May she know I'm with her in my Dreams when I close my eyes at night.

Let her feel Trust and Respect of the kind she's never known
And fill her with Your Strength and Understanding should she ever feel alone

Let her know that there's no limit to the Happiness the two of us will feel
While we share our lives so deeply in Love because what we have is real.

Let her rest assured she will never be alone again
These things I pray Father in Jesus' name. Amen.

Five Finger Poetry: How much can you say if you only have five words to say it all? There are two forms: 1) poems that sound like a real sentence and 2) image style that may seem disjointed but are all about one topic.

Examples of sentence style:

I can't think of anything.

This poem will not rhyme.

Where will this story go?

Laugh and life laughs back.

Change the world? Yeah, right.

Does Jesus believe in me?

Oh, your silence speaks volumes.

I miss my kids lots.

Crystal meth took my teeth.

Examples of image style Five Finger poems:

Spark, flame, curtains, crib, sirens.

Birds, mist, vegetation, mountains, Hawaii.

Sunburn, tourists, babes, beach, paradise.

Stadium, cheers, plays, beers, touchdown!

Commercials, comedies, game shows, news.

Bass, guitar, drums, horns, keyboards.

Reboots, downloads, searches, websites, spam.

Alliteration: This is a poetic device that often comes up in writing poems. Alliteration is the repetition of beginning sounds in a line, usually two or three or more. It's sort of like tongue twisters such as "Peter Piper picked papayas." To get used to using Alliteration, have everyone, including yourself, come up with several examples. They could then build a poem around their favorite alliterative phrase.

Examples:

The wind came whipping in the window.

Clouds clinging like mountain climbers.

Would you feel confident in a curtained cubicle?

Tell Ted to treat his teacher tenderly.

He held his outstretched arms over the ocean.

You've got to put the pain of imprisonment in perspective.

My heart moved the moment I met her.

Don't despise the downtrodden drunks, dykes and dragqueens.

Assonance: Assonance is rhyming words within a line. Again, each person tries to come up with several of their own examples.

Examples:

I say you've got to pay to play.

It's fine if you want to rhyme every line.

Those three trees are diseased.

I've heard some people say they plan to be gay for their stay.

Go slow if you don't know the road.

Haiku: Haiku poems are all about saying a lot with only a few words, following a pattern, counting syllables and not having to rhyme. Suggested topics: prison, nature, or memories.

Examples of 5-7-5 syllable pattern:

Count the syllables

And you can write a haiku

That will amaze you

We are the poets

Our words move everyone here
Come and join the fun

This poem will be brief
I only have a few words
To say everything

Kayaking coastlines
At the mercy of the wind
Cliffs and birds and waves

I must challenge you
Use that imagination
To write a haiku

New day, some old shit
Hit by the fact I'm not free
And yet still I rise

Examples of 3-5-3 syllable pattern:

Without love
I am locked away
In darkness
This is hard
I just can't do this
I'm brain dead.

I've hated
Incarcerated
Things must change

It's just words
But these words can hurt:
Go away

Silent screams
No one hears but me
What is real?

“It's All about Me”: These are poems expressive of self. Have the class finish the following phrases. The end result will be an autobiographical poem. It's OK to give more than one ending for each phrase. (For example, “I'm a brother, a lover and one mean mother hummer.”)

I am...

I want...

I believe...

I will not...

I dream...

I remember...

I would love...

Example:

I am proud of you

I want to encourage you to write
To express yourself and have some fun

I believe everyone's a poet if they want to be

I will not betray your thoughts
Or step on your soul

I dream of prison poetry slams
And new found voices

I remember how writing has blessed my life
And I'm thankful

I would love it if this inspires you
Challenges you
And brings you joy.

Another example:

I am...unusual and that's ok by me.

I want...to be young but wise

I believe...everyone has a story worth hearing

I will not... shut up when something needs to be said (no filter)

I hope...heaven waits and we all make it to the Pearly Gates

I hate... evil in all forms

And I remember...how my heart moved with first love

And the many first time smiles of my life

I would love... to feel that way again.

Poetry of IF: Follow the pattern below to create your own “IF” poems:

If I were a (blank one) and you, a (blank two),

Could we.(rhyme with blank two)?

Examples:

If I were locked up, and you were the key

All that you are would taste like freedom to me.

If I were a poem, and you were the rhyme

Would you give me your love, your laughter, your time?

If I were parched earth, and you were the rain
Would you bring me to life again and again?

If I were the sun, and you were the moon
Would you fade away each morning singing a sad parting tune?

If you were a cloud, and I was the sky
Would you smile at me as you float on by?

If I were dying and you were death,
Could we play cards 'til my last breath?

If you were an apple, and I was your tree
Would you be my friend, and 'hang around' with me?

If you were sorrow and I was laughter,
Could I make you smile, 'cause that's what I'm after.

If I was time and you were tears,
I'd help you dry even if it took years.

If I were in prison and you were free,
Would you visit here and write poems with me?

Example of a modified form:

If I am an addict, you're my drug of choice

If you were a mute, I'd be your voice

If you were soap, I'd be shampoo

If I was a panda, you'd be bamboo

If you were a twelve pack, I'd be drunk

And if you were a tutor, I'd purposely flunk

If you were sick, I'd be your medicine

And if you needed a pick-me-up, I'd be your adrenaline

If you were a pencil, I'd be paper

If I was a captive, you'd be my savior

If you were a drummer, I'd be a bassist

And if you were black, then I wouldn't be racist

If you were a cop, I'd swear off cocaine

If you were Love, I'd be Cobain

If you were formula one, I'd be a bloody racer

And if you were pleasingly plump, then I'd be a chubby chaser

If I was rhyme, you'd be reason

If you were a spy, I'd commit treason

If you were a dog, I'd give you a bone
And if you were ice cream, I'd lick your cone

If I was peanut butter you'd be jelly
If I was a fly you'd be smelly

If you were a movie, I'd watch you in slow mo
If you were a man, man, I'd be a homo

If I was a question, then you'd be the answer
And if you were carcinogens, I'd risk getting cancer

If I was Adam then you'd be Eve
If you were organized religion, then I would believe.

Another example:

If I were some rocks

And you were a pipe,

Would it be bubbles of troubles

for the rest of my life?

If I were "IF"

And you were “NOT,”

Would we end up with NOTHING?

Or would we have A LOT?

If I were love

And you were sorrow,

Would you bring me to tears?

Would I give you hope for tomorrow?

Sense Poems: Utilize taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight images in a poem.

Example: “Freedom Is”

Freedom

Is

A hug knee-high from a three year old

Freely given

It’s the harmony of voices raised in song.

The scent of barbeque in the neighborhood.

A cold beer on a hot day

This is America through my eyes

Another example:

The Grid-Irony of it all: Football

All the pretty painted people in the crowded stands

Crowds standing and waving their hands and cheering

Hot dogging and beering, you can smell it and hear it if you dare to go near it

A stadium to rival the coliseum filled with losers and boozers

Hipsters and tripsters, chug-a-luggers and babes in hip huggers

Burgers and nachos: taste it.

College kids in flo-jos: wasted.

Achy-breaky plastic seats carve canyons in your but

Oh hell, what's that smell? Did you futt?

How can you be so lame?

How am I supposed to keep my mind on the game?

If you ain't gonna cheer at least you can go get me another beer/

HOMEWORK: Compose Haikus on the theme of prison, nature or memories.

Second Session

Ask for volunteers to share their homework on Haiku poems on a prison or nature theme. If no volunteers, the teacher should be prepared to read some examples:

3 Just be mine

5 To be for all time

3 You'll be fine

Help me, Lord

Comfort my brothers

And bring joy.

This is fun

Dancing in the sun

Time to run

Deal with it

We are the poets

In da house!

Don't forget

Your love is deadly

So kill me

Yes, you can

Then you remember,

No, you can't

5 Here in this prison
7 Yes, there's poetry
5 That would amaze you

We all can express
The thoughts we have in our hearts
And that sets us free

In-car-sir-ate-ted
The birds fly free but not me
Will I disappear?

If I only die
A legacy of lost words
Never to be heard

Acrostic poems: Choose a powerful word or name and write it vertically down the page in capital letters. Then write phrases about that topic starting with each of the capital letters. Here are some suggestions for words for Acrostics: Peace, Earth, Friends, Fun, Music, Pain, Time, Anger, Prison, Faith, Money, Sorrow, or Freedom.

Examples:

People may call us crazy
Only we know from where it flows
Each of us has our own story
Tell the world
Rejoice in your words
Yes you are the poets today and tomorrow.

Just chillin' and killin' time
All I want is outside these walls and wire
I live for the day I walk away
Living free, living wiser, living.

Time, some say is relative
It is no friend or family of mine
My time is what I make it
Everybody knows your life is where you take it.

Missing that woman who gave me life
Only her hugs will do
May we be together Mom, when this is through.

Love every moment
Investigate life's mysteries
Value others
Each day is enough time

Fishing is fun
If you're catching
Sunshine and nature
Having a good time with others or alone
I'm not the best at it
Now I kill only what I can eat
Give me a kayak and a hand line and look out.

Examples: Acrostics on the theme of prison life:

Phone ain't loud enough
Radio reception is weak
If I'm sick then you're sick
Shower stall's too small
Our case manager never comes in
Next week's a world away

Put away, out of sight, out of mind
Rights? You've got to be kidding.
Insane people, angry people, sad sorts
So much time with so little to do
On my days off, I travel
No one knows what it's like

Patience is required
Relentless boredom
Internalizing it all
Seldom hear any laughter
Old ideas shaping our punishment
Negativity through captivity

Please allow me my humanity
Reverse my willful ways
Ignore any ignorance

Save me from myself
Only I can find the answers
Now I have time to think things through

People locked up, locked down
Repeat offenders
Insights unsought
Same stuff, different day
Oh, how I miss my life
Never again, Lord, never again

Paying societal dues
Really would rather be anywhere else
Isolated from friends and family
Sad sometimes beyond hope
Only I can change my world
Now is the only time I have

Finish the phrase poem: Ask each person to finish some or all of the following phrases. They can later edit it and arrange the phrases in any order:

I'm an inmate but...

I've learned to survive by...

I'm motivated by...

I get angry when...

When I'm free I want to...

I've changed my outlook...

I spend a lot of time thinking about...

I've come to appreciate...

Create your own conclusion.

Finish the Phrase poem example:

Do More Than Survive

I'm an inmate but I'm so much more

I'm not the same guy I was before

I've learned to survive

Yes, I'm staying alive

By learning each day

And I take time to pray

I'm motivated by all these people I've met

Good examples or bad, I hope I never forget

I get angry when someone gets in my face

There's already too much drama and stress in this place

When I'm free, I want to make all new friends

And spend some time making amends

I've changed my outlook, learned to stay focused on me

And the kind of man I'll be when I'm free

I spend a lot of time just thinking about

The things that I miss, what I'll do when I'm out

I've come to appreciate the small miracles each day

The sun, the wind, kind words to say

I want to do more than survive

And I'm determined to strive

To love, and to love just being alive.

Rapid Rhyme: This poem sounds like rapping, using multiple internal rhymes. It tends to use short phrases, and the rhythm can vary.

Examples:

Doin' fine

Writing poems to pass the time

We rhyme and we read it

We want it

We need it
Won't wait
To create
Within these walls
We won't call home
We are living inside every poem.

Another example:

Money

Well, you talk about income
I'd sure like some
A little dough, don't you know and we could get down
but there's just not enough green stuff around, we're talkin' money
I've got a coupon, can I win that prize
At your bargain basement computer compromise?
You got a sale I can save on everything I see
Just like the garbage on my home TV
You know I wanna buy it all though it's working me dead
I'm a TV kid with a TV head
Yes, I sit up with my set in the middle of the night
Just to fall asleep by the TV light
Then I wake up in the morning to the news each day
And they say everything's a mess and it'll never go away
And I get deeper in debt brother every day
Money!
Chinkle chankle, I'd like a whole bank full

I'd be so thankful, yea, for some money

Raisin' my rent, my money's spent

I hear there's war in the government, I'm hopin' for a settlement

I don't need napalm, A-bombs or H-bombs, battleships at sea or missiles over me

I'm in love with my life and I'm happy just to live

And if I had money, no, I wouldn't give it to blowin' things up or tearin' things down

Listen children, what's that sound?

Everybody gotta stop what's goin' down with your money, cuz it's your money

We gotta tell those boys that the price of their toys is too high to pay

And everyone, everywhere, everyday needs money

There sure are a lot of rich people I know

Got more than they need but they never let it go

Now, why don't they share some

It's only fair to spare some money for the people, when we're talkin' board and bread

Besides, you can't take it with brother when you're dead

It's only money.

Another example:

Long live liberty!

Yes, liberty through diversity.

We the people

The American masses

The hippies and rich dudes

Pacifists, Polygamists

Rednecks and nudists
Indians and engineers
Tweakers and toddlers

Together, we determine what it means to be
The land of the free

Us athletes and welfare mothers
Old folks and astronauts

Farmers and free thinkers
Cub scouts and drop outs
Prisoners and pioneers

We each make up America the beautiful
And each, in his and her own way

Define and defend
Freedom for all.

And it takes all kinds
All kinds of people
Each unlike any other
Unique so to speak

Expectant mothers
And Black Power brothers
Entertainers and explainers
Teachers and preachers
Street walkers and smooth talkers

Losers and boozers and crack cocaine users
Society twitches with hand me down riches
The deaf, the dumb, the blind: All kinds!

Thugs and muggers
Babes in hip huggers
Bar flies and wise guys
Hipsters and Tripsters

Abusive men who are all push and shove
Women who won't leave them and call that love

Politicians, morticians, Mormons on missions!
Street musicians to please us, lawyers to squeeze us

Bosses who get rich off of other men's sweat
Movie stars to mollify us and help us forget
Police with big sticks
Poets with word tricks
Let's hear it for converts and convicts
It astounds the imagination
How many different minds and kinds of people it takes
to make a world, this world

So let's give thanks to all the men and women
 who lay down their lives in war after war
 no matter what those wars are for.

Give thanks to all those nine-to-fivers

 The late arrivers

 The holocaust survivors

Who keep plugging away

 Who are willing to pay

 For our multiple sins or our marvelous deeds

God bless every soul searching soul in need

 Every man, woman, boy and girl

 Who make this such an interesting world.

Repetition Poems: These poems have a line or phrase that repeats occasionally throughout the poem. It should be a strong sentence that emphasizes an important message of the poem.

Example of a Repetition Poem:

 “It’s all good”

I see folks having fun

Writing

And it’s good

Expressing our thoughts

Our concerns

Ourselves

And that’s good

Sometimes we surprise ourselves

With the ideas that just show up

And that feels good

And if writing
becomes a new tool
for enjoying our lives
that's really good.

Another example with repetition:

Too Much

It's ok to drink
But don't drink too much
Or you may be seen as an alcoholic
Or lose your job
Crash your car
Hit rock bottom

It's ok to think
But don't think too much
Spend all your time worrying
Recycling the same hatreds and fears

It's ok to care
But don't care too much
Lest you lose yourself in others
Spending so much time feeding their needs

That you're starving

It's ok to dream

But don't dream too much

Become lost in fantasy

Moments of imagining

Never touching reality

And it's ok to love

Because you can't love too much

And if you do, no one will mind.

HOMEWORK: Write a repetition poem or two to bring to the next session.

Third Session

Share the repetition poem homework. These poems that have a line or phrase that repeats occasionally throughout the poem. It should be a strong sentence that emphasizes an important message of the poem.

Example of a repetition poem for sharing:

You're quick to laugh

And I like that

You cheer me up

Give of your time

Encourage me to do my best

And I like that

We can enjoy each other's company

Even when it seems there's nothing to do

Being together is all that matters to us

And I like that

And every now and then

You tell me how important our friendship is

And I like that best of all.

Another example of a repetition poem:

Forget Love

You can pray and preach

Bow and chant

Meditate and contemplate

But don't forget love

You can climb mountains

And sit surrounded by bird song breezes

But please, don't walk away from love

You can talk to your friends

e-mail everyone you know

bounce ideas off satellites in space

but don't forget to mention love wins

You can be rich and famous

Envied and pampered

Able to buy a slice of paradise

But my advice is to spend some time looking for the loving thing...

Then sing, dance, sculpt, write and try to create more love

wherever you go

however much you can

no matter what you do

don't forget to love.

Given a Phrase: Use one or some of these phrases in a poem or story. (Before the session, print out the phrases, cut them out and glue each one to a three by five card or a deck of playing cards so you can "deal them out" to the participants.)

I lost my stuff, Passion versus reason, Never ask mom where dad is

Forgive me, My wonderful blunder, Today has been canceled

Here, your turn to hold the piñata, If I knew then what I know now

Hot chocolate, The dandelion in my lawn, My finest moment

My big line, My bad, Hurt me again

I can't and I won't, Pie in the sky, Couch tomatoes

Baby I'm bored, Early morning hair, Dating nightmare

Saying the wrong thing at the right time, Bi-polar relay race

Liver flavored milkshakes, Never wear house shoes to a job interview

A pound of sugar in my coffee, Ta da, What could go wrong?

The first time I loved, When will I slow down? Mud puddle tea

I hope they're listening, Who's watching? Lend me your love

Temptation eyes, Got no friends, Artificial face

Which rule shall we throw out first, Fingernails and a good merlot

What some people believe,	Mopping the parking lot,	Talking in code
Keeping ahead of things,	New paint on a rusty gate,	Just kidding
Some things make no sense,	The revolving door,	Bugs bite, baby
I figured it out,	Heading home,	Broke my wings
On the down low,	That's what they all say,	Promises

Given a phrase example:

Bipolar Relay Race

My life's a chaotic blitz of emotion
From solace to heartache
to paranoid psychosis
I feel hopeless
but I hope that no one will notice
So I hide behind my bipolar diagnosis
But that cute little label
doesn't begin to describe
What I'm really about
or how I feel inside
One second I'm dead
and the next, I'm alive
From the depths of despair
to the top of cloud nine

some days I'm bummed,
the next I'm fine.

Dealt the phrase, "the revolving door":

The Revolving Door

The revolving door to jail:
As we enter we are confronted with many new experiences,
Feelings and emotions
The powers that be go out of their way
To inform the public
That we as criminals are being reformed, rehabilitated
Being prepared to re-enter society
But in reality we are treated like dogs
Left to fend for ourselves
Among personalities of every kind
"If you aren't strong enough to hold it, then it shouldn't belong to you."
That's the basic mentality
In reality, we leave here angry, bitter and broken down
We re-enter society feeling left behind
Victimized with a chip on our shoulder
The war on crime claims that crime is out of control
So more laws are passed, stiffer penalties
All the while more jobs are created by hiring more cops and correctional officers
Crime and the war on it is a great economic stimulator
All the while us so-called criminals are broken down
Un-rehabilitated, released back into society

Set up to be returned through that revolving door to jail.

Free Verse: Free Verse is poetry with no need to worry about rhyme or rhythm. Concentrate on things you feel strongly about, things you personally know well. You can choose a topic or use one or more of the following starting lines.

Examples of starting lines:

I've made some mistakes...

The people I know...

Why get high?

How I'd change things (here or about myself)

Life would be so sweet if...

What I hear around here...

Our inmate code of ethics...

Our inmate economic system... (food trades and Buddy Bars)

Starting line poem example:

Life would be so sweet if love became our priority

No wars

Food shared

Our pledge will be: Enough for all

And on special days, free ice cream

Why not hope for the sick to be healed

The lonely, welcomed

The lost, found

And music, all kinds of music

The gift of the angels

Less work and more play

People meeting people from all cultures

Traveling to see earth's wonders

to marvel at the wondrous sights

Yes, that would be sweet alright.

Another starting line poem example:

Some Mistakes, Indeed

I've made some mistakes

Lying and not learning

Losing the trust of others

Lusting, not loving

Wasting time
Time and time again
Loving too little
Not thinking before speaking
Not taking advantage of the strength of my youth
Not seeing more places
Meeting new people
Making new friends
Not realizing the body can break
Eating myself into ill health
Not trusting the Lord to lead
I've made some mistakes, indeed

HOMEWORK: Create another poem from one of the starting lines or a line of your choice.

Fourth Session

Share homework from previous session, poems created from a starting line.

Deal Me In: Write phrases on cards, (3 x 5 or an actual deck). I printed the phrases, cut out the lines I liked and pasted them on Star Wars cards. Shuffle the stack. Each person then picks a few cards and must use at least two or three of the phrases or words in a short poem or story. There is a long list of phrases I used which you can pick and choose from at the end of the last session. (Page 122????) I encourage you to make up your own words or phrases for your deck. You can easily focus the tone of the poems by the words you choose. Are they positive and uplifting, or are they about expressing anger and frustration?

on the wrong side of night

butterfly barrage

shoveling the heavy snow of discontent

lions

as blindly loyal as a good dog

hit the big go button

the land of the lost

I must sleep

ablaze

limitless

threaten me with a good time

skyscraper

you'll never win if you don't play

free within

peace instilled

heartfelt words

words of wisdom

like diamonds

better than gold

precious

sense of purpose

spirit

heaven sent

hang tough

take it in stride

one step at a time

grateful

sincerely yours

purpose driven

new start

every step

hard knocks

struggles define us

character

prioritize

give it to me

under lock and key

nothing else matters

time is of the essence

baby girl

in the still of the night

jaded heart

incognito

tornado

loving angel

think outside the box

stretches

sparring with sin

watch what you say

unconditional love

faith is the key

life's a lesson

always remember

there is always hope

take be back

always free

unstoppable

emotional imprisonment

ethnic

bound by honor

love or fear

respect

family first

unity

put in a request

I don't care

what happens now

on the run

think before you act

take it easy

keep it to yourself

speak no evil

sons

don't tell

silently singing

main street

Example: Dealt the phrases: "I'm different", "no harm", and "exercise."

I'm different

 Though we're all unique

I have no filter when I speak

 I speak my mind and I think that's fine

I love to talk but what is worse, not just converse

I like to stir the pot

 And though it's not nice to play with people in such a way

 What can I say?

 I'm different.

 So please don't take offense with my nonsense

 I mean no harm to you

 It's just something I like to do

And everyone has their story to tell

 I love to listen and then give 'em hell

 Exercise for the mind is not my idea of a waste of time.

Example: Dealt the phrases: 'got more dreams than stars', 'talents' and 'invisibility factor'

Got more dreams than stars

I've been famous

In my mind

Lots of times

Got more money than is good for me

Talents I have yet to discover

I'm a phenomenon just waiting to happen
Waiting for that big break
Waiting to go viral

Remember my name
And you can say you knew me when

If not for a certain invisibility factor
I would be flooded with offers
Showered with praise
Oh, yes,
These are my Good Old Days

Example: Dealt the phrases: 'on the wrong side of the night', 'shoveling the heavy snow of discontent', and 'land of the lost'

When
It's always when
I wake up on the wrong side of the night
Deprived of light
Buried by cold
I begin shoveling the heavy snow of discontent
To free myself from this land of the lost
One positive thought at a time
Free my mind
With each deep breath
That defies death

With limitless prayer
I shine
Illuminate my inner shrine
And it works
Works every time and I'm free
Works for me.

Example: Dealt the phrases: 'heartfelt', 'one step at a time', 'take it in stride',

Will anyone hear these heartfelt words?
Precious to me alone?
I reach out one step at a time
Confide
Take it in stride
Grateful for every heaven sent breath
Every moment left of my life
Fill me to overflowing with words
Words of encouragement and hope
Spirited discussion and love
Love, like diamonds, enriches us all.

The poet as someone else: Write in the voice of another person. Be the voice of a relative, a famous person, someone you admire or use a famous quote.

Example (a kid):

I'm a hopeless kid

But I bet I make it somehow
If life is for the living
I want to live mine now

Example (a thug):

Watch where you step
You little shit
Watch what you say
A little bit
Don't step on my self esteem
Jelly bean
'cause I can be mean.

Lines entwined/Poem from a quote: Use a quote to inspire a poem or included in the poem. Here are a few phrases for ideas:

It was the best of times' it was the worst of times...

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness...

There's no place like home.

It is better to have loved and lost...

Your caring for others is the measure of your greatness...

You get fifteen minutes of fame...

All you need is love...

A person who never made a mistake never tried something new... Einstein

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change... Stephen Hawking

Every man dies. Not every man really lives. William Wallace

Life must be lived as play. Plato

A picture is worth a thousand words. Napoleon Bonaparte

If we don't end war, war will end us. H. G. Wells

Give peace a chance...

Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them? Abraham Lincoln

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. Mark Twain

Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before. Mae West

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company. Mark Twain

Live aloha...

I knew it was illegal...

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you. C.G. Jung

When you go into court you are putting your fate into the hands of twelve people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty. Norm Crosby

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything. Mark Twain

We are all in this alone. Lily Tomlin

The trouble with life in the fast lane is that you get to the other end in an awful hurry. John Jensen

Eat as much as you like...just don't swallow it. Steve Burns

It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers. James Thurber

There is more to life than increasing its speed. Mahatma Gandhi

Life is what happens while you are making other plans. John Lennon

The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits. Unknown

He who laughs, lasts. Mary Pettibone Poole

What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us. Oliver Wendell Holmes

Why do writers write? Because it isn't there. Thomas Berger

Poem from a quote example:

“The smallest good deed is better than the grandest intention.”

Goes without mention

That something done

Has more merit

Than just talking about it

Unless it’s done wrong

I belong to those who think

“by their fruits you’ll know them”

What gets done

Is number one

Though thinking it through is a must

If you never ‘do it’, it’s just so much talk.

Another example of using a quote:

“Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?” Abraham Lincoln

Am I not
Destroying my enemies
When I make friends of them?

I don't want my enemies
Dead
I was taught to love them
Instead
So Jesus did say
Though war seems reluctant to pass away
When peace is everything we need
Perhaps it's less hate and more greed

Business decisions and security
Mad over money
And it's all me, me, me

I'd rather follow Lincoln's line
And take all the world as friends of mine

Poem from a quote example:

“To lose your troubles, help others with theirs.”

I know it's true

It worked for me
It could work for you
It doesn't have to be some grand event
To move your heart
You just have to try
You just have to start

And even if it means nothing to you
Those you help won't complain
And even if they do
You may begin to notice
Your troubles are few

HOMEWORK: Ten Lines Maximum, write a letter poem to share. It could be to a loved one, the parole board, to yourself, to the old gang, to God, to a famous person or to someone you admire.

Example:

Dear friends
I blew it
I knew it was illegal
But didn't care
No, it's not fair
But I'm in here
And the world's out there

And I've blown it
I should have known it
But it seemed worth it at the time
It must have
I wasn't down and out
That isn't what this is all about

But if I blow it
I know it will end up with me back here
Where the world is far
And can't hear tears

Sincerely,

Your behind bars brother

Fifth Session

Share the letter poem homework.

Example:

Dear Lord

Who art in heaven

Zip code cloud nine,

I just wanted to write

To thank you for my life

For all it has been and can be

And I hope you're not mad at me

I know we haven't spoken in a while

But lately, praying is not my style

Still, I honestly wish I knew you better

And I would appreciate getting a letter from you

Informing me exactly what you'd like me to do

But until I do, I guess I'll just continue...

Faithfully yours.

The Prodigal Son

An exercise in simile: Similes are just comparisons that begin with the words 'like' or 'as'. (It's hot as hell in here. He's dumb as dirt. She's crazy like a fox. He's built big like a bull.)

Title: "I Wanna Love You Like That (or something similar).

Begin with Introductory statement about love:

I wanna tell you that I'll love you a lot.

Next, list things that take a long time:

I want to love you a long time....

Like how long it takes in line at a DMV

Or for glaciers to melt,

or the ages it takes for a universe to spit out galaxies

As long as it takes a mountain to wash to the sea

I wanna love you like that and longer

Things that are hard:

I want to love you hard like carbon steel fresh from the forge

Harder than all the granite in the continental divide

Hard like calculus or physics,

A wall of diamonds protecting your feelings

I want you to feel that and often

In a wild way:

I wanna love you wild
Like a feral child
Like mustangs stampeding free across deserts
Like dolphins at playvor butterflies that meet on the wind
Rivers running down mountains, roller coaster wild
Like laughter that makes it hard to breathe
I wanna love you wilder than that.

The things people love:

I wanna love you like Grandpa loves whiskey
Like teens love their smart phones
Like kids love candy
Like comedians love laughter
The way parents love their kids
That kind of love.

All kinds of heavy:

I wanna love you heavy
Like a freight train on your foot
Like guilt on your shoulders with sprinkles of regret
Like a load of sorrow for the sins of the world
Heavy like thinking about thinking with nothing to show for it
Heavy like it really matters that you let me love you like that

Things that are hot:

Love you hot as noon day, desert sun
Melt me like ice cream, I run
Sticky fingers, I'm undone by your love.

Things that are sweet:

I wanna love you like hot chocolate kisses after playing in the snow
Write your name across the sky in cotton candy clouds
Yeah, I wanna love you like that.

Life's beautiful things:

I wanna love you like the blessing rain that lands on my eyelashes.
The sun on my face while walking in the woods
A cool breeze or a cold beer
Like every time I first see you and my heart moves

Concluding statement:

I want to eat you up like bacon and bagels
because I love you more than similes can say
so let me, so love me, let me love you a lot
and I'll be all that you need
and you'll be all that I've got.

Another example:

'Til Pigs Fly

I wanna love you for as long as it takes to count all the stars in the sky
As long as it takes to wait 'til pigs fly
I wanna love you hard like a diamond in the rough
Like a full moon sky and still that's not enough
I wanna love you wild like horses at pasture
Fast like a Lamborghini or even faster
I wanna love you like a hustler loves the game
Like Houdini loved his chains
Yup, my love's the same
I wanna love you crazy like a patient off their meds
Like the voices in my head and the monsters beneath the bed. Crazy
Love you like the sun after the rain, like jumping out of a plane
Eat you up like a luscious last piece of cake, like grilled onions and steak
A hunger I will not fake
I wanna love you like flowers in the morning
The rain when it starts pouring
The beach in the afternoon
Like the sun, the stars, the moon
I don't care where or why or how
I just wanna love you now

Another example:

I love you

Like birds love sky
Like fish the sea
Like everything and everyone loves food
Love you hot like lava making land
Slow like the coral grows, becoming sand
Love you hard like surfing a huge wave
Love you easy like hanging with friends
This love never ends
I will eat you up
Like a Hawaiian plate or a home cooked meal
Like fresh apple pie and ice cream
This is my dream
To make you feel like I feel'
When I see a rainbow from afar
The sun setting in the ocean
Like wishing on a star
Love you long and hard and hot and delicious
And don't forget the wishes
Love you so much I'll even do the dishes

Another example:

I wanna love you for the longest time
Like a classic car can catch my eye
I wanna understand you

Like archeologists puzzling over the pyramids
Love you like stars in the sky
Birds on the wing
Mountains with trees
Wanna love your steady
Like a 1957 Chevy
Full throttle, nice and steady
My love, I will devour you
Like pork chops smothered in mushroom gravy
Lip lickin' good
Love you like this
I'd go out of my way
Risk like and death to save you
To save us
What we are and can be
Love you like diamonds
Knowing your value
Always wanting to look on you
Be faithful to me and my loyalty is yours

Can I quote you on that?: Copy the following quotes and hand out. Leave the back side of the handout clear for writing a poem inspired by or using the quote in the poem.

Change is the only constant.

Generosity with strings attached is not generosity.

Pick battles big enough to matter and small enough to win.

Praise loudly but blame softly.

You can complain about your life, or change it.

Love wins.

Tolerance of diversity might save the twenty-first century.

The smallest good deed is better than the grandest good intention.

The world we have created is a product of our thinking: it cannot be changed without changing our thinking. Albert Einstein

Ideals are like the stars: we never reach them, but like the mariners of the sea, we chart our course by them. Charles Schultz

Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence.

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right. Henry Ford

Question authority: it keeps freedom working.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

To err is human, to forgive, divine.

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal to throw it at someone else: you are the one who gets burned.

Never engage in a battle of wits with an unarmed person. Unknown

Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever. Napoleon

There is only one thing about which I am certain and that is that there is very little about which one can be certain. W. Somerset Maugham

I sometimes make the mistake of thinking anything really matters. Curt Rhodes

Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers. Socrates (400 B.C.)

The purpose of life is a life of purpose. Robert Byrne

Where do I find the time for not reading so many books? Karl Kraus

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal. T.S. Eliot

Treat others as you would have them treat you.

The first thing we must teach you is to walk alone.

The greatest power a person possesses is the power to choose.

A job worth doing is worth doing well.

Little steps make little mountains.

Knowledge is power.

If you have nothing nice to say, say nothing.

Deeds count, not just words. As the Chinese say: Talk does not cook rice.

When it comes to friendship, the trick isn't finding the right friend; it's being the right friend.

Mexican proverb: If the fish had not opened its mouth, it would not have been caught.

Education should teach us how to think, not what to think.

It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end.

Love wins example:

Just Say It Then

Just want to say

If you don't mind

Not to offend, mind you

Or appear politically incorrect

But I feel it must be said

And if no one else is going to do it

I'm more than willing

To step up to the plate

So to speak

So bear with me

For even though it seems obvious to some
It's worth hearing again and again
So I'm proud to say
Proud and honored to relate this simple truth
That covers a cacophony of sins

Love wins.

Quote-inspired example:

“I sometimes make the mistake of thinking anything matters.” Curt Rhodes

Yes, you are free to think
 Nothing matters
Such is your right,
 Even if I think you're wrong
But if nothing matters,
 Life is a washed out watercolor of all grays
If nothing matters,
 What awful things we will allow
If nothing matters,
 There is no God

It may not matter what matters most;
 Father, Son or Holy Ghost
 But some things must
 Or we are just
 A waste of dust.

HOMEWORK: Write more poems inspired by the sheet of quotes given.

Sixth Session

Share the poems from a quote given for homework. Participants can always pass, or read any poem they've written at any time.

Example:

Quote: "The meaning of life is to give life meaning."

What I mean to say is...

The big thought for today is...

We give life its meaning.

We interpret and analyze it.

Figure some things out then forget and begin again

Even what's important changes over time

Money, travel, games, only one thing remains

We do the choosing

Experience the winning and losing

And always wanting more

But what is it for?

What does it all mean?

All this life between death and birth?

Without love, what's it worth?

A Change of Pace Drama Games: Try an acting exercise for a change. It's called I Pass. Participants are told to pass a phrase around the circle. The words must always remain the same, but the way they say it (tone, mood, pitch) can vary. Anyone too shy to try it can just say "I pass" each time their turn comes around.

Some phrase suggestions.

You look marvelous.

This is for you. (mime what 'this' is)

That's the best thing I've heard all day.

Whatever.

I've got a pain, right here.

Are you going to eat that dessert?

You don't have to be crazy but it helps.

I'm in my happy place, do not disturb

You are a sight for sore eyes

I like the way you think.

Go ahead, make my day

Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying

I think, therefore I am.

I'm happily married (unmarried).

Been there, done that. (got the T-shirt)

Don't kiss and tell.

My faith sustains me.

I'm not really in the mood for this right now.

A conversation of Questions?: Try to hold what sounds like a normal conversation but it's only questions.

Example:

How ya doin'?

Why do you ask?

Didn't you hear people are saying you got written up?

Why should I worry?

Are they gonna put you in the hole?

Is it a crime just to disagree with an ACO?

What did you argue about?

Can you keep a secret?

Do I look like the kind of guy who would rat someone out? etc

Circle story: Around a circle, each person adds a line to the story topic. Here are some possible starting lines:

There's going to be a celebration when I get out of here...

If you really want to rehabilitate a person...

I like getting out in nature...

You think you've had it rough...

This place is no Disneyland...

My kind of heaven...

I'm a good poet...

Here are some rules...

What my better half tells me...

You know what I miss eating the most?

Circle Poem/Story Example:

I'm a good poet, well, not just good...

And 'great' doesn't quite cover it...

Outstanding' comes close...

As does 'magnificent', though I prefer 'unparalleled'...

Most any exceptional comment is always appreciated...

Though I don't need others singing my poetic praises
to maintain my sense of competent accomplishment...

Frankly, words themselves fail to adequately describe the poetic heights
and satiric success I have achieved, or so I believe...

Which is in itself ironic and a paradox since words themselves
are the very tools I employ to express my thoughts, my emotions and memories...

It's just how I describe life's mysteries...

How I analyze, and categorize, and dramatize everything that catches my interest...

And though, it's true, I don't need the praise, yet, I humbly accept it...

It's a necessary result of the well-deserved greatness on my part...

Let's face it, poetry is simply my art.

Another circle poem example:

My kind of heaven...

 Began with love...

 Right here on earth....

So, I'm in no rush to go because I'm already there.

Don't have a hankerin' for a harp or angel wings...

 I'm much more happy with simple things...

Family and friends, to jam and sing...

 To greet the day and all it brings...

So heaven must wait...

 Before I Pearly Gate.

Someone else's voice: Write in the voice of a parent or guardian in your early years. Or write in the voice of someone you admire, what are they saying to you? Write in the voice of your own private shrink. Write in the voice of some famous person, living or dead.

Example: A Kid

Grown up?

 An impossible feat.

No one ever really grow up.

We're still kids

 Playing different games

 Still harboring the same fears.

I've been growing up for years

 I wish I could start growing down

 I like those younger games better.

Another example: The Poetry Professor

In relating to poetry,

whether you find it confusing...or not

You must see it and feel it, like a shivering hot

From the top of one's head, the words tumble down

Crumpled and broken and twisted around

Some slumping or soaring from tongue to mind's ear

A rhyme is developing, or so I do fear

Confined to a pattern? That's a waste of good time

Though darn it, the poem continues to rhyme

Now, let's have none of that. It's time to be free

And if you're following all this nonsense, you'll undoubtedly be

Amused and confused, yes it's all clear as mud
Like a curtained metaphor night that falls with a thud

So much for symbolism, but keep it in mind
It's not hard to write poems, if you don't try to rhyme.

Hyperbole: Write poems with extreme exaggeration. Show off, brag, tell some tall tales and take it to the limit.

Hyperbole example:

EXAGGERATION: It's a figure of speech,
An extravagant overstatement used to illustrate a point,
Not just to drive it home, more like
Hitting the proverbial nail on the head with a jack hammer.

To use hyperbole properly is sort of like
beating the dead horse until it comes back to life
and then killing it again!

Hyperbole is the caricature of a villain who just won't stop screaming,
"I'll get you if it's the last thing I ever do!
The evil genius always believes his own hyperbole
He lives in lies
Believe me, you should take my word on this
I know what I'm talking about
In fact, I'm an expert in the field

No one can exaggerate better no matter how hard they try.

I have got this down people.

Folks like Bill Gates come to me for computer tech and money management.

Trump has my cell phone on speed dial for advice on wheelin' and dealin'

Beyonce wants career counseling and the privilege of playing my parties

Dustin Hoffman wants me in his next movie.

Even God sends me prayers.

Have your people call my people and we'll schedule some face time

It's the least I can do as the best thing there is. I'm a wiz.

HOMEWORK: You have your choice of three challenges. Write a poem inspired by a song. Write a poem that uses repetition of phrases for emphasis or list some of the little things that happen in a prison setting that bring you joy.

Seventh Session

Share the poems inspired by a song or other homework suggestions.

Example: Inspired by the song “Every Breath You Take” by the Police.

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,

But by the moments that take our breath away

Moments like births

Sunrises and sets

The ocean’s awesome power

First love butterflies

Roller coasters and zip lines

A child’s love for you

Beautiful music well played

Voices in song

Massive mountains and

Fields a-flower

I could go on and on

And indeed

That is the plan.

Another example: A song inspired by Beatles’ song titles.

Coo coo ka chu I’m the walrus, coo coo ka chu I’m the man on the moon

Hey, hey, hey, who’s the eggman? Yea, yea, yea, we’re the Beatles

We’re the kids with some tunes,

I’m a nowhere man, I’m a fool on a hill

Hey, you could sing along with the song if you only will
It's such an easy tune comin' 'round, 'round, 'round, 'round,
'round like the moon is, and the tune is love, love everybody, love

Help me to imagine another day in a life
Hello John, goodbye John, it's been a hard day's night
Well, you've been here, there, and everywhere,
Now you've been yesterday
Come together with a little help from my friends I'd say
I'm happy just to dance with you, to twist and shout
I wanna hold your hand, I wanna be your man,
Well, we could work it out

Love, everybody, love everyone, love, everybody love.
'cause in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.

God or no god, your thoughts on the subject: Write about your faith or why you choose not to believe. What do you think life after death could be like?

Example:

Imagine me dead
and by some struck of luck
I find myself in heaven
Not wanting to waste any time,
I go straight to Jesus:

I've got a few things I've been waiting to ask you,

like, did you have to die like that?

“I didn’t want to”

What about the virgin birth thing?

“They stretched things a bit when they wrote the book.”

The resurrection?

“Does it really matter?”

But, the miracles?

“Exaggerations.”

No walking on water, feeding the thousands, raising the dead?

“Sorry, but there is one thing that went well.

I told people to love one another...

and when they do that, miracles happen.”

Another Example:

God,

The more I look

The more I find

Awaken my heart

Soothe my mind

Heighten my joy

Lower my pride

Be not...out there.

Be here, inside.

Another Example:

So many Religions,

Theologies,

Paths to the divine

And perhaps only one God

Who one day decided to divide up into pieces of living stardust

In order to experience the universe more first hand

How grand it is to have hands to raise in praise

And to create

To love and hate and hope and despair

And all that swims in the sea or rides the air

could be the Creator divided into pieces of stardust

God sparks of light

God within and God without

The whispered prayer, the joyous shout

The rising sun, the fragrant flowers

Sweet melody and silent hours

So much of God in so many ways

Seek to find and fill each day with love

God divided...and yet one

Consider the possibility of God's will done

As it is in flowers and fields

Earth and sea

Pieces of God in you and me

Perhaps in death all parts unite

to fill the universe with light

I could be wrong but I may be right

The Bible on love: What's your take on these ideas? Do you agree or disagree. What other kinds of love are there and what sort is most important.

God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy and love others as well as you love yourself. There are no higher commandments. Mark 12:29

I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge, and I may have faith so great I can move mountains, but even with all this, if I do not have love, then I am nothing. First Corinthians 13:2

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. First John 4:16

Starting Line Poem: Create a poem from one of the following starting lines. It can rhyme or be non-rhyming (Free Verse).

How to 'do time'.

Prison's little surprises.

"I think, therefore, I am. And I think..."

To keep free...

Example:

“How To Do Time”

Keep positively positive

Read all kinds of things, great books of philosophy

And the comics. Take every class you can

So you can type, create, analyze, and organize

Write letters, stories, journals, poems, for the fun of it

No harm in taking in some TV or a movie,

If can, and make plans.

Forgive mistakes, yours and others

And while you're at it, spend time in prayer or meditation

For a change of pace, review and relive parts of your cherished memories,

moments you enjoyed in the past

Be employed, however humble

Occasionally be overjoyed with great or small things

Give your imagination wings

Visualize what you really want and it is more likely to happen

Think in ways that keep you happy, strong and healthy

And find ways to have some fun. Joke. Laugh. Sing.

Isn't it all in how you look at a thing?

You Might Be a Convict If...: Have everyone finish the phrase, “You may be a convict if...”
Inspired by Jeff Foxworthy's comedy routine: You may be a redneck if...

Foxworthy's Examples:

You might be a redneck if...you wake up in the morning already dressed for work.

If you whistle at women in church.

If your coffee table is also a cooler.

If you've ever made a Christmas wreath...from a tire.
If you ever cut your grass ...and found a car.
If you've ever been too drunk to fish.
If your uncle Billy Joe Bob died from pissin' on an electric fence.
If the last thing your ex-wife said to you was, "It's either me or them dogs!"
If your truck breaks down on the side of the road and you take the plates and just leave it there.

Prison examples:

You know you're an inmate when you can't wait to eat
When you spend most of your day in bed
When you stand in line over and over
When colored pencils pass for eye shadow
If your alarm clock shouts "Head Count!"
When you wake up and realize where you are and its nowhere
When you have no idea what anyone's first name is.
When anyone close to you, you call 'Bunkie'
When blanket laundry day means a month has passed
When toothpaste tastes like candy and passes for deodorant and hair gel
Where paper is worth more than gold
When you usually eat celery, cabbage, carrots and onion stew
When you'll never look at bread the same way
When your pads come wrapped in newspaper and you use them to mop the floor
When you always have to wear a bra, underwear and clothes that don't match
If modesty is not in your vocabulary
When you stare at a covered window wondering what you could see
When you can't self-medicate and your daily agenda is dictated to you
When you've memorized the sound of the food cart
When you make cake out of bread, cocoa powder and buddy bars

When they're always calling out "Meds!" "Library!" "Work line!" "Grab your doors!"

When you use butter for lip gloss, pluck your eyebrows with a string and use tea bag tags to floss

When you 'bird bath' in your cell where there's only two flushes in an hour

When you go to bed hungry

When you need medication to sleep even if you don't know what it's called

When you're dying to hear someone call your name and hope you're not in trouble

When the women next to you start looking good

When you put pudding on your bread and call it a doughnut

If you tell time by the meal

If your guards are more miserable than you

If you will never wear brown or green again

If you put rice in milk

If you have bits of plastic comb stuck in your piercings

If you can't remember what your wrist looked like without a white band on it.

If you're in lock down

If you read by the light that comes through the door

If church comes to you

If you finally find religion.

You know you're in prison if someone else controls the television

You read more than anything else

You're standing for headcount about five times a day

You've got a Bunkie who snores and grinds his teeth

You wake up staring at the toilet a foot from your face

You learn to clear your plate no matter what you've got to eat

When there's no such thing as snacks

When you look forward to commissary day

You can't do whatever you want

You could be strip-searched at any time

If you can't leave

If you're fearful of what may happen when you leave
You start to hope, contemplate the rope and fear the slip of the soap.
You look forward to any chance to see your loved ones

Make a song: Song lyrics are another form of poetry. If you are musically inclined or if one of the inmates is, turn their poems to songs.

What I Got For You Blues

Ain't no love. No, there ain't no love
Ain't no love like the love I got for you

I tell you pretty woman, I never felt like this before
and I like the way it feels, and I wanna love you more
So grab hold of me and you're gonna see
What your man can do
Come on darlin' let me close to you
Cuz there ain't no love like the love I got for you.

I want to turn you on, maybe turn you 'round
You're the hottest tamale this hombre ever found
The very first time, yea, I knew you were mine
All those things you do
Sweet lovin' woman, you know it's true
Cuz there ain't no love like the love I got fo

“Two Fathers' Love”

The Lord has blessed me: a bit of heaven from above
The gift of my two daughters, whom I truly love
Like the love of our Father, they love me for me
No matter what my flaws, they see past my infirmities

Chorus: I will always love you. I will always care
I think of you when I can't be there
You're everything to me
And you will always be, forever mine
Forever mine, forever mine

They don't hold me for my wrongs, but love me as I am
Time to be a better father and be a better man
So give me the strength Lord, to do right by their side
You wouldn't have given them to me
If you didn't want me in their life.

I will always love you. I will always care
I think of you when I can't be there
You're everything to me
And you will always be, forever mine
Forever mine, forever mine

HOMEWORK: Pick from these three homework challenges of write a poem on a topic of your own choosing.

1. Come up with more ideas to include in the "You may be a convict if..."
2. What were your favorite things when you were a kid?
3. Give seven examples (similes) of what a broken heart is like.

Eighth Session

Share the homework: “You may be a convict if...”

You may be a convict if the clang of bars is as normal as the feel of grass under your feet.

If you can't spell 'convict.'

If you walk through a cafeteria thinking “Are you gonna eat that?”

If your main outfit has zebra stripes.

If you've got your social security number tattooed on your arm.

If you live in a bathroom. (or there's a toilet by the bed)

You may be a convict if you know what, “Clear the wing!” means.

If you hear a CO call your last name.

If all your belongings can fit in a trash bag.

If your toothbrush does more than just brush teeth.

You may be a convict if you've memorized your prison number.

If you tie the ends of your sheets when you make your bed.

If you wash your socks in the shower.

If you sneak coffee back from chow.

If you use the bible pages to roll smokes.

If you work out all the time and all you need is a trash bag.

You may be a convict if you're trying to have someone send \$10 outside money.

If you clean everything with shampoo.

If you still write letters.

If you've ever smuggled bread.

If you still fight over what channel to watch on TV.

You may be a convict if your grocery list is just snacks.

If the mailman comes and you ask about 'requests.'

If you wave your hand in the air when you want to use the phone.

You may be a convict if you trade your rice for chicken.

If you clean your home on your knees.
If you max out and don't wanna go home.
You may be a convict if you pee sitting down.
If your phone calls are all collect.
If you shower in your boxers.
If you ask permission to go to the bathroom.
If you can't do what you want.

Share poems with similes (comparisons) describing a broken heart.

A broken heart is like a night with no stars
Or going to the prom with your mom

It's a shattered window that lets in the cold
A world with no smiles or children's laughter

The sound of old love songs
played through blown out speakers

The taste of spoiled milk with burnt toast
The tears of teens on homeless city streets

A guitar with no strings
A fever everyone fears to touch

Oh yes, a broken heart can hurt that much

Share poems from students, teacher, and/or selected poets.

She is...

She is sunny and funny
Svelte and hot
But let me tell you what she's not
She's not mean, not vicious
Not cruel
She's delicious
She's not selfish or shallow
Not nasty or naughty
Not cunning or caustic
Not high-brow or haughty
She's not pushy
Not greedy
Not nerdy
Not needy
She's not old but not young
She won't tease me, won't deceive me
And if I'm lucky, she'll never leave me

Share poems about being a kid:

When I was a kid
I saw the whole world with eyes wide
There were holes to climb down
Boats to be sailed
'cross this earthly heaven of Alaska
Woods to run through and forts to be built
Nature provided the playground
And though now I've grown up

I could still grow down
To relearn all those ways
To return to the days
Of happiness chased and found.

Seven Ways to See Something: Describe a person or event in just seven unique ways.

Example:

“Seven Ways to Look at an Eagle”

A living, flying symbol of my nation home
This magnificent, majestic creature of a benevolent Creator
Pine-perched watcher of the morning light
A predatory raptor soaring over the sea
White head and tail built to sail the sky
A high pitched communicating commander of an island forest
Streaking between towering pines all the fun of flight

Writing for Kids: Write a poem or story you think kids would like.

Example (teenager):

I'm a hopeless teenager
But I'll make it somehow
Life is for living
And I'm going to live mine now

Another example of a poem for kids:

Excuses, Excuses

Mom, I can't go to school and take my test
I think I better stay home and rest
Cuz I think I've got gangrene and malaria
And the mongoose mumps
The futts and cuts and mother goose bumps
My teeth are tight, my tongue is dry
And I can't see color through my right eye
My toes turned green and my knees are blue
It might be the Vesuvius bug or Tasmanian flu
My lymph nodes are swollen up twice their size
And when I burp, I cross my eyes
I gasp, I giggle, I sneeze, I cough
I think my belly button's falling off
My ears hurt when I move my head
And I think my liver's lost or dead
My neck is sore, my foot bone's busted
And when it rains, my hair gets rusted
My elbow's crooked, my back is sore
I can't find my heart beat anymore
My brain is broke, my tummy's turned
I skinny dipped and my buns got burned
My temperature is one-oh-five
It's a wonder that I'm still alive

I've got psychosis neurosis and depressive confusion
Delusions, contusions and optical conclusions
My back bone pains me when I breathe or blink
I'm going deaf and my nose hairs stink
I'm hearing voices and seeing double
And my rheumatism's giving me trouble
I told my mom, I've got lots more excuses
if you'd care to stay
But she just smiled and walked away
Saying, "what a shame, oh, and by the way
I bet you forgot today is Saturday."

Another kid's example:

"Things I Don't Know"

I don't know how the leopard got his spots.
I haven't touched a python tied in knots.

I've never seen a camel laugh,
Or a sad giraffe

I've heard the wild geese cry,
But I don't know the reason why.

I've never been up close to any kind of bear,
But if one should come along, I'm getting out of there

I've never seen a blue whale, the biggest creature in the sea.
I've never slept with wolves and that's alright with me.

I've never seen a tiger, except in a magazine,
Though I'd like to pet one, I've heard they can be mean.

I'd never shake hands with a gorilla.
I guess I'm just not that brave.

And when I see dangerous animals in the zoo,
I usually just wave.

I've ridden a pony, a horse, and even a mule.
Been cat scratched and drenched in doggie drool.

I've had lots of cats and dogs
And my fair share of fire-flies and frogs.

I've stomped on bugs of all shape and size,
But draw the line at butterflies.

I've been chased by a bunch of bees.
Seen lots of birds nesting in lots of trees.

I've caught some fish and I've let some go.
I've seen some sort of tracks in fresh fallen snow.

Hiking or camping or nature shows: it doesn't matter how,
You gotta check out nature's surprises. Do it now.

Questions: Take the following list, cut and paste onto cards. Each poet picks or is dealt a card. That question is the inspiration for a poem, a list, or a paragraph.

Who are you and what makes you, “you?”

How’s your outlook on life?

What are some of your fondest memories?

What do you want?

What are your treasures?

What are your talents?

What are your dreams and goals and favorite things to do?

What bothers you?

What would you like to be doing in the future?

What are your accomplishments so far?

What is your purpose in life?

What would you like to be doing after death?

Who are the people you hold close in your heart?

What are some mistakes you've made?

What things would you like to change about yourself?

How do you treat others?

How do you play?

What cause can you get behind?

What are your fears?

What makes you laugh or brings you joy?

What were your favorite things when you were a kid?

What music do you listen to and why?

What's your opinion of your government?

What might have happened differently, those roads not taken, had you made other choices?

Where do you find peace and time for reflection?

Do you have meaningful work and if not, what's your ideal job?

Who are your heroes or mentors?

What does “Freedom” mean to you?

How is your physical and mental health?

Do you feel the world is improving or a mess and why?

What excuses do you tell yourself to help you get by?

How do you feel about yourself?

What do you find beautiful?

What would you like to tell everyone?

What questions do you want answered?

Who are your heroes? Example:

My heroes?

I keep ‘em close

Talkin’ real close

Everywhere I go

Can’t shake ‘em

Don’t want to

I’d lose my mind

It was gone for days last time

A hard thing to find

They see the world through my eyes

They're my friends

Real friends

They understand me

I'd follow them wherever

But not be misled

My friends, my heroes

Are all in my head

HOMework: Answer one or more of the questions above for the next session. It can be poetic, a story, or an essay.

Ninth Session

Share poems inspired by questions.

Example: Do you feel the world is improving or a mess and why?

Is Armageddon gonna get us?

History may play us for fools and not end at all

Though it might very well wither away

Under clouds of loose atoms

Of a nuclear nature

Or the Earth could lose the gravitational

Tug of war with celestial sisters

Or the Maranatha Man might enter stage left

(thank you Jesus)

Pollution could be the ultimate solution

To earth's bad case of... humans

Heading steadily toward crowd out

At the global dinner table

Or more moral decay paving the way

to scientifically controlled and created

Nifty new diseases

Or things could get real cold or too hot

We could piss off the wrong flying saucer

The sun could grow too big or love too small

It could end in a bang or a whimper

Or it might not end at all

And we'd be left holding the bag

Circle Poem: In a group, each person adds a line to a poem. Try to make it sound like only one author, not a conversation.

Example:

Heaven may be filled with sinners
But when you're with God you become renewed
Every morning's a renewal of faith
And Lord knows we have all sinned sometime of another
Harmed a sister or brother
Disappointed our mother
Lusted or lied
Still, I yearn to dine at the Lord's table
Whoever is by my side
There upon the wind of time
Without a worry on my mind
Forgiven
What wonders in eternity
Love, light and happiness to find
Circle poem example:

Another example: Life's Greatest

Seeing
Disagreeing
Fleeing like a sparrow, the world to see
Mountains to the east, the west
When you're tired, rest
Feeling feisty, jest
When unsure, test

When I am myself, best
Where are we going with this?
See life and know you are blessed.

For What It's Worth: Mention one or more of these values in a poem or story: Adventure, Meaningful Work, Change and Variety, Nature, Close Relationships, Pleasure, Creativity, Public Service, Self-motivation, Knowledge, Humor, Wisdom, Integrity, Excitement, Serenity, Freedom, Friendships, Love, Peace, Hope.

Example: Love

I'm a poem about love.
Well, I'm not, but this is:
Will this be followed by a quiz?
A poem about love
and love's crazy phases
and phrases
and prolonged gazes.

What I mean to say is,
What I'm trying to convey is,
The big thought for today is:
Love is more than a dream
More than part of the rhyme scheme,

but why should I philosophize
in a poem you won't bother to memorize
be we lovers or friends.

The point of this poem is,

unlike this poem,

love never ends.

Freedom example:

We the people

The American masses

The hippies, rich dudes

Preachers and pacifists

Rednecks and nudists

Indians and engineers

Together

We determine what it means to be

The land of the free

Us athletes and welfare mothers

Old folks and astronauts

Farmers and free thinkers

Cub scouts and drop outs

Prisoners and pioneers

We each make up America the beautiful

And each

In his and her own way

Define and defend

Freedom for all.

Partner poem from a quote: Pick one of the following quotes to start a poem. Partners pass the sheets back and forth, adding a line each time to the other person's poem.

I cannot do everything, but I can still do something. Helen Keller

No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted. Aesop

The meaning of life is to give life meaning.

Let your word be your bond.

When the power of love is greater than the love of power, there will be peace on earth

Do all the good you can, in every way you can, to everyone you can.

Fall seven times. Stand up eight. (Japanese proverb about resiliency)

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Eleanor Roosevelt

After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box.

Happiness is something to do, something to love and something to hope for.

To repeat what others have said requires education. To challenge it, requires brains.

Honesty is the best policy.

It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

Everyone has their story to tell.

Not all who wander are lost.

Better to hold your tongue and appear a fool, than open your mouth and remove all doubt.

The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

You can fool all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool mom.

Don't compare yourself to others. They may be more messed up than you can imagine.

I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. Thomas Jefferson

A closed mouth gathers no feet. Unknown

It takes a great man to make a good listener. Arthur Helps

Talk is cheap because supply exceeds demand.

I hate to advocate drugs, alcohol, violence, or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me. Hunter S. Thompson

Laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone. Anthony Burgess

The future isn't what is used to be. Unknown

A kleptomaniac is a person who helps himself because he can't help himself. Henry Morgan

It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. Howard Ruff

Partner Poem from a quote example:

Quote: "After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box."

Day after day we all play the game

Move after move it all ends the same

Whether king or queen or knight or rook

No matter where you were born or what path you took

We all play the game with winning in mind

But don't think too long or you'll run out of time

So what is the point? It all ends the same.

We live life to love because it's check mate, then game.

HOMEWORK: Write a partner poem or collaborative writing piece with someone to bring to the next session.

Optional homework assignment. If you can't find a partner to write with, use one or more of these phrases in a poem or story:

In the silent hours...

America, through my eyes...

Only her hugs will do...

Sometimes, I surprise myself...

Quick to laugh...

Living free, wiser, cautious...

How important a friend is...

There's no place like home...

My fifteen minutes of fame...

Adapting to change...

There's a future somewhere...

It's all good...

The stuff I put up with...

Sometimes you get discouraged...

Tenth Session

Share your collaborative writing piece/partner poems or the poem you wrote with one or more of the sample phrases.

Alliteration Practice: Create a few tongue twisters demonstrating alliteration, then write a poem with at least one alliterative line in it.

Alliteration examples:

My mother met Monique in Manhattan.

Paul picked plenty papaya.

I never knew Nathan, not near enough.

She should sell seashells to sharks.

Me and my big mouth.

You go girl, good.

Lost in longing for love

Alliteration Poem example:

My bruised brothers

Be not broken

Find your comforting calm

In the midst of all this crowded confusion

Be discerning but not disturbing.

Flourishing, not fighting

Forgiving, not frightened.

Steer clear of hateful, humorless souls

Rise above the mean and miserable

Draw near and revere the remarkable
The things each day brings
Remain more thankful than threatening
Triumphant
Transformative
Welcome to this wonderful world.

Write a poem inspired by one of these quotes:

Illegal aliens have always been a problem in the United States. Ask any Indian. Robert Orben

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there. Will Rogers

People who think they know everything are very irritating to those of us who do. Unknown.

We are what we pretend to be. Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

What do you think of Western civilization? "I think it would be a good idea." Mahatma Gandhi

Veni, vidi, Visa. We came, we saw, we went shopping. Jan Barrett

Why is so much month left at the end of my money? Unknown

I'm not young enough to know everything. Oscar Wilde

What luck for rulers that men do not think. Adolf Hitler

It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong. Voltaire

Never engage in a battle of wits with an unarmed person. Unknown

It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues. Abraham Lincoln

Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition. Timothy Leary

The gods too are fond of a joke. Aristotle

Where do I find the time for not reading so many books? Karl Kraus

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal. T.S. Eliot

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything. Mark Twain

The trouble with life in the fast lane is that you get to the other end in an awful hurry. John Jensen

Religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich. Napoleon

It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers. James Thurber

There is more to life than increasing its speed. Mahatma Gandhi

Life is what happens while you are making other plans. John Lennon

The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits. Unknown

He who laughs, lasts. Mary Pettibone Poole

Partying is such sweet sorrow. Jean Kerr

Ninety-eight percent of the adults in this country are decent, hard-working honest Americans. It's the other lousy two percent that get all the publicity. But then, we elected them. Lily Tomlin

Suppose you were an idiot and suppose you were a member of Congress, but I repeat myself. Mark Twain.

I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.

When ideas fail, words come in very handy. Goethe

Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt. Herbert Hoover

Trust in Allah, but tie your camel. Arabian proverb

The nice thing about egotists is that they don't talk about other people. Lucille S Harper

If I love you, what business is it of yours? Johann von Goethe

Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult. Charlotte Whitton

I am a deeply superficial person. Andy Warhol

Whoever said money can't buy happiness didn't know where to shop.

The wages of sin are unreported. Unknown

You can't say civilization hasn't advance. In every war they kill you in a new way. Will Rogers

Poem inspired by a quote example:

Quote: "The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits."

This brings to mind

 An earlier time

 A decade or two before I was born

Some scientist types

 Who must have been bright

 Split some atoms in two

 Which isn't easy to do

And it released such force

They made a bomb, of course

It would win the war

 A bomb no one had seen before

So many lives so quickly shed

 It made it hard to count the dead

Yes, they were smart enough to build such death

 And dumb enough to give it breath

Let's hope there are no more mistakes

 At least not for the children's sake.

HOMEWORK: Write a poem from a different quote above.

Eleventh Session

Share poems from a quote.

Deal me in: Use at least three out of ten phrases in a poem or free-write using the deck of cards with words and phrases glued on..

Writing the Blues: follow the pattern of the rhyme and it's easy to write new words.

Example: "Prison Blues"

Sometimes you need to bleed, just to know that you are real
Sometimes somebody's gotta cut you, just to know that you can heal
How can you be happy if you know nothin' 'bout bein' sad?
To understand what you've lost you gotta know what it is you had
Argue or agree, it doesn't matter much to me
You ain't got nothin' to lose when all you've got is blues

You only miss the sunshine when you're freezin' in the cold
You start wishin' you were younger 'bout the time you're feelin' old
You're crusin' for a brusin' and I'm headin' for a fall
Listen operator I just gotta make this call
How can I be free if she's not waitin' there for me?
I ain't got nothin' to lose when all I've got is blues

Rain may come, wind's gonna blow
Lord, I never knew I could feel so low
You can lock me up forever, go ahead and throw away the key
But you really can't control a man who knows how to be free

Everyone's in prison, depends on what you choose
But you know you ain't got nothin' if all you got is the blues.

Nine Is Fine, a Dialogue Poem: Create a conversation between two people based on these nine functions of language: a greeting, a compliment, an accusation, a denial, questioning, requesting, complaining, persuading and apologizing.

Dialogue Example:

So I see my friend from Unit Three on my way to the lunch line,
and I give him a sign and a "Wassup?"

He said I'm looking strong and I just said, "Liar."

He said, "I'm the most honest son of bitch in here."

I asked him if he got any mail or visits and He just said,
"Will you just quit asking me about that, I don't wanna think about it no more. Nobody gives a damn about me anyhow."

"You oughta get in our writing group", I said, "it'll cheer you up"

"Maybe you're right. Sorry I got on your case"

Metacognition: Write about your thinking. What do you think about? How do you make decisions? How has the way you think changed throughout your life?

Example of Metacognition:

Thinking about thinking?

What a silly waste of time

Who can afford the luxury of thinking one's life away?

And I don't seem to think that well anyway

My circuit breakers are tripped

My mother board is French Fried Toast

My processor's a crispy critter

Philosophy asks "Where do we come from?

Why are we here?

And what happens when we die?"

I'm jaded.

I see nothing new under the sun.

I scream at the TV preacher, "Lie to me, Jerry!"

Spin me a tale of cotton candy heavenly clouds

Now there's something to think about

As long as I don't think out loud

Or too long or too deep

There's a lot to say for sleep

Another example of a Metacognition poem:

Thinking of my last thought

Which I don't remember

Don't want to remember

Won't admit that it's true

(Yeah, it's that bad)

Not to me but to you

Nothing to hide

I just know when to let it ride

Move on

Move on to the next one

This place is cluttered

With dreams and nightmares and running in circles

Can't seem to catch up

Stop

Turn around

No sound

Empty is a funny feeling

Tickles

A little gloom brightens relatively

Are we clear?

Are we crystal?

Still trying to read between the lines?

I still keep things from myself

And yet, I'm the only one who needs to know

The mind can play tricks

My happiest fantasies

An unlimited imagination

Sadness and wrath

Crazy

Master evil plans and nonsense

Meditation or the torment of temper

Stay calm

Resist rage

How should I deal with this?

Stomp my feet?

Emotions clouding judgement

Depression

Hopelessness

Purposelessness

All hidden by a happy face

You can find me in my happy place

Until the cycle of mental suffocation comes 'round again

Built by by-polar brain cell bits

it's all tricks

it's not all for kicks

I think

I think about what my future holds

The opportunities

And the opportunities for failure

The benefits

The cost

All I might come across

I think about the good and the bad

This war within

Fast money?

Or my family?

What really pays?

What do I value most?

Will I be changing my ways?

Another Metacognition poem example:

How I Think I Think

There are

And will always be

Greater minds than mine

And I don't mind that

It does not prevent me from wondering

What goes on inside my head

My head may say, "Follow your heart."

But my heart is silent in most matters except love

It's my mind that must make sense of all I see

Hear

Touch

Smell and taste

(always smell before tasting)

It's in my head that all logic

And creativity

And curiosity lies

All laughter starts here

And grand schemes

And future dreams

My mind seems to often converse with itself

I often wonder this:

If I consider all times I think

Of things that haven't happened

(Say, Peace on Earth)

Then I am creating a world

A playground for my mental gymnastics

Each of us builds our own distinctly different world

With all we've learned

Mistakes endured

From the sane to the absurd

By reading and talking and sometimes listening

We pile all our experiences into a mound of new earth

Which may require plowing under

It makes one wonder

I speak often without thinking

(no filter)

I think when I'm alone

Even when meditatively trying not to think at all
And though I may not be the sharpest shovel in the shed,
I, like everyone else
Can think as I please
It is upon such freedoms as these
We dictate or create imperfect democracies
I think thinking is fun
I am but one
But not the only one
Others may disagree
But they hold no sway with me.

HOMEWORK: Write a blues verse or two and bring it to the next session.

Twelfth Session

Hand blues lyrics in to instructor. I suggest the leader take them home and see which can fit the blues pattern, then show the class in the next session.

A picture is worth a thousand words: Create a poem inspired by a photograph or a painting.

Photo inspired poem example, Native American:

I am old
But still I'm free
Saw Custer Fall
Fought at Wounded Knee
White man's words cannot contain me
Reservations will not restrain me
Great Spirit gave us all this land
I, like you, am just a man
But I will not be pushed aside
I breathe free
I have pride
You say this land belongs to you
I say ask the sun and the forest too
Question the rivers, listen to the game
How blessed I am we're not the same.

Childhood days: bring a childhood moment to life in a poem or story.

Baby's Day example:

Hey little one, how was your day?
Too young to crawl, to draw, to play.
What did you do girl, give me the scoop?
“Same as yesterday, eat, sleep and poop.”

Just a few weeks old and cute as a button.
Don't tell me you just lazed around
Not doin' nothing.
Did you learn new things?
Make memories to keep?
“Hard to say when you just
poop, eat and sleep.”

Well, you just keep on growing
You've got all the time in the world
We love just to watch you and hold you
You're such a good girl
It's a wonderful world
With so many nice people to meet
But for now little girl
You just poop, sleep and eat.

Crazy Kid example:

I'm a crazy, confused kid
But I'll make it somehow
Life is for living
And I'm going to live mine...now.

Example of first teenage love:

The trees were hungry for leaves this week

Glad to have found Spring

I've been searching so long

Glad to find

us

Life was determined to live this week

Love is better to give than receive

What a privilege to believe in a Lord who loves beyond reason

Spring season

And this young man's fancy turned to

You

Motivation: what are some of the things that motivate what you do?

Example:

I do it because I want to

Because I'm the man of the house

Because I love her

Because I don't want her pissed at me

Because I can't endure her silent treatments

Because it's easier than arguing

Because that's the way I was raised

And because God's watching.

Motivated by self-interest example:

Me, the manipulator

I begin to see it

Rarely control it

Often deny it

Haven't perfected it

Wish I could stop it

Doubt that I need it

Enjoy when I do it

Know where I learned it

Know why I use it

Maybe I should

Quit.

HOMEWORK, Functions of language: Pick several of these functions of language and put them together in a poem: greeting, parting, inviting, accepting, complimenting, congratulating, flattering, charming, bragging, interrupting, requesting, Evading, lying, changing the subject, criticizing, ridiculing, insulting, threatening, warning, complaining, accusing, denying, agreeing, disagreeing, arguing, persuading, suggesting, reminding, advising, commenting, demanding, questioning, sympathizing, or apologizing.

Thirteenth Session

Share Functions of Language poems. *Example of bragging:*

I'm a good poet

Well, not just good...

And 'great' doesn't quite cover it

'Outstanding' comes close

As does 'magnificent'

Though I prefer 'unparalleled'.

Most any compliment is appreciated

Though I don't need others singing my poetic praises

To maintain my sense of competent accomplishment

Frankly, words themselves fail

To adequately describe the poetic pinnacles

Of satiric success I have achieved

Or so I believe

Which is in itself ironic and a paradox

Since words themselves are the very tools I employ

To express my thoughts,

My emotions and memories,

To describe life's mysteries,

To analyze,

And categorize,

And dramatize

Each occurrence and endeavor

That catches my interest.

And though, it's true, I don't need the praise...

Yet, I humbly accept it

As a necessary result
Of unintended greatness on my part
For my art.

Our Journey's End: Read the following quotes and facts and chose one or more to inspire a poem about dying:

The one thing that makes death distinct from all other diseases and disorders is that everybody gets it.—Lyll Watson

Death, the only immortal who treats us all alike, whose pity and whose peace and whose refuge are for all—the soiled and the pure, the rich and the poor, the loved and the unloved.—Mark Twain

No man knows whether death may not even turn out to be the greatest of blessings for a human being; and yet people fear it as if they knew for certain that it is the greatest of evils.—Socrates

Many people would rather die than think. In fact, they do.—Bertrand Russell

One must not lose desires. They are mighty stimulants to creativeness, to love, and to long life.—St. Thomas Aquinas

Death has got something to be said for it. There's no need to get out of bed for it; wherever you may be, they bring it to you, free.—Kingsley Amis

He not busy being born is busy dying.—Bob Dylan

I do not want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.—Woody Allen

A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic.—Joseph Stalin

It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.—Marcus Aurelius

I intend to live forever, or die trying.—Groucho Marx

The idea is to die young, as late as possible.—Ashley Montagu

Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.—Dylan Thomas
Heart disease, cancer and stroke account for two-thirds of the total deaths in the U.S.

Disease has killed more people worldwide than any other cause. Famine is a close second.

The Mexican Indian native population went from 30 million to 3 million in less than fifty years due to smallpox, measles and typhus.

More Americans have been killed by fireworks celebrating the Fourth of July, than died fighting for independence in the Revolutionary War.

In 1996, eleven Belgium students studying traffic safety were killed when a truck ran off the road and smashed into them.

The automobile is the most dangerous objects available to the average consumer according to fatality statistics, followed by cigarettes, then alcohol.

Orville Wright, co-inventor of the airplane, died of natural causes at the age of seventy-six in Dayton, Ohio, on January 30, 1948. On the same day, three separate U.S. airplane crashes left fifty people dead.

In the U.S., suicide is the tenth leading cause of death, 25,000 fatalities annually.

Since 1900, more Americans have been murdered with handguns than the number of American servicemen who have died in all foreign wars. Every seventeen minutes, a firearm kills somebody in the U.S.

Seldom since the beginning of recorded history has there been a year unmarked by war, genocide, or massacre of some kind.

Of the total fatalities suffered by the military forces of the North and the South in the American Civil War, about sixty percent were caused by disease.

The survival rate for lightning strikes is only 50 percent, making lightning the most fatal force in nature.

The most deadly earthquake in modern times was on July 28, 1976, in China; over 242,000 died.

Death Poem example:

The fact that life ends, friends
Is good
Especially when its absurd
In fact
I say cull the herd

If you're not helping
You might as well go
Recycle the parts
Make soup too

Am I speaking to you?

Only you really know your heart

And whether you have helped

Or intend to start

Finish the phrase: You can make rhymed couplets or keep your answers short and simple.

I'm an inmate but I'm not...

I've learned to survive by...

I get angry when...

I've changed my outlook...

I've come to appreciate

I spend a lot of time thinking about...

When I'm free, I want to...

I am motivated by...

Finish the Phrase Example:

I'm an inmate but I'm not evil or dangerous or less a person than anyone else

I've learned to survive by appearing strong and keeping my thoughts to myself

I get angry when told to wait or treated like a low life.

I've changed my outlook by learning new things and helping others

I've come to appreciate simple things and the power of a kind word.

I spend a lot of time thinking about finding a love, a job and good friends.

When I'm free I want to hike and swim and eat and love.

Another Example:

I'm an inmate, but I'm not guilty. I'm innocent.

I've learned to survive by minding my own business

I get angry when my roomie leaves the door open

I've changed my outlook on life and won't take nothing for granted

I've come to appreciate my time I have left

I spend a lot of time thinking about how my life will be when I get out

When I'm free I want to live happily with my wife and kids

Another example:

I'm a prisoner
but I'm not locked up
I only empathize
Learned to survive
By concentrating on things beyond prison walls
Angered by injustice, I do nothing
I spend a lot of time
Thinking
About what I can offer

When I'm free
And I am often
I sing and hike
and enjoy it all

HOMEWORK: Write your ideas on how to make the justice system (courts and prisons) work better. This can be a poem or story.

Fourteenth Session

Have class members share their ideas for prison reform. Collect their writing and combine some of each person's ideas into a compilation share at the next session. *Example:*

Prison Reform, Ideas Anyone?

Better food, please

Once a week access to commissary

Different uniforms.

A top-down overhaul

Both Legislative and Administrative

New training for all involved:

(Admin, Prisoners and ACOs)

Determinate sentencing

(something that ends on a specific date)

More programs dealing with:

Addiction,

Anger management,

Goal setting,

Further Education,

Job training,

Relationships

Mental health

Physical well-being,

Sports teams and athletic competitions

Access to music and movies by choice and more books

More counselors

A chorus

Arts and crafts,

Wood working,

Ceramics

Animal care and the raising of service dogs

Nature hikes (trail repair?)

Deck hand training for commercial fishing

And while we're dreaming:

Conjugal visits.

Pizza and ice cream

Collaboration: Have everyone finish the phrase Love is....giving as many examples as they can think of. Let them know that you want them to hand it in to you and you will create a collaborative poem taking some phrases from each person. Example:

Love is...

Love is great
Love is kind
Love is fun
Love is joy
Love is agape
Love is God
Love is Jesus
Love is watching the stars
Love is riding horses
Love is boating
Love is dancing in the rain
Love is being loved
Love is talking on the phone
Love is Mom's kisses
Love is being with the family
Love is swimming with the kids
Love is being kind to one another
Love is being happy
Love is making love
Love is holding each other
Love is hugging your kids
Love is playing with the grandchildren
Love is heaven
Love is helping the sick
Love is learning something new
Love is visiting the imprisoned
Love is being home

Emotion Poem: Have the participants pick from one of the following emotions: Love, Hate, Fear, Jealousy, Surprise, Envy, Disgust, Sorrow, Joy, or Grief. Then have them answer the following questions about it. If a question doesn't fit, or they can't think of anything, they can just leave it out. Then they take these notes to edit into a poem. They can put the parts in any order. Remind them to have a strong conclusion.

The questions: Where does this emotion live? (Inside us? In a certain kind of house of structure? Somewhere on the earth?) What is the emotion saying to you? What does it feel like? What does it sound like? What does it look like? Does it have a taste? What would you like to say to it. (Put that in quotation marks)

Emotion poem example:

Joy

Joy lives on playgrounds,
Between stars and clouds
Sunrise and in loving eyes

Joy says, "Seven days with no laughter makes one weak."

It's light like a mist on your face
Bouncy like a trampoline
Thrilling as a leap off a cliff

It's whistles and giggles
Bird songs and love songs
Screams of delight
A breeze at night

Joy is a child smiling from ear to ear
Blowing dandelion blossom wishes on the wind

Joy wears moonbeam scarves and rainbow suspenders
Flowers in its hair and sea shells on its shoes

It tastes like a cold beer on a hot day,
Popcorn and pizza
“Come Joy.
Stay.
Let’s play.”

Another emotion poem example:

Hatred lives inside us
Churning our guts
Burning in our brains
Like memories of insults never forgotten
A raging fire
A slap to the face
Hatred hurts like a migraine headache
Bursting behind your eyes, through your skull
“Hatred, you’re killing me.
You wear a terrorist’s mask
You listen for revenge with evil ears
Telling me to lash out
You leave my dry mouth tasting of ashes
I hate hatred.

Another example:

Here's to Hate

I intend to set this whole world on fire
Dethrone the Devil with Death and Desire

Feast your fill on this hellish hate
That burns to ashes heaven's gate

Wicked nightmares, deadly revelations
A landscape of skulls and abominations

Holy water wasted on desert sands
Drunk on the liquor of blood-stained hands

Inhale the smoke of my smoldering name
Lust after the taste of my magnificent fame

You pay the price for a hate this hot
When all you could be becomes all that you're not

The perfection of deception is lost in lies,
And the best part of living is that everything dies

Alpha-betcha: Write the letters of the alphabet down the left side of the paper and then use each letter to start a sentence about a chosen topic such as prison life, or the things one misses on the outside. *Example:*

All the people here wear stripes

But the guards wear stars
Can't call this place home 'cause it's not ours
Doing time as best as we can
Enough ain't enough when it comes to chow
Finish your whole plate than hurry up and wait
God must love us sinners and spinners
Hog the phone when you're calling home
Inmates locked down for count
Just a few more years 'til they let you out
Keep clean or get a free bucket bath
Living the dream? Don't make me laugh.
Missing my children, in my bed crying
No, you can't call it living when inside you're dying
Only we know how it feels and it never ends
Prison is for dummies and where are your friends?
Quit your yelling you're driving me up a wall
Respect everyone equally and be fair to all
Seal your lips and don't rat people out
Talk kindly to others, it's what life's all about
Use the gifts you're given
Visits are a slice of heaven
Watch your back, that's what it takes
X-cept the fact we all make mistakes
You're setting yourself up if you live to hate
Zip your lip and learn to deal with fate.

Family member memory: Write a story or poem about some family member. *Example:*

My dad was a good man
Who took care of his family
And his church
Even collected cans for charity

He is a part of me
From my faith to the Martin belly
He will always be

Does he watch over me,
Or is he busy fixin' heaven's woodwork?
I wish he could drop me a line
I know he's doing fine
(maybe has a younger body now than mine)

I hope he's not one-noting it in the heavenly choir
He's probably making sure the doors fit right
Repairing the antiques
Living in the light

He told me so seriously, "Rod, don't get old."
So I'm shooting for young at heart
And willing to play
Glad for the day
Dad, by the way...I miss you

HOMEWORK, Questions and Answers: Fill the page with questions about life, the world, the universe, even trivia. Answer any that you can. Bring to the next session for discussion and use as a warm up.

Fifteenth Session

Warm Up: First, share the compilation poem on prison reform and then have everyone read their questions. Each person picks one question to use as their warm up writing topic. They don't have to have the answer. That question might lead to other questions. *Example:*

What would I say to everyone in the whole world?

Enjoy. Laugh. Love and live fully. Try new things. Show compassion

Don't take your life so seriously. See the humor in life.

No one should tell another what to think or do, or have power over another.

The future holds great opportunities.

Let's have more research and development and less destruction.

Everyone, please stop hating and hurting one another

Let's try to improve the lives of one another.

Let's make knowledge freely accessible to all.

Let's ask ourselves how we can make this world a paradise.

Let's plant gardens, build playgrounds, preserve nature, and utilize our knowledge, creativity, and inventions for the betterment of all.

Let's spend more money as a nation on improving the lives of the poor than we do on war.

Let's be willing to change our laws to show more compassion

Let's get along better and try to understand each other. Let tolerance prevail over prejudice.

Let's contemplate the true meaning of freedom.

Love wins.

Rules that can go: Write about the silly rules of our society or the prison system that we could do without. *Example:*

If ever the government

Federal State

Judicial

Authorities that be

Try to tell me

I cannot be free

As I see fit

Then that's it

I will gladly return all the little plastic cards

papers and passwords

numbers and networks

all ID that dares

define me

and they can come find me in the hills

waking to the birds

far away from the words: do dis and dat

When one lives free

there seems no better way to be.

Another "rules that can go" example:

I Insist

Here in Corrections City

You can correct me

But don't belittle me

Encourage me

But don't remind me of my mistakes

Put me in a cell

But don't put me down
It's enough that I can't get around
Can't go out to dinner with friends
Can't hold the ones I love
Can't swim in God's blue sea
I know I'm not free
To be outside
But inside, I insist on my humanity
I've got plenty of time to consider a new self
To learn, to grow
So remember, I'm a man
Who will one day walk free
I am determined to be.

Circle Poem: Everyone in the class writes a starting line on the top of their paper, then they pass them to the right and the next person adds a line. Tell them it's not a dialogue or conversation, but it should end up like only one person wrote the poem. If it's sad, keep with that mood. When the poem gets back around to the originator, they can edit it and read what they've got to the group. They can take it with them for further rewrites if they like. *Example:*

Never ever

I tell you honey,
Never trust a man

Tell him only what you want
And let him guess the rest

Spy on him but don't rely on him

A man can be caught but never tamed
Love can be bought but it's not the same

So ladies, don't you trust those guys
Mention marriage and see how fast he flies
And that's the truth,
Hey, would I lie?

Another example:

Haunted Halls

Everyone's in prison
Just like you
Just like me

Sometimes
It can be emotional imprisonment
Or a twisted relationship

Failure to believe in one's self
Fear of when to trust

Or it can be buzzers and bells
Iron bar hell

Discrete behind concrete
From invincible to invisible

These haunted halls have heard it all.

Partner Poem: Two people write starting lines and pass their papers back and forth until it seems to come to a conclusion. The person who started the poem can then edit it, cutting lines or adding things as they see fit or they can read it as is.

Example:

Me: My dad's the greatest.

He: My dad was never there.

Me: My mother was over protective.

He: My mom never showed she cared.

Me: My uncle had a heart attack.

He: Mine got busted selling crack.

Me: I'd like to be great poet someday.

He: I might just dry up and blow away

Another example:

The Prison Economic System

I'm a Buddy Bar baron

A rice cake rich kid

Pudding protagonist

Cigarette veteran

Pill pastor

Pleasure treasurer

Hygiene hustler

Call me Gopher, 'cause I'll 'go for' what you need

Yes, indeed

It's worth it to me

And worth is wealth

Now pass that puddin'...stealth.

Another example:

The night was dark

Dark as my soul

As I held the gun

Only a lonely one

I could blow out my brains

End my worldly pains

Play Russian Roulette

But what prize do I get?

Do I get laid, paid, dismayed, betrayed?

A lesson served cold like lemonade.

I couldn't go through with it

But I don't feel that I blew it

Guess I can deal with the strife

Sentenced myself to life

Teacher Time: This is like a partner poem except the teacher is everyone's partner. This is ideal for class sessions when there's a small group so as not to overload the instructor. *Example:*

Question Authority

In this country

Founded on equality

Immigrants of diversity

How dare anybody lord it over me

In the guise of some authority

No man's opinion means more than my own

No one has the right to tell me I'm wrong

No one's religion has more power or peace

No one knows what God wants

What God is

No one can tell me what to think

No one should be allowed to rule, oppress or cajole by force

Who are these egomaniacs?

I question why they want to mess with me?

They may shout louder and not be smarter

They may have power but not love

They may wield weapons but not wisdom

Why do we value and yet fear freedom so?

Freedom for me

Freedom to be

Please let me be

You have no authority over me, majority

The Small Stuff: Write about the little things that make life good, even in a prison environment. (a nice sunrise, a good class, jokes, TV shows, a good cup of coffee or a special meal or a visit from family) *Example*:

Perception can be a mean master

Our thoughts

Our biases

Can and do control us

They can make life a drudgery

Or they can set us free

It's all in how you look at a thing, isn't it?

Do we roll with the punches or let life defeat us?

Can we see the bright side

The walk in the light side

The everything's alright side?

Or are we flattened by fear

Hounded by hurt

Lost in loneliness

If you think you can't, you're right

If you think life's hard, it is

But if you're looking for fun

It can be everywhere.

HOMEWORK, Lessons Learned: Write about the kind of things one learns about living in a prison setting. (How to avoid fights, how to avoid boredom, how to improve yourself, who to trust, how to treat the guards, the importance of not getting anyone in trouble, when to just walk away from a conversation) *Example:*

My resolution

Is to make restitution

To every person, place and institution

I may have wronged

In any way

When I can find a free day

And it's not out of my way

Not too high a price to pay for livin'

Given I've been given so much

Guess countin' my blessin's

a life-long lesson

Another example:

Freedom strong

Liberty long

Like a baby cries
Or a seabird flies
And if Freedom dies
Succumbs to captivity
What happens to me?

I will sing when I want
Think all I can
Pray over meals
Never forget how it feels
Exhilarating Freedom

I will find ways to speak freely with others
So they too may taste the thrill
I hope they will
Delicious Freedom

I will laugh out loud
Raise the roof
Speak my truth as I understand it
Faithful and Forever Free

Just ask me.

Sixteenth Session

Share thoughts on lessons learned: *Example:*

I thought life was all about giving

Until I got taken for a ride

I wanted God to be my answer but
got distracted by the other side

I wanted love to save the world
but got caught up in my own pride

I hoped drugs would expand my heart and mind
but I'd just stay inside and hide

I knew knowledge could enlighten me
But what if wisdom is denied

I need dreams to keep on living
But some of those dreams have died

Another example:

What Works When Doing Time

Every damn time I come back through those prison doors
I always stick to my same routine that never gets me bored

I begin the day on my knees praying to the Lord above
Always giving Him thanks and praises
Even while I'm behind these walls

I keep myself away from all the bullshit that goes down
The same old junk and jive that I heard
When I did my first time around

I try not to associate with that type of crowd
'Cause that type of people will eventually bring you down

I keep my shit simple, day in and day out
I daily workout lifting water bags
That's what my day's about

I have also plugged into classes to educate my mind
Which keeps me learning something
Instead of wasting my time

I also get myself a job working, whether its in industry of FSU
Though it's not about the peanuts I earn
But keeping my day running smooth

I also have my weekly phone calls
To my loved ones that's outside
It helps keep my pride in check
And more in touch with my humble side

It's also good to write letters every now and then
'Cause to me it has more meaning
When it's written with a paper and pen

Although behind these walls, there's not much to do

Keep this in mind, just continue to do what works for you

Freedom's Fears: Write about the things that scare you when you think of regaining your freedom. *Example*:

Freedom's Fears

The key to success is Sobriety

Being able to plan with a clear mind

and then following through

Still, there are fears:

Getting too comfortable,

Thinking I can fool everyone, get away with it all

When getting caught is just a matter of time.

My determination to do what is right

Slipped away as time went by

When faced with loneliness, depression.

To insure my freedom,

I have to replace bad habits with good ones.

Keep myself safe,

Not taking chances with my freedom.

Living a simple life, a decent life.

Gratefulness instead of greed.

Learning from past mistakes.

No rushed decisions;

Well thought out creative time management over impatience.

Respecting authority.

Reaching for higher moral standards.

Being appreciative of all I have.

Giving stress a rest.

Narrowing my circle to just someone I can put my trust in,

Building a future.

Not being swayed by others, independent.

Living my own life.

Another example:

Freedom's fears, fears!

To fear being free?

My own Heaven? That's crazy!

Are we joking?

Yeah, no, you would think....

I'll wait....

I thought in this state of mind,

Your Heaven is not mine

And mine's not yours

I'm sure now, no question

Treasure is preference

So on the outside, looking in

From the inside,'

The contrast, through my eyes

I explain:

With disdain, for I'm all out of pity

It sickens me, almost to rage

How some need the cage

But I'm cool

It just is,
They just are,
After four years,
I see it, the fears,
Back to the fears
It's all over the faces
In the walks
The talks
And haircuts
Traces!
Of fear
It sounds dumb, I know
But for some, in prison, forever young
So they think
'cause they know, in those streets, it's hard to eat
Let alone sleep
Hell, just be
Something
Time's left you nothing
To no one
But a burden on parole
Your goals, gone
But they was just jive, Lies!
To yourself
Don't lie to me
I can't feel you but I see
Prison is where you ought to be
Hell, one fear of being free is,
Some of these creatures out there with me,

The revolving door can't turn fast enough
But so what
I'll just steer clear of them
And the police,
Both adversaries
I'm determined not deceived
Their savior is my enemy
That's the contrast
My point, finally I've reached
The tangent has ceased
So about the fear
The fear for me is not the freedom
It's the fight to keep it
So I pledge my allegiance to the rage against the factory
And the bricks it produces
The wall will come down
The fear is translucent,
The "them" fear the movement
The American Dream's a lie and I've prove it
Correction facility, another lie
You can't correct me
I'll be what I want to be
I haven't failed
Your successes just ain't the same to me
So you messed up, see?
'cause I been in here training
I've used my time in the joint to sharpen my mind to a fine point
Oh, yeah!
The point, oops, where were we?

Yes, the fear of freedom....
Can't fear it
When I think about it
Never really had it
This society we live in is just another type of prison!
So my mission, is true freedom
And I'll get it
Even if by force
With a musket on a horse
with a torch
for freedom.

Another example:

Set Me Free

Like a two sided coin
Freedom awaits
One "F": Freedom
One side, three "F's":
Thoughts of food, family and friends
But there's that other side of the coin.
Three "F's":
The Fast Track, the Fun that never sleeps
And Females
Can't forget the females.
This two sided coin
Constantly contemplating both sides

The good

The bad

Things that I want

Things that I had

Temptations or madness

High or wide

Fighting it out one the inside

Can I have my cake and eat it too

Would that be the right thing to do?

If you had the chance, wouldn't you?

Set me free

I can't wait to see what I'll do

Another example:

What Lies Ahead

The let downs

Things I've done

Choices I've made

Have separated me from my loved ones

Those I hold dear

And that's why I'm in here

I don't want to be a failure

A failure to myself, my family, my friends

Failures that make it hard to make amends

Tired of hurting inside
Tired of hurting people close to me
Tired of this day after day

And still I want to smoke and play

No matter what lies ahead:

Wind up back in prison

Or end up dead

Another example:

Got those

 Crystal meth

 Inner battle blues

I need

 My walkin' shoes

I want

 A breath of fresh air

I have ideas to spare

Ideas for a new day

 A new way

 Of being me

 Of staying free

And thank the good Lord, I can be

Forgiven

Now watch me start livin'.

Money: Explore this topic in poetry or prose. *Example:*

\$Money\$

Money, money, money, money, maaanay!

Get some

Get some more

Never enough

Hang on to it

Don't lose it

No, it don't make you happy

It don't love you

But it's good enough

It'll get you stuff and more stuff

That you can sell for cash

Keep your hands off my stash

Even though it never lasts

So what?

Nothing lasts.

Dealing with incarceration: Write about what works for you when it comes to “doing time.”

Example:

What Works When Doing Time?

Keep things simple

There's time for prayer if you're so inclined

Pick your friends carefully

Steer clear of the bullshit

Exercise daily

Take every class you can

Don't just sleep the time away, though sleeping helps

You can't do someone else's time for them

Work to find things worth reading

Learn all you can from others but be discerning

Work, not for the money, but to be productive and helpful

Keep in touch with those you love

Keep in touch with the love in you

Be a light in darkness

Practice being who you want to be, not who you were.

Write letters, poems, songs, stories. Write.

Do what works for you

Which Wolf: Use the following story as inspiration for writing: A Cherokee legend from long ago tells this story; a tribal elder said to his grandson, “Young one, there is a battle inside us all between two wolves. One is evil; it is anger, greed and lies. The other is good; it is joy, love, hope, humility and truth.” The young one thought about it a while then asked, “Grandfather, which wolf wins?” the elder quietly replied, “The one you feed.”

Note: At the last session, hand out a compilation of each person’s best writing, from one to three poems each. I also suggest a letter of completion that the inmate can put in their records.

Certificate of Completion Suggestions:

The Prison Poetry Project encourages students to write in a variety of styles: Prose, Free Verse, Rhyming Poetry, and Song Lyrics.

Student name is a graduate of the program and is to be commended for his/her talent as a lyricist and musician. He/she assisted others in bringing their poetry to song, helping with music composition, melody, and song structure.

I hope Student Name will continue to explore his/her talents as a Hip Hop lyricist and could easily see him/her making a living in the field of music and poetry education, performance or any other endeavor he/she chooses.

It was a pleasure to have Student Name in the Poetry Project. His/her humility, sense of humor and honesty of expression was a great addition to the program.

I hope he/she will continue to explore his/her talents as a writer. His/her outlook and congenial personality should lead him/her to success in whatever endeavors he/she pursues. It was a pleasure to have him/her in the Poetry Project. His/her cooperation and humility is refreshing.

Project Instructor

Date _____

'Deal Me In' Deck Ideas

repetitive schedule

corrupt system

green light

dusk 'til dawn

buddy bars

workout

massage

bird in barbed wire

just one cold beer

dream team

eye candy

public pretenders

self-esteem

walking the line

kindness

my meds

chillaxin'

bust my chops

threats

power play

lawyers

justice, just us

total darkness

life-long lesson

as a kid

the knife in my back

independence

pain in the neck

freedom finder

starring at me

sky full of dreams

inescapable confusion

a feeling of flying

twisted reason

so many memories

Embers of hope

insomniac thoughts

best kept inside

numbing routine

when things go wrong

inner battles

when to trust

fruit of my labor

give it a rest

I must be nuts

a world apart

have you the time?

surviving

Dealing with it

So ready for freedom

Imagination destination

Meditate on it

The power of the mind

Fooling myself again

Perspective's power

Prayer

After careful consideration

Patterns repeated

A spiritual revolution

I choose choices

The noisy silence

Tears withheld

One weakness

Night noise

On my day off

Sunday's for me

Pardon me

This is the day

Conditional surrender

Are you watching, God?

A real friend

Who's waiting?

An avalanche of anger

I'm dressing down

When nothing matters

Wasted time

Which war today

Conflict resolution revolution

Judgment day

Paid some dues

I missed that

If there were more windows

When dreams don't come true

Forgotten now

Who can you tell?

If we stop caring

Lost in the sauce

Addictive tendencies

Rehab is for quitters

Lots of secrets

In car sir ate it.

Bars don't make a prison

It takes a village

That's messed up

Contraband contemplations

Amped up over nothing

Change will come

This too will pass

Is the moon still there?

If nothing changes

This gets old fast

Who can you trust?

Been busted bad

Nothing to lose

Infestation visitation

Out of whack

Crazy days

Always something good

Positively pathetic

I'm a ramblin' man

The consistency I seek

I never knew before

Something's lacking

Got more dreams than stars

Misplaced confidence

Like ice cream in hell

All kinds of hunger

Tempt me

Too much of that

Never enough

No one notices

Invisibility factor

Give me a break

Cut some slack

Doesn't hurt to try

Medical meals

PTSD definitely

No handouts

Want it all

Plans that don't happen

Miracles would be nice

Make it pizza

The bright side of what?

Pictures of the past

Lemmings on a cliff

A real ripe peach

Never any ice cream

A happy holiday

Mirrors would help

See myself

The real me

What others don't see

If you only knew

Seen some awful things

Seen some things

Been there, done that.

Things don't just happen

Things happen

An open book

Ask the right questions

Don't dump on me

Just like you

Judge over me

It would bother you, too

The hopeful side

Words that hurt

Two sides to everything

I've got my opinions

Can't tell me what to think

I still think, I think

Think again

when ideas collide

I'm a revolving door

I'm different

Are you off your meds?

Is this crazy, or what?

Somebody's kidding somebody

Write that down

Can I quote you on that?

Prescription Pain

World weary

Quiet time

Hurry up and wait

Get in line

Lethal love

Yanking your chain

Life's short

Not dying to get out

I like it here

this is a country club

Three squares and a bed

I got this

Over paid and under loved

How does this help?

False hopes

Are we having fun, yet?

Expressing myself

Enjoying myself

Censorship city

Dare you know me?

Are we all 'that'?

My next poem

Side order toss salad

Let's be honest

Even if you don't, I love me

What's the reason...

Remember me

Someday

Broken pieces

If I die

All alone

It scares me to think...

Forgiven

If life gives you lemons

Spread your cheeks and cough

Stand by for chow

If's and can's are pots and pans

Head count

Lock down

bad batch

Whacked out

how we roll

Kim chee fried rice

cards and dice

Sexy daddy

fire balls

Grab your doors

work line

No mo nothing

Good stuff

Das right

A lie is a lie

Darkest before the dawn

the truth

You go girl

innocent until proven

Guilty until proven innocent

justice for all

Reasonable doubt

if you would just listen

Don't criticize

don't rationalize

Don't analyze

love is not all it takes

Falling like water

can't see straight

Hypnotized

in your eyes

I get lost

I am complete

Lock down

lock up

Shower fight

contraband

Keep your head up

heart strong

Crazy good

open

What's crack-a-lackin'?

you are not what you eat

Chocolate wasted

shooting stars

Buddy bars

despicable me

Mind over matter

it gets to you

Heart's desire

united we stand

Bag and baggage

spinning out

Emo

it's a jail thing

Above all

soulmate cellmate

Day ja vu

meant to be

God is good

sleep with the angels

Hold water

write up

You down

serenity

Laugh now, cry later

hungry for love

Affection

trapped

Bored to tears

no tears

Rough and tough

organized

Dreams on hold

flower delicate

Not gonna take it

keep it to yourself

Hiding in a book

God forsaken

Starving for tenderness

voyage

Onions, Carrots, Cabbage and Celery

unspoken rules

Going places

hittin' the block

Top tiers

rolled up

Sink or swim

you go first

Watch your back

a blanket

Keep your voice down

walk your talk

Lead by example

Are you kidding?

Shut you up

you ain't the boss of me

My way

I refuse

Seconds

never going home

This stinking place

sleep with one eye open

Put the curtain up

lights out

Runnin' 'em hard

Friend or Foe?

Staring back at

used to be

Tensions rising

my old self

Had it all

last chance

Façade

broken dreams

Still alive

no regret

Left behind

dark hunger

Take the deal

cherish

It's like this

get a job

Wake up your roomies

all rise

Chains on me

come on, man

No problem

what we eatin'?

Group prayer

crystal meth

Homeless

dark thoughts

Wishing I wasn't here

be patient

Only time will tell

trust

Skeletons in the closet

God is good

What's love got to do with it?

I can't wait

Peace and love

love and honor

Treasure

profound

Respect

the Bible

Family

market

Trade secrets

skull candy

Midnight

pound for pound

Grits and eggs

cake

Private parts

things we do

Always exciting

tedious

Hope

self-inflicted

Poems for Poetry Readings: On the following pages are poems that came about through the Prison Poetry Project, hence, most have a prison related theme but not always. They may not all be incredible, but there certainly is a variety. Perhaps you can slip a few into the poetry collections you create through your own sessions. The possibilities are endless.

Keep a pile of poems handy at each session and if someone would rather read one of those than something they wrote, that can be an option.

You may think it sounds strange to have a poetry reading at a prison, but stranger things have happened. All things are possible.

Whenever possible, encourage the authors to read their own poems aloud but there's no harm in hearing what other poets have done. We can learn by hearing different styles to incorporate into our own works.

I Wanna Love You Like That

I wanna tell you that I'll love you a lot.

With all that I am

And all that I've got

It's like this...

I want to love you a long time like,

Like how long it takes at a DMV

Or the ages it takes for glaciers to melt,

or the universe to spit out galaxies

As long as it takes a mountain to wash to the sea

I wanna love you like that and longer

I want to love you hard

like carbon steel fresh from the forge

Harder than all the granite in the continental divide

Hard like calculus or physics or relationships

Understandably un-understandable

I want to protect your feelings with a wall of diamonds

The hardest things ever, safe

I want you to feel like that

I wanna love you wild

Like a feral child
Like mustangs that stampede free across deserts
Dolphins at play
Butterflies that meet on the wind
Rivers that race down mountains
Roller coaster wild
With laughter that makes it hard to breathe

I wanna love you wilder than that.

I wanna love you
Like teens love their smart phones
Like grandpa loves whiskey
Like kids love candy
Like comedians love laughter
A fun kind of love.

I wanna love you like all kinds of crazy...
Like fighting for peace
Lazy crazy and crazy confused
An entire nut house filled to overflowing
And off their meds
That kind crazy

I wanna love you heavy
Like a freight train on your foot

Heavy like thinking about thinking
Like a load of sorrow for the sins of the world
Heavy like it really matters that you let me love you
like that

I wanna love you 'til it freaks you out....
Like monsters under the bed freaked
Afraid to break our embrace or bail from bed
Playing with fire
You know, like that.

I wanna love you like hot chocolate kisses after playing in the snow
Like floating in Jello and whipped cream
Like a steaming hot shower when it's frickin' freezin'
Yeah, I wanna love you like that.

I wanna love you like the blessing rain
that lands on my eyelashes.
The sun on my face while walking in the woods
A cool breeze or a cold beer
Like every time I first see you and my heart moves

Love you like no one has loved you before
All that I can and a little bit more
I want to eat you up like bacon and bagels
because I love you more than similes can say
so let me, so love me, let me love you a lot
and I'll be all that you need

and you'll be all that I've got

'Til Pigs Fly

I wanna love you for as long as it takes to count all the stars in the sky

As long as it takes to wait 'til pigs fly

I wanna love you hard like a diamond in the rough

Like a full moon sky and still that's not enough

I wanna love you wild like horses at pasture

Fast like a Lamborghini or even faster

I wanna love you like a hustler loves the game

Like Houdini loved his chains

Yup, my love's the same

I wanna love you crazy like a patient off their meds

Like the voices in my head and the monsters beneath the bed. Crazy

Love you like the sun after the rain, like jumping out of a plane

Eat you up like a luscious last piece of cake, like grilled onions and steak

A hunger I will not fake

I wanna love you like flowers in the morning

The rain when it starts pouring

The beach in the afternoon

Like the sun, the stars, the moon

I don't care where or why or how

I just wanna love you now

Long live liberty!

Yes, liberty through diversity.

We the people

The American masses

The hippies and rich dudes

Pacifists and Polynesians

Rednecks and nudists

Indians and engineers

Tweakers and toddlers

Together, we determine what it means to be

The land of the free

Us athletes and welfare mothers

Old folks and astronauts

Farmers and free thinkers

Cub scouts and drop outs

Prisoners and pioneers

We each make up America the beautiful

And each, in his and her own way

Define and defend

Freedom for all.

And it takes all kinds

All kinds of people

Each unlike any other
Unique so to speak

Expectant mothers
And Black Power brothers
Entertainers and explainers
Teachers and preachers
Street walkers and smooth talkers

Sculptors and dancers
Moon light romancers
Losers and boozers and crack cocaine users
Society twitches with hand me down riches
The deaf, the dumb, the blind: All kinds!

Thugs and muggers
Babes in hip huggers
Bar flies and wise guys
Hipsters and Tripsters

Abusive men who are all push and shove
Women who won't leave them and call that love

Politicians, morticians
Mormons on missions
Street musicians to please us
Lawyers to squeeze us

Bosses who get rich off other men's sweat

Movie stars to mollify us and help us forget

Police with big sticks

Poets with word tricks

Let's hear it for converts and convicts

Here's to the kids who go to sleep hungry

The prom queens growing cellulite

The priests with nasty secrets

All those sorry souls who live in quiet desperation

The homeless, the hopeless

The shouters, the doubters

Rappers with bling

Killers and kings

It astounds the imagination

How many different minds and kinds of people it takes

to make a world, this world

Let's give thanks to the men and women

who lay down their lives in war after war

no matter what those wars are for.

Give thanks to all those nine-to-fivers

The late arrivers

The holocaust survivors

Who keep plugging away

Who are willing to pay
For our multiple sins or our marvelous deeds

God bless every soul searching soul in need
Every man, woman, boy and girl
Who make this such an interesting world.

You May Be A Convict If...

You may be a convict if the clang of bars
is as normal as the feel of grass under your feet.

You may be a convict if you can't spell 'convict.'

If you walk through a cafeteria thinking "Are you gonna eat that?"

If you've ever smuggled bread.

If your main outfit has zebra stripes.

If you've got your social security number tattooed on your arm.

You may be a convict if you live in a bathroom
and your toothbrush does more than just brush teeth.

If you've ever hear a CO call your last name and
you know what, "Clear the wing!" means.

If you see blue and think, "Oh, shit, they're coming!"

If all your belongings can fit in a trash bag you're probably a convict.

You may be a convict if you've memorized your prison number.

If you tie the ends of your sheets when you make your bed.

If you wash your socks in the shower and you clean everything with shampoo.

You may be locked up if your longest relationship was with Ms. Palm.

If you work out all the time and all you need is a trash bag.

If you use the bible pages to roll smokes
and you've got aluminum foil and a battery in your survival kit.

If you still write letters.

You may be a convict if you're trying to have someone send \$10 outside money.

You still fight over what channel to watch on TV.

You wave your hand in the air when you want to use the phone
and all your phone calls are collect.

You may be a convict if you trade your rice for chicken.

If you try to get to the front of the line.

If you clean your home on your knees and pee sitting down.

If your grocery list is just snacks.

If you max out and don't wanna go home.

You may be a convict if you can't do what you want.

If I am an addict, you're my drug of choice
If you were a mute, I'd be your voice

If you were soap, I'd be shampoo
If I was a panda, you'd be bamboo
If you were a twelve pack, I'd be drunk
And if you were a tutor, I'd purposely flunk

If you were sick, I'd be your medicine
And if you needed a pick-me-up, I'd be your adrenaline
If you were a pencil, I'd be paper
If I was a captive, you'd be my savior

If you were a drummer, I'd be a bassist
And if you were black, then I wouldn't be racist

If you were a cop, I'd swear off cocaine
If you were Love, I'd be Cobain
If you were formula one, I'd be a bloody racer
And if you were pleasingly plump, then I'd be a chubby chaser

If you were popcorn, I'd be butter
If you were at loss for words, I would just stutter

If you were a dog, I'd give you a bone
And if you were ice cream, I'd lick your cone
If I was peanut butter you'd be jelly
If I was a fly you'd be smelly

If you were candy, I'd have a sweet tooth

If you were lonesome, I'd call from a phone booth

If I was a cop, you'd be in shackles

If I had you bent over, I'd examine your hackles

If you were a movie, I'd watch you in slow mo

If you were a man, man, I'd be a homo

If I was a question, then you'd be the answer

And if you were carcinogens, I'd risk getting cancer

If I was Adam then you'd be Eve

If you were organized religion, then I would believe.

Imprisoned Poets

There's power in every imprisoned poet
And if I could I'd gladly show it
So that everyone would know it

Know it's something great and real
Not afraid to tell us how they feel
How they make it through the day
Avoiding games that people play
How they lie awake at night
With what went wrong
And what is right

Finding faith in things unseen
And every hour in between

Some are sinnin'
Others spinnin'
Some beginnin' to see the light

Some are losin'
Others cruisin'
The smart ones choosing to learn
 They're on fire, yes they burn to be better
They're writing poems
 Not just letters
They're not alone

Not these go getters

With us there's dreams and we've got laughter

And it seems that all we're after are the stories we've got to tell

Sometimes heaven hurts like hell

But you know it's just as well

In a world that seems absurd

At least we've got the spoken word

Words we're not afraid to speak

That keeps us coming back each week

We're not perfect

We're not proud

But we speak our thoughts out loud

Imprisoned poets who are free

To speak our minds

And that must be

Must be enough to keep us writing

It's really quite exciting

We want everyone to know it

It's fun to be a poet

I'm an inmate but I'm a star,
Poetic justice in every line, I shine behind bars
I bleed and suffer in penitentiary purgatory,
Barbed wire wild within this culture kept hidden
while the world eats sex and licks lies,
consumes drugs and claims fame,
goes for the greed and prays for power.
I count each day in hours away
from somewhere else I'd rather be
and I'm gonna try,
just need some Who, some Where,
yes, When, so What and a lot more "Why?"

Minute by moment I learn who am I,
become determined to try.
It's all do, don't you die.
Survive, stay alive.
I spend most of my time in my mind
but I don't mind giving this piece of my time,
my peace on earth: been poor from birth.
Hungry but not emaciated.
Hurts more when you're discriminated.
I lived for love while others hated.

The Devil couldn't buy my soul;
Heaven's Royalty is how I roll:
Made my King my everything.

Sure, I had my share of shatter dreams,

selfish ambition, stifled screams,
the rise of rage, the fall to defeat,
nothing that matters and nothing to eat.

The secret to learning is to make some mistakes,
to do what it takes,
to bend but not break,
Enjoy running this race,
and leaving this place better than we found it. No shit.
Don't quit.

Do what you can, however much you can,
wherever you can, you be the man you're born to be.
You overcome captivity.
Lead others to a life that's free.

Free from pain and guilt and greed and hurt.
Free from crime and hate and death and dirt.
Treasure your enemy.
Find what kind of friend you can be.

Lift someone up if you find them down.
There's so much to do if you just look around.
If you don't like feeling lost, then try being found.

Deal Me In phrases: how we roll, my next poem, censorship city

My next poem will be better

This one sorta sucks

To tell the truth I can't always tell the truth

And that sucks but my next poem will be more honest, more me

Less censorship city and not so witty

Might even throw in an idea or two or hazard an opinion

But in prison, we're guarded both by others and in what we say

It's not easy to play but we get by

We get around things

That's how we roll

Just don't ask me about my soul

Don't ask me to remember things that make me swear

Or want to care

Or bring out tears

Don't prey on my fears

Keep it light

I'll be alright

And my next poem will be awesome.

She's Not

She is hot

But let me tell you

What she's not.

She's not judgmental

She's just right

She's not a psych-co

Won't shoot on sight

She's not a fighter

She's not mean

She's not the largest women I've ever seen

She's not too bossy

She's not a problem

She's not a pain

In anyone's bottom

No, she's just right

Just right for me

And with my good luck

She will always be.

Freedom Strong

Freedom strong

Liberty long

Like a baby cries

Or a seabird flies

And if Freedom dies

Succumbs to captivity

What happens to me?

I will sing when I want

Think all I can

Pray over meals

Never forget how it feels

Exhilarating Freedom

I will find ways to speak freely with others

So they too may taste the thrill

I hope they will

Delicious Freedom

I will laugh out loud

Raise the roof

Speak my truth as I understand it

Faithful and Forever Free

Just ask me.

I blew it
I knew it
Was illegal
But didn't care
No, it's not fair
But I'm in here
And the world's out there

I've blown it
I should have known it
But it seemed worth it at the time
It must have
I wasn't down and out
That isn't what this is all about
But if I blow it
I know it
Will end up back here
Where the world is far
And can't hear
tears

Prison Blues

Sometimes you need to bleed, just to know that you are real
Something's gotta cut you, so you know that you can heal
How can you be happy if you know nothin' 'bout bein' sad?
To understand what you've lost you gotta know what it is you had
Argue or agree, it doesn't matter much to me
You ain't got nothin' to lose when all you've got is blues

You only miss the sunshine when you're freezin' in the cold
You start wishin' you were younger 'bout the time you're feelin' old
You're cruisin' for a brusin' and I'm headin' for a fall
Listen operator I just gotta make this call
How can I be free if she's not waitin' there for me?
I ain't got nothin' to lose when all I've got is blues

Rain may come, wind's gonna blow
Lord, I never knew I could feel so low
You can lock me up forever, go ahead and throw away the key
But you really can't control a man who knows how to be free
Everyone's in prison, depends on what you choose
But you know you ain't got nothin' if all you got is the blues.

Quote: "After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box."

Day after day we all play the game

Move after move it all ends the same

Whether king or queen or knight or rook

No matter where you were born or what path you took

We all play the game with winning in mind

But don't think too long or you'll run out of time

So what is the point? It all ends the same.

We live life to love because it's check mate, then game.

What Poets Do

Oh, you know...

It may seem strange

The way I can rearrange words

To say something

Or nothing at all

Like scrawl on the wall if you will, and still,

The poet is free

No, I will not be confined by my commentary

Absolutely unrestrained

I'm a run-away train

Not a trained little dog in a circus

Not the least bit bound

I speak for the sake of sound

Bursting around your ear-bones

Like headphones filled with rock and roll

An imaginary stroll on a tightrope of time

And nonsense and rhyme

Just for you

Because that's what poets do.

Gonna have a resolution revolution

Change no matter how strange

Baby steps to a better life

A different day

Some other way of doing things

And see what that brings

Will exercise make me strong

Or take too long?

Will drinking less make me happiest?

Has smoking got to go?

What will I miss, how will I know?

But I can't just remain plain old me

Change is a constant or ought to be

Prison Acrostics

Phone ain't loud enough
Radio reception is weak
If I'm sick then you're sick
Shower stall's too small
Our case manager never comes in
Next week's a world away

Put away, out of sight, out of mind
Rights? You've got to be kidding.
Insane people, angry people, sad sorts
So much time with so little to do
On my days off, I travel
No one knows what it's like

Patience is required
Relentless boredom
Internalizing it all
Seldom hear any laughter
Old ideas shaping our punishment
Negativity through captivity

Quote: "We give ourselves stress; life gives us challenges."

Perception can be a mean master

Our thoughts

Our biases

Can and do control us

They can make life a drudgery

Or they can set us free

It's all in how you look at a thing, isn't it?

Do we roll with the punches or let life defeat us?

Can we see the bright side

The walk in the light side

The everything's alright side?

Or are we flattened by fear

Hounded by hurt

Lost in loneliness

If you think you can't, you're right

If you think life's hard, it is

But if you're looking for fun

It can be everywhere.

Discerning

My bruised brothers

Be not broken

Find your comforting calm

In the midst of all this crowded confusion

Be discerning but not disturbing.

Flourishing, not fighting

Forgiving, not frightened.

Steer clear of hateful, humorless souls

Rise above the mean and miserable

Draw near and revere the remarkable

The things each day brings

Remain more thankful than threatening

Triumphant

Transformative

Welcome to this wonderful world.

Quote: "The meaning of life is to give life meaning."

What I mean to say is...

The big thought for today is...

We give life its meaning.

We interpret and analyze it.

Figure some things out then forget and begin again

Even what's important changes over time

Money, travel, games, only one thing remains

We do the choosing

Experience the winning and losing

And always wanting more

But what is it for?

What does it all mean?

All this life between death and birth?

Without love, what's it worth?

How To Do Time

Keep positively positive

Read all kinds of things, great books of philosophy

And the comics

Take every class you can

So you can type, create, analyze, and organize

Write letters, stories, journals, poems, for the fun of it

No harm in taking in some TV or a movie, If can, and make plans.

Forgive mistakes, yours and others

And while you're at it, spend time in both prayer or meditation

For a change of pace, review and relive parts of your cherished memories,

moments you enjoyed. Be employed, however humble

Occasionally be overjoyed with great or small things

Give your imagination wings

Visualize what you really want and it is more likely to happen

Think in ways that keep you happy, strong and healthy

And find ways to have some fun. Joke. Laugh. Sing.

Isn't it all in how you look at a thing?

Life's greatest things
The things we love
That give us wings
Are family, friends
Love and lunch
I can think of a bunch
Sex and cheesecake
Swimming and rest
Hammocks and sunsets
Doing your best
Parties and playing
Sunshine and rain
Sweet dreams and ice cream
Freedom from pain
Lessons and laughter
Music and dance
I can enjoy it all
Just give me a chance

Just Us

Court rooms

Where people wage wars of words
And rules and procedures and precedents
Where deals are cut
And what is said is balanced
against what is left unsaid
reams of papers
some never read
is Justice dead?
Smothered under piles of paperwork
Walled in by well-chosen words
Obstructed by objections
Exterminated by examinations
And cross examinations
Entombed by testimony
Cut to the bone by perjury's surgery
And all that's left to justice
Is just us.

The prison economical system

I'm a Buddy Bar baron

A rice cake rich kid

Pudding protagonist

Cigarette veteran

Pill pastor

Pleasure treasurer

Hygiene hustler

Call me Gopher

'Cause I'll 'go for' what you need

Yes, indeed

It's worth it to me

And worth is wealth

Now pass that puddin'...stealth.

I wanna love you like that

Wanna say I love's ya a lot
And will love you longer than it takes to grow a pine
Longer than my years, my hopes, my fears, all time
Love you 'til the calendar falls from the wall as dust
I must, love you like that, I must

I wanna love you crazy like a rock and roll opera
A candle in the wind
Nuns who sin
Every moment I'm in, love you

Until a million moons turn into suns
Mountains into sands
Until a boy becomes a man
Like that.

I wanna love you hard as solid steel
The sledge that pounds the stake
Give you my heart to break
But don't you hurt me like that

I wanna love you wild, child
Like monkeys swingin' on a vine
Like how I feel from too much wine
Like it's clear we've got plenty of time
You be the light for my smoke
I'll be the laugh for your jokes

Fun, like that

I'll love you gentle too

Like wind on a bike passing through

Silk on my cheek and there's no need to speak

I'll love you like a sunset show

Fast or slow, flowers in bloom, in every room

I'll love you all these ways and a whole lot more

And if you can't stand it, there's the door.

Are we having fun, yet?

Is that OK?

What will the warden think?

Have the proper authorities been notified?

How can poetry be educational

when all it does is stir the blood

and speak in metaphor?

What would happen if they all started doing it?

Started memorizing and performing and sharing and caring?

What's with all the laughter and smiles?

And is it addicting?

Will they be Jone-sin for more dangerous words?

Which few will read

Indeed

I think they're starting to think they're free.

Doin' fine

Writing poems to pass the time

We rhyme and we read it

We want it

We need it

Won't wait

To create

Within these walls

We won't call home

We are living inside every poem.

Inhale

Every breath

Every conscious breath

Can be a meditation, of sorts

Sniffs and snorts of mother air

Which we hardly appreciate

Until it's not there

for a minute or two

If only our love for God and each other

Could become as indispensable

As air.

A Broken Heart

A broken heart is like a night with no stars

Or going to the prom with your mom

It's a shattered window that lets in the cold

A world with no smiles or children's laughter

The sound of old love songs played through blown out speakers

The taste of spoiled milk with burnt toast

It's a guitar with no strings, no song to play

A stillborn kitten

The tears of teens lost

on homeless streets in a city at night

A fever everyone fears to touch

Oh yes, a broken heart can hurt that much

Long Live Liberty

We the people

The American masses

The hippies, rich dudes

Preachers and pacifists

Rednecks and nudists

Indians and engineers

Together

We determine what it means to be

The land of the free

Us athletes and welfare mothers

Old folks and astronauts

Farmers and free thinkers

Cub scouts and drop outs

Prisoners and pioneers

We each make up America the beautiful

And each

In his and her own way

Define and defend

Freedom for all.

Lessons Learned

I thought life was all about giving
until I got taken for a ride

I wanted God to be my answer but
got distracted by the other side

I wanted love to save the world
but got caught up in my own pride

I hoped drugs would expand my heart and mind
but I'd just stay inside and hide

I knew knowledge could enlighten me
but what if wisdom is denied?

I need dreams to keep on living
but most of those dreams have died

Together

We are close

As the ABC's

Close as can be

Like the 123's

We connect

Like electric current

Or magnets

We fit

Like a favorite pair of jeans

We need each other

Like a pencil needs paper

Or shoelaces need shoes

We communicate

Like actors and directors

Or CIA code specialists

My life without you would be

An empty bowl of cornflakes

Filling with tears

Because we go together like

Fish and poi

Sunshine and swimming pools

Pizza and Pepsi

Dreams and rest

You're the best

How Much I Burn

Where there's hope

There's fire

Here's my love

Fan the desire of my heart into flame

Speak my name

Know me completely

Like the alphabet

Memorize my touch

And never forget how much I yearn

How much I burn

To be your heart's desire

Kiss me

And learn the taste of fire

Just Say It Then

Just want to say
If you don't mind
Not to offend, mind you
Or appear politically incorrect
But I feel it must be said
And if no one else is going to do it
I'm more than willing
To step up to the plate
So to speak
So bear with me
For even though it seems obvious to some
It's worth hearing again and again
So I'm proud to say
Proud and honored to relate this simple truth
That covers a cacophony of sins

Love wins.

Too Long

Why am I destined to be so alone?
Trapped in this hell of my making
In these four walls of stone
Stuck in the system, my life just revolves
I search had for the answers but my problems aren't solved
I ask God to please help me
Lord, please show me the way
I can't find a reason to face every new day
And now I'm locked up and they won't let me out
My life's going nowhere and there's no other route
If I hate this so much, why am I back in this place?
Because I act without thinking, which is always the case
If I thought before acting, I would never do wrong
How much time will they give me?
Ten years is too long
But the judge slams his gavel and sends me back to my cell
If these walls could talk, the stories they'd tell.
People tell me their stories, I seldom believe
I'm just not gullible and not easily deceived
Is this all I'll amount to?
Is this all I'll be?
I forgot how I was raised
I was afraid to be me
But God sent me here, so there must be a reason
I can read the Bible every day but that don't mean I'm leavin'
But for now this is home with the inmates and the guards
I just want my freedom but it's just not in the cards

I try to call someone every few days
But they either don't answer or have nothing to say
I tell them I love them as tears fall from my eyes
I look forward to Hellos and I hate the Goodbyes
But I'm here because I chose this
The decision was mines
I chose the fast life and committed the crimes
I can't point no fingers
There's no one to blame
The years can't come back and things won't be the same
I put down my ego, I swallow my pride
But there's no denying that I'm dying inside
My daughter doesn't even know me
She probably doesn't even care
How can she love a daddy that's never been there?
My family tries, they do what they can
Waiting for my son to start being a man
Will I ever change, will I ever grow up
When will I know when enough is enough?
Am I through acting childish, is my partying done?
Will Mom and Dad ever truly be proud of their son?
If they passed on today, would they know that I love them?
Yet, in past priorities, I placed drugs above them.
Mom and Dad did their best, they did everything they could
It's not easy loving a son who's so far from good
My family's still there for me, I truly am blessed
I'm sorry for the pain, the heartache and stress
I hope that I'm done and that I change my life
I dream of having a family and finding myself a wife

But only God knows, only He understands
You can hear God laughing if you tell Him your plans
How will I act and what will I do?
I'm still a boy at the age of thirty-two
I hope I leave this place with my head still intact
Say goodbye to my misery and never look back
Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies
I invite anyone to try living a day through my eyes
You think you could do it? Even just for a day?
Would you continue to live life if you lived it this way?
I hope you've learned from my mistakes
Take a lesson from me: crime doesn't pay
And this is not the place to be.

My Ten By Four

All day, all day

I'm locked inside a box

I feel the cold cinder blocks

In this school of hard knocks

Scratchin' dates on da wall as I count years

I dream of skulls, spider-webs and tattoos of tears

The sun never shines in my lonely prison cell

Forever in the shade, might be hell but I can't tell

Four walls, steel bars and a concrete floor

I shed a tear for every year in my ten-by-four

I'm missing in this system, it's a heartless machine

This prison's got me hidden where I'll never be seen

All the cops and the charges and judges and the trials

So much pain in a man's heart that we cover with smiles

You realize what's important when you've lost what you've had

Missing family hurts bad, like a little kid missing dad

Four walls, steel bars and a concrete floor

I shed a tear for every year in my ten-by-four

The lost, the wicked, the guilt, the scars

I see dreams fade away through these eyes behind bars

Watchin' time disappear, there's no stopping the clock

I hear the sound of da keys when the cops hit the block

Shake down, piss tests, time alone in the hole

Full control is their goal

So they deny my parole

Never chased

The Dragon

Never

Felt that fire

Didn't drive down that road

My Poetic license was expired

Everybody loves the good times

Who wants a monkey on their back?

Gotta pay the piper boy, there is no going back

Why hide inside a needle?

Looking for a thrill

When the world is your best playground and the world is waiting, still.

Do More Than Survive

I'm an inmate but I'm so much more

I'm not the same guy I was before

I've learned to survive

Yes, I'm staying alive

By learning each day

And I take time to pray

I'm motivated by all these people I've met

Good examples or bad, I hope I never forget

I get angry when someone gets in my face

There's already too much drama and stress in this place

When I'm free, I want to make all new friends

And spend some time making amends

I've changed my outlook, learned to stay focused on me

And the kind of man I'll be when I'm free

I spend a lot of time just thinking about

The things that I miss, what I'll do when I'm out

I've come to appreciate the small miracles each day

The sun, the wind, kind words to say

I want to do more than survive

And I'm determined to strive

To love, and to love just being alive.

Nick O. Teen

You love me or have convinced yourself you do

Even though we foul a kiss

I'm not easy to resist

No, I insist

Inhale deeply. What's that? You can't?

I may make thirst,

But I offer you breaks

Cancer stakes. Gamblers smoke. Cough, choke

Soothing, so you think

If you're not afraid to stink

Let me take away your breath

Pave the way to early death

No need worry anymore

You can always quit like you quit before

Ours is a love/hate relationship

Who will be the first to slip?

When will our bubble burst?

We shall see who gets put down first.

PRISON

Please allow me my humanity

Reverse my willful ways

Ignore any ignorance

Save me from myself

Only I can find the answers

Now I have time to think things through

People locked up, locked down

Repeat offenders

Insights unsought

Same stuff, different day

Oh, how I miss my life

Never again, Lord, never again

Paying societal dues

Really would rather be anywhere else

Isolated from friends and family

Sad sometimes beyond hope

Only I can change my world

Now is the only time I have

People denied their freedom

Ready to make a change

Inmates, convicts, criminals

Serving time

Only a number

Never give up

Question Authority

In this country

Founded on equality

Immigrants of diversity

How dare anybody lord it over me

In the guise of some authority

No man's opinion means more than my own

No one has the right to tell me I'm wrong

No one's religion has more power or peace

No one knows what God wants

What God is

No one can tell me what to think

No one should be allowed to rule, oppress or cajole by force

Who are these egomaniacs?

I question why they want to mess with me?

They may shout louder and not be smarter

They may have power but not love

They may wield weapons but not wisdom

Why do we value and yet fear freedom so?

Freedom for me

Freedom to be

Please let me be

You have no authority over me, majority

The Thief called Ice

I remember a time when life was simple and free
When I knew who I was and what I wanted to be
Then everything changed and I was caught in his vice
That was the day I met this thief called Ice

At first we were friends, this old thief and I
But he always was taking and I never asked why
It started with money, he took all that I had
And when that ran out, things really got bad

I needed a way to pick up a deal
So he said, "Hit the streets and learn how to steal"
It was so easy I didn't think twice
I did all he commanded, this thief called Ice

He had all of my money and all of the gold
He had captured my mind and was after my soul
Then one day, I got caught in a place
And the police filed against me a burglary case

They put me in prison, locked up in a cell
But I'm much better off than being in Ice hell
So friends, listen to me and heed my advice
Run away and stay clear of the thief called Ice

Freedom

The ability to have and hold my own beliefs

Being able to hear the beliefs of others

Sharing what we believe

To own

And even suffer the consequences

Of those beliefs.

Freedom.

To Want To Wonder

The air is cool

On my mountain

Hard to tell

Where blue water meets blue sky

And what a view!

I wonder if love feels good

Like this

Like sitting on this mountain

Sky high

On a mountain of love

I want to wonder

I need to know

How cool that feels

Hard to tell where hearts meet

Until I meet you

Then I'll see

Oh, what a view I see in you

The Dream is My Reality

Welcome to where time stands still

Always leaving, but never will

Uniforms that never change

Just labeled mentally deranged

I dream the same thing every night

See the freedom in my sight

No locked doors, no windows barred

Nothing to make my brain feel scarred

Sleep my friend and you will see

The dream is my reality

Keep them locked up

It makes them well

They're getting better

Can't you tell?

Winston Churchill: "Never, never, never give up."

Never, never, never give up

No matter what fate puts in your cup

In yourself you must believe

'Tis the only way to achieve

When things get tough

As they sometimes will

Just keep trudging up that hill

When life's too hard

And you're feeling low

Say a prayer and go with the flow

There's a tinge of silver behind every cloud

So hold your head up and stand real proud

Don't leave before you see the miracle

And remember

Never

Never, never give up.

Tell the World

Things of this world

Are based on perception

Life can be filled with hope

Or a lot of deception

We can look at situations

With a positive light

Or make choices to do wrong or do right

This world can be what we want it to be

We have the chance to be sinful

Or the right to be free

We can love

We can hate

It's not written in the stars

We can cry

We can fly

The choice is ours

That First Hit

If I had the opportunity
To tell someone about Crystal Meth?
First,
The good things
The energy and the feeling
You can run around the island three times
Able to talk forever...
I stayed up for eight days...
But to tell you the truth
If I had the chance to tell someone about Ice,
I would tell them, "Don't even try that first hit,
because it's all downhill after that.
You'll find yourself burning bridges
especially with your family,
the people that you care for the most,
the ones you'll end up hurting the most.
If I could go back,
knowing what I know now,
I would never have taken that first hit."

Rock Bottom

I would never give someone dope
For their first time
Would never want someone to go through life
Suffering from drug abuse
I've lost everything I ever had
Because of drugs
Lost a lot of good jobs
Good friends
My precious family
I'm still fighting my drug addiction to this day
It's been over twenty-five years of suffering
And I don't wish that on anyone
The only thing I haven't lost yet
Is my life
So here I am at rock bottom
The only way I can move is up
I ain't giving up on myself
I'm going to fight my addiction
'til I get it right
I want to live
Not suffer
I'll fight 'til I win
I have nothing to lose.

A New Me

These heartfelt words

World weary

Yet unstoppable

Bounce about in my brain asking

Always asking

“What happens now?”

If there are two sides to everything

Here, it's only inside and outside

And I decided

Inside my head

I want more than just three squares and a bed

A new me instead

Not under lock and key

Not like it's turned out to be

I pledge allegiance to all that is free

And unstoppable

And what happens now,

We'll see.

Not the Best

Being in prison

Makes me sad

It's not the best time I ever had

But

I've seen birds fly through razor wire

Noticed the shadow of bars on the hallway floors

Celebrating the morning sun

Even noticed people going out of their way

To comfort others

Who are scared

Scarred

Trying to learn the rules from all sides

What an education

And everything's free

Except me

I Can Change

When to trust

And just how much

Dealing with it daily

How to hope?

How does one cope?

I'm feeling it intently

Obviously surviving

But not arriving at any epiphany

Dusk 'til dawn

Lights always on

This may make a man of me

Got some self-esteem

And a sky full of dreams

I hope I can make it

It may seem strange

But I can change

Or at least I can fake it.

That's Your Smile

And so it begins

Brand new and innocent

Have you buying diapers and payin' rent

It's no longer about you,

What you'll do and what you did

And the dreams you have now will be for your kid

Now you'll be second, that is, to your wife

You're a walkin' ATM, born to serve, that's your life

Whatever they need, no matter the price

Your existence now is one of sacrifice

Smile at those stains on the carpet, go shopping for shoes

No more sweet little baby, it's the terrible twos

Relaxing with him perched on your lap

It's your slice of heaven or it could be a trap

Head butts and baby futts, now don't hurt the child

He's stolen your heart and look, that's your smile.

He's a lot of trouble but you know you can stand it

Kids don't ask for our love but they sure do demand it.

Dealt: All kinds of hunger, The land of the lost, and In the still of the night.

Wait

In the still of the night

Here in this land of the lost

I feel all kinds of hunger

To touch and be touched

To savor the flavor of foods I like

To watch clouds blow over the mountains

To swim and dive and surf

To embrace my family with laughter and love

But I cannot

So I hunger

Empty

I take responsibility

Still my gut aches

When I think of my mistakes

Thankful that I'm not numb

What will I become?

What will become of me when I'm free?

It's all wait and see.

If Only, My Love

If you were paper, I'd be your pen

If you were Barbie, I'd be your Ken

If you were my wine, I'd be your grape

If I were Christmas wrap, you'd be my scotch tape

If you were a book, then I'd be your cover

If you wanted to be more than friends, then I'd be your lover

If I was a shark, you'd be my food

If you wanted to make love, I'd be in the mood

If you were Wonder Woman, I'd be your Superman

If you were a bicycle, I'd be your kickstand

If you were a surfer, I'd be your wave

If I was an explorer, you'd be my cave

If I was a gun, you'd be my bullet

If you was a redneck, I'd be your mullet

If We Could

If we were only as good as our words

If we could look in the mirror and respect that person

If we could enter a room without embarrassment and with ease

If we could meet each other without preconception

If we could give without strings and accept with grace

Wouldn't that be wonderful for the whole human race

Grandparents are

our continuity with the past

Our ballast in this stormy sea, life

The firm hand on the tiller

They kissed our parents

so they'd kiss us

They're the bedrock of our existence

and we're the embodiment of their hopes

Some Things That Are True

Life is change

The weather will change

Wait, and things will get worse

Wait some more, they'll get better

Fairness and justice are mirages

What you think has more weight than reality

'Tis better to love than be loved.

Sing Out

The real world,

The real me,

Tell me what I want to believe

Breathe hope into my hungry lungs

Give me the melody to my song

And I will sing out joy, loud and strong

It's here where I belong

God's garden, planet paradise

No more demons from shooting ice

I bid goodbye to all those lost days

Changing habits and all my old ways

I embrace my future starting today.

Fall in Love Daily

For someone locked up
You may be surprised to learn
I've been going places
Now keep your voice down
'cause it's sort of a secret
But I travel daily in my dreams
Move freely through my imagination
I refuse to remain captive
Will not be trapped by concrete
And barbed wire
Rather than suffer, starving for tenderness
I fall in love daily
On beaches and in night clubs
I wear amazing outfits
Drink the finest wine
And the music in my head
Makes me want to dance
So I'm doing fine
Even though I'm doing time
Even if it's all only in my mind.

In Car Sir Ate It

Positively pathetic crazy days

Out of whack

Cut me some slack

'cause this gets old fast

But this too will pass

Got more dreams than stars

Bars do not a prison make

Make no mistake: scars heal

I'm trying to deal with it all

Medical meals in free fall

My stomach sings of all kinds of hunger

From never enough

And no one notices something's lacking

My plastered on smile is cracking

Look on the bright side of what?

And why should I care?

Just one more question:

Is the moon still there?

Confined to a Void

Met my maker on Meth Mountain

And Satan said:

I'll grow crystals on your lungs

Trading your teeth for sleepless nights

Pornographic delights

Thin as a rail

Night-light pale

Confined to a void

Paranoid

Worship at my feet

No need eat

Meth breath that kills

Better than pills

When it all ends with you dead,

Remember what I said

Speed kills

Prison Reform, Ideas Anyone?

Better food, please

Once a week access to commissary

Different uniforms.

A top-down overhaul

Both Legislative and Administrative

New training for all involved:

(Admin, Prisoners and ACOs)

Determinate sentencing

(something that ends on a specific date)

More programs dealing with:

Addiction,

Anger management,

Goal setting,

Further Education,

Job training,

Relationships

Mental health

Physical well-being,

Sports teams and athletic competitions

Access to music and movies by choice

and more books

More counselors

A chorus

Arts and crafts,

Wood working,

Ceramics

Animal care and the raising of service dogs

Nature hikes (trail repair?)

Deck hand training for commercial fishing

And while we're dreaming:

Conjugal visits. Pizza and ice cream

My Bunkie

He's one mean mother
Tough as nails
The kind of guy
You wouldn't want to mess with
And yet
In the quiet of night
I hear him
Stifling back his tears
Fearful of all the years
Still to go
Tears he can't let flow
Hurt that he won't show
But I can hear him in the bunk below
And I too want to cry
To understand his reason why
But I can't let him know I know
And there's nothing I can do
Each guy locked inside these walls
Must find his own way through

The Sounds Around This Place

It's a trip what I hear in here

The many MTV mornings and shushing evening showers

Some late nights I hear

An ocean-crashing toilet-flushing racket

Inches from my face

Trying to find dreams

through the Walkie-Talkie chatter on each ACO's belt

and that off-key kid who continually sings sad songs

the whole day long

Every day after day

Always my boss always yelling, always

Yelling over the scraping of spoons on plastic plates

Made worse by inmates who constantly converse

Constantly complaining big talkers with their bullshit

I don't believe it a bit

Outside, weed whackers whip through dusty grass and grit

I hoot and holler but can't see the cat wars and

Mongoose battles that rage just off stage

And that blasted blasting from the quarry

is enough to rattle my teeth

Birds, thank God for birds that chirp and coo,

fluttering their wings

Handball off the wall

Clacking dominos and bounced basketballs

Slippers slappin' the stairs
as we return from lunch to who cares where
and I hope for the sound of wind and rain
the power of thunder
to hide the sighs of quiet desperation

The cell door closing, clicking.
Time ticking away
That's all I heard today

The First Time

Life has milestones, markers, measurements

Elastic rulers that stretch the conception of what's possible

I've had mine

I remember the first time

I shoplifted something I wanted

Wanted it enough to take the risk

Whether I got caught or not

So what?

This skill fed me later in life

It's good not to starve

It's great to not get caught

But it's best not to risk freedom

I intend to conjure up more creative solutions

At least that is my recent resolution

Lessons Learned

What a wake-up call prison can be

Just ask me

I've had to learn to be independent

To pursue what's important

To endure and persevere

I am careful with trusting

I avoid manipulation

I speak only when spoken to

Prison is a boys club badly in need of men

I intend to keep my beliefs

Appreciate my values

Learn from my mistakes and the mistakes of others

I will seek the council of my better self

I will find my way

My Heart's Desire

When things go wrong

I tend to lose focus

On who

And when

To trust

That's just me!

The character I've become

My heart's desire

Is to be the best

The best father

To give my kids unconditional love

Like my parents have given me

May I remember this

When I'm free

Heart Still Beating

Each day

In here

Each small part of a year

Is a new start

My heart still beating

Looking forward to eating

Still got debts to pay

Still get threats by hey,

I still take it in stride

I'm not here to hide

But to learn

To prepare for my return

To the outside

What Scares Me

The time has come
Foggy freedom's near
Close, yet unclear

If only I were truly free
To enjoy all those possibilities

They can open the gate
And I may leave behind my cell
Only to be released to a greater Hell

Society is a prison of space and time
Built to control, to keep us in line

Taught from the start just what to think
What to wear and what to drink

Who to love and who to hate
I carry my captivity like a heavy weight

Hunted and haunted, there's nowhere to hide
Can't break free from what I keep inside.

Freedom

Begins

Within

Involves experimentation

Appreciated in meditation

Requires some imagination

It can be given away

To addictive wishes and whims

It can be taken away

With Courts and Laws and just because

If lost, it can be found

Look around

Really learn to see

Really love

And see if that sets you, gets you

Free

The Functions of Language

Can you hear me?

I hope you understand,

If you could,

The plan is not to be misunderstood,

Now, what was I saying?

What words are you dealt

What vibrations heard and felt

(I feel like I'm on a shelf full of nick-knacks

Charming China, all cracked

Isn't everything made in China?

Well, isn't everything?

Isn't that funny except when it isn't.)

Laughter and language, the barks, meows, squawks and croaks,

Bellowing from the throats of God knows

Chirps and hums, waters run, wind blows

Goes to show how beautifully functional language can be, "B"

Humans speak

Bunch of bull shit, disaster

Except for the poetry and laughter

And songs to sing

Everything ever said and books read,

Shakespeare long dead

Something like that, now where was I at?

It's quite the trick to get the eyes to lie
Ever wonder, why?
No ham in my hamburger
Devoid of pork to spork or spife
Such is life it's said
The spoken word is not dead due to neglect
Change of subject
Change like music changes on the starry dynamo juke box of dreams
Patient screams
Furtive schemes and treachery
Leathery lechery

Silent telepathy an end to lying directly
What would she think if she knew what I think?
If we spoke all thoughts,
can we separate the what is's from the what's not's?

Communication pathways to a new kind of high
Thinking, creating, writing this is enough "why?"
Lord knows when it comes to drugs, I've had my share of those
(Do you think it shows?)

Had enough 'whys?' to be wise
To fear the futility of lies

I choose to speak with thought and poise
Something more than noise

Free from scheming and violence

Content with awkward silence.....or

Thankful to have something to say

If words be music, by all means....play.

Damned If I Care

People here think I'm fair game

They devour the weak

Love to pick on the lame

But I'll not be meek

Nor submit to same

I'll say my fair share

Stop them in their tracks with my stare

Do what you want with my body

I'll be damned if I care

I've got one foot in heaven

And friends waiting for me there.

Hear My Sins”

Father, forgive

Been too long since my last confession

I been rackin’ up the sins

Considerin’ the condition

my condition is in

A burden so heavy

can’t bear it no more

You put the ‘give’ in forgiveness

Teach me what forgiveness is for

So I’m giving my burdens it to You

like you told me to

By your mercy I’ve made it this far

No one can touch my soul

Faith, my protection

That’s how I roll

Now, father, hear my sins

And consider

the condition

my condition

is in....

Saving some
Spending more
Striving to have now what I had before
Energy!
Gimme, gimme, gimme, some more
Rain down
Pour!
All over me
Substance in abundance
Like water in the ocean
Strength with rhythm
To keep me in motion
Oh, how the gears grind when they turn
As the ears receive what we learn
From those who know
And those who know not
Disregard the tick and the tock
The clock resides in a dark corner of the mind
Winding only down
Never with "re"
whining won't change a thing
From crawling to walking
The sand constantly falling in the shape of a pyramid
What we do will not erase what we did
No matter how much we wish it would

So many wants, so little shoulds
Yes, I could, but will I?
I guess you try just won't do

To live is to move

To give is to lose

But then, some losses are wins

In this paradoxical life we live in

The only place where motion can stagnate

So live

Live now

'Cause life won't wait.

Fate is always on time

So I will not spend mine pondering

I will continue wandering

The sky, the ocean, the land.

Why?

'Cause I'm in motion, man!

Dealt: emotional imprisonment, love or fear, unconditional love, I've got this, nothing else matters, and silently singing:

I've got this

Life-long lesson

And I call it overcoming emotional imprisonment

The drugs I love or fear that brought me here

To this corrupt system

Are not to blame

I played the game

Nothing else matters

And no one gives a shit

So I sit, silently singing

Living and learning

Yearning to know

Understand

And practice unconditional love

Perhaps that's the key

To getting' free.

Pardon me

Said softly

Asks for attention

Pardon me

As a judicial request

Is fingers crossed for freedom

Pardon me

Said loud-angry-like

Is a

Stay-out-of-my-face-mind-your-own-business

Kind of thing

Pardon me

Is also asking for

Forgiveness

Which we all need

From time to time

And appreciate

Even without the thank-yous

Say it out loud

One time

I'm forgiven.

First Corinthians Thirteen Interpretation

If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels,

but don't know love,

I am only making noise.

And though I have the gift of prophecy,

and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,

and though I have faith enough to move mountains,

but have not love,

I am nothing.

If I give all I have to feed the poor,

my life itself,

but have not love,

nothing is gained.

Love is patient and kind.

Love is not envious.

It is not arrogant or rude or quick to anger.

Love turns its back on evil and rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things,

Believes all things,

Hopes all things,

Endures all things.

Love never fails.

We are made new by our faith, hope, and love,

but the greatest of these is love.

“Giving Thanks”

I give thanks for creative cons
and generous teachers who volunteer

I give thanks for paper and pen
and the language and intelligence to use them

I give thanks for books, their printers and their authors

I give thanks for music, their performers and their composers

I give thanks for plays and their actors and their producers

I give thanks for art, their creators and their galleries

I give thanks for inventions, their inventors and their innovations

I give thanks for provender, their providers, and their provision

Thanks for first draft, and final revision.

Neutrally Thankful

To be thankful

Is one hell of a feeling

To have the mental capacity to feel

Or the audacity to not,

The will to suppress,

To be neutral regardless of comfort or distress

And not neglect thankfulness

Thinking rationally

Can we have complete neutrality and be thankful?

My ultimate goal is to be absolutely neutral,

thankful sounds positive in retrospect,

makes it negative in this aspect,

and it's all a matter of preference,

biases are a nuisance,

to live with selective indifference takes some patience

that's how I've made it this far

How far?

I can't say

Well, I woke up today

Am I thankful for that?

That's a good question

The lessons of progression and regression all in succession,

I'm thankful for the middle ground between the ups and downs
If I can recall ever being truly thankful at all
for something other than the sun and music,

It's my experiences
Sad or happy
Triumph of tragedy
I must find neutrality
Somehow
Sounds complex
So for now,

I'm thankful for the rationale to attempt to figure this out.

The Bible says,
A lie is a lie.

But with all due respect,
There is a difference between lying to someone
And not telling the truth.

Lies are malicious, damaging and intentional

Not telling the truth may not hold those attributes of a lie

Two sides to everything, intentional or unintentional.

If you are in doubt,

Keep it to yourself.

Tedious Time

Time

Tedious time

Oh yes, it gets to you

In here

'cause you don't get out of here near fast enough

You remain

A world apart

With only your own heart to keep the beat

Keep you on your feet

Make you want to eat

Are you feeling it?

I'm dealing with it

And who gives a shit

If I choose to think outside the box?

Far from locks and bars

I must imagine the stars

It's The Little Things

Jaded

It used to take so much

Faded

Completely out of touch

Needing

Always more and more

Bleeding

Passed out on the floor

Injecting

Something small to fill me up

Suspecting

Pretty soon I might throw up

Blue

Was the tinge in my spoon's water

Flu

Without I'm getting hotter

Sickness

Rising in my gut

Quickness

I never had enough

Didn't think it would end this way

I didn't care at all
In here, not for a brief stay
Where was my crystal ball?

I cared not for the small things
Or anything at all
Apathy, this is what it brings
A concrete prison wall

Shoot it up, keep it down
I was spinning all around
Nothing left but my frown
In the chamber was a round

Gave me twenty for my deed
That I'll never do again
Guilty I gave as my plea
And now I am my only friend

The little things I took for granted
These things that brought me joy
On that day, too late recanted
Misbehaved, this little boy

It's the little things
Mother's smile, Godfather's cough
Won't see her for a while
Lives go on, to death he's off
First error and now trial

Grandmother, too she died
While I sat inside my cell
All the things I should have tried
To spare them of my hell

Little things, I'll enjoy them once again
But my family, who will be there?
Some little things will never be again
I ruined so much, I just didn't care.

Of Broken Hearts

My heart has been broken
Three outta five and yet, I'm alive

Her hand a gentle wind on the nape of my neck
Softly caressing
But then she left

Leaving me like rain,
Like tears on barren ground
Soaked in sad colors cuz she's not around

Swallowed by sorrow's quicksand
Unable to breathe, nowhere to stand

As with war, there's blood and there's pain
Oh, how I bleed to hold her again

Nothing to give, little to take
What good is a heart if it's going to break?

I am rent sackcloth, hiding the pain
You, my thirsty sky
And I'm praying for rain

This is a bad poem

the love in it is dried up

the metaphor, ridiculous

the similes are bent and broken

the rhyme, non-existent

its helter skelter rhythm

plays like burnt bongos

the stanzas are slanted and silly

and the whole kit and caboodle

ends abruptly

Dealt a phrase: "I'm Different"

I'm different

Though we're all unique

I have no filter when I speak

I speak my mind

And I think that's fine

I love to talk

But what is worse, not just converse

I like to stir the pot

And though it's not

nice to play with people

in such a way

What can I say?

I'm different.

So please don't take offense with my nonsense

I mean no harm to you

It's just something I like to do

And everyone has their story to tell

I love to listen and then give 'em hell

Exercise for the mind is not my idea of a waste of time.

“Where Thou Art”

My God

For my God is awesome

Help me

Be within me

Free from sorrow

Healed of pain

For Thine is the love

The power

The healing

Prayers and blessings

And I shall thank You all of my days

And love You

My God

My awesome God

Amen

The Truth

Tell me true

are you watching, God?

Do I matter that much to you?

Have you the time for me?

You want my love

But I am free

I can turn my back

Go on my own way

Or I can let you guide me

I can love

I can pray

Fan the embers of hope

I hold in my breast

And take all of my anger

Yes, help me give it a rest.

When Booze is King

Look at my life

I been slackin'

Sad sorry to say something's lackin'

It's positively pathetic how far I've sunk

But no one notices

"He's just a drunk."

Praise the Lord for alcohol

(even Jesus made some wine)

Just roll me over if I vomit

Don't worry 'bout me, I'm fine.

Dealt: Chillaxin', happy hour, bird through barbed wire,

Chillaxin' see

Relaxin', free

In my mind

Found some time for my thoughts

I think of you

And all we could do

The love

The power

You are my happy hour

Unlike a bird through barbed wire

I cannot fly to your side

I can't though I've tried to find a way

Day by day

I come closer to you

To hold you

But I love you even now and always

That's why I told you.

Breaths We Take

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,

But by the moments that take our breath away

Moments like births

Sunrises and sets

The ocean's awesome power

First love butterflies

Roller coasters and zip lines

A child's love for you

Beautiful music well played

Voices in song

Massive mountains and

Fields a-flower

I could go on and on

And indeed

That is the plan.

She is...

She is sunny and funny

Svelte and hot

But let me tell you what she's not

She's not mean, not vicious

Not cruel

She's delicious

She's not selfish or shallow

Not nasty or naughty

Not cunning or caustic

Not high-brow or haughty

She's not pushy

Not greedy

Not nerdy

Not needy

She's not old but not young

She won't tease me, won't deceive me

And if I'm lucky

She'll never leave me

“I sometimes make the mistake of thinking anything matters.” Curt Rhodes

Yes, you are free to think

Nothing matters

Such is your right,

Even if I think you're wrong

But if nothing matters,

Life is a washed out watercolor of all grays

If nothing matters,

What awful things we will allow

If nothing matters,

There is no God

It may not matter what matters most;

Father, Son or Holy Ghost

But some things must

Or we are just

A waste of dust.

Consider this rap
Your street level invitation
To keep it real
Don't have to deal with all your
Movie title morals
That bring you down to the street
With outstretched arms
Down to the level of down
Down with it
With all the stone starved melodies
Of the lost poets and rockers who rolled stones
And prayed for moss
Tell it to the boss
Cuz there ain't no money coming
There will be nothing in the mail
And it'll be "don't call us, we'll call you"
Just take a seat cuz
You can't keep the beat
Can't take the heat
You're not made for streets like these

Alone in my head

On no one's mind

Do I exist?

My name

On pieces of paper

In files, on lists, exists

Pieces of paper exist

Writing this poem

Black ink on off-white paper

Poem exists

I'm a tree falling in a forest

(trees fall to become paper)

with no one to hear the sound

I don't care

This tree exists

Alone in this forest

This cell

My head

Writing this poem

On no one's mind

I don't care, I exist

A word called caring

Written in black ink

Though writing doesn't make it real

I don't care

I do care

I exist

Even if no one hears, I exist

Even if no one cares, I exist

Someone, someday, will care, I hope.

We Can Make Love

How many Prophets does it take

to remind us

How many messiahs to find us

lost sheep

How many visions and miracles do we need

to keep us from forgetting

We were made for love

We were made from love

And we can make love work for us all.

Poem About Love

I'm a poem about love.

Well, I'm not, but this is:

Will this be followed by a quiz?

A poem about love

and love's crazy phases

and phrases

and prolonged gazes.

What I mean to say is,

What I'm trying to convey is,

The big thought for today is:

Love is more than a dream

More than part of the rhyme scheme,

but why should I philosophize

in a poem you won't bother to memorize

be we lovers or friends.

The point of this poem is,

unlike this poem,

love never ends.

My resolution
Is to make restitution
To every person, place and institution
I may have wronged
In any way

When I can find a free day

And it's not out of my way

Not too high a price to pay for livin'

Given I've been given so much

Guess countin' my blessin's

a life-long lesson

I Will Not Stop

I won't stop 'til I drop

Gonna keep on livin'

Keep on givin' life my best

'til I'm laid to rest

Not that there's so much just gotta be done

I'm just hopin' for some fun

I'm not lookin' for lust or fame or wealth

I just wanna enjoy myself

I've observed those who take life too seriously

And that's not the sort of path that appeals to me

I want to explore, always something more

To see, to do

And share it with a friend or two

To think and learn and laugh and grow

And leave lots of love behind when I go

An empty cup I be
Asking kindly Lord
Come fill me
Enjoy life in my shell
Tell me when I'm doing well
Lead me to where I can be of service
I'm rusty at prayer
And just a little bit nervous
Divine driver, take my soul for a spin
And forgive me those 'never dones'
And oh so many 'should have beens'
I'm just a vessel, cracked and worn
A flag flown too long now faded and torn
But since the day I was born
It has served me well
Here between heaven and hell
Night and day
Rest and play
Hope and despair
I keep breathing air
Keep on plugging away
So come in
Help me see
Replenish the light in me
and let's seize the day

Dad's Day

Dad, please forgive me for not being there
Because I'm locked up in here
I couldn't ask for a better person to honor
on this special day of the year

You taught me to be strong and noble
and to also have a big heart
Be slow to speak and quick to listen
so when I grew older, I'd be smart

As the years go by, I'm sorry that I have yet to make you proud
As smart as I was, I was stupid because I chose to be part of the crowd

Instead of being myself,
like everyone else,
I was trying to have some fun
Choosing to brag and boast,
but the ones hurt the most
were the ones who deserved more in a son

With nothing to gain,
through the hurt and the pain,
through the good and the bad
In spite of it all,
I knew I could always call on my friend, my hero, my Dad.

Three Haiku Poems

In-car-sir-ate-ted

The birds fly free but not me

Will I disappear?

I'm so lost

Since love walked away

There's nothing

My music

Follows the rhythm

Of my soul

Straight to Jesus

Imagine me dead and by some stroke of luck, I find myself in heaven.

Not wanting to waste any time, I go straight to Jesus:

I've got a few things I've been waiting to ask you, like, did you have to die like that?

"I didn't want to"

What about the virgin birth thing?

"They stretched things a bit when they wrote the book."

The resurrection?

"Does it really matter?"

But, the miracles?

"Exaggerations."

No walking on water, feeding the thousands, raising the dead?

"Sorry, but there is one thing that went well.

I told people to love one another...

and when they do that: miracles happen."

Freedom,

The ability to have and hold my own beliefs

Being able to hear the beliefs of others

Sharing what we believe

To own

And even suffer the consequences

Of those beliefs.

Freedom.

Sorrow lies
In darkness
Whispering
I can have you
Ruin you
You don't want to mess with me
I'll be all your fears
Flooded by tears
A voice of negativity
Scraping fingernails
Across the blackboard of your hopes

Dressed in cold sweat and chains
I'll be sand in your mouth

Tormented thoughts
All thoughts going nowhere
Same old same old

I say, "You are not me.
I will be free!"

My treasures are things I hold dear to my heart
That inspire me when I'm feeling torn apart
My treasures are thoughts that keep me sane
And one day will lead me to fortune and fame
My treasures are what keep me in this life
(And for damn sure, it ain't my wife)
My treasures are what keep me in a good mood
And sometimes my treasures make me look like a fool
My treasures are what keep me from wanting to die
My treasures are named Shy and Sky
These little beauties are my life's real treasures
They're truly my life's greatest pleasures
What I have accomplished in life so far:
I never turned out to be a star
But in my own ways of being me
I do the best that best can be
And the love I was searching for in life
I finally found the best possible wife
I got into crime, my shame in the past
Now I'm doing time, I need time to go fast
So when I get out, out of this place
Having paid my debt, I can show my face
To live a new life that I've learned in here
Accomplishing new goals, not far, but near
If I come back locked up and jailed
Then I've accomplished nothing and I know that I've failed

Will You Teach Me To Love

Do you know how to love?
Because I truly want to learn

I want the wisdom and the knowledge
With the understanding to discern

You see, I've tried to love but just don't know how
And I've come to truly realize that the time to learn is now

Will you teach me to love as I see you do?
I'm speaking of the kindness and the forgiveness
that encompasses you

The word is easily formed to come out of my mouth
but I want this same love to dwell in my house

In which direction shall I turn?
Someone please tell me where shall I seek?

And at the very same moment Almighty God revealed to me
To simply be kind to others and carry myself as meek.

The Revolving Door

The revolving door to jail:

As we enter we are confronted with many new experiences,

Feelings and emotions

The powers that be

Go out of their way

To inform the public

That we as criminals are being reformed, rehabilitated

Being prepared to re-enter society

But in reality we are treated like dogs

Left to fend for ourselves

Among personalities of every kind

“If you aren’t strong enough to hold it,
then it shouldn’t belong to you.”

That’s the basic mentality

In reality, we leave here angry, bitter and broken down

We re-enter society feeling left behind

Victimized with a chip on our shoulder

The war on crime claims that crime is out of control

So more laws are passed, stiffer penalties

All the while more jobs are created

by hiring more cops and correctional officers

crime and the war on it is a great economic stimulator

all the while us so-called criminals are broken down

un-rehabilitated, released back into society

set up to be returned through that revolving door to jail.

Basket Case

Do you really know yourself?

Can you handle?

There are natural highs and more

And the more I do, the more likely I might lose track

Lose sight of what I started for

My experiments in more may become impediments

What seemed to set me free

Becomes more of a need

For more

An all-consuming hunger

Say goodbye to the job

The family and friends

Taken on a ride that never ends

This Land of the Lost

Never enough life

Or time

Or love

Things better than gold

I'd trade a ton of respect

For an ounce of compassion

In this land of the lost

Lawyers confine us

Struggles define us

Sometimes justice is just us

Fire refines gold pure

I will endure

Can't be sure I'll succeed

Though I know what I need

My spirit flies like a bird through barbed wire

As I learn to walk again

One step at a time

World weary

Yet unstoppable

Always asking

“What happens now?”

If there are two sides to everything

Here, it's only inside and outside

And I decided
Inside my head
I want more than just three squares and a bed
A new me instead
Not under lock and key
Not like it's turned out to be

I pledge allegiance to all that is free
And unstoppable
And what happens now,
We'll see.

Doing Things I Should

At this point I'd say my attitude is quite good!

Although I'm locked up, I'm doing things I should

I'm in this program, getting by with ease

Ignoring what others say, it's me I have to please

Day by day, night by night, the time keeps ticking

I can taste the outside world and MMM it's finger licking

Stay positive, keep my nose clean and just keep on stepping

Kill them with kindness with a simple smile as my weapon

For freedom is months away, just around the bend

So don't veer off the beaten path and soon this all will end

I Used To Reach

This is the deathblow
Emotionally grasped chokehold
My love climbs fine without a foothold
I used to see but lack the motivation to reach
Without arms long enough
to guard my love from feeling heat
because it's still cold
I suppose it'll open when I...
If I decide to, then I'll...
Kid myself into thinking there could be more to this
I got a mad at your attitude not being mad at me
Mad at being stagnant, adamant, and damn it
I can't imagine you're out laughing
And living free
I traversed across the earth
and through several planes of hurt
to search for that part of me
I realized how much my negativity kills my creativity
Hard-boiled, coiled then unknotted
Non-sense clarity charity
Self-ish and ism, wisdom and stupidity
Love is so confusing usually – literally
Warm cuddly Care Bear fantastic
Back to passionate protoplasm
Back spasm twitch
Love hunger eats love rich
Cool breeze in the valley

Warmth from you

High above the mountains

Flying inside your eyes

Everything I want to do

Pales in comparison when I'm with you

True, but I want to make this work

Before I bust

Stainless steel vs. rust

My love is like control with no hold

BOLD

Let's start a fire and put on a show!

What You Blue About?

I know I'm getting old

And there ain't nothin' I can do

Can't run and play or love the way

The way I used to do

Things have started hurtin'

That weren't hurtin' me before

Feel like half the man, doncha understand

I can't stand it anymore

And when you're memory starts to go

And you gotta take it slow

There's nothin' that you can do

And all you got is blues

If

If I were in charge

And you, incarcerated

I'd say, "Good news!

You'll soon be liberated."

We've just got to change some views

Get society educated

They're only millions strong

It shouldn't take long

(Not as long as you've waited)

Here, Now

If I were some rocks
And you were a pipe,
Would it be bubbles of troubles
For the rest of my life?

I've got to stop
Lighting up the I'm-Not-There
Conserve on water
Not pollute the air

I've got to do something
Yes, little old me
I'm part of the problem
And that's a problem for me

I want to remain mindful
Be present
Be centered
Focused and kind

Be good and be ready
For all this day brings
I might change my perceptions
I might even sing

I might do a good deed
How likely is that?

But I'm here and I'm willing
And that is a fact.

If I were love
And you were sorrow,
Would you bring me to tears?
Would I give you hope for tomorrow?

I'm here
In prison
Inside walls, wire, and fences
Inside
I'm scared
By so many unknowns
Court and count
Depositions and depression
Silent screams in tortured dreams
I awake
I must not fake how I feel
This is real
Lot's at stake
My mistake
And no do overs

Being in prison makes me sad
It's not the best time I ever had

But I've seen birds fly through razor wire
Noticed the shadow of bars on the hallway floors
Celebrating the morning sun

Even noticed people going out of their way
To comfort others
Who are scared

Scarred

Trying to learn the rules from all sides
What an education
And everything's free

Except me

Sunset Colors

Colors

So beautiful

In the sky

And upon the sea

I sit here

And wonder

Was this created just for me?

Then I tell myself,

“Oh, no silly...

God Creates for all to see.”

Life's short

And no one can read their expiration date

Still, time keeps tickin'

So you frickin' better get in line

When they start handin' out laughter

Or you can cry me a river

Here

And ever after.

Those Little Moments

The moments with you
Were the best of my life
The hugs and kisses
Loving touch and a gentle caress
Waking up in your arms
As you whisper you love me
And even when we would disagree
Arguments were put aside
The nights were long
The love strong
No regrets
No need to rush the dawn
Leave me to my dreams
To lie in the longing of those memories of you

Each day

In here

Each small part of a year

Is a new start

My heart still beating

Looking forward to eating

Still got debts to pay

Still get threats, but hey,

I still take it in stride

I'm not here to hide

But to learn

To prepare for my return

To the outside

Reality

Here I sit behind the walls of confusion

I pray to my God it's all an illusion

Four walls and steel doors all around me

I feel that my past has caught up and found me

Where do I go and what do I do?

I pray to my God 'cause I haven't a clue

The Biggest Blessing

Love is peace, joy and freedom.
It's caring and sharing with your loved ones

But as I live and learn,
Through each and every day,
I have come to realize that love should be shared
with those who don't know what love is about.
Those with mad and sad faces.

No one needs a smile more than the one
with no smile on their face

A smile costs nothing.
So why not share your smile with others
And show them what love is all about?

Love, peace and wisdom, can hopefully
put a smile back on their faces.
And share the biggest blessing the Lord gave to us:
Love.

Love is...

Love is great

Love is kind

Love is fun

Love is joy

Love is agape

Love is God

Love is Jesus

Love is watching the stars

Love is riding horses

Love is boating

Love is dancing in the rain

Love is being loved

Love is talking on the phone

Love is Mom's kisses

Love is being with the family

Love is swimming with the kids

Love is being kind to one another

Love is being happy

Love is making love

Love is holding each other

Love is hugging your kids

Love is playing with the grandchildren

Love is heaven

Love is helping the sick

Love is learning something new

Love is visiting the imprisoned

Love is being home

The Rage Inside

Spark up my joint, sit on my ass

All my buddies tell me, "this too shall pass."

Wise words from wise birds

'cept all my friends are turkeys

As my high starts to fade

All my love turns to longing and my joy into rage

They say I'm too damn angry for my age

Serve it up with a slice of humble pie

You can just call me Mr. Not So Nice Guy

And that's Mister with a capital M-R

My words smack you up so hard you see stars

All I see is red, the color I bled

It pounds in my chest and it won't rest

Left with the taste of regret

Though I just can't forget

I won't forfeit my soul

Won't let rage take control

Better light up another

And find peace with my brothers

Anger

Where you at, oh, anger of my heart?

Where's all the love I once had?

They've torn Shakespeare apart

And this play turns out bad

Why you so mad anyway?

What you think is so wrong?

Bust out your violin

And play us the saddest song

Anger for the stupid

Anger for the mad

Anger for the fools who lost

What they never really had

Anger that just burns you

Stories you can't tell

No more hope of heaven

If your life has gone to hell

Fuck you anger

Like you fucked me

You made me a number

And now

I'm

not

free

Where Am I Going?

This morning

As the guard cracked the doors at 4 am

My first words were, "That's messed up."

I felt totally out of whack

There's this conflict resolution revolution

Going on in my crazy brain, Duhhhh!!!

I hate it!

Where am I going?

Who am I?

Does the fruit of my labor give me conditional surrender?

Mumbo Jumbo, big pot of Gumbo,

With shrimp, Cali peppers, garlic, jumbalaya

Screamin' at me

And it's positively pathetic

Cuz I gotta settle for unseasoned eggs and rice, rice, rice, rice

Am I in China or what?

Who am I? I'll tell you who:

I am heading for my imagination destination in over drive

I'm a kid of the King with this gold signet ring

And I fall and I fall

But in spite of it all this Humpty Dumpty puts his cracked

Pieces back in place

As this spaced spiritual revolution lets me know

Who's waiting at the end of my ride, brother.

I'm my brother's keeper.....OK. (Cain)

Where art thou?

Martin Silva

Given the phrases: crazy days, inner battles, when things go wrong, and, dealing with it.

Just a Kid

On those crazy days when things go wrong
When I am stuck dealing with it for just too damn long
I think back to those days
Just so long ago, when I was younger

Didn't have the perpetual hunger
Before my values were torn asunder
Back when I still had my best friend
And summer days seemed to have no end

'Cause once I was just a kid
Who never cared what politicians said or did

But now I'm stuck fighting inner battles
Stuck up shit's creek without a paddle

'Cause once I was just a kid
Just a skid without a purpose or direction

Sitting on curbs
Eating fast food in the 'burbs
'Cause once I was just a kid, did I mention?

At Last

After careful consideration,
After watching my life passing me by
I realized I must be nuts to let hope die

This too will pass

So at last,
After sitting around,
Doing a lot of thinking,
I've decided, "This is the day!"

"The day change will come."

Now I'm no longer afraid
No longer numb.

A Better Way

This is the day
Could be the day
Given one day

And if you only knew
All the good you could do
You too would be handing out kindness
Like tickets to heaven

You'd ask the right questions
And hope for more hope

You'd light this darkness every way you can
Understand?

You'd find a better way
And all that I can say is
This...
This is the day

Sharing is Caring/Giving is Living

Only now

I have learned the true meaning of caring

I know now the love of giving

Is better than just taking

Like the bonding,

The relationship of a dad and a daughter

From birth to successful adulthood

And today

When I gave my chow hall buddy

My main dish

That feeling resurfaced

By Brian

All It Takes

After they turn out the lights

In the still of the night

I can see what others don't see

The truth inside me

That shines

Reminds me

I'll be fine

All it takes

Is time.

“No one can make you feel inferior
without your consent.” Eleanor Roosevelt

I Insist

Here in Corrections City
You can correct me
But don't belittle me
Encourage me
But don't remind me of my mistakes
Put me in a cell
But don't put me down
It's enough that I can't get around
Can't go out to dinner with friends
Can't hold the ones I love
Can't swim in God's blue sea
I know I'm not free
To be outside
But inside, I insist on my humanity
I've got plenty of time to consider a new self
To learn, to grow
So remember, I'm a man
Who will one day walk free
I am determined to be.

Haunted Halls

Everyone's in prison

Just like you

Just like me

Sometimes

It can be emotional imprisonment

Or a twisted relationship

Failure to believe in one's self

Fear of when to trust

Or it can be buzzers and bells

Iron bar hell

Discrete behind concrete

From invincible to invisible

These haunted halls have heard it all.

What Hides Inside

Etched on my face

By years of addictive tendencies

Is a world of sorrow

But what others don't see

What hides inside me

What I don't let show is the kid I was

and will always be

There's both hurt and hope here

Just like you

So let's forgive ourselves

And get beyond the shame

We all have our masks

And are all so much the same.

No One Really Knows Me

Day after just another day
Only my thoughts to sustain me
I try to make the most of my time
Never forgetting my faith
Good books befriend me

There's always someone who needs encouragement
In time, this too will pass
My dream is for a better life
Each day brings me closer to freedom

Depression lurks in the sad shadows
One day I will walk away from here
I've got to watch my back
No one really knows me
Getting sick and tired of the monotony

There should be other ways to make amends
I feel forgotten, frustrated, lost
My life is not my own
Every person deserves another chance

A Lesson Served Cold

The night was dark
Dark as my soul
As I held the gun
Only a lonely one

I could blow out my brains
End my worldly pains

Play Russian Roulette
But what prize do I get?

Do I get laid, paid, dismayed, betrayed?
A lesson served cold like lemonade.

I couldn't go through with it
But I don't feel that I blew it

Guess I can deal with the strife
Sentenced myself to life

It's Not the Same

I tell you honey,
Never trust a man

Tell him only what you want
And let him guess the rest

Spy on him but don't rely on him
A man can be caught but never tamed
Love can be bought but it's not the same

So ladies, don't you trust those guys
Mention marriage and see how fast he flies
And that's the truth,

Hey, would I lie?

Alpha-betcha

All the people here wear stripes
But the guards wear stars
Can't call this place home 'cause it's not ours
Doing time as best as we can
Enough ain't enough when it comes to chow
Finish your whole plate than hurry up and wait
God must love us sinners and spinners
Hog the phone when you're calling home
Inmates locked down for count
Just a few more years 'til they let you out
Keep clean or get a free bucket bath
Living the dream? Don't make me laugh.
Missing my children, in my bed crying
No, you can't call it living when inside you're dying
Only we know how it feels and it never ends
Prison is for dummies and where are your friends?
Quit your yelling you're driving me up a wall
Respect everyone equally and be fair to all
Seal your lips and don't rat people out
Talk kindly to others, it's what life's all about
Use the gifts you're given
Visits are a slice of heaven
Watch your back, that's what it takes
X-cept the fact we all make mistakes
You're setting yourself up if you live to hate
Zip your lip and learn to deal with fate.

A coloboration

Emotion poem: Joy

Joy lives on playgrounds,
Between stars and clouds
Sunrise and in loving eyes

Joy says, “Seven days with no laughter makes one weak.”
It’s light like a mist on your face
Bouncy like a trampoline
Thrilling as a leap off a cliff

It’s whistles and giggles
Bird songs and love songs
Screams of delight
A breeze at night

Joy is a child smiling from ear to ear
Blowing dandelion blossom wishes on the wind

Joy wears moonbeam scarves and rainbow suspenders
Flowers in its hair and sea shells on its shoes

It tastes like a cold beer on a hot day,
Popcorn and pizza

“Come Joy.
Stay.
Let’s play.”

I'm Toast

Are you watching, God?

Can You see me surviving

In this land of never enough

Never enough chow

Never enough dreams

Plenty of people with not enough freedom

Can You help me God?

I'm toast spread with boredom and despair

And sometimes you need a real friend

Not just the Holy Ghost

And what I miss the most

In this poor excuse for a place

Is the sand between my toes

And the sun upon my face

Lord, I need some of Your amazing grace

To get me through

Seems the whole world's given up on me

So I'm counting on You.

Dealt the phrases: Every step, This is the day, and The Bible.

Made in the Shade

The Bible say,

“This is the day
That the Lord has made.”

And I have got it made in the shade

Livin' breezy and easy

In the shadow of the cross

Of that put-down

Small town

Carpenter King

And I say,

May every step you take

Distance you from every mistake

You have ever made

Be cool, seek the shade

And if life gives you lemons,

Make lemonade

Get Down, Charlie Brown

Down town
Laughin' like a clown
Good old Charlie brown
Singin' for the sake of sound
Bouncin' 'round your ear bones
Like head phones
Filled with rock and roll
A Juicy Lucy stroll on a tight rope of time
Of nonsense and rhyme
Like scrawl and the wall if you will
And still, the poet is free
Ain't nothin' you can say to me
Nothin' else I'd rather be
Looky here and you will see
Look and see and you will hear
The poetry blast past your ears
Forgive and forget your feeble fears
Take time to cry and dry your tears
Though they lock you down for years
You will arise to cries and cheers
And you will always be
Forever free
Forever free
You just wait and see.

Inspired by a Circle Poem Collaboration

My One Weakness

a Deal Me In poem

Don't have much
But what I've got
Is all kinds of hunger
So make it pizza
No, make it freedom instead
With a real job
And a place to lay my head
And a woman to grace my bed

Let love be my one weakness

So much I want
So little I need
And when I'm finally freed
Though miracles would be nice,

I think I'll start with that pizza

At least one slice.

Time Invested, Money Spent

Time invested

Money spent

Intellectually, I'm heaven sent

A fool who once had dreams of A Good Dad

And a better human being

And a journey full of continual relationships

From cell, to cell, to cell...

Some broken, some built

Ever learning

When investing what's beneath my chest

The first five years of my life

In the Hotel Halawa

Was filled with empty card games

Chasing and investment of laughter

Compiled with finding lost family members

When is the store order finally in?

You my cousin, cousins, cousins, cousins

And the conversation ends

Usually with a request

I can have one Buddy Bar?

Time invested,

Money spent...

Haikus

Help me, Lord
Comfort my brothers
And bring joy.

Halawa prison
Yes, there's poetry
That would amaze you

We all can express
The thoughts we have in our hearts
And that sets up free

This is fun
Dancing in the sun
Time to run

Her memory wanes
Chill wind arctic night cresting
To fall before flight

Time
The sun half setting
Embers cool, the ashes blown
Vacant eyes of age

Deal with it

Halawa poets

In da house!

Rogue Donuts in the Street

Rogue donuts in the street

On the same old Rodney King beat

Smash, grab and dash

Do it habitually until colored lights flash

You know it's funny, in school I couldn't even say my ABC's

Now those alphabet boys all have eyes on me

Rogue donuts in the street

They come rolling up fresh, get dunked in coffee

Like Kobe and Lakers, those law abiding fakers

Rogue donuts in the street

They come a dozen to a pack

To serve and protect

But corruption's just another racket

You know they got twenty different flavors

State, FBI, CIA, NSA

And the list goes on

Ha! Try to tell me I'm wrong

Rogue donuts in the street

And if you don't understand, let me repeat

Fuck rogue donuts in the street.

Incarceration Situation

Many aspects of incarceration are enjoyable.

The thrill of commissary store orders

(A highlight for those fortunate enough to participate).

Meal time chow, a another source of entertainment,

Tasty and nutritious.

The comradery and physical exertion at “Rec”

Or working out in the cell are a pleasant diversion.

The learning Center and Rec Library

Provide opportunities for personal enrichment

Via classes or time spent reading a good book.

Hot showers, clean clothes, and sheets on your bed.

You can sleep the day away.

Watch TV, talk story,

Play cards of dominoes.

My point?

Prison, like life, is what you make of it.

Be positive.

Look for the good.

Be grateful

And try to enjoy the time.

What Works When Doing Time

Every damn time I come back through those prison doors
I always stick to my same routine that never gets me bored
I begin the day on my knees praying to the Lord above
Always giving Him thanks and praises even while I'm behind these walls
I keep myself away from all the bullshit that goes down
The same old junk and jive that I heard when I did my first time around
I try not to associate with that type of crowd
'Cause that type of people will eventually bring you down
I keep things simple, day in and day out
I daily workout lifting water bags, that's what my day's about

I have also plugged into classes to educate my mind
Which keeps me learning something
Instead of wasting my time
I also get myself a job working, whether its in industry of FSU
Though it's not about the peanuts I earn
But keeping my day running smooth

I also have my weekly phone calls
To my loved ones that's outside
It helps keep my pride in check
And more in touch with my humble side
It's also good to write letters every now and then
'Cause to me it has more meaning when it's written with a paper and pen
Although behind these walls, there's not much to do
Keep this in mind, just continue to do what works for you

Haiku

Waiting for freedom
Quick, look at me daily
I'm already free

Tough Spirit
Inner peace strengthened
Christ, my King

Recording my songs
Telling my stories through pain,
Music, melody

Disguises
Look out for evil
Shape shifters

Knowledge strengthens me
Foolishness deprives my mind
Which of these to choose?

Staying hopeless stinks
Now get up and help someone
No pity parties.

With time, healing comes
Hands raised, praise the almighty
Jesus is my Lord

Imagination Meditation

Today I realized,
there are two sides to everything
I make my way,
His joy I sing
Through C H R I S T
Words of wisdom flow
from the B I B L E
Ask, seek, knock,
find the real me
Father, help this child to see
Define my divine identity
A world apart I await your victory
Will it be pleasures or treasures?
Tell me telepathically
For I am sometimes spiritually blind
Like ice cream in hell
Father, I'm melting
It hurts
Give me a sign.

Life is More...

Mind over matter

What a way to live

Living and thinking outside this box.

Every step you take through life

Watch your back but don't tell

It's just as well

And what others don't see won't hurt

They won't mind and it won't matter

Life is about more than three meals and a bed

Find faith instead

It matters.

Vice is a monster
Pride, lust, envy, anger sloth
Strive to be, be free

Life is good
Perception is mine
Choose the right

Sunday is gloomy
My hours are slumber-less
Dark as the shadows
I live in are number-less

It may seem
 From where you sit
 That ahead lies only defeat

But life is full
 Of many isles
 So why don't you change your seat?

One word Haiku

Illusion

Immortality

Extinction

Awareness

Unreliable

Fantasy

Lost joy, youth

Surf, dance, sparkle fly

Old men stumble

Be gone, torment mine

Dollar sign eyes, candy lips

Our forbidden pact

Beggar on his throne

The King dies in rich excess

Astride a pale horse

Ask me the right questions
And I will seek your answers
Chase them to Earth's end
And bring them back to you

But no matter what you ask,
A lie is a lie
And I cannot change it
I would wish not to give it to you
But I cannot seem to find the truth

Please tell me your heart's desire
So that I may defend it with my life
Give it my honor
Make it mine

Together, we have nothing to lose
But one another's embrace
So do not despair
For I am here
To hold you in the night.

When I Fall

I must be nuts
to be back in prison again
I failed to change my character
and improve myself
enough to stay out
But when I fall down
I get back up
and dust myself off
and figure out what I did wrong
to end up in this predicament
I plan to do things differently
and make a new start in life
I plan to achieve financial independence
so I will not be in this situation again.

God is my co-pilot
Beside me flying beyond dark blue skies
It took me most of my life to realize
That I'm loved
Through days and nights and wind and rain
Hopes and dreams and loss and pain
Guided by God's good grace above
Loved
Forgive me every wrong I do
I'm counting on you
To show me how to live
And how to die
How much to love and every reason why

God, you're my co-pilot
Come on, let's fly

Sky winds, silent beauty
Cries blossom in the air
The sound of defeat lingers

Black death upon me
Its cold arms reach for my heart
I rush to her embrace

Don't forget
Your love is deadly
So kill me

Yes, you can
Then you remember,
No, you can't

Mortality
If I only die
A legacy of lost words
Never to be heard

The Good and the Bad

I'm a good poet

Well, not just good...

And 'great' doesn't quite cover it

'Outstanding' comes close

As does 'magnificent'

Though I prefer 'unparalleled'.

Most any superlative is always appreciated

Though I don't need others singing my poetic praises

To maintain my sense of competent accomplishment

Frankly, words themselves fail

To adequately describe the poetic pinnacles

Of satiric success I have achieved

Or so I believe

Which is in itself ironic and a paradox

Since words themselves are the very tools I employ

To express my thoughts,

My emotions and memories,

To describe life's mysteries,

To analyze,

And categorize,

And dramatize

Each occurrence and endeavor

That catches my fancy.

And though, it's true, I don't need the praise...

Yet, I humbly accept it

As a necessary result

Of unintended greatness on my part

'Tis true,

I promise you. Cross my heart...

Anything New?

I don't mind

We are not separate

We're one

Think about it

Kinda fun

Collective Human Consciousness

Ala Carl Jung

Then we add Artificial Intelligence to the mix

Download everything

The deep six silicone chips

When you think or do

That's nothing new

There's nothing that's new under the sun

If you think about it

Kinda fun.

Lost Frost

Without my glass,

I don't see

Feeling medicated

I double take, it

Sure fits to a Tee

Blue ones, yellow ones

Fat ones, small ones

Yumi filling

Tip a bottle

Roll a blunt

We be chilling

What a cost

We get lost

In a mind game

The drug frost

Three Haikus and a poem

3 Just be mine

5 To be for all time

3 You'll be fine

5 He'll come on a cloud

7 Shining in all His glory

5 Just yell for joy now

3 You're so grand

8 Giving all you have all the time

3 You're so kind.

Expectations set

Too high. Too low

It's hard to get them right unless you know

Know exactly what you're looking for

What you want, where to go, what to do...

Dreams and/or failures await you

What I suggest you do is pray to God for help,

For His will done through you

And remember, there is nothing that's too hard for Him to do.

For all things are possible through Him

You can begin again.

Religion

Meditating on how amazing she is
Trying to capture the soul that lies behind her eyes
I play at pleasure,
That role at the tip of my tongue
Performed upon her soft lips
The perfection of a kiss
So precious, like scripture
Read on a heart of love
Sweet like honey dew in season
Creation lies in her, her secret touch
Relief from the pain of love
From all distress
My expectations of her can't be forgotten
Every detail a treasure beyond diamonds and gold
Her lips lead me on pathways of passion
A captive of her ecstasy
Blinded by her physical beauty
Lost, entranced,
Spiritually she strengthens me
Secure in her silent, sacred trust
And a wild fire of fantasy and desire
She is to me all mystery
An innocent blessing
All love can be

Red Dawn

This crack of dawn, I rise
The morning light in my sleepy eyes
Stars fade behind the slumbering moon
And all too soon, the sun's rays
Call out to me of summer days

Between blue sky and bluer ocean
The noise of a world awake, in motion

But this life behind bars says I must stay
Moment upon moment, day after day
Weeks and months and years that tell
Of a life lost to a lonesome cell

Watching the world through the window cracks
All I gave up. All I can't get back.

Life passing me by like the wind-blown clouds
Safe within these walls from the cars and crowds

Here's to Hate

I intend to set this whole world on fire
Dethrone the Devil with Death and Desire

Feast your fill on this hellish hate
That burns to ashes heaven's gate

Wicked nightmares, deadly revelations
A landscape of skulls and abominations

Holy water wasted on desert sands
Drunk on the liquor of blood-stained hands

Inhale the smoke of my smoldering name
Lust after the taste of my magnificent fame

You pay the price for a hate this hot
When all you could be becomes all that you're not

The perfection of deception is lost in lies,
And the best part of living is that everything dies

Breathe You In

I wanna love you like nobody has before
Give you all that I've got to give,
Then give you more
Love like you're my first so that you'll be my last
Breathe you in 'till you're my present, future and past
Be with you even when your parents make it hard
Even when you're using, abusing my credit card
We'll take our love and just go wild
Let our hearts write our story, free and untitled
'Cause that look in your eyes makes me lose my mind
Crazy without you, heart heavy
Like barbells dropped on my chest
You intoxicate me, I can find no rest
It's scary how much I care for you
Unable to breathe, I'm turning blue
It's only you
You have become my drug of choice
I live and die to hear your voice
You are the blood of life inside
Keep me alive,
Come along for the ride
Together 'till the end
And a little more, even then.

Sweet Stuff

I'm White Chocolate and the ladies love it.
They know I've got Good News in my pocket,
Dripping Rainbow Skittles and they want to taste that pot of gold.
I will deck them out in Diamond Caramel-covered Chocolate Jewells.
(I ain't no fool) It's all in the mix, Honey, have a Twix.
My sugar sweet, she's a Jaw Breaker but with Buttercup behavior.
I delight her Licorice, 'till she shake like Laffy-Taffy on Tutti-Frutti.
Sweet Tart, I'm dreaming about your Milkyway, dunking your Cookies and Cream,
Picturing you wrapped in Red Belt Sour Strips that tease.
Gonna chew your Juicy Fruit if you let me see you Tootsie Roll.
White Rabbit, Trix like this aren't for kids.
I'm a Willy Wonka workin' a Big Hunk and Wonderballs. To love me is to taste me.
Don't you wanna know how many licks it takes
'till you reach the center of my Lollipop? Now, stop.
First, they're sour, then they're sweet. Sour Patch Nerds never heard
the Fruit Roll-up and over these Gummy Worms.
Don't worry, I ain't gonna Starburst your bubble baby.
Do yourself a flavor sweet cherry and love my strawberry
With your Hershey Kisses.
Kit Kat, you want Reeces Pieces on your cupcake?
Be my tasty little lemon apple blueberry.
I wanna bring you Almond Joy,
Be your Life Saver,
Your Butter Finger,
Snickers licker
'Cause you're not the same when you're as hungry as I am for you.

Love Is

Love isn't measured in distance nor time

Love is a feeling no word could define

Love is a way of thinking that could make your heart blind

Love is that special person who is stuck on your mind

Love is so many things we don't know where to begin

Love is that special person you dedicate your life 'till the end

Love is something we search out lives to hold

Love is worth more than any money or gold

Love is our hearts and every beat that they take

Love can sometimes hurt but it's never a mistake

Holding Back

Every time I see you, my heart stops in its place
It's melted by the beauty of you angel-like face

Your smile so pure, it makes my heart ache
For us to be together, I'll do whatever it takes

As I see you pass by me,
I wish we could be in a world without boundaries
Where it's just you and me

Holding back these feelings, it's not easy to do
When deep in my heart, all I can see is just you

I want to hold you close and feel the softness of your touch
Looking into your eyes and show you I love you so much

One day it'll happen, it's just a matter of time
No longer a dream, I'll be yours and you'll be mine

Don't You Quit

When things go wrong as they sometimes will
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile but you have to sigh
When cares are pressing you down a bit
Rest if you must, but don't you quit

Life is strange with its twists and turns
As every one of us sometimes learns
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out

Don't give up though the pace seems slow
You can't succeed if you don't give it a go

Success is failure turned inside out
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt
And you can never tell how close you are
It may be when I seems so far

So stay in the fight when you're hardest hit
It's when things seem worse that you must not quit.

Take Notice

So many memories come to mind

As the morning sun starts to rise and shine

I jump out of bed and notice no one notices what I find

It's another beautiful day

I only wish others could see things this way

I'm thankful I can see is all that I can say

If I could, I'd give them all poet's eyes

If that's what's lacking, I hope they realize

Love your life and oh, how time flies

If

If I had known then
what I've come to know now
I'd have made that dead body
disappear/go away/vanish somehow

It's not just a matter
of a right or a wrong
It's more nearly about
how to just get along
with the system or neighbor
with which I must practice
cooperation and community
in place of this mis-justice

Pass It On

When I was twelve, I lost my attitude of gratitude
The most powerful loss of this world
Hard to go on with my father gone

Now with my true Father found
I patiently wait for a heavenly reunion
It'll be the most fantastic thing to ever happen to me
Incredible to describe
So many ways free

Awesome and intense
To arrive at that peaceful place
I'll see the one I've waited for all my life
I'll know His grace

All these amazing things He taught me
I'll reach out to pass it on to others
Looking forward to time without end
Beside these sisters and brothers

To rejoice in His presence
After all places I've been
To finally find my rest
In harmony with Him

The Other Side

His ways are not our ways
Lean not on your own understanding
He loves us and wants to save us
Not punish us or be demanding

He is just and it must be hard for Him to see
The hurt and hate that in our world abides
People get away with doing such terrible things
Though they pay dearly on the other side

Ah, the other side, the one we cannot see
Or can we? Is it right before our eyes?
From majestic mountain peaks
To glorious sunset skies

There are glimpses of heaven, though I don't need proof
This is no court of law
But there have been miracles in my life
With hope and love and awe.

There was a time in my life, I was bitter
Held hatred in my heart
Until I turned to Him for solace
Intent to make a new start

Lord knows we must love

And learn to live and let live
And if we want His forgiveness,
We must first learn to forgive.

When the wealthy oppress the poor
Don't you envy their nice ride
They may have some glory here
But not on the other side

So pay attention to where you're going
And don't think of yourself as clever
Enjoy the comfort of knowing
That the other side is forever

Thank God for God
That's not a silly thing to say
Don't get caught up in the world
Rather, turn to Him each day

The world's wicked ways can't wear you down
Learn to take everything in stride
And you'll learn that God's love is all around
Both here and on the other side.

Shake These Bars

I hear the keys jinglin',
They make an eerie sound.
I know the ACO's a-comin'
Gonna lock my butt down.
They grab me by my arms
And throw me in a cage.
I don't show the hate
But inside I feel the rage.
Welcome to three squares and a cot.
I wonder how much time have I got?
You may think I've got a deal,
But how can you know how I feel?
Fellow inmates, suit up for battle!
Let's shake these bars and make them rattle!
They may take us and give us more time,
But they'll never break us in our minds.
We've been through this.
There's nothing to this.
We can do this: doing time.

People Like You

There are very few
People like you
A special kind of person
The world needs more of

People like you
Make everything so much nicer
You have a unique ability
To turn happiness into joy
And sadness into understanding

“You are appreciated beyond words
Because people like you
Mean the world
To people like me.”

Mother and Daughter

Push! Push! You're almost there!

The room filled with screams and cries

While everyone stares

Push! Push! You're almost there!

Daddy looks like he's going to faint

Quick, someone grab him a chair.

Momma looks at the doctor and says, "I got this."

And gives dad a sigh.

Momma pushes and pushes, 'till she is relieved

By her newborn child's cry.

As Momma held her newborn child tight

She looked deep into her pretty brown eyes

Promising to love her and never let go forever and ever so.

Years have come and gone

Nothing can break this mother-daughter bond.

The love is unconditional, these two are inseparable

Her baby girl is all grown up now, ready to live out her life

Remembering, promising never to let her go

Her eyes start to tear up and she starts to cry

Her baby girl asks, "What's wrong, Momma?"

And Momma replied, "Nothing. Just remember Mommy loves ya and I'm here if you want to talk, or even go out for a walk."

Her baby girl held her Momma tight,

Looking into her pretty brown eyes, saying,

"I Promise to love you and never let you go,

Forever and ever so."

I love you Momma.

Exploration

Seeking new land

Time to expand

The family has grown

To heights unknown

Only the brave will succeed

To find new land and plant new seed

It's a drive to see,

To live, to be

On a new frontier

New friends, new plans

For days at sea

The food gets low

So far to go

At last we see land

So small, so grand

Faith to fruition, to persevere

My heart in Euphoria

My feet on new soil

Time to get busy

Time to toil

I love exploration

Fulfilled expectations

Just keep the faith

Congratulations!

The Guys Can't Sing

Who put the 'ho' in Holidays?

The gift that keeps on givin'

Why am I doin' all the learnin'

And she's out workin' for a livin'

How come Santa's not arrested for multiple B & E's?

Does he have protection or did he cop a plea?

Where we gonna put the presents when they lock up the Christmas tree?

The only gift is what you give yourself and the day you walk out free.

Which ones are the decorations if all of us are seein' stars

And dreamin' 'bout some fast food, fast women and fast cars.

No way we're going carolin' cuz most of the guys can't sing

And if baby Jesus is on our block, no one is sayin' a thing

Still, a very merry Christmas for you, for all the guys

And who's to say there won't be angels singing praises in the skies.

Time

The great equalizer

You can't buy it

Can't sell it

You can never get enough of it

If I had a dime for every time

I was a minute or two late

And if I could find some time to cover that crime

Though it sounds a little bit asinine

I'd probably add a dozen years to my life

So I ask myself, "Is it worth all the strife?"

If it were only in our power

It'd be worth it for even an hour

To change our ways

Make up for our wrongs

Give our loved ones the time they wanted all along

So the gist of this poem, if you don't already know,

Is to love laugh and sing. Just go with the flow.

Enjoy every minute

Do the best that you can

For the time we've been given is all in God's hands.

First off, I don't care

Don't care what others think of me

Won't give them any power over me

I'm determined to remain free

So let them think I'm an aging hippie

Let them think I'm rude

Or self-centered (Who isn't?)

No skin off my nose

They don't seem to notice how I play them

Stir the pot

Rattle their chains

I call it rounding off their rough edges

Ok, you could say I give them shit, just a little bit

Don't mean to hurt no one, I'm just having fun

They may think I don't know nothin' 'bout diddly-squat

So what? I know God

I know what I like, I stay out of trouble

And don't care what they think

Give

Give me

Some of yourself

Your time

Your thoughts

Your touch

Because it matters so much

Be only honest with me

Sometimes lies sound like honesty

What a difference it makes

And that matters to me

And if you do

I will love you

Even if I can't see you

Or touch you

Or tell you

As much as I want to

Love

Takes it

To another level

And I hope

That matters

To you

Changing From Within

God

This time

I made up my mind

I'm done

It ain't no fun

In and out

Ain't what it's about

Need to renew

My thoughts so true

Doing what's right

In your sight

Forgiveness of sin

Changing from within

Determined to succeed

It's not a must, it's a need

Living this life

Without anxiety and strife

Choosing wisely

Will make you happy

I've got to believe

So I can achieve

And now I pray, just for today

Let my light shine

Your blessings divine

With you God, I'll win

In Jesus name, Amen.

An empty cup I be
Asking kindly Lord
Come fill me
Enjoy life in my shell
Tell me when I'm doing well
Lead me to where I can be of service
I'm rusty at prayer
And just a little bit nervous
Divine driver
Take my soul for a spin
And forgive me those 'never done's'
And oh so many 'should have beens'
I'm just a vessel
Cracked and worn
A flag flown too long
Now faded and torn
But since the day I was born
It has served me well
Here between heaven and hell
Night and day
Rest and play
Hope and despair
I keep breathing air
Keep on plugging away
So come in
Help me see
Replenish the light in me
and let's seize the day

My Everything

You gave me life
You took care of me
And loved me in every way
So I just wanted to show you
That I love you and appreciate you
On this Mother's Day
When I was a baby you made me your star
Made sure I would shine
But if I got stupid, you didn't hesitate
To put a stick to my behind

I can't thank you enough for all you've done
And all you continue to do
My Mommy, my Rock, my everything
The one that I turn to

You gave me a roof over my head
Clothes on my back
And enough food to make me fat
And put up with all my whining
Because I'm a spoiled brat
My childhood's full of all the memories
of the amazing things you've done
I love you Mom and Happy Mother's Day
Sincerely,
Your son.

Together

We should go together

Because we go together like the letters of the alphabet

Like the numbers needed to add, to subtract, like dotted 'I's and crossed 'T's

Riding happily ever after into fairy tale sunsets

You're the stitch in my seem, cherries on my pie

My 'How come?' and my 'Why?'

Romeo and Juliet, Bonnie and her Clyde

We go together like ice cream and coke

I need you like blood, like air or I

Every minute of the hours and the seconds in between

(You know what I mean)

Be my shadow, be the moth to my flame

Speak my name and make me whole, you need never sell your soul

A thousand China cranes sing your praises, wing your praises to the sky

Oh how you heal me, shelter me like a roof when there's a storm

When I'm cold and you are warm

I hope to wind up safe from harm and in your arms. Just in your arms.

We belong together, never above, never below,

but always by your side

I just wanted you to know.

So Far

What I have accomplished in life so far:

I never turned out to be a star

But in my own ways of being me

I do the best that best can be

And the love I was searching for in life

I finally found the best possible wife

I got into crime, my shame in the past

Now I'm doing time, I need time to go fast

So when I get out, out of this place

Having paid my debt, I can show my face

To live a new life that I've learned in here

Accomplishing new goals, not far, but near

If I come back locked up and jailed

Then I've accomplished nothing and I know that I've failed

Nonsense

There's a Fripster in the bushes

And it's hungry

And it's mean

The most distoffle breed of Fripster

Your eyes have ever seen

It's got galungles on its back end

And tritunkles on its head

Worse than any monster

You'd find beneath your bed

Bring on the Kaboomers

your straightest arrows,

your hardest rocks

and let's crickcracket it all asunder

or we'll all be pissin' in our socks

I Don't Wish It On Anyone

They say it's great

They say it's bad

It can give you a rush

Like you never had

Soon you'll see

All was spent

Money, friends, rent

It separates families

Then you find yourself alone

With nothing left

Got to re-up

You turn to theft in any degree

But you risk being free.

I Will Endure

Never enough life

Or time

Or love

Things better than gold

I'd trade a ton of respect

For an ounce of compassion

In this land of the lost

Lawyers confine us

Struggles define us

Sometimes justice is just us

Fire refines gold pure

I will endure

Can't be sure I'll succeed

Though I know what I need

My spirit flies like a bird through barbed wire

As I learn to walk again

One step at a time

Love Is So Confusing

Hard-boiled, coiled then unknotted
Non-sense clarity charity
Self-ish and ism, wisdom and stupidity
Love is so confusing usually – literally

Warm cuddly Care Bear fantastic
Back to passionate protoplasm
Back spasm twitch
Love hunger eats love rich

Cool breeze in the valley
Warmth from you
High above the mountains
Flying inside your eyes
Adamantine, solidified, crystallized
Cabochon love luster

Everything I want to do
Pales in comparison when I'm with you
True, but I want to make this work before I bust
Stainless steel vs. rust
Love vs. lust
My love is like control with no hold
BOLD
Let's start a fire and put on a show!

Bipolar Blitz

My life's a chaotic blitz of emotion
From solace to heartache
to paranoid psychosis
I feel hopeless
but I hope that no one will notice
So I hide behind my bipolar diagnosis

But that cute little label
doesn't begin to describe
What I'm really about
or how I feel inside
One second I'm dead
and the next, I'm alive
From the depths of despair
to the top of cloud 9

If

If I were in charge

And you, incarcerated

I'd say, "Good news!"

You'll soon be liberated."

We've just got to change some views

Get society educated

They're only millions strong

It shouldn't take long

Not as long as you've waited

Going Nowhere

This poem is going nowhere

So far

And doesn't rhyme very well

As far as I can tell

In fact

It's sort of confusing

Like using toothpaste for hair cream

Or forgetting to daydream

And all that I say seems

Not to matter the least

Look into the eyes of the beast

Yes, I could be eaten

Beaten

Defeatin' myself before the first bell

An endless hell

It's just as well
The poem ends
While we're still friends
I could be wrong
It depends

The Power of "IF"

If I were some rocks

And you were a pipe,

Would it be bubbles of troubles

For the rest of my life?

If I were "IF"

And you were not,

Would we end up with nothing?

Or would we have a lot?

If I were love

And you were sorrow,

Would you bring me to tears?

Would I give you hope for tomorrow?

Walls, Wire and Fences

I'm here

In prison

Inside walls, wire, and fences

Inside

I'm scared

By so many unknowns

Court and count

Depositions and depression

Silent screams in tortured dreams

I awake

I must not fake how I feel

This is real

Lot's at stake

My mistake

No do overs