

## GUERRILLA POETRY



You may have heard the word 'guerilla' associated with a tactical type of warfare; a type of warfare where small groups of soldiers/troops use 'unconventional' tactics to subvert and attack larger armies. The key words in the previous sentence are 'subvert + attack' because the focus of guerilla poetry is to 'subvert + attack' the 'conventional' means of publishing (larger corporate publishing companies with profit driven agendas) by publishing (root word: public) unconventionally. It's twisted, it's confusing, but it's fresh and very *punk*.

Guerilla can be dropped in front of almost any art form - guerilla music, guerilla writing, guerilla painting - with the related connotation that the art form is intended to

subvert + attack. But the Big Publishing Companies will ask the inevitable greedy questions: Is graffiti art? Is tagging art? Is postering art? Are the art-forms just excuses to vandalize? Or tantalize? Or symbolize? They just want you to keep purchasing the conventional way and make you feel guilty about supporting guerilla tactics. Don't listen to them (but don't spray paint unless you get verbal permission from the owner. You will have to pay).

The debate will rage. And we are going to join it.

As a group of 'crafty' citizens we are going to mimic and adapt this "punkish" publishing ethic. We are going to be a group of guerilla poets and 'attack' our "corporate" environment with words. Poetic words. Poignant words. Pithy words.

Craft a short poem that uses your new found appreciation for the sound and style of words. Follow the TIPS for writing poetry to guide you.

1. **THE CONTENT:** we want to 'attack and expand' the minds of our community, but as we know, our educational community is often reluctant to look at just words on a page, so we are going to blend *text, visuals and a product* to attract attention. The content of the poem is essentially up to you, but make sure that it is meaningful. Now you may be asking, what is meaningful poetry? Agreed. It is rather a subjective concept, so let's just say that the poem you write should be some combination of socially-conscious-educational-obscure-thought-provoking-weird-enlightening. Sound easy? Good.
2. **THE LANGUAGE:** besides being brilliant, the language should contain absolutely NO SWEARING, OBSCENITIES, HATEFUL REMARKS (RACIST/SEXIST/ HOMOPHOBIC/ETHNIC SLURS) OR PERSONAL RANTS/ATTACKS. Now that the restrictions are in place, you are pretty much free to use the language that best suits the tone/content of your poem. Sorry, again, there are a couple of stipulations:

- use language that has 'sound'
- use language that is 'fresh'
- use original + raw figurative expressions (see lists)
- use an authentic voice over a sentimental voice

3. Once you have finished writing your poem (by \_\_\_\_\_) in rough, have it checked by the designated censor – ME. I must approve the content to assure that the stipulations in point 3 are satisfied.
4. Now it is time to attack and subvert. Transfer your words onto a “product” of some sort (see Mr. Geist’s rather cliched and ‘imaginativeless” example).
5. The Fun: the fun begins when you go out on your guerilla mission and attack the minds of your peers. Think about possible places to bombard and attack with poetry. Don’t make them too obscure. We want them to be read (i.e. poem + old shoe + cafeteria table during lunch).
6. The Proof: gauge and observe the reaction of people to your guerilla poem and then take it back. Write up what your observations. Interview the ‘readers’ for a more accurate impression. Conduct this ‘sorta-sociological” experiment 3-5 times.
7. If you have a digital camera or camera phone, take a picture of your poem in a few of the locations and post the images on your blog. It will, if anything, look cool. If you cannot get a camera/camera phone, let me know and I will take a few pictures for you.
8. Please have fun. Use your powerful word of mouth skills to spread the word that you will be ‘attacking’ (although, don’t use this word. Just say, Poem Placement) the school and for your peers to join in the fun.
9. Hand in as follows

- ☐ hard copy of poem
- ☐ the product
- ☐ 3-5 observations
- ☐ visual proofs

## PUBLISHING (optional)

10. Try publishing your poem and/or product with a Canadian literary magazine. Check out the following websites ([www.canlit.ca](http://www.canlit.ca) and [www.ditchpoetry.com](http://www.ditchpoetry.com)) for information on how to submit. The Canlit website also has a comprehensive list of Canadian literary magazines that accept poems, stories, and non-fiction in the links section What a coup if you get published.

## POEM/PRODUCT EVALUATION

- ☐ sophistication of language and message (not trite; not cliché)
- ☐ use of powerful/vivid expressions (i.e. reflects tone; understanding of connotation and denotation)
- ☐ use of original figurative expressions (i.e. not his eyes are like cat’s eye, rather, his eyes, jaguar headlights slicing the mist)
- ☐ uses elements of raw authenticity

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- ☐ text is arranged creatively on a “product”
- ☐ product is creative, thoughtful, and unique; placement of product is original
- ☐ proof of guerilla poetry attack (i.e. product-poem is placed in )

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