



## Writing Poetry

Poetry is like music. Writers can make poetry sound like music by using rhythm and rhyme. Prior to the mid-1800s, that was the way writers created poetry. In 1855, Walt Whitman, a famous poet, published a book called *Leaves of Grass*. The poems in this book were written in **free verse**. This means that the poetry didn't have regular rhythm or rhyme. It is still beautiful to read. It can still sound like music. It is easier to write. Many people like this style. It allows the writer to express his feelings easily. You can write free verse poetry about any subject. In this lesson, you will read free verse poetry, and you'll write your own.

Let's read a poem written in free verse. This poem was written by Walt Whitman and published in his book, *Leaves of Grass*.

### A Farm Picture

Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,  
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

Do you notice how the words at the end of each line do not rhyme? Do you see how descriptive the words are? They make you see a sunset through those barn doors. They paint a picture for your mind to see. One of the things your poetry can do is describe a scene like the one above. That is not all that poetry can do.

Write On! The Poetry of Life

Let's look at another example. This poem was published in 2007 in a book titled *Estamos Aqui: Poems by Migrant Farmworkers*. It was written by Avel Domínguez.

Guatemalteco	Guatemalan
Pues, soy un Guatemalteco pero traigo muchas penas. Así como yo fui un tiempo para defender a mi patria, pero salí de me tiempo y cuando llegué a mi casa me iban a perseguir, los guerillas. Por esa razón me vine aquí a salvar mi vida en los E.U., sufriendo cansancio, hambre y sed. Y cuando estoy en mi casa con pena, pensando de mi familia sin dinero para mantener mis hijos sé que tengo que regresar a ver a mis hijos.	Well, I'm a Guatemalan. I'm carrying a lot of sorrow. I had to serve for a time in the army, defending my country. But when my time was up and I arrived home the guerillas started to persecute me. That's why I came here, to save my life in the U.S., suffering tiredness, hunger and thirst. Now when I am in my house I am sad, thinking of my family without money to provide for my children I know I have to return to see my children.

Isn't this a beautiful poem? Do you notice how it tells a story? It tells about the hardship of life. Can you feel the poet's sorrow? Do you share any of the same experiences? Poetry can also tell a story.

Do you notice that there aren't any rhyming words? The line lengths are not the same. The one thing that is important in free verse is to add detail. In the story above, there are many details. Make a list of the details you read.

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Write On! The Poetry of Life

### Brainstorming: Coming Up with Ideas

You are going to write a three-line poem that describes a scene. Use descriptive words and lots of details to help your reader see the same scene you are seeing in your mind. Remember to use words that engage the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. To help you organize your thoughts, fill in the chart below.



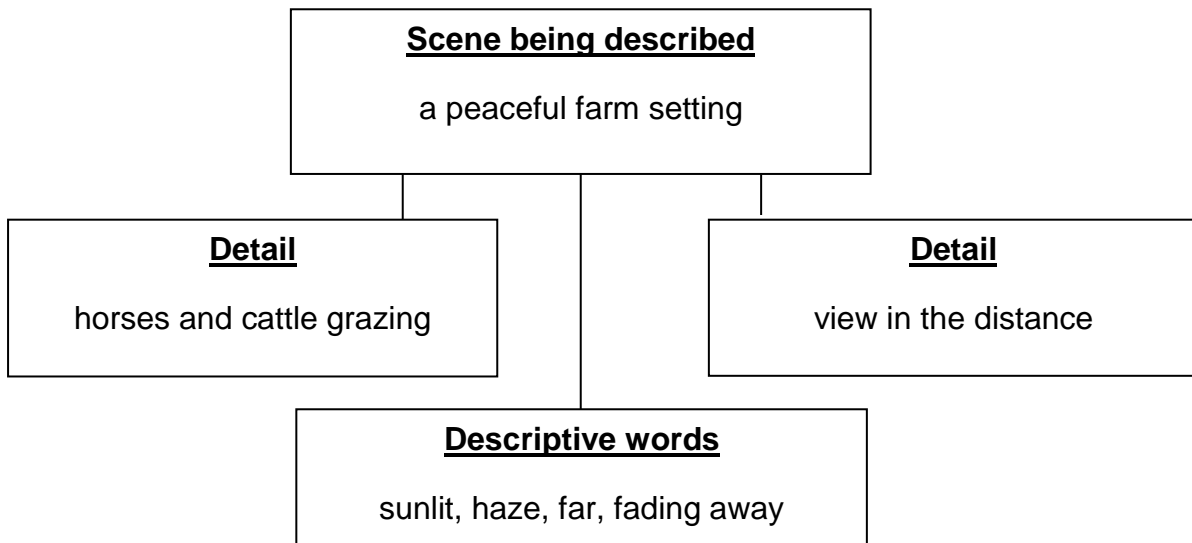
#### Check it Out!

*Poetry: Form, Syllables, Mood, and Tone* in the Reading on the Move lesson series can also help you with writing your poem.

Find it on the Internet at

[www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm](http://www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm)

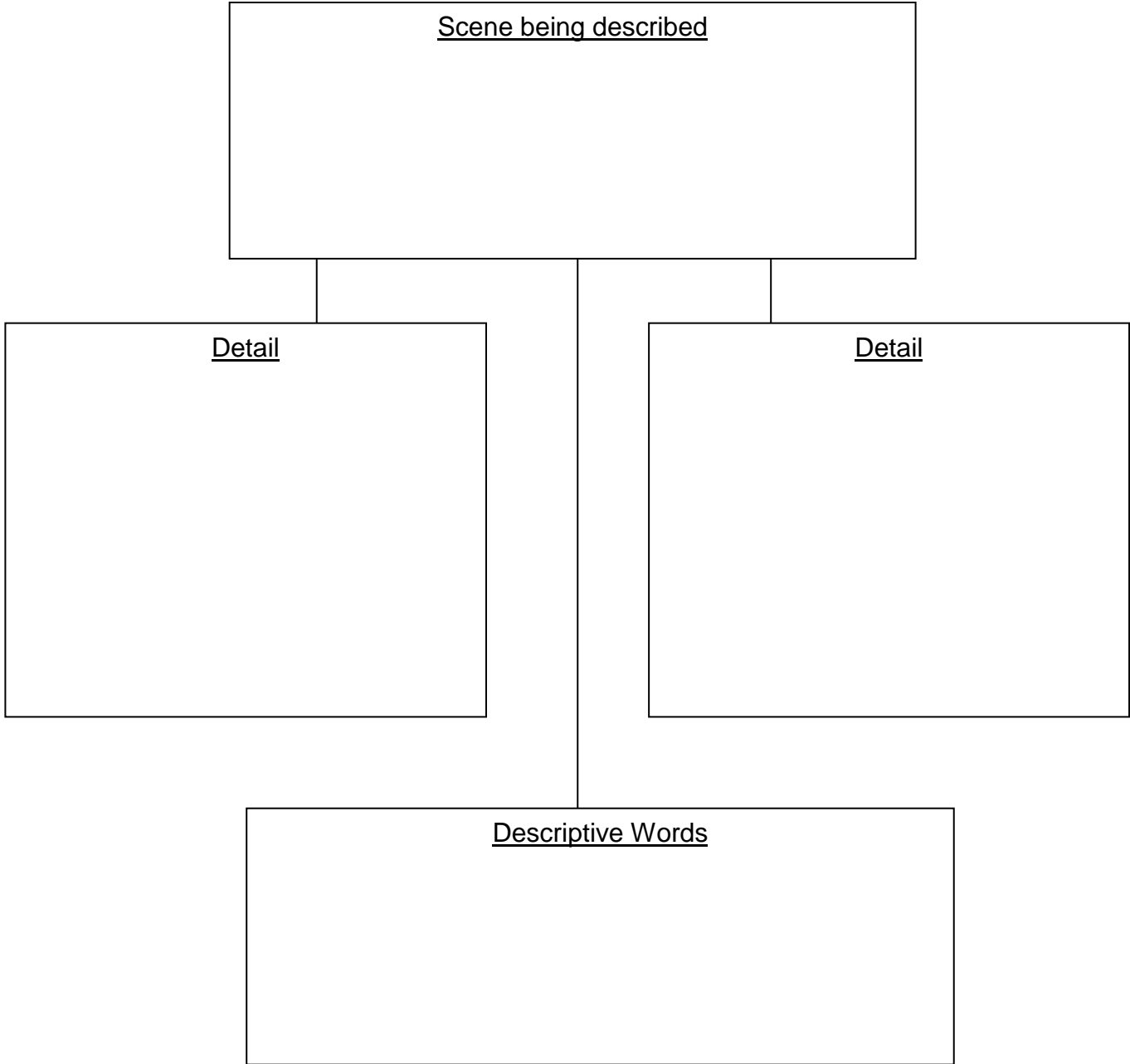
Here is an example of one for Walt Whitman's poem.





**Your Turn**

Organize your thoughts here.



Write On! The Poetry of Life

Now, use the information from your **graphic organizer** to help you write your three-line poem here.

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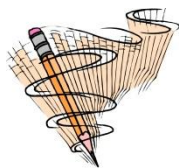


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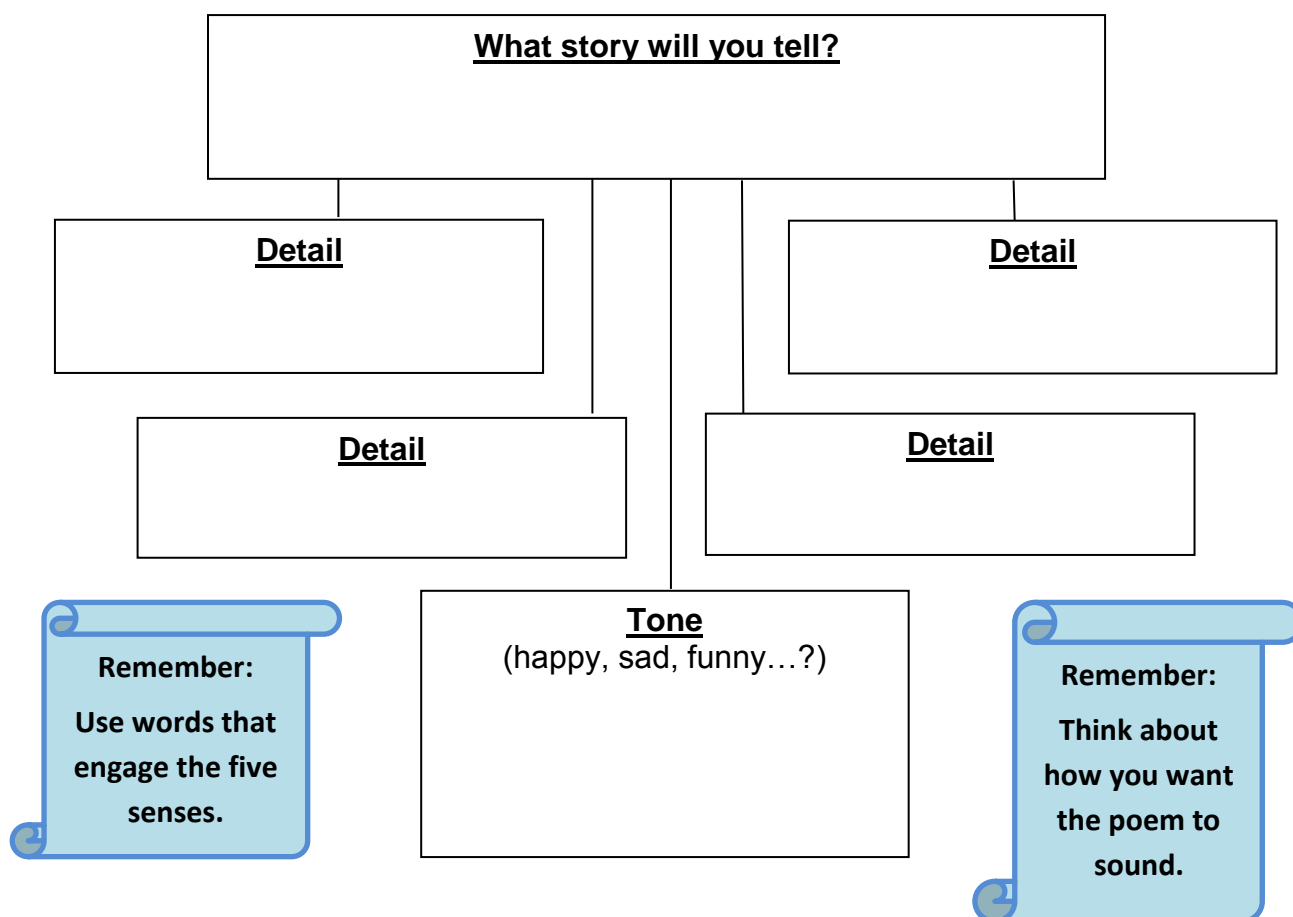
Good Job!



### Your Turn

Next, let's write a poem that tells a story. Below is a graphic organizer.

Write a story about work or life. Decide what story you want to tell, and then add the details you want to include. Your poem should be at least 10 lines long. Remember to think about how you want the poem to sound.



Write On! The Poetry of Life

Other notes:

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**Check it Out!**

*Poetry: Rhyme, Repetition, and Rhythm* in the Reading on the Move lesson series can also help you with writing your poem.

Find it on the Internet at

[www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm](http://www.migrant.net/migrant/publications/index.htm)

Now write your poem on the following lines. Remember that it should be at least 10 lines long. Remember to give it a title. Remember to use words that describe. You are trying to paint a picture in someone else's mind.

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### Finishing Up

Now that you have the hang of it, write a poem about anything you want.

Here are some ideas: life, work, freedom, America, children, parents, families, pets. Organize your thoughts on this page. Then write your poem on the next page.

<b><u>What story will you tell?</u></b>			
<b><u>Detail</u></b>			<b><u>Detail</u></b>
<b><u>Detail</u></b>			<b><u>Detail</u></b>
<b><u>Tone</u> (happy, sad, funny...?)</b>			

Other notes:

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**Remember:**

**Try using words  
that will paint  
pictures in the  
reader's mind.**





### Poetry-writing Checklist

- I wrote a free verse poem with no rhyme.
- There are many details and descriptions in my poem.
- My poem makes my reader feel something.

### Writing Traits Scored in this Lesson

	<b>Great Job</b> 5 points	<b>Almost There</b> 3 points	<b>Keep Working</b> 1 point
<b>Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The message is clear.</li> <li>• It is interesting to read.</li> <li>• There is enough information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The message is clear.</li> <li>• Some parts are interesting to read.</li> <li>• More information is needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The message is not clear.</li> <li>• There is no solid information.</li> </ul>
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentences start in different ways.</li> <li>• Sentence length varies.</li> <li>• The piece flows smoothly when read aloud.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some sentences start in different ways.</li> <li>• Most of the sentences vary in length.</li> <li>• Most of the paper flows smoothly when read aloud.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are too many short sentences.</li> <li>• All sentences start the same way.</li> <li>• The writing does not flow smoothly.</li> </ul>

### Words to Know

**free verse:** poetry that doesn't have regular rhythm or rhyme

**graphic organizer:** a visual aid that helps your organize your thoughts

