

How to write a Pantoum poem

A pantoum poem looks like it is a difficult format to follow, but in reality it is just a lot of fun. You follow a recurring outline. The pantoum uses four line stanzas. You repeat lines throughout the poem. Lines 2 and 4 of a stanza then become lines 1 and 3 of the next. By using this structure you give the poem its cadenced quality. Follow the instructions below.

1. Write a four-line stanza. Use your imagination; try to make the lines emotional. Just like with any other poem let the words take over.
2. Lines 2 and 4 of stanza 1 now become lines 1 and 3 of the next stanza.
3. Creating lines 2 and 4 so that connect lines 1 and 3.
4. Repeat the outline. Lines 2 and 4 of the second stanza become 1 and 3 of the third. Repeat this until you have completed your poem.
5. When you have reached your final stanza, then you go back to the opening stanza. Use the two lines that haven't been repeated yet – lines 1 and 3. To finish the pantoum make line 3 (from stanza 1) the second line of the final stanza, and make line 1 (from stanza 1) the final line of the poem.

Some writers believe that to get the most from a pantoum you need at least five to seven stanzas. Personally I like at least seven. It can be difficult to tell a story with a pantoum (though I have seen it done), but a pantoum can be a useful vehicle for expressing emotional themes.

This is a basic map of where the lines go.

1
2
3
4

2
5
4
6

5
7
6
8

(and so it continues until the last stanza)

Last stanza

7
3
8
1