

Pantoum:

The pantoum is a poetic form from Malaysia, beginning centuries ago as an oral folk form of indefinite length. It is made up of quatrains that rhyme abab.

The lines follow this pattern:

1

2

3

4

5 (same as line 2)

6

7 (same as line 4)

8

9 (same as line 6)

10

11 (same as line 8)

12

Another way to see this pattern is

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 2 3 4 | - Lines in first quatrain. |
| 2 5 4 6 | - Lines in second quatrain. |
| 5 7 6 8 | - Lines in third quatrain. |
| 7 9 8 10 | - Lines in fourth quatrain. |
| 9 3 10 1 | - Lines in fifth and final quatrain. |

Closure for the poem is an option. What I mean is the stanza can include as its 2nd and 4th lines, lines 3 and 1 of the first stanza. If you do this, the poem is completed. If you prefer, you may leave the poem open-ended.

The repetition of lines gives the poem a hypnotic or dream-like effect, but your challenge will be to keep the poem fresh.

You may change words slightly in your repeating lines if you need to. For example, you may change walk to walked. You may also add a couple of little words.

Ode to The Natives (Pantoum)

Hope Cisneros (11th grade)

On this land were once a people (1)
Where have these people gone? (2)
Does the wind speak of their heritage? (3)
Are the rocks hiding their secrets? (4)

Where have these people gone? (2)
Are they forever remembered or completely forgotten? (5)
Are the rocks holding their secrets? (4)
Can rocks split to reveal hidden thoughts? (6)

Are they forever remembered or completely forgotten? (5)
Will the children be taught of the battles? (7)
Can rocks split to reveal hidden thoughts? (6)
Or are the children taught only silence? (8)

Will the children be taught of the battles? (7)
To hear the breeze sing of wonder and days forgotten. (9)
Or are the children taught only silence? (8)
To appreciate the silence of a land that is always there's. (10)

To hear the breeze sing of wonder and days forgotten. (9)
Does the wind speak of their heritage? (3)
To appreciate the silence of a land that is always there's. (10)
On this land there will always live a people. (1)

Poet and presenter Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer is the author of If You Listen, a three-time award winning book of poetry, editor of Charity: True Stories of Giving and Receiving, and leads TAG: You're It seminars on creativity, positive attitude and finding purpose. Visit her at www.wordwoman.com.