

Bandit Poetry Guide 2020

Converting a bandit sign into poetry can be as simple or complex as you'd like to make it. Basically, you choose (or write) a short poem, get your sign, and apply!

Supplies:

- Paint to cover the existing message on the sign
- A poem or poems of your choosing
- Permanent markers (No-fade Sharpies work great)
- A bandit sign AKA those election yard signs you've been seeing everywhere for the past six months

Some tips for applying your poem:

There are three basic types of bandit signs: thick paper, rigid plastic, and plastic sheet. With rigid plastic signs, you simply paint over the original (though be warned it might take a few coats). With paper and plastic sheet signs, you can turn them inside out and work with a blank slate. The upside of paper is that it's easy to write your poem directly on. The downside is that it won't last as long as the other types. The plastic sheet signs will last longer, but often they are black on the inside. You can try painting the sheet, or simply apply your own paper or cardboard to it.

Word height: We've found that 1.5-inch high lines work well. Remember, that means the mid-point is actually about $\frac{3}{4}$ for lower-case letters. We recommend a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch space between lines and a one-inch space to indicate stanza breaks, though this is a little tight for the appendages of letters such as the bottoms of y's.

You can use the front and back and/or multiple signs to create longer poems. For a front and back poem, you could probably fit a sonnet, which has 14 lines. This is assuming the lines don't need to be wrapped/continued on to the next line.

Line length: If you put the title and poet's name to the side, you should have room for about 33 characters including spaces. For poems without titles, you should be able to fit around 40 characters.

Please note, this is entirely subjective and depends on the way you write. Play around to see what fits using a pencil first.

Check out our PDF of poem ideas if you don't have one in mind!

And don't forget to take a picture and share on social media! You can tag us @artlitlab (IG, Twitter, and Facebook) and #BanditPoetry.

Poems

History Lesson
by Steve Turner

History repeats itself.
Has to.
No one listens.

Untitled
by Emily Dickinson

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee.
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.

[\(More poems by Emily Dickinson here.\)](#)

The Uses of Sorrow
by Mary Oliver
(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me
a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand
that this, too, was a gift.

The Poem
by George Oppen

A poetry of the meaning of words
and a bond with the universe

I think there is no light in the world
but the world

And I think there is light

Winter

by Adelaide Craps

The cold
With steely clutch
Grips all the land...alack,
The little people in the hills
Will die!

The Jewel

by James Wright

There is this cave
In the air behind my body
That nobody is going to touch:
A cloister, a silence
Closing around a blossom of fire.
When I stand upright in the wind,
My bones turn to dark emeralds.

Poems by Lorine Niedecker:

Fall

We must pull
the curtains—
we haven't any
leaves

Untitled:

Remember my little granite pail?
The handle of it was blue.
Think what's got away in my life—
Was enough to carry me thru.

Untitled:

Hear
where her snow-grave is
the *You*
 ah you
of mourning doves

more at <http://www.lorineniedecker.org/poems.cfm>

Not to Be Printed, Not to Be Said, Not to Be
Thought
by Muriel Rukeyser

I'd rather be Muriel
than be dead and be Ariel.

Meditation 8

--Philip Pain (d. 1666)

Scarce do I pass a day, but that I hear
Some one or other's dead, and to my ear
Me thinks it is no news. But oh! did I
Think deeply on it, what it is to die,
My pulses all would beat, I should not be
Drowned in this deluge of security.

Because You Asked About the Line Between Prose and Poetry
by Howard Nemerov

Sparrows were feeding in a freezing drizzle
That while you watched turned to pieces of
snow Riding a gradient invisible
From silver aslant to random, white, and slow.

There came a moment that you couldn't tell.
And then they clearly flew instead of fell.

Epigram 43, "In Whose Will Is Our Peace?"

--J.V. Cunningham 1911-1985

In whose will is our peace? Thou happiness,
Thou ghostly promise, to thee I confess
Neither in thine nor love's nor in that form
Disquiet hints at have I yet been warm;
And if I rest not till I rest in thee
Cold as thy grace, whose hand shall comfort me?

A Deep-Sworn Vow
by WB Yeats

Others because you did not keep
That deep-sworn vow have been friends of mine;
Yet always when I look death in the face,
When I clamber to the heights of sleep,
Or when I grow excited with wine,
Suddenly I meet your face.

First Fig
by Edna St. Vincent Millay

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!

Love Flea
by Charles Simic

He took a flea
From her armpit
To keep

And cherish
In a matchbox,
Even pricking his finger

From time to time
To feed it
Drops of blood.

The Undertaking
by Louise Gluck

The darkness lifts, imagine, in your lifetime.
There you are - cased in clean bark you drift
through weaving rushes, fields flooded with
cotton. You are free. The river films with lilies,
shrubs appear, shoots thicken into palm. And

now all fear gives way: the light
looks after you, you feel the waves'
goodwill as arms widen over the water;
Love

the key is turned. Extend yourself -
it is the Nile, the sun is shining,
everywhere you turn is luck.

Going There by Jack Gilbert

Of course it was a disaster. The
unbearable, dearest secret has
always been a disaster. The
danger when we try to leave.
Going over and over afterward
what we should have done
instead of what we did.
But for those short times
we seemed to be alive.
Misled, misused, lied to and
cheated, certainly. Still, for
that
little while, we visited
our possible life.

A House of Cards by Christina Rossetti

A house of cards
Is neat and small:
Shake the table,
It must fall.
Find the Court cards
One by one;
Raise it, roof it, -
Now it's done: -
Shake the table!
That's the fun.

Unknown

by Mascha Kaleko

When the waves close over me, I dive down to fish for pearls.

Untitled

by Kujo Takeko

I do not consider myself worth counting,
but sometimes even for me
heaven and earth are too small.

Nothing Gold Can Stay

by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

The Red Wheelbarrow

by William Carlos Williams

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white
chickens

Risk

by Anais Nin

And then the day came,
when the risk
to remain tight
in a bud
was more painful
than the risk
it took
to blossom.

Fog

by Carl Sandburg

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Visit [Poetry Foundation](#) or the [Academy of American Poets](#) for more great poems!