**Poetry for Two or More Voices**

**What is poetry for two or more voices?**

Poetry written for more than one person has been around for a LONG time. Though there is little documentation about when Poems for Two Voices actually came into being, most Christian churches have had a poetic liturgical reading somewhere in their services for over 400 years. Choral readings, they were called, were a back and forth between the worship leader and another parishioner or the entire congregation. No one seems to know when this form of poetry became popular as a contemporary form of poetry, but most poems specifically for two voices began to be published with some frequency in late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

Poetry written for two or more voices is a poem that is written for two or more people to perform. The poetry usually has two columns—one for each person who is reading the poem. The persons reading the poem will each take their column. Sometimes the poet wants the two readers to say something at the same time, then the poet will write the words on the same line in each column. It’s a lot like writing a dialogue for two people.

Look below at this poem for two voices:

**FROG SERANADE**

*Poem for two voices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ga-lunk</th>
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<th>Ga-lunk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ga-lunk</td>
<td>I hear your deep-voiced songs by the pond this warm summer night.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ga-lunk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ga-lunk</td>
<td>I hear your chorus of banjo songs under the shining stars tonight.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*by Georgia Heard*


What do you notice about the voices in this poem? What is the purpose of having more than one voice represented in a poem?
How do I write poetry for two voices?
Just like all poetry, poems for two voices need an idea. Nature makes great subject matter for poetry for two voices, but don’t overlook topics that need discussion. The following poem below was written by a teenager for Teen Ink magazine. Notice how powerful the poem becomes with two voices.

**War**

*(A poem for two voices)*

by Lisa M. – Earlville, NY

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THE BOMBS

Lightning flashes on a calm
The aid becomes the monster.
Civil people at the innocent.
The world watches in fear wondering who will Save their children?
war ...
war ...
war ...
How can war distortion of freedom?
A small sits and colors a union of races hand in hand.

As the bombs crash
her little bedroom window!
Who gets hurt in a war?
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
Who gets hurt in a war?
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...
soldiers ...

save our children!
war ...
war ...
war ...
How can the late shift at a building to clean
Yet still the bombs rip through rip through
a pale purple-red sky

Another flag is burned in the name of freedom.

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How would this poem be different if it only had one speaker?

What other writing traits are important to this poem? Why?
In writing your own poem for two voices, think about ideas that need discussion or make for great dialogue. List 3 ideas from your own life that might make for good poetry with more than one voice.

1.

2.

3.

At your tables, brainstorm a list of words that are important to your idea. (You don’t have to use all of these, but ask other poets what words they would use about this topic).

Begin crafting your poem into two columns—one column for each speaker in the poem.