

# Pantoums (Repetition) For Grades Three Through Twelve

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The pantoum, a poetry form invented in Malaysia and brought west by the French poet Victor Hugo, will enable students to achieve astounding feats of repetition while letting their minds soar free wherever they will wander. If they learn this simple pattern, they will never be at a loss for how to begin or end a poem!

1. Share Lily Stoner's poem, bilingually if possible (a student may read Spanish if the instructor doesn't).
2. If time permits, tell a mature class about Delmira Agustini, whom Lily quotes for her line A. The first great woman poet of Uruguay, she lived a scandalous life, wrote very explicit love poetry, and was shot and killed by her husband because she wanted a divorce.
3. Ask for observations about the repetition. How many stanzas in the poem? How many lines in each stanza? How many total lines in the poem? If each line is repeated once, how many different lines in the poem?
4. If time permits, work through the pattern on the board, labeling lines 1 and 16 A, lines 2 and 5 B, etc. Students will help fill in the pattern. Hand out a worksheet with the pantoum form.
5. Ask what is the most important line in the poem (A, because it begins and ends the poem). It's also possible to do as Lily did and choose great first lines from beloved poems.
6. If time permits, compose a class pantoum on the board, accepting contributions from students.
7. Ask students to come up with their A line and write it in as both line 1 and line 16, checking with the instructor before going on.
8. Encourage students to write lines that are semi-independent units, as in Lily's poem, rather than a run-on narrative that will get fatally tangled by the pattern.
9. Students should compose a line, then fill it into its other slot as they go along. That way they know what's coming up. Some upcoming lines will be "sandwiched" between two already created lines and must fit somehow.
10. A pantoum can be created quickly. Soon students are writing the G and H lines, which complete (but do not end) the pantoum.
11. Read aloud.
12. Return to the pantoums in another session and revise them for clarity and originality.

## Pantoum Form

A _____	E _____
B _____	G _____
C _____	F _____
D _____	H _____
B _____	G _____
E _____	C _____
D _____	H _____
F _____	A _____

**Time and Materials:** One or two fifty-minute sessions (if two sessions are available, work on Lily's poem and get as far as a class pantoum the first day, then write original pantoums the second day). A third session for revision is optional. A larger version of the pantoum form above, reproduced as a worksheet. Have available some vivid first lines from other poets, famous or not.

# Worksheet

## “Gota de nieve con sabor de estrellas”

— Delmira Agustini, 1886–1914

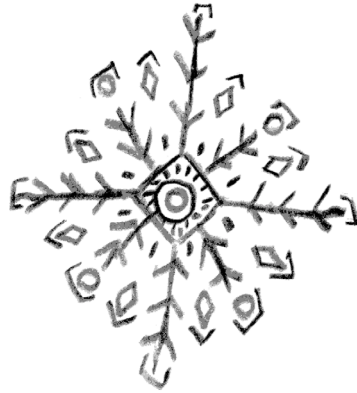
by Lily Stoner, Alameda County

*Gota de nieve con sabor de estrellas  
Pétalos de flor con crema de fresa  
Nubes con canela de amor y leche  
Paz con una tacita de cariño*

*Pétalos de flor con crema de fresa  
Helado de hadas con chocolate  
Paz con una tacita de cariño  
Galletas de ángeles con irises*

*Helado de hadas con chocolate  
Luna con lágrimas tan brillantes  
Galletas de ángeles con irises  
Olas bajando y subiendo, siempre*

*Luna con lágrimas tan brillantes  
Nubes con canela de amor y leche  
Olas bajando y subiendo, siempre.  
Gota de nieve con sabor de estrellas.*



## As I Dream

by Mehrnush Golriz, Alameda County

I can't think of anything,  
music is flowing through my head  
like intertwining grapevines  
jumbled together in a knot.

Music is flowing through my head  
like an avalanche of wonders  
jumbled together in a knot  
that's too complicated to explain.

Like an avalanche of wonders  
covering my soul  
that's too complicated to explain  
as I dream.

Covering my soul  
like intertwining grapevines,  
as I dream  
I can't think of anything.

## “Drops of snow tasting of stars”

by Lily Stoner, Alameda County

Drops of snow tasting of stars  
Flower petals with strawberry cream  
Clouds with cinnamon of love & milk  
Peace with a little cup of kindness

Flower petals with strawberry cream  
Fairy-tale ice cream with chocolate  
Peace with a little cup of kindness  
Angel cookies with irises

Fairy-tale ice cream with chocolate  
Moon with tears so shiny  
Angel cookies with irises  
Waves rising and falling forever

Moon with tears so shiny  
Clouds with cinnamon of love & milk  
Waves rising and falling forever  
Drops of snow tasting of stars

## Advice to Writers

Working in a fixed form can free your wildest inventions. In the pantoum, you only have to make up eight lines to get a sixteen-line poem with a hypnotic, compelling rhythm of repetition.