

Revision Checklist for Your Student Poets

Paraphrasing James Ellison, “The heart writes the first draft. The brain writes the final draft.”

7GP believes revision is a vital part of the writing process. Use these tips to assist your student poets with revising their poems before final submission. The tips have been aligned to the 6+1 Trait® Writing approach, but are worded to assist all students regardless of classroom writing curriculum.

IDEAS

- The title of a poem is its front door. We strongly encourage poets not to submit one-word titles, predictable titles, or weak titles. Here are some other examples to avoid: “My Life,” “My Mother,” “My (fill in the blank),” “I Am,” “Love” (or other single emotion words), and the names of holidays.
- Any submitted poem must be written by the student while s/he is in seventh grade. Plagiarism or use of earlier work (written in an earlier grade) disqualifies a poem from our program. Please make sure the poem is a recent, original work.

ORGANIZATION

- Line breaks and stanzas help poem readability and enhance reader understanding. They help control how the poem breathes.
- There should be a logical, crafted, natural flow how the poem says what it does.

VOICE

- Read the poem out loud to yourself and someone else. Check for smooth readability. If there is a stumbling point, that may be a spot needing revision.
- Use a consistent writer’s voice. One example of this is dialect. If you choose to use a specific dialect, use it throughout the poem.

WORD CHOICE

- Tighter is mightier. Erase repetitive thoughts and unnecessary words (unless using repetition is a technique, such as a refrain). Remove dead or tired language, including clichés or unnecessary articles (the, a/an). Here are some other examples: my, it, some, very, more, and a lot.
- Use of imagery, metaphors, similes, and alliteration are all options to enrich the poem’s wording, texture and craft.
- Words matter. Improved word choice helps build vocabulary.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- Forced rhyming throws off the rhythm as well as the meaning of a line. It sends the wrong message that rhyme is more important than words or the poem itself. Forced rhymes call for revision.

CONVENTIONS

- Spelling** – Check for typos. Also, many common spelling and word errors are not caught by spellcheck. These include you’re versus your, it’s versus its, and other homonyms such as meat versus meet.
- Grammar** – Check for verb tense consistency.
- Capitalization** – Capitalizing every line’s first word is an option, not a requirement. Check your capital letters and only use them to aid readability and understanding. One option is capitalizing the first word of the first line in each stanza.
- Punctuation** – When used in poems, punctuation should be used correctly, selectively, and purposefully. Not every poem requires punctuation marks. Their use, however, may help guide understanding and flow.

PRESENTATION

- Formatting Rules** – The following information should appear in the upper left of the first page, a couple of lines above the poem in this order: Student full name, school full name with county and state, educator full name, and title in quotation marks. Look for consistency or at least a firm decision made how the poem appears. Use one-inch margins all around each page; size 12 font in Times New Roman. Please pay attention to vertical poem layout and length, especially page breaks.