

Apology Poems

William Carlos Williams, a notable physician/poet, is well-known for two short poems:

This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums that were in
the icebox
and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast
Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens



To William Carlos Williams from Mrs. Harrell

I have broken
the red wheelbarrow
that was in
your chicken coop
and which you were probably
using
to collect rain water

Forgive me
so much
depended on it

Writers love to model on the first one to write “apologies” which can sometimes be humorous and always indicate the apology is perhaps not quite sincere. An apology poem has four parts to it:

1. A confession or an admission of what you did wrong
2. An explanation of why your action was wrong or how it hurt someone
3. A phrase which apologizes or says you are sorry
4. A phrase that shows you’re not really sorry for what you did or which points out some good that came from what you did

*Here you see that two poems can be modeled and combined!
Believe it or not, few poems that I have ever written please me more than this one. It was so much fun to make.*

First, let’s see what Poet Laureate, Kenneth Koch, did with this modeling exercise:

Variations On A Theme By William Carlos Williams

1
I chopped down the house that you had been saving to live in next summer
I am sorry, but it was morning, and I had nothing to do
and its wooden beams were so inviting

2
We laughed at the hollyhocks together
and then I sprayed them with lye
Forgive me, I simply do not know what I am doing

3
I gave away the money that you had been saving to live on for the next ten years
The man who asked for it was shabby
and the firm March wind on the porch was so juicy and cold

4
Last evening we went dancing and I broke your leg
Forgive me. I was clumsy and
I wanted you here in the wards where I am the doctor.

