

Transformations in Three Parts

Part 1

I used to...but now...

Diamante

Pantoum

I used to scream in silence
But now I divide the lines
Between yesterday and today.

I used to believe in answers
But now I disagree in questions.

I used to wonder where does it end
With a bolt of thunder or a long descend.
Will the earth explode with a single boom
Or will it take eons to meet its doom?
But now I know I am the one
Who will pull the trigger and release the gun
You see, I'm in the army; I work in the station
That shoots off the missiles to begin termination
The end of the world, the sun and the sky
Stop it now before it's too late to cry.
Your greatest enemy I am
I'm the human race, and I am man.
~Debby Wilson '84

I used to think that if the sun was behind a cloud
It wasn't there
But now I know that a light is always shining
Somewhere.

I used to be an avalanche, falling from the hills
But now I am the snowflake, floating silently and still.
~Alyssa Williams '00

I used to be a winter day, silent, shy and stern
When anyone would speak to me my bashful face would burn
But now I am a summer breeze, my laughing face upturned.
I greet my life with an open smile; that lesson I have learned.
~Jessica Marsh '98

I used to be afraid of things—of things I could not see
Like crocodiles beneath my bed and movies like ET
But now I know that crocodiles need water to survive
And ET is a fantasy and really not alive.
With special things that Spielberg does, Jurassic Park is one
No longer do I fear such things, but find them lots of fun.
Wouldn't it be great if we had nothing more to fear
Than just the things we think we see and sounds we think we hear.
~Michael Ward '97

I used to be a child—wild, short and stubby
I'd play kiss the boys and keep frogs in my school cubby.
But now I have blossomed and become a teenager.
I've found myself and who I am, and realized that school is major.

~Carly Stanojev

I used to be a blob thrown upon the wall
But now I am an abstract admired by mostly all.

~Leah Braseth

I used to be young; now I am old.
I used to be asked; now I am told
Once life was fair, not it's just cold
Just let me be young before I grow old.

~Sheila Combs '98

I used to be amazing, but now I'm just dull.
I used to be wide-eyed, but now I turn my head.
I used to be open-minded, but now I conceal my thoughts
I used to be a child, but now I'm an adult.

~Aaron Spector '00

I used to be an evergreen
transforming CO₂ into oxygen for the world
But now I am a lined college-ruled sheet of paper
Where did I go wrong?

~Devin Coons

I used to call it fun, but now I call it taunting
I used to call it mischief, but now I call it vandalism.
I used to call them friends, but now I call them incorrigible.
I used to call it sly, but now I call it sneaky.

As everyone knows, a name is a name.

I used to call it fair, but now I call it foul.
I used to just not care, but now I know how.
I used to hide my feelings, but now I call it love.

The saying is true—a name is a name.

I used to call it near, but now I turn my back.
I used to cry a lot, but now I've hardened up.
I used to have things stolen, but now I do not share.
I used to call it bitter, but now I call it experienced.

A name is a name, but it doesn't have to keep it.

~Eric Katz '84

After reading these you probably can figure out how they show a transformation. These poems may be short or long, rhymed or unrhymed, figurative or literal. They must incorporate the concept and/or words "I used to...but now." You may write about yourself personally or about a broader human concept. Pay attention to the arrangement of your words and the way you form lines. (To save space I often turned two lines into one line; your poems will look more vertical, probably). This is a writing assignment that could find its way into your Antholio.

child
 young, energetic
 playing, laughing, tumbling,
 growth, change, development,
 knowledge
 working, achieving, succeeding
 older, wiser
 adult

stranger
 new, different
 seeing, meeting, talking
 acquaintance, associate, member
 pal
 liking, enjoying, seeking
 familiar, trusted
 friend

hate
 angry, cruel
 hurting, loathing, detesting
 weak, distant, close, strong
 sympathizing, understanding,
 empathizing
 benevolent, tender
 love

car
 shiny, new
 cruising, stopping, revving
 driver, friends, admirers, darers
 racing, cornering, skidding
 crumpled, bloody
 wreck

sea
 salty, wet
 drowning, swimming, floating
 waves, whitecaps, drifts,
 formations
 rolling, expanding, settling
 solid, firm
 land

Carolyn
 energetic, intense
 wondering, working, planning
 teacher, writer, wife, mother
 cleaning, loving, learning
 harried, worried
 Harrell

You will notice the transformation quality of these diamante (dee-ah-mahn'-tay) poems as well as their shape. They are really more contrast than transformation, but the contrast should happen so subtly that the reader thinks a transformation or change is occurring. Notice how the poems shift in meaning from top to bottom and look like diamonds. (except where making columns messed me up)

You can produce a diamante by using the following directions for the seven lines:

1. Write down a noun (at this point you may want to skip to line 7 and write there the opposite of this noun)
2. Write two adjectives describing the first noun
3. Write three participles (describing words ending in "ing" or "ed" for past participles) for the noun
4. Write four nouns related to the subject. The first two nouns should relate to the noun in line 1 and the last two nouns should relate to the noun in line 7. **There should be a smooth, clever transition between the pairs.**
5. Write three participles that relate to the noun in line 7
6. Write two adjectives that describe the noun in line 7
7. Write a noun that is the opposite of the first noun (you probably already did this)

Before beginning, it is probably a good idea to figure out your opposite ideas or things—child/adult, sound/silence, spring/fall, flower/weed, et. al. You may notice also that you can make a diamante about yourself using two sides of your personality expressed by first and last names or by name and nicknames. This works well for contrasting characters in literature. Diamantes provide a good place to use your vocabulary words and words from your connotation handouts. They could find all kinds of uses in your Antholio.

And finally, the Pantoum (pan-TOOM) Part of the pleasure of the pantoum is the way its recurring lines gently and hypnotically twine in and out of one another, and the way they surprise us when they fit together in unexpected ways and sound really cool.

Pantoum is the Western word for the Malayan pantun, a poetic form that first appeared in the fifteenth century, in Malayan literature. It existed orally before then. Making up pantoums was highly popular, and Malaysians knew the famous ones by heart. The Western version is a poem of indefinite length made up of stanzas whose four lines are repeated in a pattern: lines 2 and 4 of each stanza are repeated as lines 1 and 3 of the next stanza and so on as shown below (p 4):

_____ line 1
 _____ line 2
 _____ line 3
 _____ line 4

_____ line 5 (same as line 2 above)
 _____ line 6
 _____ line 7 (same as line 4 above)
 _____ line 8

_____ line 9 (same as line 6 above)
 _____ line 10
 _____ line 11 (same as line 8 above)
 _____ line 12

And so on...

All right, fasten your seat belts—Sometimes the final stanza has a neat twist although its first and third lines are as usual the same as the second and fourth lines in the stanza above it, its second and fourth lines are the same as the third and first lines of the very first stanza. This way, every line in the poem is used twice, and the first line of the poem is the same as the last. Rhyme is optional. (Are you still here?) It all sounds complicated, but if you look at the example below, you'll see that the pantoum form is easy enough for you to accomplish. Make yourself a line pattern to follow for the first draft. (I have color coded the lines to clarify the format a bit; don't color code your lines in your final draft.)

Because birds are gliding across my brain
 I rise into the shadows
 And the mist is rolling in
 Because my breath is rolling out.

I rise into the shadows
 Like a pond that sleeps
 Because my breath is rolling out
 I hear doorbells in the woods.

Like a pond that sleeps
 And wakes inside a dream,
 I hear doorbells in the woods
 Though the woods are in the dream

And wakes inside a dream
 Although the air is filled with clouds
 Though the woods are in the dream
 A good idea can smell like pine.

Although the air if filled with clouds
 I am filled with ideas about dreams.
 A good idea can smell like pine
 And a dream can grow like a cloud.

I am filled with ideas about dreams
The stars don't know what they mean
And a dream can grow like a cloud
I can't explain this bigness.

The stars don't know what they mean
And the mist is rolling in.
I can't explain this bigness
Because birds are gliding across my brain.

Although that previous poem was cool in a weird way, here are a couple of student samples that may make more sense to you. You will also notice the varied lengths.

An Angel's Duty by Beida Chen '06

An angel descends from the heavens
Floating down to earth
Helping those who have begun their journey
Aiding those who feel as if walls are closing in

Floating down to earth
The angel watches over us
Aiding those who feel as if walls are closing in
To assist by nudging happiness seekers in the right
direction

The angel watches over us
To wish for the happiness of humans, wanting nothing
in return
To assist by nudging happiness seekers in the right
direction
To walk along with angels who watch over us.



I hope you can use these and all the poetic formats
I'm sharing with you many times in your education and
in your personal reflective writing. Have fun!

Sunshine Surfing by Ben Williams '06

I surf on the waves of sunshine
Riding them all through space
I swoop and spin through the galaxy
Leaving the stars in their place

Riding them all through space
I flip towards Saturn's rings
Leaving the stars in their place
Doing some aerial things

I flip towards Saturn's rings
Grinding near the end
Doing some aerial things
I reach the beginning again

Grinding near the end
Close to the abyss
I reach the beginning again
But something is amiss

Close to the abyss
More sunshine rays run by
But something is amiss
I'm heading toward the sky

More sunshine rays run by
I swoop and spin through the galaxy
I'm heading toward the sky
I surf on the waves of sunshine.

A change poem describes a single change or a series of changes by using one-word lines and stanzas. The changes you show should be unpredictable and surprising and try to show leaps through time. These sample poems show primarily events. The first poem shows a change of seasons beginning with autumn. By the last stanza winter takes hold, and colors, leaves, and butterflies are held captive by spreading ice. The first simile brings the leaves to life, while the second implies both temporary and permanent change, even death (sheet of ice). The leaves transform into ice in the poem.

Autumn
Dead
Leaves
Flutter
Like
Butterflies

To
The
Ground

Red
Orange
Brown
Spreading
Out
Like
A
Sheet
Of
Ice



This next poem by Satoshi Hayasaka is both shocking and sad because too often this is true in today's world.

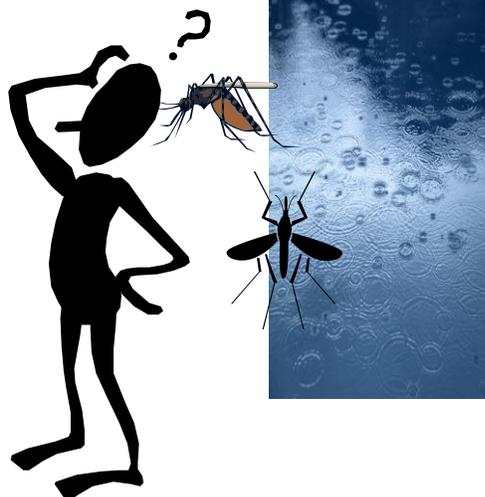
Nephew

At
First
Nice
Quiet
Then
Learning
To
Talk
To
Be
A
Nuisance
Now
Serving
Time
Without
parole

The change in Keli Sato's poem is almost instantaneous and thus a bit ironic. The change involves a physical transformation, movements, and change of mood or state of mind.

Mosquito

Squirming
Worms
In
A
Puddle
They're
Gone
You
Scratch
Your
Head



Transformation Poems

This poem by Mark Strand, a former US Poet Laureate, shows a vivid transformation. What he was thinking?

Eating Poetry

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth
There is no happiness like mine.
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.
Her eyes are sad
And she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.
The light is dim.
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,
Their blond legs burn like brush.
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand
When I get on my knees and lick her hand
She screams.

I am a new man.
I snarl at her and bark.
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

For this format, you write a poem describing a worker becoming a part, a tool, or a product of his or her work. The subject you choose should be important to you so that you know about processes, attitudes, responsibilities, and language connected to the work. It is important to show the transformation happening and make the reader experience it. Don't tell about the transformation by using words like become, change, or transform. Use metaphor, alliteration, and rhyme to make the change seamless. Think how things could relate to each other. Here are some samples from middle school students for you to enjoy:

Sketching

The frazzled cartoonist
sips his coffee thoughtfully
He seizes a pen
and begins to doodle everything
that comes to him
He selects a picture that he likes
and stares at it,
The characters' images
sticking to his brain.
Hours pass, and no punch line
comes to him
Frustrated, he animates his body
and walks toward his bedroom
frame by frame
muttering to himself
in word balloons.

~Trevor Williamson

Jewels

A girl slips the ring on her finger
Her olive eyes study the golden band
decorated with rubies, emeralds and pearls.
Her pale lips purse in concentration
She gazes at the ring for a long time, then rises
Her golden face glowing
Her emerald eyes sparkling
Her ruby lips parted in a smile
showing pearl teeth.

~Lauren Butts

That Bytes!

You stare at the screen your face glowing green
You type a text that's quite mean.
Nicely formed letters in front of you
You assure yourself you know what to do.
You punch some keys you no longer recognize
A strange glow enters your eyes
Letters flash across your face
At a very rapid pace
You let out a beep instead of a cough
Your dad frowns and turns you off.

~Zach Phillips

The Seamstress

Is a hardy old woman
with pins
sticking
out of her mouth.
Thread in hand.
With a needle
she
bastes
hems
appliqués
a Raggedy Ann.
Her face
an old wrinkled pincushion
Pins stuck in her painted mouth
Two black buttons for eyes
Hair of fine vermilion thread.

~Julie Lim

The Gardener

It was a long, weary day
for the tired gardener
All day long
Digging
Pulling weeds
Planting flowers
Finally the day was done
He turned his head
from the setting sun
rooted his feet to the ground
and wilted
into sweet sleep.

~Tara Bagen

To Be One of the Greats...

A writer slumps in his chair
among the greatest books of all time
Frustrated and tired because
he finds no topic

He had hoped that inspiration
Would come to him in the library.
He bent over his notebook
And began to scribble onto the pages

Dust covered books danced around him
Taunting him to be one of the greats
like them.
He continued to write with an unearthly passion
Turning page after page.
His vision blurred and his body ached
But he did not care.

Dust began to settle on his jacket
His body grew sore
and his spine stiffened.
With one last breath he was finished.

In the morning, the librarian spied a new book
lying open on an empty table
its dusty jacket flapping outward
and pages the color of pain.

~Brenna Benson

A Math Problem

She points to the blackboard
Solving an old problem
The digits are written monotonously
Chalk fades into dust
A problem is solved yet again
Without pleasure
Slight cracks on a blank board
Tired wrinkles on her chalky face,
Motionless
Like a minus sign.

~Michal Crispin

You may have heard of Word Ladders as more of a game than a poem, but whatever we call it, it has something to do with transforming words and ideas.

Lewis Carroll, in 1879, called them doublets. His goal was to connect two given words of the same length in the fewest steps. At each step a single letter changes in a word to make the next word. Usually the starting and ending words are related somehow—synonyms, antonyms, etc. For transformations, we would consider antonyms or part of a whole. (Find out what metonymy and synecdoche are). Here are a few of Carroll's ladders with the number of steps he used to solve them. Try them if you want to go "through the looking glass" or down that rabbit hole.

Black to White in 7 steps

Head to Tail in 5 steps

River to Shore in 11 steps

Blue to Pink in 9 steps

Here are a couple of Word ladders to help you get a better handle on this and to perhaps inspire you to make some of your own. Try for a nice poetic rhythm and flow to develop as you write. The words should sound like they magically transform into one another:

Rich, Rick, Rock, Rook, Book, Boor, Poor

Flour, Floor, Flood, Blood, Brood, Broad, Bread

Now, that's all well and good, but look at how Stephanie Acree's word ladder is way better as a poem because each word relates to the other until the opposite quality is reached. This time, the number of letters or how many letters are changed doesn't matter. What matters is the smooth, seemingly effortless way one concept becomes its opposite.

Win
"Wow"
Bow
Beat
Defeat
Defy
Try
Tie
Sigh
Cry
Crawl
Bawl
"Boos"
Lose

In doing these poetic word ladders, it's sometimes helpful or fun to find a picture to model on. M.C. Escher's drawings as well as pictures in the *Masters of Deception* book and the transformations you saw as we began this activity work well here. I've noticed too, that advertisements often use this concept.

Here is an Escher drawing along with the accompanying student word ladder poem:

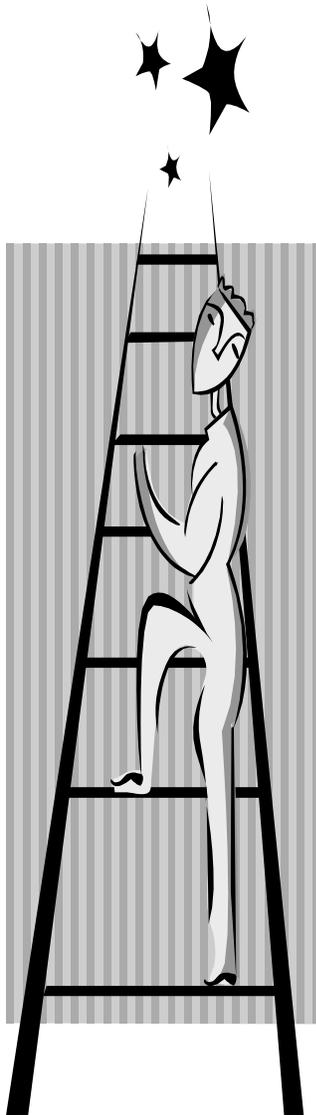
Fowl
Flap
Fling
Swing
Wing
Water
Wave
Wash
Swish
Fish



Rhyming Ladders are fun to try as well. Here you keep a rhyme scheme going along with your transformation for as long as you can. You can develop whatever rhyme scheme works for you, just make it smooth and clever and magical.

Pounce
Skip
Bounce
Trip
Dance
Jump
Prance
Slump
Slide
Drop
Glide
Pop
by Ahri Labby '06

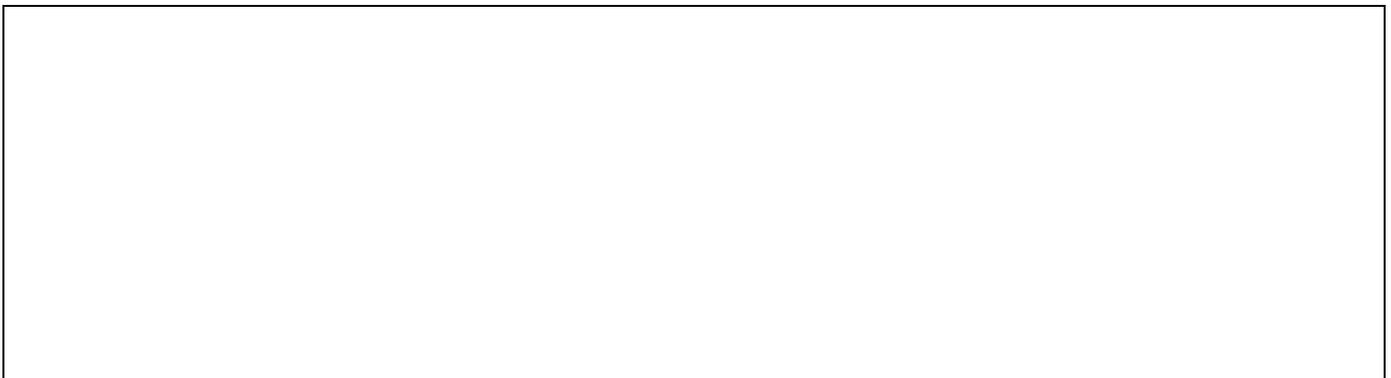
Lunch
by Olivia Farris '06
Munch
Crunch
Food
Good mood
Kids laugh
Teachers and staff
Paper bags
Name tags
Sweets
Treats
30 minutes pass
Wow, that didn't last



Sliding Rock
by Zach Clauss
Long lines
Loudmouth chatter
Frigid water
What's the matter?
Rushing water
Slippery slope
Steel-hard rock
Hard to cope
Bump, bump, bump
Down you go
Make sure you jump
Look out below!

Olympics
by Ben Joseph
Burnin'
Turnin'
Spinning
Winning
Curling
Twirling
Speed
Creed
Snow
Show
United States
Golden fates
Athletes glide
Olympic pride

Finally, for you artists, I'll show you a couple (from many) transformations from Mad Magazine and former students. You may use drawing instead of words to make a statement about something or someone. It's the same idea as our previous transformations, but uses "a picture for 1,000 words."

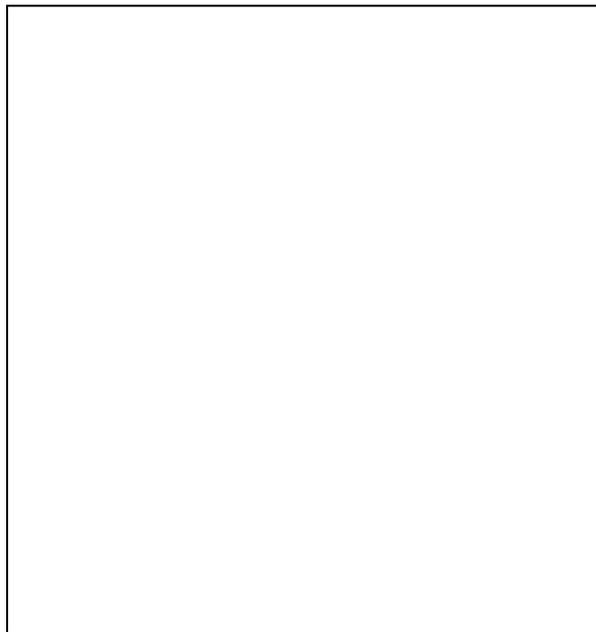


Part 3: For this activity, spend time perusing the array of transformational books spread on the tables. You'll have to visit the "supply stations" for several possibilities too, but I'll present the first couple below:

- A. Read the following poem and figure out the answers to these questions 1. What change takes place in the exact middle of the poem? 2. What is the purpose of this change? After reading it, you should think Wow, that's cool, and try to write one yourself following the pattern. (NB: The boxes beside various poems are available for inspired sketches if you become inspired)

You in My Very Center

As sun loves sky
 sky loves clouds
as clouds love wind
 wind loves trees
as trees love birds
 birds love song
as song loves lips
 lips love touch
as touch loves warmth
 I love you
as you love me
 warmth loves touch
as touch loves lips
 lips love song
as song loves birds
 birds love trees
as trees love wind
 wind loves clouds
as clouds love sky
 sky loves sun.

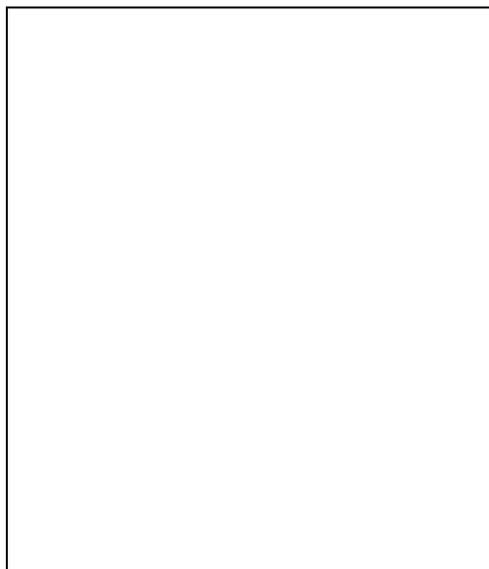


- B. Write a poem about any subject you wish using an **extended metaphor**. Begin by stating your metaphor (or you could begin with a simile or any line, actually—you just need to be sure you have set up your metaphorical idea). Then throughout the remainder of the poem continue the metaphor to develop and describe your idea showing how the two unlike things are really quite similar when you go under the surface and think about it—which, of course, is the magic of metaphor. I'll offer a couple of samples written by middle school students to get you going.

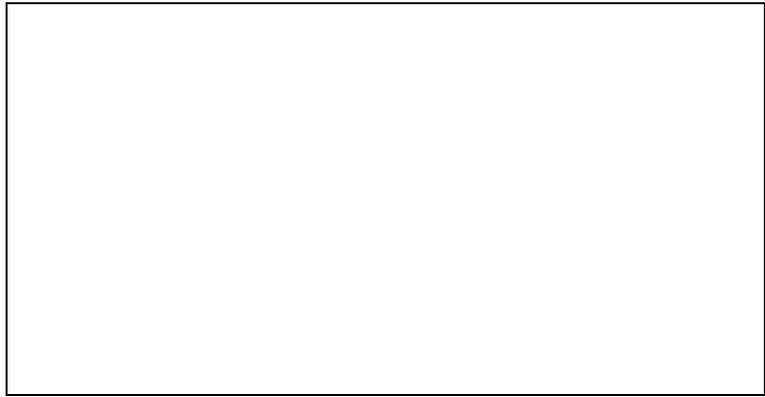
Flaming Poetry

by Daniel Rosenthal

Poetry is like flames
Swift and elusive
Dodging realization
Words on paper
Spark
 Leap
 and dance
in the flickering firelight.
The fiery tongues,
 formless and shifting shapes
tease my imagination
For those who see
 through their mind's eye
they burn up the page.



The Poem in the River
by Kale Braden
As a river flows
so flows a poem
into every
crack and crevice
rearranging soil
inventing a new geography
it changes the
face of the earth.



C. Here is another transformation model. Tell of three or more things that evolve into the next. Then end with a thoughtful statement about the changes. Here is an example followed by suggestions for writing.

Seed into sapling
Sapling into tree.
I can see "Home Sweet Home"
Right in front of me.
by Megan Fowler

Think first of several sets of three evolving subjects such as eggs—tadpoles—frogs, baby—child—adult, arguing—fighting, war...Your last sentence will determine the depth of your thinking. Try to discipline your thoughts until you find the phrase that captures understanding and perhaps uses figurative language. You also see that rhyme may be useful, but it's not mandatory. Considering the last sentence of the above poem, does it mean the tree is a home for a bird or squirrel, or that a home was made from a cut-down tree?...two very different ideas.

- D. For this idea, you'll need to refer to some of the popular books on our shelves that retell common fairy tales or fables from a different point of view...the three little pigs told from the perspective of the wolf (pigs bad; wolf good—or at least misunderstood) Try your hand as such a retelling. Include illustrations if you wish.
- E. You will also see some books on our shelves that tell a story using only pictures, and the story in pictures often centers around a transformation of some type. If art is your passion, try this.
- F. Recall the handout called Commonly Understood we did as a warm-up. Then try one of the Comparisons activities. A number of books and photographs on our art shelves will guide you here. (Also refer back to Part 2 of this handout packet.)
- G. Look at the Shape-changers sculpture provided on the acetate page. Try Googling some other such sculptures and/or masks and totems as well, and see if you find similar story carvings. Then imagine yourself way back in time carving a representation of your transforming self. Draw or make this sculpture.
- H. A final idea (I must stop sometime) is illustrated by a student's short story, "The Tie That Binds." In this activity, you think of an object that is a focal point in three very short stories (vignettes). Each story is quite different from the others and the object serves a very different purpose as well. In Andrea's story, a rope is the central object which is used by and affects three characters in very different ways. This is an activity for you serious writers. Actually, if you prefer poetry, you could use that genre instead of prose, but I like the story idea a whole bunch.

Some of these activities, obviously, can grow into bigger undertakings, ones that will take time and which you can revisit many times during your life of learning. Transformations are, you see, one of the most intriguing aspects of life.