

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, the final chapter "A Boat, Beneath A Sunny Sky" is an acrostic of the real Alice's name: Alice Pleasance Liddell. *Read the first letter of each line going down.*

A boat, beneath a sunny sky
Lingering onward dreamily
In an evening of July -

Children three that nestle near,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Pleased a simple tale to hear -

Long has paled that sunny sky:
Echoes fade and memories die:
Autumn frosts have slain July.

Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.

Children yet, the tale to hear,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.

In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:

Ever drifting down the stream -
Lingering in the golden gleam -
Life, what is it but a dream?

Alice through the Looking Glass



Acrostics can be more complex than just making words from initials. A double acrostic, for example, may have words at the beginning and end of its lines, as this example, on the name of Stroud by Paul Hansford . Stroud was a cloth manufacturing town in England during the Industrial Revolution. *After reading the whole acrostic poem and based on the information I gave you, what do you think Hansford wanted us to know about the town he loved and why might he need to let the reader know his thoughts?*

Set among hills in the midst of five valley**S**,
This peaceful little market town we inhabi**T**
Refuses (vociferously!) to be a conformer**R**.
Once home of the cloth it gave its name to**O**,
Uphill and down again its streets lead yo**U**.
Despite its faults it leaves us all charmed**D**.

There is also a triple acrostic! Where do you think the third vertical word would appear in a triple acrostic?
I dare you to try a double or triple!

<http://imaginativespiral.blogspot.com/2012/02/triple-acrostic.html> (here's one)

Acrostic is a poem form
Containing a device
Rhyming's not essential, no it
Only makes it nice
Sometimes it is difficult
To write acrostic muse
It took a lot of patience
Composing this for youse

A
C
R
O
S
T
T

Acrostic Poetry

An acrostic poem
Can be about anything,
Really.
Of course, some people like to
Start each line as a sentence,
Though
I prefer weaving words into a
Creation that is more freeform.

Does it strike you as strange that an Acrostic
is set up vertically rather than across?

I
C

It won't when you realize that the word acrostic comes from the Greek *acros* meaning outermost and *stichos* meaning line of poetry. As a literary form, the basic acrostic is a poem in which the first letters of the lines read downwards and each letter begins a word, phrase, or sentence. An acrostic does not need to rhyme but it can. The thing to be careful about is making sure that your acrostic is more than a simplistic listing of descriptive words about a subject. As in all poetry, you must create engaging and smooth syntax. Acrostics may be serious or silly but they are a nice way to convey information. In fact, many advertisers use acrostics and you have probably used acrostics as mnemonic devices from time to time. This informative feature is something that makes an acrostic useful for zines. Acrostics can also be artistically arranged and often are.

Try to imagine how either of these short acrostics could be presented in a way that enhanced the message:

Hear me crying

End my sorrow

Lend a hand

Please be kind

Runs on

Ordered

Binary code

Obedient

Technological

Intelligent

Computers are a

Substitute for people

Acrostics have seemingly been around since ancient times and were part of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin literature. Some of the Biblical writings, especially Psalms, are acrostics (but you'd have to know Hebrew to realize it 😊)

Edgar Allen Poe wrote acrostics along with his other rich sound poems and mystery and horror stories. Queen Victoria loved acrostics, and they were often seen as games and puzzles in the courts (especially double and triple acrostics).

Some ancients felt the acrostic had mystical power, but later writers (Dryden, Addison, Samuel Butler) regarded the acrostic as a simplistic and empty art form. I would think for us, the acrostic is trivial only if the writer makes it so. Therefore put your mental, verbal, and playful powers to work and show those doubters what 21st Century writers can do!