

Epigram *n. proverb, aphorism, dictum, saying, adage, apothegm, motto, mot juste, truism, axiom, maxim*; for example, “Three can keep a secret if two of them are dead” is a well-known proverb of Benjamin Franklin from *Poor Richard's Almanac*. You've also deciphered many epigrams when you did the Bureaucrat Intelligence Test.

Epigrams can and have been arranged as short poems which have wide appeal for the public. Basically you create an **original** aphorism, set it up vertically so it sounds like poetry, and experiment with images and words as you write. Here are a few of many epigrammatic poems by Peter McWilliams. Hopefully you will be inspired to write several of your own for including in your Antholio. They can count as thought or creative wording categories.

When I
create
something
it doesn't
hurt
as much.
Maybe
that's why
God
created me.

Commitment
is something
one grows into
and then
grows from

pain
is
the
presence
of
your
absence

At a critical moment I said:
*I would rather you go
and regret your going
than stay
and regret your staying.*
Some day,
at critical moments
I'm gong to
learn to keep my mouth
shut.

She asked me if seeing
you was a drain.
Seeing you is not a drain.
It's a sewer.

Thursday:
Drowning in love
Friday:
Drowning in doubt
Saturday:
Drowning
Sunday:
God, I can't even drag my
self to church
Please make a house call

come
over
and we will
over
come
that which has
come
over
us

and
through
all the tears
and the
sadness
and the
pain
comes the
one thought
that can
make
me internally
smile again:
I
have
loved

This poem
is a kiss
for your mind.

You make
flowers
of my
hours.
Today
was a
bouquet

I would
blow your mind
if I could find it.

don't you know
that people change
thus relationships change
and that pain is a sign
of changes
not endings?

I failed
chemistry,
so tell me,
do we need
heat,
cold,
agitation,
pressure
or a catalyst
to bind us
together?

Like a
Savings account
I grow
In direct proportion
To the
Amount of
Interest paid

Spring:

Leaves grow
Love grows

Summer:

Love dies
I drive away
Tears in my eyes
Bugs commit suicide on
my windshield.

Autumn:

Leaves fall
I fall

Winter:

I die
I drive away
Nothing in my eyes
Snowflakes commit
suicide on my windshield.

where there is
joy in love
I can touch
the hand of
the beloved
and sigh.
when there is
pain in love
I can only touch
pen to paper
and, with words
for tears, cry

If the painting
of my life were
the Mona Lisa,
you'd be the smile

who took the
L out of
Lover?

Current Affairs

Essay Exam

Write a brief essay
on each of the
following points.
Use extra paper if
necessary.

1. you
2. me
3. we.

When I miss by
several light-years
I shrug and say,
*Oh well, it was never
meant to be*
But when I miss
by only a few inches
Oh, that hurts.

Any action
performed before
an altar
can be considered
altering.

I am
in love
with you;
that is
I am in love
hoping you'll
join me.

I am missing you
far better than
I ever loved you.

I write only
until I cry,
which is why
so few poems
this month
have been
completed
It's just
that
I

What is an Epigram?

~Samuel Taylor Coleridge
What is an epigram?
A dwarfish whole,
Its body brevity,
and wit its soul

[Epigrams]

~anonymous Latin
translation

Three things must
epigrams, like bees,
have all
A sting, and honey,
and a body small

An Epigram

~William Walsh ca 1690

An epigram should be—
if right—
Short, simple, pointed,
keen, and bright,
A lively little thing!
Like wasp, with taper
body—bound
By lines—not many,
neat and round,
All ending in a sting.

Her Whole Life Is an Epigram

~William Blake
Her whole life is an
epigram: smack, smooth &
neatly penned,
Platted quite neat
to catch applause,
with a sliding noose
at the end.
(ca 1793-1811)

Palladas(ca. 400) From the Greek Anthology

Naked I reached the world
at birth;
Naked I pass beneath the
earth;
Why toil I, then, in vain
distress
Seeing the end is
nakedness?

Grooks are similar to Epigrams because they are short. They are a bit more challenging, however, because they must have a witty or satirical point; a little twist or irony, perhaps. Here are a few Grooks by the Danish poet, philosopher, physicist, architect and mathematician, Piet Hein, who also invented Grooks.

The Opposite View

For many system-shoppers it's
a good for nothing system
that classifies as opposites
stupidity and wisdom
Because by logic-choppers it's
accepted with avidity:
stupidity's true opposite's
the opposite stupidity.

Wisdom

Wisdom is
the booby prize
given when you've been
unwise.

Comparative Sense

Which of us doesn't
accept as a rule
that anyone dumber than us
is a fool?
But how many of us
can wholly subdue
the feeling
that anyone smarter is, too?

The Mirror

Mirrors have one limitation:
you can't by hook or by crook
use them to see how you look when you aren't
looking to see how you look.

Grook on Long-winded Authors

Long-winded writers I abhor,
and glib, prolific chatters.
Give me the ones who tear and gnaw
their hair and pens to tatters
who find their writing such a chore
they only write what matters.

Candle Wisdom

If you knew
what you will know
when your candle
has burnt low,
it would greatly
ease your plight
while your candle
still burns bright.

The Paradox of Life

A bit beyond perception's reach
I sometimes believe I see
that Life is two locked boxes, each
containing the other's key.

The Case for Obscurity
(on thoughts and words)

If no thought
your mind does visit
make your speech
not too explicit.

Lest Fools Should Fail

True wisdom knows
it must comprise
some nonsense
as a compromise
lest fools should fail
to find it wise.

If You Know What I Mean

A poet should be of the
old-fashioned meaningless brand:
obscure, esoteric, symbolic—
the critics demand it;
so if there's a poem of mine
that you do understand
I'll gladly explain what it means
till you don't understand it.

To Sum Up

(a Grook on finding a form
commensurate with one's subject)
It may be observed
in a general way
that life would be
better, distinctly
if more of the people
with nothing to say
were able to say it
succinctly.

Did you notice something else about Grooks? Yes, the rhyme scheme. Hein often illustrated his Grooks with little line sketches as well. Try a Grook or two (add a sketch if you wish)