

Poetry Prompts for all ages

AUHSD Summer Writing Institute
June 2023

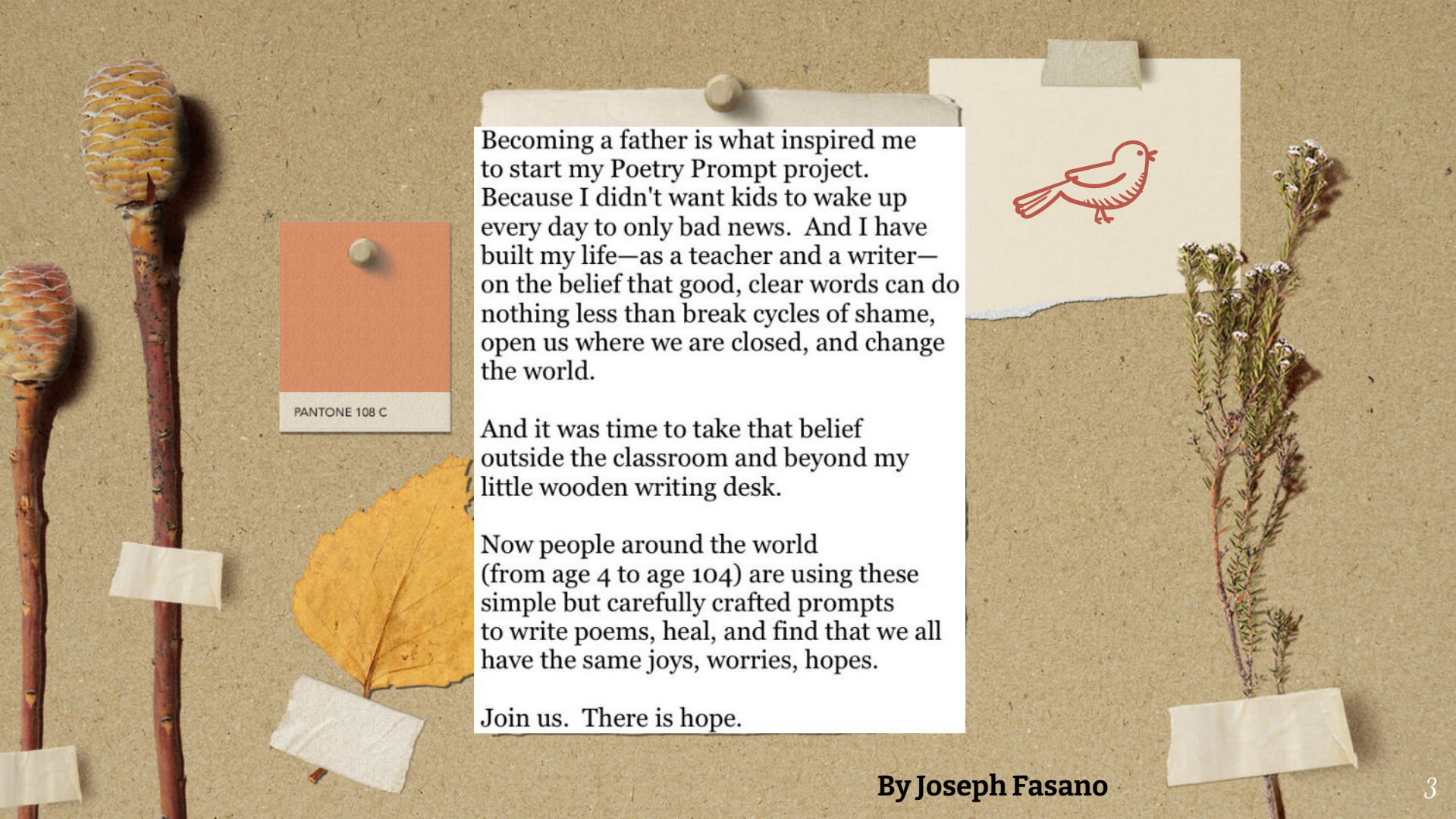


Source

All prompts by poet
Joseph Fasano

Twitter: @Joseph_Fasano_
josephfasano.net





Becoming a father is what inspired me to start my Poetry Prompt project. Because I didn't want kids to wake up every day to only bad news. And I have built my life—as a teacher and a writer—on the belief that good, clear words can do nothing less than break cycles of shame, open us where we are closed, and change the world.

And it was time to take that belief outside the classroom and beyond my little wooden writing desk.

Now people around the world (from age 4 to age 104) are using these simple but carefully crafted prompts to write poems, heal, and find that we all have the same joys, worries, hopes.

Join us. There is hope.

By Joseph Fasano

But form and formula is bad, right??

No. Not always.

In this excerpt from *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle, a character is talking about poetry, and in particular, about the sonnet form:

“But within this strict form the poet has complete freedom to say whatever he wants...You’re given the form, but ...[w]hat you say is completely up to you”



Prompt 1

My Poem (Title)

My name is (name).
Today I feel like a/an (adjective) (noun)
 (verb)ing in the (noun).
Sometimes I am a/an (noun).
Sometimes I am a/an (noun).
But always I am (adjective).
I ask the world, "(question)?"
And the answer is
 a/an (repeat your words from line 2).

Writing prompt by
Joseph Fasano



Prompt 2

DEDICATION POEM (Title)

There are days when I am (my name)
and days when I am not.

My heart is a/an (adjective) (verb)ing (noun) in the morning
and a/an (adjective) (verb)ing (noun) at night.

If only I could (verb) in the (noun),
I would be (adjective).

If only I could let go of (noun),
I would be the (verb)ing (noun).

(Someone's name), this poem is for you.

To love you is to be the (repeat words from line 8).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 3

GRIEF POEM (Title)

I miss your smell of (noun).

I miss your voice like (adjective) (noun).

I miss your hands like (adjective) (noun) (verb)ing in the (noun).

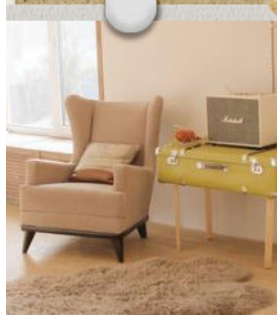
But I know that living means (verb)ing.

And I want to live. I want to (verb).

And you, (name), I want you to be the (adjective) (noun).

Go, be the (repeat the adjective and noun from previous line).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 4

FRIENDSHIP POEM (Title)

You and I are (noun) and (noun).
You and I are (verb)ing and (verb)ing.
When I am deep in (noun),
you come to me like a (verb)ing (noun).
When you are lost in (noun),
I go to you like a (verb)ing (noun).
Let the world say everything is (adjective).
I would bring you (noun) if you were (adjective).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)

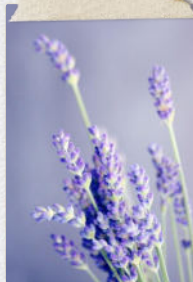


Prompt 5

CHANGE POEM (Title)

I am done with being (adjective).
I am done with (verb)ing in the (noun).
I am done with not (verb)ing (adverb).
Life, help me to (verb).
All I want is to (verb) like a/an (noun) in the (noun)
the way I did when I was not (adjective).
(Your name), (adjective) (repeat green noun), say it:
I am not (repeat yellow adjective).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 6

POEM TO MYSELF (Title)

No one knows the (animal) that (verbs) in me.
No one knows my heart is a/an (adjective) (noun)

I carry through the (noun) toward the (noun).
No one knows the (noun) I softly (verb).
But I do. I do.

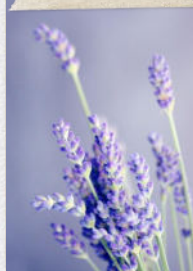
I will wake today and (verb) my (noun).

I will walk today and (verb) the (noun).

I will (verb) until I (verb) the (noun).

(Repeat pink animal), (repeat blue verb three times).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 7

SELF-ACCEPTANCE POEM (Title)

The (animal) cannot help being (adjective).
The (plant) cannot help being (adjective).
The (celestial body) cannot help being (adjective).
And I cannot help being (name).
Even in my sleep, I dream of (something you like).
Even in my sadness, I love my (noun).
I swim in the rivers of my (emotion).
I climb through the mountains of my (emotion).
I travel for years and years.
And on the other side
is (your name), beautiful (your name),
his/her/their (adjective) (noun) (verb)ing in the (noun).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 8

AFFIRMATION POEM (Title)

Let the (noun) be (adjective).

Let the (noun) be (adjective).

Let every (noun) inside me find its (noun)
and (verb) (adverb), (adverb) toward this world.

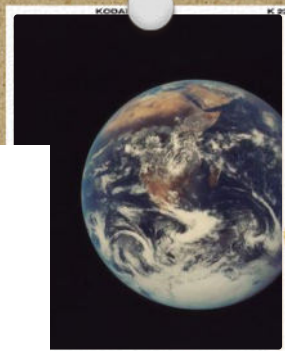
I have a story I have never told:

Once, when I was (adjective),

I looked up at the (noun) and saw the (noun)
and knew I was a (noun) made of (noun).

I am still a (repeat green noun) made of (repeat yellow noun).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 9

PROMPT: POEM FOR A MOTHER

You carried me through the (noun)
toward this world
and laid my heart like a/an (adjective) (noun)
in my hands.

(Verb), you said, when it was time,
and I did.

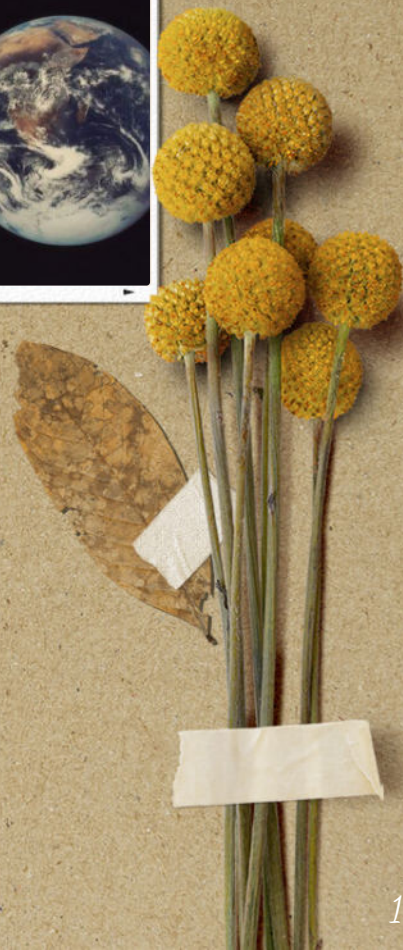
I moved through (noun)s, through (noun)s.
I carried your (blue noun) in my (blue noun).
(What you call your mother), before you (verb)ed
were you also (adjective)? Were you also
(adjective) in (noun)?

Once, you (verb)ed beside me in the (noun)
and told a story of a beautiful place of (green noun)s.

I know now I am those (repeat green noun)s.

Your (repeat blue noun) in my (repeat blue noun) has led me here.

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 10

DISAPPOINTMENT POEM (Title)

Even the moon sometimes fails to (verb).
I tried. I woke each day in (noun)
and (verb)ed
and (verb)ed
and thought I was a (noun).

Now I stand here (adjective) in the (noun)
and my heart is a/an (adjective) (noun),
and my hands are (adjective) (noun)s.

Look:

the (animal) (verb)ing in the (noun) [line 10]
fails to (verb) the (noun)
and (verb)s
and (verb)s
and goes right on (repeat verb from line 10)ing.

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 11

EPIPHANY POEM (Title)

All my life I tried to be the (adjective) (noun).

All my life I thought happiness was
a/an (adjective) (noun) (verb)ing in the (noun).

All my life I was afraid to (verb).

Now I stand before the mirror
and see the face of a/an (adjective) (noun)
that knows how to (verb) and (verb).

(Your name), don't be afraid.

You are a/an (repeat adjective from line 6) (repeat noun from line 6).

All you have to do is (repeat one of the verbs from line 7 five times).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 12

BREAKUP POEM (Title)

You ask me if I am (adjective 1).
But I am not (repeat adjective 1).
I swore you were the (noun 1) in my life.
I hoped you were the (noun 2).
Now I walk out of this (adjective 2) (noun 3)
and see the (noun 4) for the first time
and know that you are not the (noun 4).
I am the (noun 4)
and I am (noun 1)
and I am the (noun 2).

(poetry prompt by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 13

HOME POEM (Title)

My home is not made of (noun).

My heart is not made of (noun).

My soul is not made of (noun).

No, my home is a/an (adjective) (noun) that no one can (verb).

I am there whenever I am (adjective).

I am there whenever I am (adjective).

I am there whenever I am (adjective).

Yes, you can enter.

But first repeat after me:

My heart is not made of (repeat noun from line 2).

My soul is not made of (repeat noun from line 3).

*(poetry prompt
by Joseph Fasano)*



Prompt 14

DREAM POEM (Title)

I have dreamt of a/an (adjective) (noun).

I have dreamt of a/an (verb)ing (noun).

I have dreamt of a/an (noun) in the (noun).

Always, in my dreams, I wish to see (someone's name),
but instead I see a (noun) in a/an (adjective) (noun).

Instead I wake and see the (adjective) (noun).

Tell me, (same name), where will I find you
in the (noun) of dreams?

Or am I supposed to find you in the (noun)?

(poetry prompt
by Joseph Fasano)



Prompt 15

SPRING POEM (Title)

I touch the face of the (noun) in the mirror.
Even the trees know this:
It is time to (verb).



NEWS!

By Joseph Fasano

In the coming days I will be announcing the upcoming publication of a BOOK of my poetry prompts (most of them never before seen) by one of the "Big 5" publishers...and **YOU** have a chance to be in it!

When I post a new prompt or re-post one of the original 7 prompts, post your poem that uses that prompt (or a poem by a student, friend, loved one, etc.) with the hashtag **#FasanoPrompts**, and I will see it and consider it for inclusion in the BOOK!

This is for **anyone** and **everyone**, for people of all ages, of all levels of writing experience/ability. Teachers, students, writers, wanderers, go for it!

Remember to **#FasanoPrompts**



EXAMPLE: Prompt 1

Dear Mr. Fasano,

I came across the poetry prompt you designed for little children to express themselves with poetry, and I gave it to my 95-year-old mother, who has been struggling to express herself through dementia. This is what she wrote (Peter is the name of my late father):

My name is Dorothy.

Today I feel like the room where we get to play Scrabble forever.

Sometimes I am a cactus.

Sometimes I am my children.

But always I am hopeful.

I ask the world, "Where will I see Peter again?"
and the answer is
the room where we get to play Scrabble forever.

Thank you for what you do,



EXAMPLE: Prompt 2

< Inbox

little miracles

Hi, Joseph,

My Dad has struggled with literacy his whole life, but only recently has he asked me for help. Every Thursday I visit him and we read together. This week, instead of our usual reading, I showed him your poetry prompts, explaining the parts of speech one by one, blank by blank, and he made this poem.

(He grew up working on a ranch, hence some of the images).

Thank you, Joseph, for this gift you're giving people. Please do share.

Abby W.

My Poem

There are days when I am James
and days when I am not.

My heart is a small calf standing in the morning
and a tired rancher sleeping at night.

If only I could read in the lamplight,
I would be free.

If only I could let go of fear,
I would be the perfect words.

Abby, this poem is for you.

To love you is to be the perfect words.

< Inbox

Dear Joseph Fasano,

I found your viral poetry prompt on Upworthy, and I used it with my twelve-year-old son, who struggles with verbal communication as a result of his autism (he has a stuffed giraffe he named Buzz that he carries with him everywhere, and sometimes it helps if I talk to Buzz and then Sam answers). We worked through the prompt slowly, out loud, and this is what he came up with. I can't even tell you how grateful I am that you're doing this work.

To Mom

There are days when I am Sam
and days when I am not.

My heart is a wild dog sleeping in the morning
and a tall giraffe hiding at night.

If only I could dance in the classroom,
I would be my own teacher.

If only I could let go of Buzz
I would be the dancing boy.

Mom, this poem is for you.

To love you is to be the dancing boy.

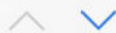
Truly, Joseph, thank you,



EXAMPLE: Prompt 3


< Inbox

thank you, poetry



Mr. Fasano,

My son Danny is mostly non-verbal. We've been experimenting with words written on cards as a sort of communication game. I wrote out one of your poetry prompts and gave him a stack of word-cards and this is what he made for his Dad, who passed away when Danny was 8.

I'm blown away. Thank you so much. Pls share 



I miss your smell of HONEY
I miss your voice like SMALL RAIN
I miss your hands like SMART BIRDS
SLEEP ing in the GRASS
But I know that living means LEAVING
And I want to live. I want to BE
And you, PAPA, I want you to be
the JOYFUL- BIRDS. Go, be the JOYFUL BIRDS



EXAMPLE: Prompt 6

This 3rd-grade student of [@NicoleZizzo](#) wrote this poem using one of my poetry prompts, and I can't get over it ❤️

Poem to Myself



No one knows the wolf that thrives in me.

No one knows my heart is a burning fire I carry through the street toward the moon.

No one knows the wolf I softly calm.
But I do. I do.

I will wake today and run my life.
I will walk today and declare my freedom.
I will walk until I find the perfect thing.
Wolf thrives, thrives, thrives.

No one knows the words I softly whisper.
But I do. I do.

I will wake today and know my purpose.
I will walk today and feel my worth.
I will be happy in the world.

Dragons, represent me, represent me, represent me.

—Mianna, age 10, Kauai



EXAMPLE: Prompt 7

Thank you for your poetry prompts. From my 16-year-old autistic child:

Am I?

The fox cannot help being.
The tree cannot help being.
The stars cannot help being.
And neither can I.
Even in my sleep I am.
Even in my sadness I am.
I swim in rivers of my existence.
I climb through mountains of my being.
I travel through this world.
And at the end of it all
I am.
Name shining through the gloom, I am.



EXAMPLE: Prompt 8

"Take a moment with this joy. Teacher Jasmine Korpan gave my most recent poetry prompt to her students, and this is what one child wrote."

– Joseph Fasano, Author and Poet

Affirmation Poem

Let the ocean be beautiful
Let the sky be blue
Let every hope inside me find its smile
and sitting strong kind toward this world
I have a story I have never told once I was
once when I was clear
I looked up at the sky and I saw the stars
and knew I was a child made of love
I am still a child made of love.

< Inbox

Poem from Prison

Mr. Fasano

I hope you open this. My father is in prison (he's a good person who made some mistakes in life), and he always tells me to keep believing in redemption. Here's a poem he wrote with the help of one of your poetry prompts that I brought him.

SKYLIGHT

Let the doors be opened.
Let the law forgive.
Let every child inside me find its shoes
and walk with hope, opening to this world.
I have a story I have never told:
Once, when I was small,
I looked up at the sky and saw the birds
and knew I was a soul without a cage.
I am still a soul without a cage.

Thank you Joseph for doing this for everyone

EXAMPLE: Prompt 8

< Inbox

Memorial Day



Dear Mr. Fasano,

My son was only 19 years old when he lost his life while serving in the Marines. My therapist encouraged me to use one of your writing prompts to prepare myself for Memorial Day this year, and I wrote this poem for my son.

Thank you so much,
[REDACTED]

Let the stars be stars.
Let the stripes be.
Let every child inside me find their boots
and run again, trembling, toward this world.
I have a story I have never told:
Once, when you were born,
I held you in the night and smelled your hair
and knew you were a child made of stars.
You are still a child made of stars.

Angels



Let the fears be short.
Let the funerals be beautiful.
Let every memory inside me find its way
to the heart
and walk carefully, slowly toward this world.
I have a story I have never told:
Once, when I was alone,
I looked up at the sky and saw shadows of my family
and I knew I was a girl made of angels.
I am still a girl made of angels.

—Emily, grade 8

EXAMPLE: Prompt 9

< Inbox

magic



Dear Joseph,

My partner gave our daughter your poetry prompt so she could write a poem for me for mother's day.

Thank you from the bottom of my mother-heart for making this gift possible.



The Magic We Are

You carried me through the stars
toward this world
and laid my heart like a moon rock
in my hands.

Shine, you said, when it was time,
and I did.

I moved through homes, through ghosts.
I carried your heart in my heart.

Mom, when you were little,
were you also alone? Were you also
afraid to shine?

Once, you sat beside me in my sickness
and told a story of a beautiful place of magic.
I know now I am that magic.
Your heart in my heart has led me here.



EXAMPLE: Prompt 10

Even the moon sometimes fails to appear
I tried. I woke each day in despair
I waxed
I waned
and thought I was a witch
now I stand here in the shade
and my heart is a bruise
and my hands are spell-makers
Look:
the hare trembles in the long grass
fails to transform
and waits
and watches
goes right on living.

Deirdre Maher

< INDEX

inspiration

Joseph,

My daughter loves, *loves* singing. This week she was turned away from her school's competitive choir, and it's really been a hard time. I just saw your poetry prompt about 'disappointment' and texted it to her. This is what she just texted back.

The Singer

Even the moon sometimes fails to shine.
I tried. I woke each day in fear
and opened
and sang
and thought I was the wind.
Now I stand here silent in the dark
and my heart is a mute swan
and my hands are empty bars of music.
Look:
the swan singing in the light
sings what no one hears
but opens
and opens
and goes right on singing.



EXAMPLE: Prompt 12

< Inbox

I am

Hi Joseph,

I found your newest poetry prompt and I used it to write a "breakup poem" to my depression.

Thank you for giving me this tool. Please share my poem anonymously in case it might help anyone.

Thank you!

[REDACTED]

I AM

You ask me if I am staying.

But I am not staying.

I swore you were the partner in my life.

I hoped you were the road.

Now I walk out of this shadowy house

and see the moon for the first time

and know that you are not the moon.

I am the moon

and I am the partner

and I am the road.



Home

My home is not made of gold.

My heart is not made of ice.

My soul is not made of plastic.

No, my home is a peaceful

flower that no one can pick.

I am there when I am reading.

I am there when I am frightened.

I am there when I am calm.

Yes you can enter.

But first repeat after me:

My heart is not made of ice.

My soul is not made of plastic.

EXAMPLE: Prompt 13



NOT ALL FORMULA IS BAD.

1. **Pick a form/template and try it out.**
2. **Feel free to try more than one.**
3. **You can write in your notebook, on your computer/tablet, or you can check out the link below and draft directly on the site.**

Check out <https://promptful.ly/>