

## Writing With Writers: Karla Kuskin Poetry

### Step 3: Write Your Poem

Now you try it. Here are some challenges that should help you begin writing.

1. Write a description of something that interests you, something you know very well — your cat, dog, or bird. If you don't have a pet, how about a stuffed animal? Or your running shoes, or the picture in your room that has been there so long you don't look at it anymore.

2. Now take a long look at the subject you have chosen. Think about it. What makes it special? Does your dog have long ears that look like old socks? Write that. Do your running shoes light up when you run at night? Write that. What color are the lights? Where are they on your shoes? Pay attention to little things, the details that make your shoes or the dog or that picture on the wall different from something else. Don't write that your dog is "nice" or that a picture is "pretty." Instead, write about those things that make something nice or pretty. When you write this way, you are making a picture out of words. This is a word picture of my cat's nose:

There is no nose I know  
no nose I think  
no point as pale and pink.  
A rose among fur snows.

If I could choose  
to be a snoot as suitable  
as it that sits on Toots  
I would have chose  
to be that very nose.

“There is no Nose” from *To Ride a Butterfly*, © 1991.

There is a lot of rhyming in those lines. And there are lots of words that almost rhyme and sound funny together, like nose and know, and snoot and suitable. Rhyming is fun to read, but a poem does not have to rhyme. Many wonderful poems do not rhyme at all.

3. Now, you have written a description of something you know well. Try describing something new to you. Take a walk outside and find something you have never looked at closely like the street light or the sky at 4:30 in the afternoon. As you write this description, listen carefully to the sounds of the words you use, and to their rhymes — but *try not to*

*rhyme*. Just concentrate on making a picture of what you see.

When you've finished your description, put your work down for a little while. Walk the dog or make yourself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Now go back and read your words again. Do you still like them? Is there something you think could be better? Try changing it. Here are a few things to look for:

1. One way to see how your words sound is to read them aloud to yourself or someone else. Do they make you see the light fading in the sky? How do you like the way your words sound together?

2. Do the words you have written express a feeling? If a friend reads your words, will he or she feel what you have felt?

3. Don't be afraid to change your words. Reread what you've written several times. The better you know it, the better you will know if it needs to be changed, or if it says what you want to say as it is.

4. If you like to draw, try illustrating one of the descriptions you have written. Writing and drawing

make a good combination, and each one helps you to see things more sharply.

When your poem is complete publish it online to share with other kids.