

Borrowed Words, True Feelings

A Guide to Choosing Poetry

Find Words That Speak for You

*Choosing a reading can feel harder than you expected.
You may not know where to begin.*

*You may want something that sounds like them.
Or something that speaks to how you feel.
Or you may not know yet.*

*This guide is not a list to search through.
It's a way to think about what you're looking for.*

*The right words are not about finding a perfect poem.
They are about finding something that feels true to this
moment, and to the person you're remembering.*



Start with the Person

What Did They Love?

Before looking for a poem, pause and think about the person themselves.

Not in a formal way.
Just the small things.

You might ask yourself:
What kind of humour did they have?
Were they quiet, or bold, or both?
Did they love the bush, the ocean, the garden?
Were they a person of faith, or of doubt?

Did they collect words themselves—quotations, song lyrics, lines from films?
Sometimes the right reading is already there, in what they loved.



Prompt

*Write down a few words or phrases that describe them.
Not what they did. Who they were.*

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Consider the Moment

What Does This Part of the Ceremony Need?

A reading can do different things at different moments.

It might come near the beginning, to welcome and settle.

It might come in the middle, to offer reflection.

It might come at the end, as a farewell.

Where it sits can shape what it needs to do.

You might want something that offers comfort.

Or something that celebrates a life fully lived.

Something that speaks to enduring love.

Or simply gives permission to feel.

There is no wrong reason.

Only what feels right for this moment.



Prompt

What do I hope this reading will offer?

What feeling do I want it to leave behind?

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Letting a Poem Find You

How to Look, Gently

When you're ready to look, it can help to carry those small thoughts with you.

You might sit with a book of poetry you already own.
Or to an online archive, if that feels like too much.
Or you might simply sit with your thoughts, and see if a line from somewhere, a song, a memory, something someone once said, comes back to you.

You are not hunting.
You are keeping company with your thoughts, and seeing what arrives.

If nothing comes, that is also okay.
Sometimes words need time.
Sometimes the right words are simpler than a poem.

When a Poem Isn't Right

Other Kinds of Words

A reading does not have to be a poem.

Some of the most moving tributes come from:
a passage in a letter your person wrote
a children's book they loved reading aloud
lyrics from a song they played on repeat
a short piece of prose that speaks plainly
words you write yourself, even a few sentences

If a formal poem feels distant or not quite right, let it go.

There is no requirement to use one.

When You Find Something

Trusting Your Choice

When a reading catches you, pause with it.

Read it aloud, if you can.
Sit with it for a day.

See if it still feels right in the morning.

There is no one measuring whether it is right.
Only you, and the person you're honouring.

If it speaks to you, it will speak to others.

sometimes you will read something
and know

this is it

you don't have to explain why



A Few Examples, by Feeling

To give a sense of what this might look like
Here are a few examples, grouped by what they might offer. Think of
these as illustrations, not a catalogue.

For When Love Continues

*"Death changes nothing but the masks that cover our faces.
And she who sang her song to the wind shall keep singing."*

— Kahlil Gibran

For Comfort and Gentle Healing

*"What do we do when our hearts hurt?" asked the boy.
"We wrap them with friendship, shared tears and time,
till they wake hopeful and happy again."*

— Charlie Mackesy *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*

For the Light They Left

*"When you died your magic did not vanish.
It is carried by those who love you.
We do not tell your story to make the world darker.
We tell your story to make the world brighter."*

— Sara Rian

For Understanding the Circle of Life

*To everything there is a season
a time to laugh, and a time to cry
a time to be born, and a time to die
a time to mourn, and a time to dance*

— The Byrds, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* (adapted from *Book of Ecclesiastes*)

For Letting Go, Gently

*"You can shed tears that they are gone,
or you can smile because they lived."*

— David Harkins

