

POETRY CHALLENGE—ANN GASSER, EDITOR
THE SYLVAN, FALL 2010

NEW CHALLENGE

Our new challenge is an exercise in writing Heroic Blank Verse, which is very useful in writing a number of forms of poetry.

The lines are all in iambic pentameter, which may sound complicated, but it is a simple matter of writing a line of 10 stressed and unstressed syllables, alternating, with the first syllable of each line unstressed, the last syllable of each line a stressed syllable. For instance, if I wanted to write about the moon

I could not say: "The moon is a yellow melon hanging in black velvet sky," because the syllable count and stresses would be off.

I could say: "The moon is melon yellow, shining bright."

Many modern poets do not try to learn formal meter, but it is good poetic discipline and will open up new avenues for a serious poet. In Heroic Blank Verse lines do not rhyme. They may or may not be enjambed. I would recommend not enjambling until you have thoroughly mastered the rhythm. Once this is accomplished, sonnets will be a piece of cake.

STONEY CREEK —by Susanna Roma

I'm cradled by the lapping creek—
I'm white and polished smooth
and round.
A tiny ripple kisses me
and gutgles with a happy sound.

Some day the creek may
overflow,
another force may capture me.
But here or there I'll be content—
the creek controls my destiny.

HAIRY TALE —by Constance Trump

Wintry winds whisked me away
I'd taken quite a tumble
And though you'd never hear me cry
My locks were all a jumble.

A mustachioed stranger standing near
Drop kicked me like a twig
Which would have surely brought a
tear
'Twere not that I'm a wig!

**VENUS AND MOON
—by Miriam Parker**

On pellucid nights
We heavenly constants appear,
Our monthly celestial courting
Visible to the naked eye,
We dance near and far.

I am
Silvery Man-in-ther-Moon
Deigning to appear thereafter
In disguise—
A fingernail sliver—
Half a pie—
Then add a slice.

I am lovely Venus
Unchanging
A glittering diamond
Round, faceted,
Globally high in the sky.
On pellucid nights
We dance near and far.

**NEXT DEADLINE —RECEIVED AND IN-HAND BY
DECEMBER 31 e-mail (in body of message—no
attachments)—to aubadeg@verizon.net or snail-mail
to Ann Gasser 801 Spruce Street, West Reading, PA
19611-1448 and please mark your poem or
envelope "CHALLENGE POEM"**

Example: Stressed syllables are in bold type

WRITING HEROIC BLANK VERSE

The **ryth-m** is the **same** in **ev-ery** line.

It's **real-ly eas-y** and a lot of fun.

Just **beat** it out with **finger-s** of your **hands**
and **soon** you'll **write** it like an **old-time bard**.

Be **sure** to **keep** it free of **an-y rhyme**,
save **rhymes** for **son-nets** or for **oth-er verse**.

Don't **be af-raid**, what **have** you **got** to **lose**?

Just **con-cen-trate** and **rev-el** in the **beat**.

When **you** have **mast-ered** the **tech-nique**, have **earned**
your **wings**, it **will** be **time** for **you** to **fly**,
to **add em-bell-ish-ments**, to **show** your **skill**
with **im-age-ry** that **touch-es** **read-ers'** **hearts**.

You **could** write **blank verse** that would **make** tears **flow**
or **bring** a **smile** to **glad-den** some **sad heart**,
the **choice** is **yours**. Some-times I like to **write**
a-bout the **way** I **feel** or **what** I **do**,
or **may-be** when I **write** I'm **some-one else**
whose **life** is **more ex-cit-ing** than **my own**.

These **are** **po-et-ic perks**, just **use** them **well**,
and **you** will **know** a **ver-y spec-ial joy**.

MIGRATION—by Loretta Diane Walker

You were moaning on disappointment's gray road
when we first met.
You lost something but never bothered to say what.
It's dangerous to leave vagueness in the basket
of someone else's imagination.
I buried your lover, branded your father
with a word my mother would not allow me to say
and accused your sister of things sisters shouldn't do.
Curious this journey of trust,
how one automatically thinks it is broken.
But you were broken,
severed with lightning's sharp finger.
Maybe that's why your limbs were limp.
They were tired from reaching

Ed. Note: I felt the poem above was a good poem although I am not sure it met the personification criteria of being of an inanimate object speaking. I am not sure who or what is speaking, but it is my guess that the speaker is talking to a tree, which, of course, for our purposes could be considered to be inanimate.

CUSTODIAN —by Emiliano Martin

My motto has been "existence."
For years I've been in place,
setting up my own resistance
in the defense of my face
seen in the distance
by others; unable to take me with them.
For years I've been alone
in the middle of the wilderness,
overlooking the horizon and as cold as motionless,
facing the weather's erosion, the heavy rains of the season,
countless moon nights... sunny days.
For years I've been intriguing, an addiction
to young climbers willing to visit me first,
they are the ones who came closer and stayed on top of me;
gentle pride they made me feel.
For years I've been around
and nobody knocked me down.
I'm strong and part of nature just as it was meant to be.
I'm a mountain rock of granite
and I long to be forever the custodian of my will.

AUTUMN'S PLEDGE

—by Joan L. Campbell

I am Autumn
and I've come
to take your breath away.

This year my reds will be redder --
my golds will be golder --
and wait 'till you see the blends
I've come up with.

I'll be touting my presence
with spirited breezes
that sway the branches
and rustle the leaves.

And when it's time to bow out --
I'll leave you with color-drenched
carpets to traipse and cavort on
under the trees.

A NEW PURPOSE—by Colleen Yarusavage

I'm smaller than my brothers,
sitting by the side of the path.
Many feet pass by me, and
hands and eyes ignore me.
Why am I here?
Too small to be noticed.
Sometimes I get walked on
or a bike rolls over me.
Without any thought;
no concern for me.
But, wait!
A small hand reaches for me.
Little fingers surround me, and
I hear a delighted giggle from
the owner's mouth.
I'm raised up and studied and loved!
"Mommy, can I keep this rock?"
"Yes, put it in your pocket."
And I'm off to a great adventure!

I AM A BUILDING —by Carol Dee Marks

I'm who Americans Need Sooner
or Later.

I'm most impressive, huge
with halls held high.
Employees rush inside
as chores and sick await their help-
ing hands.

I strive to heal the ill,
(whatever ails
or payment method skills),
release them all and mend healthy
glands.

I watch the patients cry
in pain. In pain
they lie, recall the times
when they survived
and thrived in happy lands.

I counsel kin, advise
the doctors' writ.
I sooth their panic modes,
their hearts in throat.
They heed. My showcase stands.

SECRET THOUGHTS OF A TALL, RUGGED GRAY STONE —by Jacqueline Moffett

Chosen with extreme care from the country
garden store
I now grace the front lawn near my master's red
entry door
I am not a famous stone like some of my
contemporaries
who reside in Buddhist Zen gardens
that represent mountains,
and feature moss and pruned trees.
No water is visible in dry gardens

These vertical stones, shaped by nature,
will eventually be placed where white sand
and smooth pebbles add to their beauty
Aged gardeners rake sand in swirling artistic
patterns
around the bases and touch their best side
in honor before they depart

As a feeling of peace and tranquillity descends
upon them,
many tourists begin to check the best viewing spots
They have traveled far to enjoy this famous Zen
garden and
the bus ride over bumpy roads was well worth the
effort
Briefcase in hand, master pats my head as he
quickly
walks to the railway station each morning.

THE CHAMELEON CLOUD

—by Marie-Louise Meyers

I rush to envelope sunshine
gush over with tears,
people fear me when lightning
strikes near.
The wind sometimes comes over
me,
for I was born to be free.
I can take on the darkest gray
or reflect a rainbow over me.
I have all kinds of expressions,
make all kinds of impressions.
I can be fluffy as a marshmallow
or huffy with pride,
puff away like an engine
you can run along side.
I can tear across the sky,
or float like a balloon on high,
but don't take my word,
if you don't follow my signs,
the picnic you planned might be
undermined.

PERSONIFICATION POEMS

ELECTRONIC IDOL

—by Mark Hudson

Here I am, your electronic idol,
I hope to claim God's title
Billions of humans living Online,
The soul that you have is suddenly mine.
From pornography to Online predators,
There is no place to escape your creditors.
Cyber-space will never be erased,
Facebook is the realm of bad taste.
E-books are a substitute for the real thing,
The mighty computer is now the king!
Wouldn't you like to do on-line banking?
A bunch of criminals will give you a thanking!
Don't be surprised if a thief steals your cash,
The recycling bin contains all your trash!
Don't worry about all the people spying
Big Brother is here, and it is not dying
Don't you worry about the war on terror
It must've just been a computerized error
And so you see you can not break free
Computers will scar your eternity!

THIMBLE ISLAND—by Maureen Applegate

Glaciers left me, one amid so many,
an island rolled into a salty bay.
Smoothed and contoured by the restless sea,
I rested as a dock along the quay.
A rookery for gulls I soon became
until a man claimed me as if his own.
I gave the seals a place to bask in sun,
until a man built on me his cottage home.
In judgment, rain and wind began to lash.
Angry sea waves rolled up to the shore.
Every board and nail was washed away,
leaving me just as I was before.
I endure, a smooth and contoured haven
waiting for gulls and seals to come again.

CHANGE OF FORTUNE

—by Prabha Nayak Prabhu

I never thought we'd meet this way
She was the talk of my hometown
In sports and studies she held sway
She went to Yale and then to Brown.

She was the talk of my hometown
Everyone knew she would go far
She went to Yale and then to Brown
People called her a rising star.

Everyone knew she would go far
She'd no doubt make a lot of dough
People called her a rising star
But Fate dealt her a nasty blow.

She'd no doubt make a lot of dough
Every move she handled with care
But Fate dealt her a nasty blow
And now she's immobile, in a wheel chair.

Every move she handled with care
In sports and studies she held sway
And now she's immobile, in a wheel chair.
I never thought we'd meet this way.

SHELL SEEKERS

—by Marilyn Downing

When lazy summer afternoons invite,
my leisure dreaming mind will wander free.
I float in vistas filled with warm delight
and breathe in measured rhythms with the sea.

My leisure dreaming mind will wander free,
as I stroll slowly in the shore-washed foam
and breathe in measured rhythm with the sea,
collecting shells and pebbles to take home.

As I stroll slowly in the shore-washed foam,
the raucous calls of gulls would seem to ask,
collecting shells and pebbles to take home
appears to them to be a pointless task.

The raucous calls of gulls would seem to ask,
to treasure each and every empty shell
appears to them to be a pointless task,
as gulls seek only shells in which clams dwell.

To treasure each and every empty shell,
I float in vistas filled with warm delight,
as gulls seek only shells in which clams dwell
when lazy summer afternoons invite.



This page of Pantoums did not get printed for the last issue. My apologies to all who submitted.

-Ann. Gasser.

TIMES START TO DWINDLE DOWN

—by Carol Dee Marks

The sunlight's halo mirrors grace
while Seniors dance and share their canes;
as life grows thin like tattered lace,
it disappears in autumn banes.

While seniors dance and share their canes,
their agile spirit settles down;
it disappears in autumn banes
like clumps of baby's breath in brown.

Their agile spirit settles down
in dormant days; fall season's cast
like clumps of baby's breath in brown,
the autumn's gold becomes her past.

In dormant days, fall season's cast
in echoes, sounds from winter's crunch.
the autumn's gold becomes her past,
frail babies' breath begins to bunch,

In echoes, sounds from winter's crunch,
as life grows thin like tattered lace,
(frail babies' breathe begins to bunch),
the sunlight's halo mirrors grace.



The Challenge Page is designed to encourage PPS members to grow in the craft and experiment outside their comfort zone.

It is my hope that when poets see how their peers respond to the challenges, it will inspire them to respond as well.

When a poem is submitted in response to a specific subject or form challenge and the poem does not follow the form precisely, I reserve the right to edit the submission to show the correct form, or to break lines to fit the available space.

STRIVING RHYME

(Attempt to Pantoum)

—by *Emiliano Martin*

I strive my best to move along
trying not to become a pest.
With the lyrics of my song
I aim to be among the best.

Trying not to become a pest
searching deep into my heart
I aim to be among the best
not afraid to fall apart.

Searching deep into my heart
makes my behavior go wild
not afraid to fall apart
like the thinking of a child.

Makes my behavior go wild
everything that I admire
like the thinking of a child
deeply embedded in desire.

Everything that I admire
with the lyrics of my song
deeply embedded in desire
I strive my best to move along.

SOUP KITCHENS

—by *Mark Hudson*

In a visit to a soup kitchen
Where the rich serve the poor
You can see a lot of twitchin'
From those who have to do chores

Where the rich serve the poor
It's a day out of National Lampoon
From those who have to do chores
That's why I wrote this pantoum

It's a day out of National Lampoon
When the rich try to protect their
hygiene
That's why I wrote this pantoum

About homeless people surviving
When the rich try to protect their
hygiene
Manicures and soap can be used

About homeless people surviving
They might end up with the blues
Manicures and soap can be used
You can see a lot of twitchin'



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HANDS FOLDED IN PRAYER

—by *Jacqueline Moffett*

Releasing emotional strain
I sit erect with eyes closed
Hands folded in meditative prayer
Chin lowered in repose

I sit erect with eyes closed
Tension slowly released
Chin lowered in repose
Memories of blue serene ocean

Tension slowly released
Head bowed, mind clear
Memories of blue serene ocean
Cumulus clouds float by

Head bowed, mind clear
Sky reflects surface of deep water
Cumulus clouds float by
Seagulls soar with the fresh wind

Sky reflects surface of deep water
Hands folded in meditative prayer
Seagulls soar with the fresh wind
Releasing emotional strain

MIGRATION

—by *Maureen Applgate*

The cold, pale sun now peels away
blankets made of ice and snow.
Winter white to brown gives way
in February afterglow.

Blankets made of ice and snow
melt, revealing frozen ground.
In February afterglow
remnants of corn abound.

Melt, revealing frozen ground,
beckons to the swans and geese.
Remnants of corn abound,
inviting them to land and feast.

Beckons to the swans and geese,
wings a blizzard white in flight,
inviting them to land and feast ...
my heart rejoices at the sight.

Wings, a blizzard white in flight,
winter white to brown gives way.
my heart rejoices in the sight
the cold pale sun now peels away

