

Guernsey International Poetry Competition

Dear pupils and teachers,

Thank you so much for your interest in the Guernsey International Poetry Competition!

This competition is for poems up to 14 lines, our closing date is 15th January 2026, and if you are between 11 and 17 years old you can enter for free! Winning poems will be displayed around Guernsey at the airport, harbours, and on buses, so you could well find your poem zooming round the island, being read by thousands of people!

We recommend that you read all the information on our website, poemsonthemove.com, carefully, including the full competition rules which are available there.

In this document, we have put together a list of top tips for entry, based on our experience of the entries to previous competitions – things that will help you succeed. We have also attached a couple of writing prompts, based on winning poems from previous years. Of course, you don't have to follow these – you can write your poem about anything, so please write about whatever inspires you. The prompts are just there to get you going or to give you ideas if you're stuck.

We wish you every success in the competition and, most important of all, a really happy and exciting time writing your poem! Enjoying writing and creating something you're proud of is a tremendous win in itself. Happy writing!

All best wishes,
Poems on the Move

Top Tips!

- Make sure your poem is a **maximum of 14 lines**, as we can't accept anything over this length. Make sure you count your lines and double check!
- Entries should be in English, typed or submitted online in Word or PDF format, and fit on a single A4 page.
- Please **don't include photos, colours, fancy fonts**, pictures. We just need your glorious poem, in plain text.
- Please make sure that **your name, age and residency** don't appear anywhere on the same page as your poem, as they will be judged anonymously.
- Please make sure that the poem is **all your own work**. We can't accept poems that have already been written and published or self-published or that have been placed in any other competition, that you've found on the internet or in a book, or which have used AI in the writing process. Give us your own, glorious voice.
- Poems need to be **submitted individually** by each author. Unfortunately, we don't have capacity for batch submissions of whole class groups, for example, by teachers. The submissions process is super easy!
- The more **individual and original** your work is, the more likely it is to succeed, so please be careful about relying too much on pre-existing models and structures or writing frames to help you generate your work. Give us something which is unique to you!
- Most of all, **enjoy your writing!** Writing poems is one of the happiest ways to spend time that there is, and everyone who has a happy writing time is already a winner!

Please refer to our rules for further details: <https://poemsonthemove.com/rules>

Writing Prompt 1

Time (and why I can never escape you)

I'll find you wherever I look,
Birthday candle burn, station clock chime,
Grubby gold wristwatches,
I look for you all the time.

Hope Barrett, Jersey, C.I.
3rd prize, 2025

- Write a poem which begins with an idea or feeling. Hope Barrett's poem is titled 'Time.' You could choose something like 'Happiness,' 'Hope,' 'Ambition,' 'Success,' 'Home,' 'Safety,' 'Joy'...
- Your poem will be a list of images which help you describe that word. So, think of all the things that word is connected to for you, and build your poem around that.
- What objects does this word make you think of? Hope uses objects connected to time in her poem – a birthday candle, a station clock. See what objects your word leads you to and put them in your poem!
- If your word were a person, who would it be? If you're writing about happiness, do you think of a baby, laughing, for example? Or of a grandparent, heading out to see their grandchild? What do they look like? What are they wearing or doing? What sort of look do they have on their face? You can use this to generate a few lines of your poem.
- If your word were an animal, what would it be? If you're writing about hope, do you think of a young bird, standing at the edge of its nest, about to open its wings for its first flight? Or of a penguin, standing on the edge of the sea, about to take a dive? Use an animal to give you some more lines of your poem.
- What places does your word make you think of? Can you describe them to give you a few more lines?
- If your word were a place, where would it be? The top of a hill? In a rocket, circling the moon? Or even a room in your house or a place that's special to you? See if you can include a few lines to describe the place.
- What weather does your word make you think of? Can you describe it – the sound of rain, the feel of snow?
- What colours does your word make you think of? What sounds and smells and touch and taste? Can you get some rich lines to describe these things?

- Think carefully about the ending of your poem – the last line is tremendously important. Hope uses this lovely phrase ‘I look for you all the time.’ Perhaps think about using a sentence which includes ‘I,’ and sums up how you feel about your word.

Writing Prompt 2

At the Bus Stop

A bus with yellow doors and red decals
saying ‘city route’ will stop for me,
but I’ll have to say ‘sorry’ with cute round eyes
because I’m busy looking around,
at the supermarket with its green roof
and the full-to-the-brim parking lots,
the run-down bookshop with the friendly owner
who wears a pink vintage dress every day,
the shop in the corner that sells lawnmowers
even in snowing winters,
the two craft shops that are up before the sun,
the city I’ll be calling home.

Oshadha Perera, New Zealand
2nd prize, 2022

- Write a poem about a place that’s special to you.
- By all means go into the world with a notebook to help you with this task! Make some notes while you’re sitting on the bus or walking to school, or even just sit in a room in your house or by a window, looking out. What can you see, hear, smell? Let your senses guide the poem.
- You can also do this poem from memory. What places have you loved, and what’s been special about them? Pick anywhere you like, that’s special to you. Perhaps you’d like to celebrate somewhere you’ve been on holidays, or somewhere you like to visit with your family. Perhaps you’d like to celebrate your town or village, or your street...
- If you’re standing in this place, what can you see? What can you see in the distance, and what can you see up close? I love the way Oshadha Perera’s poem gives us a mix of a wide view of the scene with really close detail.
- You might want to get some speech into your poem, as this poem does. Who’s speaking? What are they saying, and to whom?
- What people are in this place? Can you describe them? What are they wearing and what are they doing? What sort of looks do they have on their faces?

- Are there animals in your place? Dogs and cats? A fox? Birds swooping above? Or perhaps you can see trees, leaves or bushes or the sweep of a hill? These can be really rich things to describe.
- What are the sounds and smells of your place? Can you hear children's voices, birdsong, the chug of a car engine?
- Think about your ending. How can you make it memorable? Oshadha's poem has a lovely last line, 'the city I'll be calling home.' Perhaps there's a last line which sums up how you feel about this place and why it matters to you.
- Enjoy celebrating a special place! If you would like further inspiration for your writing, check out the website, poemsonthemove.com. There are a large number of winning poems from the competition available to read there, stretching all the way back to 2017. See what poems you love and let them inspire you!