

EXERCISE ONE: This is a warm-up writing exercise called The Rule Of Three

This exercise is in 3 parts. Use a fresh piece of paper each time.

Part 1: Write a poem or a story or a stream of consciousness piece where your first word is 'If'. Take 5 minutes to do this.

Part 2: Circle a word in your piece of writing that appeals to you in some way. Now write a second poem/story/piece where the word you've circled is the last word. 5 minutes.

Part 3: Circle a word in this second piece of writing that appeals to you. Now write a third poem/story/piece where the word you've circled is the title. 5 minutes.

You should have three separate pieces of writing. This is raw material of words, phrases, lines and sentences that can be used to develop ideas or use in poems elsewhere. Don't throw them away! A valuable writing exercise that makes you think about words and the writing process in three different ways.



EXERCISE TWO: The theme of this exercise is HOROLOGY / THE STUDY OF TIME AND TIMEPIECES

Here is some information about the theme:

Horology is the scientific study of time. Specifically, horology involves the measurement of time and the art of making timepieces. Clocks, watches, clockwork, sundials, hourglasses, timers, time recorders and marine chronometers are all examples of instruments used to measure time.

People interested in horology are called horologists. That term is used both by people who deal professionally with timekeeping apparatus (watchmakers, clockmakers), as well as aficionados and scholars of horology. Horology and horologists have numerous organizations, both professional associations and more scholarly societies.

There are numerous museums dedicated to clocks and timekeeping. Here are a few of them:

[The Royal Greenwich Observatory](#), which is also the source of the Prime Meridian (longitude 0° 0' 0"), and the home of the first marine timekeepers accurate enough to determine longitude (invented by 18th century master clockmaker, John Harrison).

[The Clockmakers' Museum](#) in London, England, is believed to be the oldest collection specifically of clocks and watches in the world. The collection belongs to and is administered by the Clockmakers' Charity, affiliated to the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, founded in 1631 by Royal Charter. Since 2015 it has been housed in a gallery provided by the Science Museum in South Kensington. The collection includes an astronomical table clock by Samuel Watson, possibly

belonging to Isaac Newton and a Smiths wristwatch worn by Sir Edmund Hillary to the summit of Mount Everest.

[The Museum of Timekeeping](#), established in 1994, cares for a unique collection of artefacts at the home of the British Horological Institute in the village of Upton, Nottinghamshire. Exhibits include the watch worn by Captain Scott on his ill-fated polar expedition of 1912. You can also hear the voice of the General Post Office's first Speaking Clock via the original machine itself.

[The Cuckooland Museum](#), previously known as the Cuckoo Clock Museum, is a museum that exhibits mainly cuckoo clocks, located in Tabley, Cheshire, England. The collection comprises 300 years of cuckoo clock-making history, since the very earliest examples made in the 18th to the 21st century. The museum also hosts a range of Black Forest cuckoo and quail clocks, trumpeter clocks, monks playing bells and other associated musical movements. Cuckooland has more than 700 cuckoo clocks on display of different styles, sizes, manufacturers and ages. Many of the timekeepers are very rare and the collection contains the best examples of the cuckoo clockmaker's art. They have a "cuckoo and echo" clock that emulates the whistles and bellows the bird makes in the wild and is thought to be one of only six in the world. Other rarities include; picture frame cuckoo clocks, several timepieces with a life-size automaton cuckoo bird on top of the case, models combined with paintings of people or animals with blinking or flirty eyes, etc.

Famous clocks include:

[The Corpus Clock, Cambridge](#)

The Corpus Clock is one of the most distinctive public monuments in Cambridge and has been admired by residents and tourists since its inauguration in 2008. It is an unusual device for the measurement of time being both hypnotically beautiful and deeply disturbing.

The timepiece was designed by John Taylor, a clock collector and lifelong inventor. The device can do surprisingly un-clocklike things. The pendulum speeds up, slows down, and sometimes stops, but returns to the correct time every five minutes. "I wanted a clock that would play with you," Taylor says.

The face of the clock is plated in pure gold and the radiating ripples allude to the Big Bang, the central impact that formed the universe and could be considered as the beginning of time. Sitting atop the clock is an extraordinary monster, a giant fanged insect called the 'Chronophage', meaning 'time-eater'. For that is what the Chronophage does, devouring each minute as it passes with a snap of its jaws. It evolves out of a grasshopper, a term used by the 18th-century horologist John Harrison to describe his invention of an escapement which was a strictly functional innovation and usually hidden inside a clock's mechanism.

The Corpus Clock has no hands or digital numbers and at first it appears difficult to tell the time. However, there are 3 rings of LEDs, which reading from the innermost ring show hours, minutes and seconds. When an hour is struck there is no chiming of bells, but rather the shaking of chains and a hammer hitting a wooden coffin. Time passes and we all die, a fact further represented by the Latin inscription underneath, *mundus transit et concupiscentia eius*, meaning 'the world and its desires pass away'. Taylor designed the clock to remind himself of his own mortality.

[The Wishing Fish Clock, Cheltenham](#)

Christopher 'Kit' Williams, born in 1946, is a Stroud artist, illustrator and author best known for his 1979 book *Masquerade*. In 1985, Kit Williams designed the Wishing Fish Clock as the centrepiece for

Regent Arcade shopping centre in Cheltenham. At more than 45 feet tall it is believed to be the tallest mechanical clock in the world!

The clock features an illusion with a goose seemingly laying a never-ending stream of golden eggs and includes a family of mice that are continually trying to evade the snake sitting on top of the clock. Hanging from the base of the clock is a large wooden fish that blows bubbles every half-hour along to the tune of *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*.



Big Ben

Big Ben is the nickname for the Great Bell of the striking clock at the north end of the Palace of Westminster in London; the name is frequently extended to refer to both the clock and the clock tower. The tower was designed by Augustus Pugin in a neo-Gothic style. When completed in 1859, its clock was the largest and most accurate four-faced striking and chiming clock in the world. The tower stands 315 feet (96 m) tall, and the climb from ground level to the belfry is 334 steps. Its base is square, measuring 39 feet (12 m) on each side. Dials of the clock are 23 feet (7.0 m) in diameter. The

hour hand is 9 feet (2.7 m) long and the minute hand is 14 feet (4.3 m) long.

Big Ben is the largest of the tower's five bells and weighs 13.7 tonnes. Four quarter bells chime at 15, 30 and 45 minutes past the hour and just before Big Ben tolls on the hour. The clock uses its original Victorian mechanism, but an electric motor can be used as a backup.

Now look at these example poems on the theme:

Clocks – Annie Davison (Annie is a top 15 winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2019)
<https://poems.poetrysociety.org.uk/poems/clocks-2/>

Clocks – Carl Sandburg (6th January 1878 – 22nd July 1967. An American poet, biographer, journalist and editor. Won three Pulitzer Prizes: two for his poetry and one for a biography of Abraham Lincoln. This is a free verse experimental poem about the kinds of clocks the poet observes)
<https://internetpoem.com/carl-sandburg/clocks-poem/>

Sonnet 19 – William Shakespeare (the link includes a modern text version; the rhyme scheme of the original poem is abab cdcd efef gg)
https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/sonnets/sonnet_19/

Think about the form, patterns and repetitions in the poems, the 'word music', what each poem is saying to the reader, how you feel when you read them, etc.

EXERCISE THREE: Write a poem inspired by the theme of HOROLOGY / THE STUDY OF TIME AND TIMEPIECES

This part is about writing your poem. Here are some suggestions:

Write a personification poem from the point of view of a clock or timepiece. It could be your own, someone else's or one of the famous clocks listed here. Write your poem imagining the object is

'alive' and has the same attributes as a human being. What would it say? Think about the function of the object, where it is situated, what it sees, smells, hears, touches etc. What does it think about/dream about? Memories? Ambitions? Think about its mechanism – what makes it tick...

Write a poem inspired by the theme that evokes a personal memory for you / think about clocks left as heirlooms or given as gifts.

Write a poem considering your relationship to clocks and time-keeping, the act of wearing time on your wrist, the passage of time...

Write a poem considering if your notions and feelings towards time changed during lockdown - lack of structure and timed routines, body clocks out of synch, the world still moving on in time...

Your poem could be written in the form and/or style of one of the example poems - using the free form style of a list as in Annie Davison's poem *Clocks*; the experimental style of *Clocks* by Carl Sandburg; the formal structure and rhyme scheme of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 19*.

And, of course, you are perfectly free to write about the theme in your own way and in your own style!

Take your time and enjoy! (Get it?)

© Sara-Jane Arbury

The Festival is grateful to Arts Council England the Garfield Weston Foundation

