

A year ago, I discovered a new hobby: writing children's poetry. Tonight, I'd like to read you some of the poems I've written and share three things I have discovered along the way. To start, here's the first poem I wrote:

Little Red and the Wolf Pup

A small wolf pup, with bright brown eyes,
Played in the woods, chasing butterflies.
One bright morning, by the path he stood,
When who should come along but Little Red Riding Hood.
"Little Red" said the pup "won't you come and play?"
"I'm feeling a bit lonely on this particular day."
"Definitely not" laughed Little Red.
And listen here to what she then said:
"I wouldn't play with anyone as ugly as you.
You probably have fleas and smell like mildew,
You'll ruin my cap and get mud on my shoe.
Besides I have better things to do."
And so she left with her nose in the air,
Not stopping to wonder if her accusations were fair.
And the little wolf pup began to cry,
Wondering if her words were true, and if so why?

The rest of the tale is known through and through,
And thus I don't need to remind you,
That Little Red was eaten that day
Because she refused to stop and play.
She may have screamed, she may have cried,
But nobody heard, and in the end she died.
Not all wolves are evil, and not all are tame,
In fact, no two wolves are even the same.
Now here's a question you should think through,
In Little Red's shoes, what would you do?

I wrote this poem because after reading multiple versions of little red riding hood in my fairytales class, I felt frustrated; I was tired of reading story after story about a big bad wolf, written to make young girls afraid of the big bad world. I wanted to tell a story of tolerance and friendship. And by writing this poem I made my first discovery: children's poetry can be powerful. It can succinctly and playfully comment on incredibly difficult concepts, and give the reader something upon which to reflect. This next poem is one that I hope inspires such reflection. I wrote it after a particularly stressful week, to try and release a building anxiety.

Monsters:

I know several beasts more scary
than the monsters under your bed.
But most of all you should be wary,
Of the monsters inside your head.
They don't have long arms for snatching or
great big yellow eyes.
Instead they have these slithering voices
great for telling lies.
Gone are the teeth,
the spikes
and the claws
Their weapon of choice
is to point out people's flaws.
They may say you're worthless, that you shouldn't even try
They'll make you want to scream and make you want to cry.
But should these monsters
Ever come too near,
Just know that you have nothing to fear.
Don't let your head fill up with doubt,
For you are beautiful, both inside and out.

This poem is powerful because it draws upon emotions with which we can all relate: loneliness, self-doubt. Through writing this poem I made my second discovery: a good poem can offer comfort in a

time of need. It can be a supporting friend, a shoulder to cry on, or just a way to release anxiety as we realize we are not alone.

When brainstorming ideas for new poems, I often wonder if others share my thoughts, and this next poem is such a test:

Sharing

If you split a pie in two
Giving half to each person is fair.
But if the splits between me and you,
I'll eat the pie and leave the air.

I like this poem because it makes no attempt to justify the protagonist's actions or teach a lesson. And thus, discovery #3: poetry doesn't need to be deep. Sometimes it's enough to just have fun and bring out a bit of childish wonder, joy and excitement.

And so, I leave you tonight as I started: not with a brilliant insight, but with a poem. So, analyze it if you wish, or just sit back and smile. It's called,

Broken Pen:

The ink, the ink it's flowing out of this pen
There's simply no way to stop it.
So I have to keep using the ink
So this pen doesn't drip, drip, drip, drop it.

splatter

speckle

sprinkle

spot

That's all the ink I've got.