

TWENTY CONSONANT POETRY

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Twenty Consonant Poetry was developed by skilled poetic researchers working in Urbana, Illinois in 1993. The idea grew out of a joke about twelve-tone music. It was originally used as a learning aid to invoke visions in high school poetry students. Since then, people of widely varying sensibilities have attempted it. It has been used to write stories, scripts, stock reports, limericks, lists of things to do, matrices, songs, political commentary, and cartoons. Unbeknownst to us (at least for awhile), Twenty Consonant Poetry even had its own web page (<http://www.au.com/ammx/20cp.html>).

Here's how it works: a Twenty Consonant Poem uses each of the twenty consonants exactly once before repeating any of them. Y is usually treated as a vowel, although 21 Consonant Poetry exists. Vowels may be (but do not have to be) used freely. These rules may then be modified by individual poets.

Our understanding is that Y is technically a consonant when it appears in words like YO-YO, but a vowel in words like ANALYSIS. Thus, the 21 Consonant Poet must be sure to use Y properly as a consonant (which can be easily done by adding the word YOU wherever necessary) and must decide whether or not she may use it as a vowel as well. This confusion has caused Y, in most cases, to be considered a vowel no matter how it is used in order to preserve the simplicity of the form.

A convention which is used in most of the following examples is to repeat a consonant as many times as desired so long as no other consonant intervenes. This will allow ALLOW in which the L is repeated. It will also allow A DEAD DADA DAD DID A DADA DEED, DUDE.

Here are five shorter and three longer examples:

I quit my job: a crazy wage slave, dead hunk of pox

Reflections Upon the Viewing of Bill Clinton's Inaugural Address, 1993
from the Kitchen of Minneci's Restaurant in Champaign, Illinois,
Minutes After Opening Time

I asked Bill for a waxy TV quip. Oh, gaze in my juice.

He blows me off, quite vexed. "No joke?" Cagy prez!

"Go find a book. Jot a view, acquire hazy examples."

"Why expound off my jazzy victory soliloquy book?" (gag)

Rodney 1992

I spew: a bum King juror acquitted a vile L.A. fuzz hoax
 XXXKKK. Darrel quit his fuzz job. Give me a new cop.

News poem, 7 February 1996

AP SARAJEVO A quiet face exuded a weak laugh. (Home? Zone.)
 Bo/snia-(Family? Boxed. Joke opaque. Eye wet. Touch? Ha.)-Herze-
 gov/ina. (Djukic? Acquit. Fizzle? Pax.) We give Serbia a home.

Book View

Who conjured up pizzazz? A quilt of foxy games.
 Eckler: A. Ross, who examined D, B, J to opaque Z, gave off
 a query, gave off waxy jazz, makes A's alphabet dance.
 Above a quirk of pop: how to taxonomize (judiciously) logo-
 logy. A queen book, who juxtaposes a maze carved of
 a cube, a requisite example, and a dizzy view off of a huge joke.

The Night Bethany Made Joe Cook Dinner

(A Twenty Consonant Script for Joe, Bethany, and Narrator)

JOE: Jabberwocky zapped venom goo to fix his quill./Loquacious banjo,
 fat gamma ray hoax, weak video Pez./Fact Jalopy waved a hazy
 baroque oxygen mask./

NARRATOR: ...Voluptuous Joe waxed Zany: marquee haiku, coffee gab.../

BETHANY: Joe, you cook!

NARRATOR: ...a quip lax Bethany vowed...

BETHANY: I graze famis/hed on Veal Pez. Go brew coffee!

JOE: Tax me!

NARRATOR: ...Joe quakes.../

JOE: Zowie!

NARRATOR: ...agog, he fixed a oven...

JOE: "...OK...Simmer Arab quail juice."

NARRATOR: ...a potato/ book Joe viewed explains...

JOE: Geez! Cut me a fee!

BETHANY: Ha!

NARRATOR: ...A query.../

JOE: I seek beezwax. Fetch me a jar, love!

BETHANY: No go. Quid P/ro Quo. Fix jasmine vegetable pie, wiz!

JOE: Okay, okay.

NARRATOR: ...he ceded.../

JOE: Ox-kebab has good cozy piquant flavor.

BETHANY: My jaw! Ow!/
 NARRATOR: ...kiss Ming; a queer buzz vexed Joe--he wept cafe ale...

In the following, I used a reule which stipulated that I could repeat any consonant (PoPPy) or sequence of consonants (MeaN MoNth) as long as no other consonants intervene. I allowed repeated consonants within sequences (TeQuiLa QueLLS: T-QL-QL(L)-S) and overlapping sequences (TeQuiLa QueLLS a LiSP SPiCe SPeCK: T-QL-QL(L)S-LSP-SPC-SPC-K), I did not allow repeated sequences within sequences (HaVeN'T NoT a HaVeN

To: HVNT-NT-HVNT). I made sure all repeated sequences were repeated in their entirety.

A Waste Land/

By Ezra Q. Pound, who excels as a sage,
me a fave joke to/ quiz a boob

A Wake of Dead

July is a mean month, coax a
Poppy grove/ up off of jaded dead rock, mixing
a quite blue bile bulb eel & a lazy wash & shave,/ joining
safe pox ivy back with May aqua drizzle./
January raze hot, fixed opaque
smog by a wavy ice lake,/ squeezing
juice foam our morph tube, awoke a lax dove./
A weak hoax, fall let it out at us.
It sat as T.S. ate squid Dijon up in Pezberg.
Brag a oboe raga. Barge, rage, urge, argue or give me mice!/
Peak aqua jugs showered fizz. Move. Exit a colonnade, baby./
We walked by, opaque X-ray sieve ozone zenith,
to a huge jam cafe/ gazebo,
we quaffed lemon java,
she ear-shares her easy hours here, tax a piece, cake.../
"Ja. Ich bin nur Xerox aus Ezekiel."
gave a tweed Mafia quip./
Age of five we amaze pals,
play a spiel as ex-arch-duke: a quaint not-job./
"Yo! Prove my jazzed fib! Wax a quick tinsel sleigh!"/
Bon-bon 'n' Tequila quells a lisp spice speck.
I vow: "Vie! Who...uh...of...
I judge a Zoomer! Marie, Marie...Murmur more Marx."/

A wavy quail in aquiline jagged peaks.
A sexy bomb, me. A razor zoo of foci, he.
Itch to each touch. Teach it (Ouch!) to chit-chat./
Six PM? Read a book. Why icy aquafog? Jet to Venezuela.

Twenty Consonant Radio

Monday, February 22nd WEFT, Champaign 90.1 FM

Biz quells a joke. Vox radio WEFT Champaign.
No/ joke, no new age hoax. Cool 90.1 FM.
Buzz 359-9338, request a vapid/ jazz poem CD.
Quell a fake sax guy interview.
Hey, bad/ DJ, hey! Spinning wax.
Quote a breezy vacuum. "I like fo/lk."
Quip a judicious review, foxy biz man. Thug./
Our radio waves squeal FM moxie. Pizzazz!
Begin a hit, Jack./ KVXX. Magic chat.
Wired Djs quaff payola, benze/drine 'n' java.
A quick smug gab fix. A hip pop waltz.