

Cause/Effect Poems

As the name implies, a cause/effect poem traces an effect back to its cause or a cause to its effect, usually revealing irony or mystery so that readers appreciate the power or place of little (but not insignificant) things in the world—a common theme in nursery rhymes, fables, and fairy tales. In terms of theme, the cause/effect poem reminds readers of the connectedness of the universe and the ripple effect of what might seem at the time to be of little consequence. The cause/effect poem takes the form of a series of statements that are connected by logical “links” in a causal chain as well as by the repetition of key words or ideas. Here are some examples:

Distracted at the Altar

My little sis left the gate ajar in her haste to meet her date.
Better to leave things just half done than to be a moment late.
So her mischievous dog escaped his pen in search of something to do,
When he spied me leaving my defenseless room and found some leather to chew.
My new Florsheims were a pitiful sight when Bowser had had his way,
And my dad’s dress shoes hurt my feet on this my wedding day.
So as I stand at the sacred altar trying to wiggle my toes,
All I can think of is that stupid mutt and his great big snotty nose.

A Stroke of the Pen

A little man sat at a big oak desk in an office in Washington D.C.
And signed a piece of paper that changed my life with an ominous decree.
Six weeks later my boyfriend found himself in a place called Iraq
Dodging bullets and bombs and booby traps and trying to watch his back
I prayed more than I ever have and checked my email everyday
Hoping against hope that he would survive in that dismal, dangerous fray
One night last week when on patrol in a place he’d never been
My best friend in all the world came to an untimely end.

Notice that the cause/effect poem is eight lines long and follows an aabbccdd rhyme scheme. Poets who have trouble with this rhyme scheme may wish to access the Rhyme Zone on the Internet at <http://www.rhymezone.com/> to find long lists of rhyming words.

Suggested Topics

an unattended candle	cheating on a test	fighting with siblings
expressing gratitude	forgetting to fill the gas tank	facing your fears
a high pollen count	a love letter	aimlessness
a bully’s taunts	a pebble in the potato salad	leaving the keys in your car
one too many drinks	a prank phone call	gossip
a random act of kindness	roses from a secret admirer	stalking a celebrity
a change in the weather	a bill left unpaid	talking back
breaking curfew	an icy bridge	cold mornings in a duck blind
too much homework	watching too much TV	being suspiciously kind
a forgotten birthday	unconfessed sin	gluttony
a broken promise	holding a grudge	football fanaticism
crying wolf	daydreaming	being tardy to class