



The Pensee: A French Form

(Ok, Shorties Crew, this is an easier form than some of the Welsh forms. The pensée is limited to five lines maximum so you won't go over our limit of 9 lines maximum. This would be a good one to try with younger poets.)

Guidelines for writing a pensee

The pensee has a required number of syllables for each line, and each line has a job to do. Though it is non-metrical and non-rhyming, you may use some internal rhyme, alliteration, assonance or consonance. But these aspects of rhyme are not required. Here are the basics:

5 lines total: 2 , 4, 7, 8, 6 syllables.

Line 1—Introduces the subject. (Can be the title.) 2 syllables.

Line 2—Includes a description of the subject. 4 syllables.

Line 3—Includes an action taken by, or for, the subject. (Use a verb.) 7 syllables.

Line 4—Includes information about the setting/time. 8 syllables.

Line 5—Final thought(s) about the subject. 6 syllables.

Two examples of the pensee

(Both these poems are by Shutta.) “Puppy,” the first poem, uses the initial line as the title. Then, only 4 lines follow the title. The second poem “Kintsugi” refers to the Japanese practice of mending crockery with silver or gold—especially prized when the piece is old or revered. That poem has a separate title, with the full 5 lines following.

PUPPY

Tail thumping joy—
makes a clutter of my life
amid laughing, belly-rub days.
Oh, you! Thief of my heart.

KINTSUGI

broken
your blue rice bowl
waited years to be mended
today, fingers will trace gold scars
feel only perfection

Oft times, writing short is more difficult than writing long. However, with the guidelines of the pensee it can be a pleasure. I hope you come up with some wonderful short poems! **Don't forget, you want to convey a full thought about your subject, not simply a fleeting image.**

Resources

Preminger, Brogran [*The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics*](#)

Poets Collective [*"Poetry Forms," Poet's Collective Multisite Network*](#)

Skelton, Robin [*Shapes of our Singing: A Comprehensive Guide to Verse Forms and Metres from Around the World*](#)

Turco, Lewis Putnam [*The Book of Forms. The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics, Including Odd and Invented Forms, Revised and Expanded Edition*](#)

Writer's Digest [*List of 168 Poetic Forms for Poets*](#)