

Write Your Own “Goodnight” Poem

In *Goodnight Moon*, Margaret Wise Brown uses a detailed description of a place (a great green room) to inspire a beautiful and evocative goodnight poem. In this activity, participants will make detailed observations of their own bedroom to inform and inspire a personal goodnight poem, in the style of Margaret Wise Brown.

Materials Needed:

Paper and a writing utensil, a room (preferably a room where you sleep) to observe.

Directions:

Step 1: Observe and Record

- Choose a room in your home, preferably the room where you sleep, as your inspiration. Find a comfortable place where you can sit down with paper and a pen or pencil.
- Give yourself between five and ten minutes—you may want to set a timer-- to simply look around the room and write down what you see. Try to make your observations as detailed as possible. Instead of just “a chair,” try writing “a blue wicker chair with a puffy white cushion,” etc. The more details you have to choose from when making your poem, the better!
- When you have finished your notes, read over what you’ve written, and circle/ underline images that you like or find interesting.

Step 2: Write Your Poem

- Use the images you’ve circled/ underlined to write your poem. As you write, try including the following literary devices employed by Margaret Wise Brown in *Goodnight Moon*:
 - **Alliteration:** When several words start with the same letter or sound, that is called alliteration. Poets use alliteration to create rhythm or evoke a specific feeling in their audience. *Goodnight Moon* starts with the alliterative line, “in the great green room.” How does the “g” sound in “great” and “green” make you feel?
 - **Anaphora:** When a word appears over and over again in successive lines or clauses, that is called anaphora. Poets use anaphora for emphasis and rhythm. *Goodnight Moon* uses this tool in repeating the words “And” and “Goodnight” at the start of many successive lines. Why do you think these words are repeated? What is the effect?
 - **Rhyme and/or Rhyme Scheme:** When the final syllable of two or more words sounds the same, they rhyme! When words in the middle of a line rhyme, this is called internal rhyme. When words at the end of lines rhyme, this is called external rhyme. When rhymes make a pattern (for example, the last word in each line rhymes or the last word in every other line rhymes, etc.), we can describe this as a rhyme scheme. *Goodnight Moon* employs all kinds of rhymes and a changing rhyme scheme. See how many rhyming words you can find! Make your own rhymes too!

“In the great green room
There was a telephone
And a red balloon
And a picture of
The cow jumping over the moon”
- *Goodnight Moon*,
Margaret Wise Brown

Step 3: Revise and Illustrate

- Read your poem out loud several times. How does it sound? Are there any places where you could change a word or phrase to... make a stronger rhythm? Emphasize an idea or image you love? Create a specific feeling?
- Illustrate your poem with pictures, or better yet, trade poems with a friend or family member and illustrate one another's work. Trade back, and compare what they drew based on reading your poem to the room you observed. Did they get close to reality? Or draw something even more beautiful?

Closing:

Share your poem with someone in your home before bedtime.

Bonus:

Margaret Wise Brown wrote many, many poems for young people, some more famous than others. If you enjoyed using *Goodnight Moon* as inspiration for your own poetry, you may want to explore her other work. Suggested titles:

- *The Runaway Bunny*
- *Little Fur Family*
- *The Important Book*
- *My World*