

MAC Poetry Workshop Writing Exercises from Christopher Luna  
2025: 4/28, 5/12, and 5/25  
Poems by Mike Garofalo

Christopher,

I look forward to attending your June 23, 2025 MAC Writer's Workshop WORK on Zoom.

What software do you use to create your documents and collages: Adobe In Design, Adobe Photoshop, Word, or Affinity? Your art collages are fantastic! Are the art collages in your new book, *Voracity*, in color?

I studied the documents you sent to us (4/28, 5/12, 5/26) giving us prompts and examples to guide our new writing efforts.

I wrote five new poems based on these prompts; and, I revised one longer poem I wrote last November based on "my experiences at the sea." Still working on creating some prose poetry!

My new writing exercises are available in the Word.docx file that is attached below.

You have my permission to share with others in our class or elsewhere.

I don't expect any comments or feedback from you about these poetry writing exercises. I am just sending them to you to show you that I am listening to you, using your prompts, following up on your suggestions, and doing the WORK of a poet using writing as one of my spiritual and well-being practices, e.g.:

my zazen was writing  
pencil in hand—  
    sitting still for minutes  
    no special breathing  
    just moving my hand

One of my specialties is writing [Quintains](#). These 5 line poems are in a variety of rhymed, blank verse, and free verse styles. I do write some traditional Japanese style nature-seasonal Tanka, as well as a few contemporary minimalist, free verse style of Tanka. I really want to write some good limericks.

All my poems, new and old, are also online at my free 24/7 poetry website:

[25 Steps and Beyond: The Collected Works](#)

Best wishes, Mike Garofalo

**Poems by Mike Garofalo**  
**MAC Poetry Workshop Writing Prompts**  
**4 Handout Pages for May 26, 2025**

Write about your body, the Kingdom that is your body, a discourse of  
bodies, your bodily health.

***Two Hands & Ten Fingers***

Fingers fly feelings into my mind,  
brain and thumbs are aligned,  
Each finger a *Lightening* pole  
grounded down into my soul.

They searched carefully for a Sign  
Of the sharp cutting Edge of the Mind.  
They found it, picked it up, realized  
their hands and fingers qualified.  
Fingers were the Edge of the Mind,  
their hands clapped over this Find.

She rubbed against the world,  
touching with fingers curled.  
Defining herself to herself:  
Feeling things, touching oneself.  
In whatever we touch, whatever we feel,  
we leave traces of ourselves.

Our magical fingers cast spells,  
Stamping Others with our Seal.

Feeling the Touches,  
Touching to Feel—  
lovers linger languors hours.  
Skin to Skin, Power into Power,  
clutching thrusting Intensities  
hour after hour.

Eyes and hands  
coordinated cooperatively  
Two Hands, Two Eyes,  
measuring space  
precisely planned  
till habits are formed  
inside the hands.

Manipulating what I see  
active fingers, clever hands  
help define a handy me  
climbing up evolution's tree.

Two eyes, two hands,  
ten fingers touching  
Everything he can  
not verboten in his land.

The hands achieve what  
the eyes and mind can't;

By Doing, Actions, Work,  
creative acts, giving back,  
opening doors,  
shaking hands,  
pats on the back,  
frisky fingers completing tasks.

We can never hold Eternity  
in the palm of our hands:  
but easily there existentially persists  
80 years in my gnarled left fist.

Today, I added 2 stanzas to a version of the above poem that I wrote in early May. The poem is based on ideas found in quotations on my webpage anthology about human hands:

***Hands On*** by Mike Garofalo

[Hands, Fingers, Touching, Feeling](#)

Studies, Quotes, Bibliography

<https://www.gardendigest.com/poetry/25SHands.htm>

*The Five Senses* by Mike Garofalo

Studies, Quotes, Bibliography

<https://www.egreenway.com/reason/fivesenses.htm>

Write about sexual or romantic love, physical intimacy, bodily pleasure,  
sexual pleasure, healthy living for a body.

May 26, 2025

*Pleasures at Hand*

An activity quite handy  
always available to me  
don't cost a cent  
nothing to go out and buy  
clean, simple, ready at hand  
no need for another's help  
convenient, accessible,  
personal, private, alone  
no need to travel anywhere  
poor or rich, who cares,  
safe and healthy  
day or night at any time  
no need to talk or listen.  
Lots of fun, pleasures free  
all you need: an active mind  
a creative imagination  
erotically inclined  
pacing with your hot hand,  
Yes, Masturbation's grand.

**Poems by Mike Garofalo**  
**MAC Poetry Workshop Writing Exercises From Prompts**  
**Christopher Luna, Teacher**  
May 12, 2025

**My Mom**

Bertha June Ast Garofalo  
Born 1921      Died 1994  
Raised Three Sons  
Liked to Read   Socialize   with Ladies  
Democrat      Lutheran  
A Better Person      Than my Dad  
Easy Going  
Trained Us Boys to Entertain Ourselves  
Go Outside and Play  
Kept us Fed, Clothed, and in Line  
Took us      by Bus  
Everywhere  
Did not Drive      until Age 55  
Hiked from Glacier Point to Yosemite Valley Floor  
4 miles with me      and even      later more  
Active      Tough      Stoic      Kind  
  
She never had a chance for Education

An Edith Bunker type    Under an Italian Bossman    Housewife Stuck  
for Life

Trapped by Economic Necessity  
A Depression      Era Woman  
Knew the value of each dollar  
Before Women's Liberation Time

My mom loved Carpentaria    and she held our hands tight,  
as we all walked together,  
in the starry 1950 campground night.

My mother    used to say  
"mind your own business";  
so, I try to be focused and stay  
*busy my way.*

My mother    used to say  
"Don't talk about religion, politics, or sex"  
If you want    a peaceful day

My mother    used to say  
"Be Smart    Look Sharp    Be a Man";  
so I tried    my best    in all of my days  
to follow her useful plan.

She Liked my Wife Karen  
Helped Us Out All the Time  
Many Fine      Happy Times  
She loved her grandkids

welcomed them all  
hosted Church Guild card parties  
traveled with my dad  
until her health began to fail  
and cancer called

My Memories of Her  
Sadly Have Faded  
But Tinged with Happiness  
Thee Cheers Shout Out  
**Happy Mother's Day Mom**



Karen, Alicia, June



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1958  
Paul, Dad, Phil, Mike, Mom

## **May 12, 2025: MAC Workshop Writing Exercise**

Write a poem beginning with the word 'Then.'

**Then**

it became clear  
as my vivid dream ends  
and my waking mind gently asks  
"When?"

Then

one morning in May  
the kitchen sink leaked  
not the best way a Saturday  
Began

Then

Mother's Day  
cards opened and read  
a flower bouquet beside her bed a  
Trend

Then

wondering, on edge,  
would the expensive gift given  
communicate the message I wanted to  
Send

Then

we drove to the sea  
found a cozy motel by the shore

mad acrobatic love for hours with  
Bends

Then, the End! [Quintains in the Adelaine Crapsey Style]

**May 12, 2025 Revised and Added two stanzas**

Write a Poem about your experiences at the Sea.

***Stepping Over Epiphanies***

Affecting all the molecules in me  
the pull of the moon and sea  
feeling the call to walk the shore  
Smiled, opened the door

Tides and time sent signals to me  
to step nimbly over epiphanies  
seen flipped over in the turning sands  
Surprised, opened my hands

Waiting for nobody but me  
a fleck of cold fire  
flung out on this fleck of space  
Sang out, loved this place

Shore pines paint a background scene  
short stubby crooked trees

swaying gently in the salty breeze  
Unruffled, I found tranquility

Stunned by the crisp clean colors  
savoring the scents of the sea  
enchanted by the incessant singing surf  
Awakened, calming reveries

Pointing to the ineffable realization of  
insights known to me alone  
erupted up from our sensory realities  
Profound, not foreknown

Such awakenings come and go  
sometimes fast or sometimes slow  
unpredictable visions playing peekaboo  
Pausing, not thinking too

Slogging up and down the dunes  
breathing hard on que  
one step up, a half-step back  
Stopping, beautiful view

A romantic couple passes me  
by on the thin path through sea grass;  
we nod, mumble "hello", step aside,  
Thinking, will love last

What I see is painted by me  
created for free in a brain for me

suckled from the breasts of reality  
Pondering, reality or illusory

I practiced outside today  
the Practice of the Outside Way  
I figured a a few things out  
Understanding, what Place's say

Tip toeing over bull kelp strands  
stepping on broken shells  
avoiding the driftwood piles ever moving  
Listening, a virtual foghorn knells

A friendly dog off-leash comes to me  
seeking a gentle pat and pet  
desiring a kind human face to see  
Laughing, she was wet

My grand daughter and I once walked  
beside an Oregon dune  
not very long ago it seemed to us  
*Remembering*, gone too soon

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**May 12, 2025**

Write a poem with a two column and centered typographical spacing.

**CENTERED**

**Not Left**

**Not Right**

Insights

McClure's

Calling Card Signature

and

**BARKING**

**GROWLING**

**SQAWK-KWAQS**

Beast Language Eco-poetry

Hip disregards of

human superiority-separateness falsities

favoring animal-mammal

**Intimacies-----Similarities**

muscles and meat                      spit and sperm

arms and feet

dog tails                      clam tongues

salmon fins                      caddisfly wings

Eight Legs-Four Legs-Two Legs

**Two Eyes**  
STARING, staring, STARING  
at the moon so pale

MEMORIES  
impaled on chains of food  
uncooked RAW bloody good meals

Ideas SPREAD      Across the PAGE  
CONVEYING  
more than meaning  
more than sounds  
more than personal idiosyncrasies  
more than oblique generalities

... DELIVERING...  
**!DETAILS of AWAKENING!**

**Interconnections, Interrelations, Integrations, Interpenetrations  
Repetition, Replication, Reproduction, ReGeneration, ReCreation**



**Zoom Class**  
**Saturday, May 24, 2025**  
**Write a Poem about your experiences at the Sea.**  
**By Mike Garofalo**

**Big Sur**

The Henry Miller Library tucked inside  
a dark grove of quiet redwood trees  
for sober devotees of intense wild sexuality  
who stop and see his old books, cool art,  
listen to symphonies, sip black coffee, and  
ponder Tropic of Cancer analogies, and  
Imagine California oranges colored  
fancifully by Hieronymus Bosch.

Big Sur Village, between tiny Lucia homes  
and bustling Carmel fairy tale shops  
and busy tourist filled restaurants with  
fans hoping to catch Clint Eastwood  
playing subtle piano in a local bar.

The traffic on Hwy 1 comes and goes,  
relentless, despite the twisting cliffs,  
scary steep drops to the rocky

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sun spattered rushing sea below.

Robinson Jeffers would have hated  
the Big Sur popularity. Snubbed his  
finicky hermit's nose at Mr. Hearst's  
San Simeon Castle high on eucalyptus hills,  
and despised the tourists from anywhere.

Decades ago, I tent camped at Morro Bay,  
San Simeon, Pfeiffer Julia Burns, Pfeiffer  
Big Sur, and Andrew Molera State Parks.  
Beautiful, crowded in dry season; cold  
and wet and, except for big RVs,  
deserted in Winter's Dark.

Hiked the trails, watched the Hawk,  
listened to grunting seals  
lounging on the sand, carefully  
stood at the Edge of the Land.

Low rolling green hills, topped with grass,  
from Morro Bay to Ragged Point.  
Twisting road, steep cliffs, otherwise,

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when the Hwy 1 is opened after  
big cascading landslides.

Mesmerizing vistas of Vastness  
from a road high above the shore  
fouled by the incessant traffic's roar,  
sadly, not as appealing anymore.

Don't want to start a curmudgeon's rant  
but the Golden Gate's hinges are rusted,  
tourists have twisted the Gate askance,  
(the Perishing Republic don't Shine)  
rich folks have come to the Dance.

Skinny Jeffers was wise, even back then,  
to sequester at Tor House and Hawk Tower,  
win Una in their bed by his side, and  
philosophize environmental inhumanism,  
and walk the woods at Carmel by the Sea,  
and splash in the Tide pools at Point Lobos,  
and ponder on the harsh cruel beauty of Nature  
till he died.

Ride On Roan Stallion, Ride!

So Long, Big Sur, *Adios*-Goodbye!

**VOID FORMS MANY  
MINUS GROUND PLUS  
NIGHT DAY  
DEAD LIVE  
PAST NOW  
NOW TIME  
OFF ON  
ONE ALL  
YIN YANG  
NONE SOME  
ZERO ONE  
CHAOS LAW  
SILENCE WORDS  
FORM IS EMPTINESS  
EMPTINESS IS FORM**

**May 20, 2025**

*Big Sur* added to my: *At the Edges of the West*

<https://www.egreenway.com/mpgss/shortpoemsmpeg9sea2.htm>

Highway 101 and 1

By Mike Garofalo

Pantoun: April 28, 2025

**April 28, 2025**

**The Dice of Days**

Life's a gamble every day  
The Future ... our open doors  
The Present is only one day  
The Past offers love and lore

The Future: our opened doors  
Free rolls of the loaded dice  
The Past offers love and lore  
Beauty served up straight on ice

Free rolls of the legal dice  
Gamble's choice to bet or not  
Beauty served at a modest price  
Time readily bought and sold

Gambler's choice to take or hold  
Sometimes free to bet on me  
Time precious bought and sold  
Many other depend on me

Sometimes free to just let it be  
Chances are the claim of the game  
Many others love lucky me  
Standing uncertain in the rain

Chance in life are randomly hitched  
The Future: opened up useful doors  
Standing fast, taking risks,  
The Past a fecund changing shore.