

Project 2.

## 25 Variations

### *Phase 1*

#### **Instructions**

1. Choose an existing poem. It should be written by someone else — someone who is not yourself and someone you do not know on a personal level. As a general rule, the poem should also be able to fit on approximately one printed page (no epic poems).
2. You will be making 25 formal variations using this poem. Each variation will be a separate webpage. For each variation, you will focus on changing the poem's form through shifts in composition, typography, hierarchy, scale, and pacing. The poem's content must remain intact throughout all 25 variations.
3. The 25 variations are divided into 5 levels of 5 variations each. The levels start with my constraints and gradually allow more freedom.

#### **Level 1**

##### Restrictions

- Only use HTML (no CSS of any kind)
- In addition to the required `html`, `head`, `title`, and `body` elements, you can use any of the following HTML elements:

`p`  
`br`

You can also use `&nbsp;` to equal a visible space.

##### Goals

Focus on breaking up the text in different ways. How does the poem usually look? What happens if you present it more spaced out? More condensed? In a specific shape or form? What happens to the poem when you have to scroll to read it all?

## Level 2

### Restrictions

- Only use HTML (no CSS of any kind)
- In addition to the elements allowed in Level 1, use any of the following HTML elements:

div  
span  
h1, h2, h3, h4, h5, h6  
strong  
em  
ol, ul, li

a (With the a element — do not link to external sites, but you can link to parts of your poem using an attribute to assign an id)

Again, you can use `&nbsp;` to equal a visible space.

### Goals

Focus on presenting the text in various hierarchies & scales using only HTML.

## Level 3

### Restrictions

- Use both HTML and CSS
- Only use the HTML allowed in Levels 1 and 2.
- Only use the following CSS properties:

padding  
border  
margin  
position  
display  
float  
top, right, bottom, left  
height, width

## Goals

Focus on positioning elements using CSS. Experiment with space and possibly try a very tall page or a very wide page.

## **Level 4**

### Restrictions

- Use both HTML and CSS
- Only use the HTML allowed in Levels 1 and 2
- In addition to the CSS properties allowed in Level 3, you can use any of the following CSS properties:

```
font-style  
font-weight  
font-size  
font-family  
text-align  
line-height  
letter-spacing  
text-transform
```

## Goals

Focus on typography using CSS. Experiment with hierarchy and scale.

## **Level 5**

### Restrictions

- Use both HTML and CSS
- Use any HTML element (except for `img`, `iframe`, and `a` via linking to external sites. This is a purely typographic & semantic project, so no external images, links, or other assets should be used.)
- Use any CSS property

## Goals

Do something you haven't done before. Use colors. Test the limits of what you can do. Experiment with new CSS properties (including animations, if you want). You might also consider how your website is read on a screen reader

## **Overall project goals & background**

This project is an iterative exploration of typography through HTML and CSS. Since you'll be making 25 variations on the same text, no one single representation of the poem is important than any other. This should allow you ample room for visual experimentation. You should aim to have a variety of visual treatments that responds to the poem's content. Additionally, by the end of the project, you will better understand the differences between HTML and CSS and see how each can be used in semantic and visual expression.

This project has you exploring formally from a primarily visual level. But we should remember that the web is not only visual — it is a democratic medium that allows anyone (regardless of disability or age) to access information, so we should keep this in the back of our minds — that visual is just one layer to experiencing the web. We will explore the semantics of HTML in the projects to come.

This project is partly inspired by Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style* (1947), which narrates a simple encounter on a bus 100 times, each in a different tone / style that alters — subtly or radically — how we understand the basic story. This project will allow you to see how style alters the message of a poem. In the later levels, this project might also expose you to the many different styles at large today on the web. By trying them out, you will learn how they were made and perhaps also why they exist so that you can apply them judiciously from here on out.

## **Credit**

Thanks to my professor from RISD, Lucy Hitchcock, for inspiring this project with her print-based version.

## Possible poems to use for Project 2.

"SNOW PIECE"

by Yoko Ono

from "Grapefruit"

1963 summer

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Think that snow is falling.

Think that snow is falling everywhere all the time.

When you talk with a person, think that snow is falling between  
you and on the person.

Stop covering when you think the person is covered by snow.

"All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace"

by Richard Brautigan

1967

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I like to think (and  
the sooner the better!)  
of a cybernetic meadow  
where mammals and computers  
live together in mutually  
programming harmony  
like pure water  
touching clear sky.

I like to think  
(right now, please!)  
of a cybernetic forest  
filled with pines and electronics  
where deer stroll peacefully  
past computers  
as if they were flowers  
with spinning blossoms.

I like to think  
(it has to be!)  
of a cybernetic ecology  
where we are free of our labors  
and joined back to nature,  
returned to our mammal  
brothers and sisters,  
and all watched over  
by machines of loving grace.

Excerpt from "For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut"

by Takashi Hiraide

translated by Sawako Nakayasu

2008

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Things that rain, and things that grow.

They are all that hold my interest.

(Until the things that rain have grown, and the things that grow  
have poured.)

Things that grow, and things that rain.

They are all that I desire.

(Until the things that grow cease to grow, and the things that  
rain no longer rain a single drop.)

"Just Walking Around"

John Ashberry

1998

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What name do I have for you?  
Certainly there is not name for you  
In the sense that the stars have names  
That somehow fit them. Just walking around,

An object of curiosity to some,  
But you are too preoccupied  
By the secret smudge in the back of your soul  
To say much and wander around,

Smiling to yourself and others.  
It gets to be kind of lonely  
But at the same time off-putting.  
Counterproductive, as you realize once again

That the longest way is the most efficient way,  
The one that looped among islands, and  
You always seemed to be traveling in a circle.  
And now that the end is near

The segments of the trip swing open like an orange.  
There is light in there and mystery and food.  
Come see it.  
Come not for me but it.  
But if I am still there, grant that we may see each other.



## Gestalt Prayer

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I do my thing and you do your thing  
I am not in this world to  
live up to your expectations,  
and you are not in this world to  
live up to mine.  
You are you  
and I am I  
and if by chance we find each other,  
it's beautiful.

Various Haikus

by Basho

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One insect  
asleep on a leaf  
can save your life

A bell at sunset  
no one to hear it  
this spring evening

With every gust of wind  
the butterfly changes its  
place on the willow

Good Bones

by Maggie Smith

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Life is short, though I keep this from my children.  
Life is short, and I've shortened mine  
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,  
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways  
I'll keep from my children. The world is at least  
fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative  
estimate, though I keep this from my children.  
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.  
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,  
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world  
is at least half terrible, and for every kind  
stranger, there is one who would break you,  
though I keep this from my children. I am trying  
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,  
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on  
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,  
right? You could make this place beautiful.

Poems by Izumi Shikibu

trans. Jane Hirshfield

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Nothing  
in the world  
is usual today.  
This is  
the first morning.

I cannot say  
which is which:  
the glowing  
plum blossom is  
the spring night's moon.

Even if I now saw you  
only once,  
I would long for you  
through worlds,  
worlds.

Other good ways to find poems:

( 1 )

Ask your friends or family what their favorite poems are

( 2 )

Search online:

Go to <https://www.poetryfoundation.org> and browse

Going to <https://are.na> and searching for “poem” ... if you find one you like,  
see what else it’s connected to

( 3 )

Search in a physical place:

Go to the WashU library, poetry section

Go to a bookstore & ask for the poetry section