

N O - L

*Lipograms for the
Christmas Season*



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Foreword

Within, find poems on the theme of Christmas and the Winter season. Each of our winters were free to write what they wanted on the theme, evoking what it meant to them, but they had to avoid using one distinct character: the dreaded L.

Hence, we have formed No-L poems. Yes, the entire project has been based on a pun, but hey, we are writers, and as is our custom, we adore *jeu de mots*. We hope you enjoy these 12 Poems Of Christmas, happy reading and happy Christmas!

- Colin Dardis, Editor

NO-L: Pangrammatic Lipograms
for the Christmas Season

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Ellie O'Leary: *Angst and Joy*

Singing the songs of the season,
as I'm bringing out Christmas décor,
puts me into a mix of angst and joy.
Wishing peace even as I worry,
is what I have enough to give?
Are my youngsters going to be happy
or disappointed with me, their Santa?
Do my decorations show my poverty
or my moderation? Gratitude overtakes anxiety
as we gather for baking, for wrapping,
for setting up the tree with ornaments,
some made as gifts, some new, some more senior
than the kids who set them on branches,
preparing for a day to share our joy.

David Brazier: *In the Greenwood*

We were there before the beginning,
beside you in the high branches,
witnessed your first unsteady steps
out from under the canopy
onto the sky-burned savannah.
We drew back as you threw rocks,
dug iron, sharpened sticks, took arms.

We cried for you but you never hear,
except in winter, the death of the year,
when a message arrives in the scent
of frosted bark on the sharpening air.
Then you decide to cut down a tree,
drag us in out of the hungry dark,
to set in us a hundred-thousand sparks.

Mark Russell: *Season's Treasons*

End of year has the sun heating the other hemisphere.

Bit queer that the systems of work and education here
do nothing to adhere to our own need, as Winter nears,
to hibernate from the frozen frontier. Its icy spears
numbing our skin and bones as we brace outdoors, grab our
phones,
and hus'n'bus' as drones - when we'd much rather not bemoan
the enforced need to roam beyond our home, to shopping zones
to buy things we're set to outgrow. Just to keep up with Jones.

It's great that we gather together, end of December,
vectored from work and weather, to create and remember
good times and tender. I think it'd be for the better
if it wasn't rendered to a mere week or so of ember.

Shame we don't enjoy the reason throughout the entire season.

Gerry McCullough: *Wonder*

A baby boy; the host of Heaven singing praises.

Shepherds frightened, no wonder.

So much wonder.

A star showing the way to the wandering wise men

Who studied the skies.

They found a new king,

And made Herod angry,

No wonder.

So much wonder.

The other infants died. One escaped to Egypt.

Mary hugged her baby, and thought about it,

No wonder.

So much wonder.

So much pain.

Ambre Burt: *Winter Dreaming*

Snow dreams of arctic winds,
fading away into obscurity;
a drop of water: token remains
of this northern transient.
Fires burn deep into the dark,
protecting tender skin and bone
from winter's freezing discontent;
as autumn vanishes in dissent
Storms hover nearby,
ready to upend their stores
on unsuspecting heads
dreaming of far distant sun
and sand and beachy days
with never-ending tans

Stephen Knox: *Designated Driver*

Around August it is mentioned,
momentum gathers through autumn,
venue booked, menu decided,
portents of party time.

I dread the thought of being caught
in the faux friendship of the Christmas do,
how to get through,
integrity intact?

I drag him, vomit drunk, from my car
into his house, onto his chair,
 season's greetings,
 peace on earth,
 Designated Driver.

Clark Chambers: *Winter's Fire*

Winter's aristocracy is rising, just as you think, "Winter's over, she's drifting into dark", she turns and rises and icy extremities creep into your soft beds of repose.

You sense her, further and nearer, and further again, something not quite, but encroaching on pain moves through you, warmth dismissed with a wave of her frosted hands.

Rain, not yet snow precipitates against the pane, I see her, icier, her visage pressed on the transparency and she penetrates from outside to within.

And vice versa! We're driven out to escape her wintery grasp: there the wanderers are wrapping around each other their presence as presents, to be opened-in warmth. On trees, fires spark and sputter as they entwine, and she mutters: "Stay".

Colin Dardis: *Mystified*

No cascading snow, no statues of white
no footprints mosaics on the high street

no centrepiece tree, no street decorations
no rainbowed strings shining on and off

no open fire, no hanging stockings
no signs demanding 'Santa, stop here'.

And yet, that presence that cannot be denied:
what makes this different from the other months?

That tiny shiver of intoxication when
we imagine the day; we make our own gifts together.

Pauline Fayne: *Winter Fog*

I sift muddied memories
Through the frame
Of others' rose-tinted views.

Theirs,
Draped in winter fur
Dipped in honeyed drinks
Humming with happy tunes.

Mine,
Monotone, magpie hued.
A memoir of mouse-chewed poems,
The broken cache of a damaged brain.

Jenny Cleland: *Abeyance*

We rested in the quiet of this quiescence,
frozen roots beneath the ground,
our breath, a hush against ice
in the air, we hung there. But now
the earth is waiting to be reborn,
every dream is waking.
Your hand in mine, our eyes ahead,
this new year, a new beginning.

Kenneth Owens: *Decorating Haiku*

i.

the neighbours have had
theirs up since November time:
I open the attic.

ii.

too many trinkets,
festoon of costume and stars -
not enough branches

iii.

apex of the tree:
a star, a cherub, a bow -
who shines the mountain?

Geraldine O'Kane: *Secret Santa*

A shine erupts from your eyes,
communicating the strange grief
Christmas gifts us with.