

## Anxiety Poem Assignment

**Objective: To create a powerful and visually rich poem which describes your unique experience of anxiety.**

Read the following two poems from the Poetry Foundation website, and consider how each poet brings the experience of anxiety to life.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45723/theres-a-certain-slant-of-light-320>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/58641/respiration>

Consider how Dickinson and May employ metaphors, similes, imagery, or the five senses to encapsulate their worry?

### **There's A Certain Slant of Light, (320)**

By Emily Dickinson

There's a certain Slant of light,  
Winter Afternoons –  
That oppresses, like the Heft  
Of Cathedral Tunes –  
Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference –  
Where the Meanings, are –  
None may teach it – Any –  
'Tis the seal Despair –  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the Air –  
When it comes, the Landscape listens –  
Shadows – hold their breath –  
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance  
On the look of Death

### **Respiration**

By Jamaal May

A lot of it lives in the trachea, you know.  
But not so much that you won't need more  
muscle:  
The diaphragm, a fist clenching at the  
bottom.  
Inhale. So many of us are breathless,  
you know, like me  
kneeling to collect the pottery shards  
of a house plant my elbow has nudged  
into oblivion. What if I sigh,  
and the black earth beneath me scatters  
like insects running from my breath?  
Am I a god then? Am I insane  
because I worry about the disassembling of  
earth  
regularly? I walk more softly now  
into gardens or up the steps of old houses  
with impatiens stuffed in their window  
boxes.  
When it's you standing there with a letter  
or voice or face full of solemn news,  
will you hold your breath before you knock?

## Anxiety Questions

1. Now that you have read two poems which bring the experience of anxiety to life, consider your own unique response to anxiety. Describe it in a sentence here.
2. What makes you the most nervous?
3. Why? Explain carefully and provide details.
4. How do you know when you are nervous? Do your palms sweat? Does your face feel hot? Is there a pounding in your chest? Do you fidget more?
5. Using at least one of the five senses, describe the experience here.
6. What image do you picture in your head when you are experiencing this anxiety? Describe it in detail here.
7. Now, compare your anxiety to something else, in order to bring it to life. For example, you might write, " My fear of filling in those oval bubbles is a hungry ghost, devouring me silently."

Once you have completed the questions, you can try to create your own poem. Good Luck!