

Acrostic Poems

Name _____

Date _____

An **acrostic** is a poem in which the first letters of the lines spell a word or a name. Jewish writers have used acrostics for thousands of years, to help people memorize prayers and to sign or honor a name.

Ancient acrostics

Psalm 145 (Ashrei) and "A Woman of Valor" (Proverbs 31) are alphabetical acrostics: each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from א to ת.

A poet signs his name

In the sixteenth century, Rabbi Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz, born in Thessaloniki and living in Safed, wrote "Lecha Dodi," the song that welcomes Shabbat in synagogues around the world. The first letters of its first eight verses spell his name, Shlomo HaLevi (שלמה הלוי), reading from right to left.

י	ו	ל	ה	ה	מ	ל	ש
Yod	Vav	Lamed	Heh	Heh	Mem	Lamed	Shin
<i>Yamin u'smol</i>	<i>Vehayu limshisah</i>	<i>Lo tevoshi</i>	<i>Hitoreri</i>	<i>Hitna'ari</i>	<i>Mikdash melech</i>	<i>Likrat Shabbat</i>	<i>Shamor ve'zachor</i>

A hidden name in English

Lewis Carroll hid the name of the real Alice, Alice Pleasance Liddell, in a poem at the end of *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). Here are its first lines:

A boat, beneath a sunny sky
 Lingering onward dreamily
 In an evening of July
 Children three that nestle near,
 Eager eye and willing ear

Two model poems

MEMORY

Mothers and grandfathers telling stories at the table
 Every voice a link in a long chain
 Moving from Tripoli, Cairo, Aden, and Casablanca to new homes
 Old languages still spoken on holidays
 Recorded so the stories are never lost
 Yesterday's lives, told for tomorrow

ROOTS one word lines

Remember
 Origins
 Oral
 Traditions
 Stories

Your acrostic

Every line must include a specific detail from the testimony

Speaker: _____ Write one letter of the speaker's first name in each box. Then write a line for each letter, and note the evidence behind it.

Letter	My line	Evidence from the testimony (and minute)

Why did you choose these details to honor this person?
