

Crane Poem Prompts

(offered by Laurie Kutchins, for Virtual Crane Festival September 2020)

Crane Prompt #1: Mimicry

- Go out somewhere in Teton Valley and watch some sandhill cranes. Take a notebook and pen/pencil with you. (The TR Land Trust can help guide you to some crane habitat if you need some help finding them. Oh and try not to disturb the cranes when you see them. They are very busy getting ready to migrate).
- Watch and Listen. Do nothing else. Don't even try to take a picture of them on your phone. Just be very still and breathe with the cranes and watch and listen. For at least 15 minutes. (preferably longer).
- Begin to write in your notebook what you see and hear. Begin to "mimic" them on the page (and not in any condescending sense) – maybe a better word for this is to *emulate the cranes*. Try to **emulate** them with words on your notebook page. Let your words come from the cranes. See if your words can move like cranes and sound like cranes.

Crane Prompt #2: Migration Story

Cranes are migratory. So are we – sort of, & more-or-less. Think about migrations in your own life – you can use the term very loosely – for example, we are currently "migrating" from summer and a lot of being outdoors to autumn weather and more indoor activity. On Fridays we "migrate" into weekend modes, and on Monday mornings we migrate into weekday routines. So the word Migration, or Migrate can be used broadly, loosely, and figuratively in this prompt. **Write a short Migration Story**. Make it a poem of only about fourteen lines. Write it so that the cranes will understand it and relate to it! Let your audience be our resident summer cranes who about to migrate down to the Bosque del Apache in New Mexico.

Crane Prompt #3: A Letter Poem (an Epistle)

Keep going with the cranes themselves as your reader/audience. Write a poem that is addressed to them (or to one crane singular "you"). Write a letter to a crane. Do this quickly, so that they will receive it before they fly south. What do you want to tell the crane before it leaves this valley where it summered? Is there anything you need to release, or let go of, or get off your chest, as we often do in letters we write? Maybe there is a secret you carry in your own heart that you could entrust to a

sandhill crane in a letter poem. What do you need to communicate to this crane, in this letter? How might you be 'the lighter' and more airy for having written to a crane?

Crane Prompt #4: I-am-not-a-Sandhill-Crane Poem

Write a poem beginning with this line:

I am not like a sandhill crane, I am no crane at all...

And then keep going. Tell us why and how you are not like this magnificent creature. Tell us what you *ARE* like – in contrast to cranes and cranness. Use images and descriptions to tell us what you are not and what you are...

Use simile (I am not like a crane...) and/or metaphor (I am not a crane...).

Have fun and make some things up. You can be anything you want to be if you ask your imagination to show up and participate!

(Crane Poem Prompts from Matt Daly)

Crane Poem from a Model

Celebrate your love of cranes by composing a very short poem about them. First, read this classic crane poem by Eihei Dōgen, a 13th Century Japanese poet (translated by Steve Heine).

Impermanence

*To what shall
I liken the world?
Moonlight, reflected
in dewdrops,
shaken from a crane's bill.*

Start your poem with a question about your relationship to the land where you live. Try to ask the question in no more than two lines with no more than five words per line. Avoid fancy words.

Now, answer your question by describing the action of a crane in a specific time and place. Try to use only three lines, no more than five words per line, for your answer. Avoid explaining what you mean. Let describing the action of the crane be enough.

Call-and-Response Crane Poem

Write couplets (two lines followed by a space) in which you describe the actions of a crane or group of cranes in the first line and then respond with a line about how that action affects you. Focus on active verbs.

Example:

Cranes call each other into the seed-filled field.
I wait for one to ask me to dance.

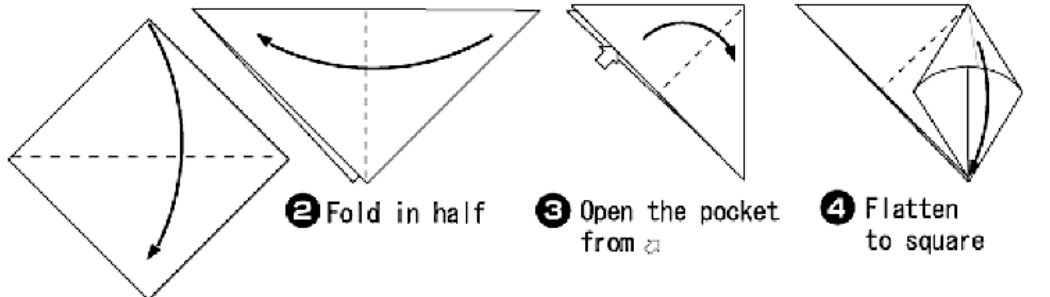
After a few of these call-and-response couplets conclude by reversing the pattern. Write a line about your actions and have the cranes respond.

Wise Saying Crane Poems

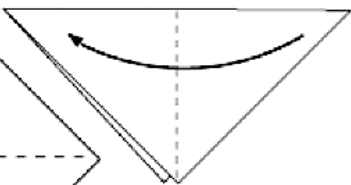
Take a minute and create a “wise saying” that focuses on cranes. What is something you learn from experiencing cranes? What do they have to teach or share? Really try to make your wise saying sound wise, even if what you are saying is quite simple.

Now, write your wise saying in the middle of a page. Read it aloud and hear the sounds of your words. Use the sounds and rhythms of your wise saying as the model for the rest of your poem.

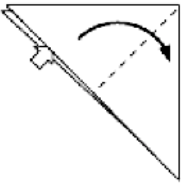
With your wise saying in the middle of the page, write at least three lines before the wise saying and write at least two lines after it. How will you get to your wisdom? What comes after?



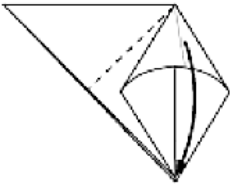
1 Fold in half



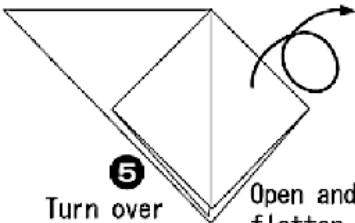
2 Fold in half



3 Open the pocket from \square

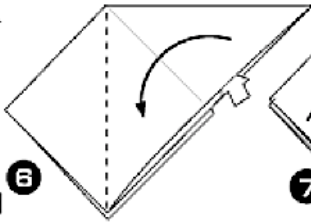


4 Flatten to square



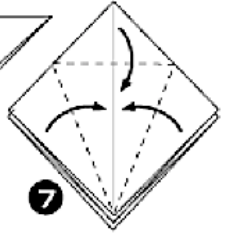
5

Turn over



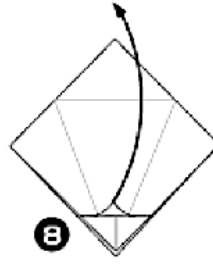
6

Open and flatten the pocket like Fig. 3 & 4



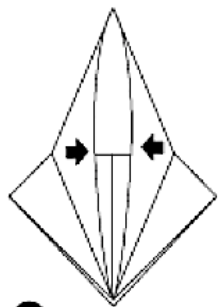
7

Fold to make creases and fold back



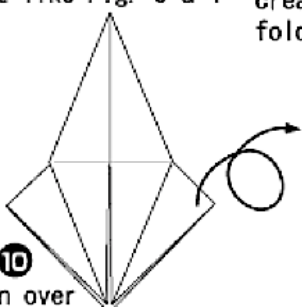
8

Pick a tip to make a space



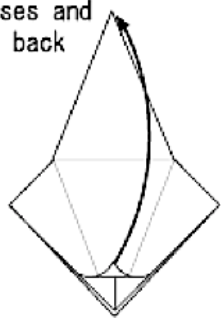
9

Flatten the pockets



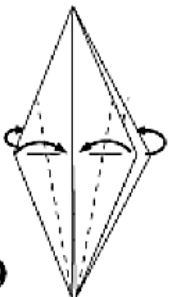
10

Turn over



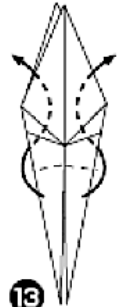
11

Fold, open and flatten the pocket like Fig. 7, 8 & 9



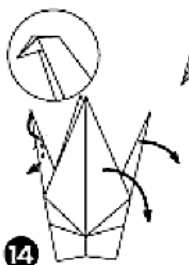
12

Fold to meet the center line



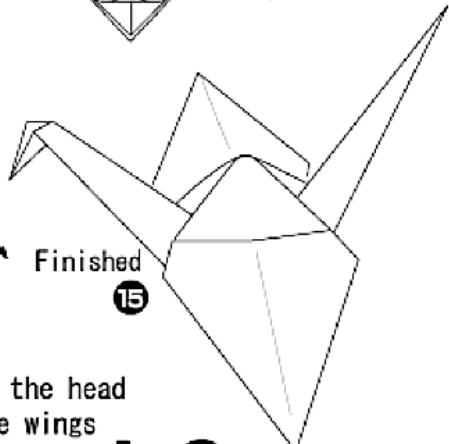
13

Pocket fold in the dotted line



14

Pocket fold the head and open the wings



Finished 15

*Traditional
Diagram: Fumiaki Shingu

A Crane