

Finding a form: Little black verse

Aim of the exercise: Try out different forms

You are going to write a short poem of exactly twenty lines.

- the first line must read 'Black has always been in fashion.'
- the final line must read 'My little black dress' or 'My black tuxedo.'

What happens in the eighteen lines in between is up to you!

When you have written your poem:

- if it is unrhymed, have a go at writing a rhyming version
- if it rhymes, write a second version in free verse with little or no rhyme

Compare both versions and ask yourself which you prefer and why.

You may like to follow this up with a short story.

Imagine a character wearing one or other of the two costumes in the pictures: the black dress or the dinner suit. Now imagine him or her entering a room during a social event.

- Who sees them?
- How do those people perceive them?
- How do they feel making an entrance in their dress/ suit?
- Who do they talk to? How do they feel talking to them?

Make notes. Use this material as the basis for the beginning of a short story and see how the story develops.



Evening dress, Catherine Walker, 1994-5. Museum no. T.49-1005



Evening dress-suit, Charles Wallis Ltd, 1923, Museum no. T.49-1005