

Writing greeting card verses

Hallmark has this month celebrated its 100th birthday, having been founded by Joyce Hall from David City, Nebraska, after she latched onto a craze for postcards that had swept America in the first decade of the 20th century. Nowadays, the company is one of the world's biggest card producers and continues to be run by Joyce's grandson, Don Hall.

This important birthday raises again the profile of card verse writing as a form of creative writing. Can you imagine how difficult it is to say 'Merry Christmas' in a hundred of different ways? If this is a challenge that you feel you're interested in seizing then read on!

There are opportunities for writers of greeting card verses to submit their words to large card companies; not everything is written in house. Editorial manager at Hallmark, Ruth Turner, states that she is always looking for new freelance verse writers. "We have a big library of what you might call standard verse, so we're looking for something a bit different: writers who have a new voice or a more quirky or interesting way of expressing themselves."

At Hallmark, and the same principles apply for the majority of card manufacturers, submissions can be submitted directly through their website. Card verses for all subject matters and seasonal festivities will be accepted throughout the year, so try not to feel as if you have to write or submit a card verse that is specific to a time of the year over certain months only.

As with all writing, research is of paramount importance. Louise, one of the writers at Hallmark suggests that greeting card verse writers should, "go into the shops. Look at what we [Hallmark] and other companies are doing. Stand around and listen to what people say when they're buying. If they read a card and put it back, go and look at it to see why it might have been that it didn't work for them."

Once you have a greeting card verse idea in mind or you have something down on paper and you are considering submission of your writing to a card manufacturer, ask yourself a few questions first:

- 'Would I actually send a card with this message in?'
- 'Have I used archaic rhymes? If so, is there a way that I can amend the text to avoid this rhyme?'
- 'Have I written anything backwards to make it rhyme?' If so, it needs rewriting.
- 'Have I used the first person?' Cards should be written in the first person to give them that personal feel.
- 'Is the verse specific to an event?' Lovely verses can be written about specific events, such as a daughter gardening with her Dad which you may feel would work well as a focal point for a father's day card. But other people may not relate to this event, and so specific events should be avoided in cards.

So, as we reach the festive season, take the opportunity to get your creative juices flowing and start writing some greeting card poetry!