How to write a pastiche

A pastiche is an exercise in literary criticism: it involves changing one or more elements in a work of prose or poetry in order to examine the effects of stylistic variations. Writers can use pastiches to hone their own style, and a pastiche may even lead further, to an original story or essay.

There are different ways to write a pastiche: you can change...

- **The plot:** Take any story and outline its plot. Change the plot outline from a tragedy to a comedy or vice-versa. Molière did that with his own plays: typically a *deus ex machina* comes on stage in the final scene and bails everyone out of trouble. The action is comic but the plot is tragic up to the last, implausible scene. And that, Molière seems to imply, is the point.

- **The setting:** Change the setting of a story. If the action takes place in a big city, change it to a small town or jungle or vice-versa. Likewise, if the action takes place in the present, change it to the past or future. If the story seems to have no particular setting of note, give it one in a way that is more than decoration.

- **Change a character:** Transform a character from male to female or vice-versa. How will that affect dialogue and action? Or turn a villain into a hero by making the fewest changes possible. Can your character be a villain or hero by actions alone, without talking or looking like one? What’s the least you can do to avoid inconsistency? And, of course, how do these changes affect the meaning of the story?

- **Change the point of view:** Rewrite a scene in a story from the point of view of another character. Or change a scene by adding senses other than sight and hearing.

- **Change the dialogue:** Take a scene in a novel or play and change the level or mode of language: how would the characters speak if they were from another region or social class?

Pastiche of “The Raven”

The Reaction
Paladin Quixote (http://physics.livejournal.com/515054.html)

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of something gently rapping, rapping at my chamber sensor.
" 'Tis some particles," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber sensor;
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I recall, it was in the end of fall,
And each distinct particulate ball wrought its ghost 'pon the sensor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow, sorrow for the lost LENR.
For the rare and radiant reaction whom the scientists name LENR,
Unobserved here forevermore.
(...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Raven</th>
<th>To Poe – From the Raven</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harold Billings</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once upon an evening hungry, stomach growling, almost howling.</td>
<td>Once upon a cloud in Aidenn, I looked upon my dear, so laden</td>
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<td>While my wings in anguish fluttered, just above Poe's chamber door,</td>
<td>With remorse and yearning for me, his angel, named Lenore;</td>
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<td>With thoughts of an eye to get me by, till my beak could try the darkling sky,</td>
<td>His broken heart without its healing, simply and forever needing</td>
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<td>In anguished hunger my innards rumbled, my wings thrashed at his chamber door.</td>
<td>Always and forever pleading for life the way it was before;</td>
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<td>Slippers flipping, slurred from tipping, he finally asked:</td>
<td>Someone he is yearning for, someone that is called Lenore – Simply me, and nothing more.</td>
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<td>&quot;Who is thrashing at my door?&quot;</td>
<td>I send my soul to him, my lover, as a raven, as a cover,</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Tis only I, with hunger waiting, your friendly raven, only I and no one more&quot;</td>
<td>Sitting on the bust of Pallas I sat there calling, “Nevermore!”</td>
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<td>To tell him of the vow he made, to tell him not to be afraid,</td>
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<td>To show him love is always there, and to forget this nevermore.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>So he can show all that he feels, that I will be forever more;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>His dear, his love, his dead Lenore.</td>
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The Test  (http://storywrite.com/story/7836611-The_Test_A_Pastiche_poem_using_Edgar_Allen_Poes_The_Raven_by-AliciaInWonderland)

Once upon a midnight dreary, there I lay in house so eerie,
After long and dreadful reading, lying on the cold hard floor.
Unable to rise and lumber, up to bed where I could slumber,
Rigid as a green cucumber, dreading my awaited bore.
Pondering the night ahead, I shiver to my body’s core,
Knowing I must study more.

I could read or I could rest; with six short hours till the test,
Words on paper sounding bleakly, seems that I’ve read them before
Why cannot my brain remember, not one little brainy ember?
I learned these words last December, these words that I have to store.
The exam will not be easy, no matter what I implore,
Studying forevermore.

Meandering to my bedroom, while my mind is screaming, “KA-BOOM!”
Tell my mom and myself, too, I’d study later, that I swore
I have Googled my friend’s name, but every website is the same
Solitaire is a fun game, but a zero’s still my vacant score
“New Mail” folder now is empty, reading mail was such a chore
Electronics are no more.

I’ll procrastinate all night, if I don’t keep my books in sight
Here, I’ll write some notes on paper while I sit upon the floor.
All my doubts, they went unspoken, drawing makes my focus broken
Doodles will not be a token when I’m still awake at four.
Yet I question if I’ll ever win a battle of this war
Studying forevermore.

Fine’ly opening the book and quickly now I take a look
Read page two, address page three, and drowsily I skim page four
Soon my eyelids start to flutter, “I must study” I do mutter
When I glance at all the clutter, I crawl o’er to shut the door
The next time that I wake up, it is five o’clock, I hear a snore
I’ll pass a test nevermore.

Raven Two
Mike Keith (the "Grand Anagrammy Award - Special Category" 1999 winner.)
http://www.cadaeic.net/raventwo.htm