

POETRY

POEM. N. AN ARRANGEMENT OF WORDS WRITTEN OR SPOKEN, TRADITIONALLY A RHYTHMICAL COMPOSITION, SOMETIMES RHYMED, EXPRESSING EXPERIENCES, IDEAS, OR EMOTIONS IN A STYLE MORE CONCENTRATED, IMAGINATIVE, AND POWERFUL THAN THAT OF ORDINARY SPEECH OR PROSE: SOME POEMS ARE IN METER, SOME IN FREE VERSE.

A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom. – ROBERT FROST

PROSE...words in their best order.

POETRY...the best words in the best order. – SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth. – SAMUEL JOHNSON

Poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits. – CARL SANDBURG

POETRY IS AT BOTTOM A CRITICISM OF LIFE. – MATTHEW ARNOLD

Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash. -- LEONARD COHEN

**Poetry is boned with ideas,
nerved and blooded with emotions,
all held together by the delicate, tough skin of words.**
-- PAUL ENGLE

Poetry involves the mysteries of the irrational perceived through rational words. – VLADIMIR NABOKOV

All poetry is putting the infinite within the finite. – ROBERT BROWNING

Always be a poet, even in prose. -- CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Poetry is what gets lost in translation. – ROBERT FROST

If...it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that it is poetry. – EMILY DICKINSON

The poet is liar who always speaks the truth. – JEAN COCTEAU

A poem should not mean, but be. – ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds. -- PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

POETRY IS A MARRIAGE OF CRAFT AND IMAGINATION. -- CHRISTINE E. HEMP

Out of the quarrel with others we make rhetoric;
out of the quarrel with ourselves we make poetry. --W.B. YEATS

Imaginary gardens with real toads in them. --MARIANNE MOORE

Poetry is to philosophy what the Sabbath is to the rest of the week. --AUGUSTUS AND JULIUS HARE

It is the job of poetry to clean up our word-clogged reality by creating silences around things.
--STÉPHEN MALLARMÉ

You will not find poetry anywhere unless you bring some of it with you. – JOSEPH JOUBERT

WHAT IS POETRY?

It is words arranged in a rhythmic pattern with regular accents (like beats in music), words which are carefully selected for sound, accent and meaning to express imaginatively ideas and emotions. Each poem has rhythm, melody, imagery, and form.

SOME ELEMENTS OF POETRY

WHAT IS RHYTHM?

Rhythm is produced by a recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables and pauses. Each poem has a **metric pattern** (except in "free verse" which has no metrical pattern since it is based on the natural cadences of speech). That is, the accents of the syllables in the words fall at regular intervals, like the beat of music. This pattern is described by indicating the kind and number of feet in a regular verse line.

THE FOUR MOST-USED KIND OF FEET			
No. of Syllables	Technical Name of Kind of Foot	Accented = (/) "DUMM" Unaccented = (~) "de"	Such as
2	iamb, iambic	~ / de DUMM	~ / ~ / a WAY, i WILL
2	trochee, trochaic	/ ~ DUMM de	/ ~ / ~ COM ing, DO it
3	anapest, anapestic	~ ~ / de de DUMM	~ ~ / ~ ~ / can non ADE, let us IN
3	dactyl, dactylic	/ ~ ~ DUMM de de	/ ~ ~ / ~ ~ VIC to ries, TWO of them
Less Often Used: spondee, spondaic (DUMM DUMM) pyrrhus, pyrraic (de de)			

The beat of poetry feet is called **meter**. Marking lines as the following are marked to show **feet** or **meter** is called **scansion**:

~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
The stag | at eve | had drunk | his fill

This line is **iambic tetrameter**. If meter should vary within a line, it is called **inversion**.

The number of feet in a line is expressed as follows:	
1 foot	<u>monometer</u>
2 feet	<u>dimeter</u>
3 feet	<u>trimeter</u>
4 feet	<u>tetrameter</u>
5 feet	<u>pentameter</u>
6 feet	<u>hexameter</u>
7 feet	<u>heptameter</u>
8 feet	<u>octameter</u>
9 feet	<u>nonameter</u>

Pauses do not usually figure significantly in scansion, but they do affect the rhythm of a line, just as they affect the rhythm of music. There are three types of pauses:

End-stopped which is a pause at the end of a line.

Caesura which is a pause that occurs within a line.

Enjambement which is a line that "runs over" to the next line without a pause.

WHAT IS MELODY?

Like music, each poem has **melody** (i.e., sound devices). A poet chooses words for their sound, as well as for their meaning. **Rhythm**, of course, is a kind of sound device based upon pattern. **Euphony** (literally “good sound”) and **cacophony** (literally “bad sound”) contribute to producing **melody**, or a musical quality in verse.

One of the principle tools of melody is rhyme — that is where two words have the same sound on their last accented vowel preceded by different consonants, such as:

Single (Masculine) Rhyme	dame, same love, dove
Double (Feminine) Rhyme	napping, tapping weather, heather
Triple Rhyme	mournfully, scornfully victorious, glorious

Other rhyming terms include:

Sight (Eye) Rhyme in which two words look alike but don't sound alike, such as “LOVE” and “JOVE” or “DAUGHTER” and “LAUGHTER.”

Slant (Imperfect) Rhyme in which two words are nearly rhymed but have a slight variation in vowel sound, such as “LAKE” and “FATE.” **NOTE:** Sometimes what is now a sight rhyme was once a true rhyme, but pronunciation changes have occurred, such as “AGAIN” and “RAIN.”

Identical Rhyme (Rime Riche) in which two words are spelled differently but have the same pronunciation (also called **homonyms**), such as “TWO” and “TOO” or “RITE” and “RIGHT.”

End Rhyme in which the rhyming words occur at the ends of lines of poetry.

Internal Rhyme in which the rhyme occurs inside a line, such as –
“Let's BEAT the HEAT.”

Besides rhyme, poets also use other sound effects:

Alliteration is the repetition of similar speech sounds in closely associated words or syllables. There are three kinds of alliteration:

Consonantal Alliteration	<u>P</u> eter <u>P</u> iper <u>p</u> icked a <u>p</u> eck of <u>p</u> ickled <u>p</u> eppers.
Vowel Alliteration	<u>A</u> pt <u>a</u> lliteration's <u>a</u> rtful <u>a</u> id is often an <u>o</u> ccasional <u>o</u> rnament in prose.
Internal Alliteration	The <u>m</u> oan of doves in <u>i</u> mmemorial <u>e</u> lms, And <u>m</u> urmuring of innumerable bees.

Assonance is the repetition of identical vowel sounds in syllables that have different consonant sounds, such as “LAKE” and “FAKE” or “In Xanadu did Kubla Khan” (which repeats only vowel sounds).

Consonance is the repetition of identical consonant sounds in syllables that have different vowel sounds, such as “BILL” and “BALL” or “BORN” and “BURN.”

Onomatopoeia is the use of words which sound like their meanings, such as “HISS,” “MURMUR,” “BUZZ,” and so on. A really skillful poet may merely use S-sounds in a poem about a snake, rather than the word “HISS.”

WHAT IS IMAGERY

Each poem also uses **imagery** which is produced by **figures of speech**. These take many forms, but all are rhetorical methods which affect the literal meaning of words. Let's start by looking at single words which appear synonymous:

dumb, stupid, slow, uneducated, ignorant, obtuse, dense
smart, clever, shrewd, brilliant, intelligent, with-it, cagey
skinny, slender, thin, emaciated, scrawny, lithe, lean, underweight
fat, chubby, plump, corpulent, pudgy, junoesque, zaftig, overweight
home, house, shack, bungalow, mansion, crib, pad, hearth, quarters

Even though the **denotation** (literal meaning) of the words appears synonymous, the **connotation** (figurative meaning) is different. Figures of speech work the same way.

Imagery is the use of figures of speech which are **concrete** — it always refers to a sensory experience. The sun perceived by the senses is **concrete**; the enlightenment associated with it is **abstract** (perceived by the intellect, not the senses). Thus, we have the **image** of a peacock which serves as the **vehicle** of the comparison. Its **theme** or meaning may be something abstract like vanity or beauty, but the **image** must be concrete. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of figures of speech: comparisons, substitutions, and ambiguities.

Comparisons

Analogy	A comparison of two things, alike in certain aspects – a simile is an expressed analogy; a metaphor is an implied one.
Metaphor	Two unlike things compared directly, implying several similar qualities, such as “The river is a snake which coils on itself .”
Simile	Two unlike things compared using “like” or “as,” implying only one similar quality, such as “The man paced like a hungry lion.”
Personification	Giving human qualities to inanimate objects or non-human creatures, such as “The trees danced in the breeze.”
Apostrophe	Addressing some abstract object as if it were animate, such as “O world! Tell me thy pain!” Thus, it is a kind of personification.
Allusion	Referring metaphorically to persons, places or things from history or previous literature, with which the reader is expected to have enough familiarity to make extended associations, such as “The new kid is as mean as Grendel and twice as ugly” or “He must think he’s some kind of Superman.”
Allegory	A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself, such as Everyman. Special kinds of allegories include the fable and the parable.
Conceit	An extended or elaborate metaphor which forms the framework of an entire poem with all comparisons being interrelated in some way, such as “What Is Our Life?” by Raleigh.
Symbolism	The use of one object to represent or suggest another object or an idea. Thus, a rose might be used to symbolize the loved one or love in general, depending on the context.

Substitutions

Metonymy	Substitution of one word for another closely related word, such as “The pot’s boiling” or “The White House announced.”
Synechdoche	Substitution of part for the whole, such as “All hands on deck.”
Synaesthesia	Substitution of one sensory response for another (or the concurrent stimulation of several senses), such as “a blue note” or “cool green” or “The blind man turned his face to feel the sun.”

Ambiguities

Hyperbole	Saying more than is true, an over-exaggeration, such as “He wore his fingers to the bone.”
Meiosis	Saying less than is true, an under-exaggeration, such as “The reports of my death have been exaggerated.”
Irony	Saying the opposite to what is true, such as “War is kind.”
Antithesis	Using contrasts for an accumulative effect, such as “Man proposes; God disposes.”
Oxymoron	An antithesis which brings together two sharply contradictory terms, such as “wise fool,” “little big man,” “eloquent silence,” and “loving hate.”
Litotes	A form of understatement in which a thing is affirmed by stating the negative of its opposite, such as “He was not unmindful” which actually means he was mindful.
Paradox	A statement which while seemingly contradictory or absurd may actually be well-founded or true; a “logic twist,” such as “Everything I say is a lie.”
Pun	A play on words based on the similarity of sound between two words with different meanings, such as “She offered her honor; he honored her offer; and all night long he was on her and off her.”
Neologism	A word concocted for deliberate effect, such as “slithy” from “lithe” and “slimy,” “frumious” from “fuming” and “furious.” Some such words actually become a part of the language, such as “smog,” “brunch,” or “motel.” Sometimes called a coined word or a portmanteau word .

WHAT IS “POETIC LICENSE”?

It means that a poet is allowed to break rules in order to improve his poem in some way. For example, he may break a spelling rule to make his rhyme or his meter more perfect, such as using “’oft” instead of “often.” Poets also use such special effects as:

1. **Catalexis:** An unstressed syllable omitted from the beginning of an iambic or anapestic line – or from the end of a trochaic or dactylic line.
2. **Hypermeter:** Adding an unstressed syllable at the beginning of a trochaic line – or at the end of an iambic line.

The whole point of “poetic license” is dependent upon the poet’s knowledge of the very rules he is breaking. Irregularities should be deliberately planned by the poet to establish a desired poetic effect; they should not be unintentional errors.

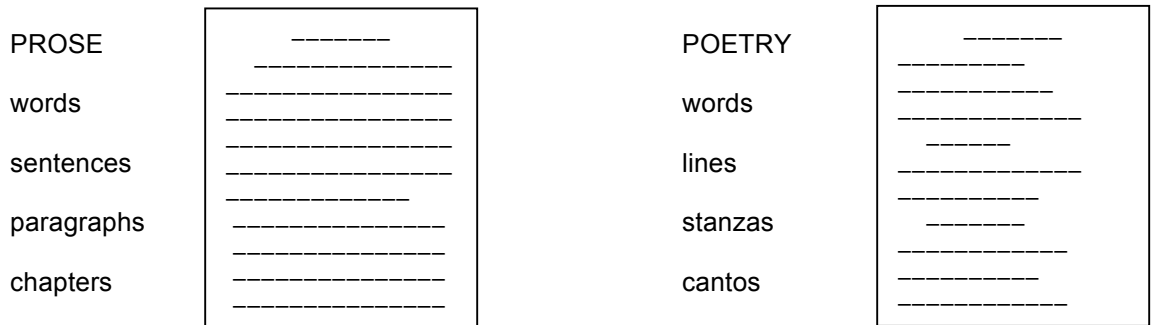
WHAT IS FORM?

And finally, every poem has form. A poet can arrange his poem so that you will read it as he wants you to read it to get its sound, rhythm, and emphasis. The length of lines and the location of pauses affect the speed at which you read his poem. In modern free verse the very typographical arrangement of words in lines produces emphasis, just as regular rhythm and rhyme produce emphasis in regular verse.

There is such a vast difference in the following arrangements of words that the very meaning of the words is changed:

Star, if you are a love compassionate, you will walk
with us this year. We face a glacial distance who are
here huddled at your feet. —Burford

Star,
If you are
A love compassionate,
You will walk with us this year.
We face a glacial distance who are here
Huddl'd
At your feet.
--Burford



The appearance of the poem is often a clue to its form, since form is usually determined by the number of lines, the length of the lines, the rhythmic pattern, and/or the rhyming scheme. The **rhyming scheme** (rhyme pattern) can be determined only by looking at the form of the whole poem. Rhyme schemes are indicated by the use of letters to designate rhyming combinations:

-sound =	=	A		
-ten	=	B		
-men	=	B	=	A B B A C
-round	=	A		
-fight	=	C		

KINDS OF POETRY ACCORDING TO FORM:
Regular Verse, Blank Verse, Free Verse

No. of Lines	REGULAR VERSE: Rhyme and Rhythm	
	What It's Called	What It Is
2	rhymed couplet	2 lines with identical rhymes
2	heroic couplet	2 lines with identical rhymes
3	tercet, triplet	3 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
4	quatrain	4 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
4	ballad quatrain	4 lines rhyming a b c b; 1st & 3rd lines iambic tetrameter, 2nd & 4th lines iambic trimeter
5	quintet	5 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
5	cinquain	5 lines – no rhyme, no meter BUT consisting respectively of 2, 4, 6, 8 and, 2 syllables a line
6	sestet	6 lines (often 3 sets of couplets) any rhyme scheme, any meter
7	rime royal	7 lines rhyming a b a b b c c iambic pentameter
8	octave	8 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
8	ottava rima	8 lines rhyming a b a b a b c c iambic pentameter
9	Spenserian stanza	9 lines rhyming a b a b b c b c c lines 1 - 8 iambic pentameter line 9 iambic hexameter
14	sonnet	14 lines iambic pentameter English - 3 quatrains + 1 couplet abab cdcd efef gg Italian - 1 octave + 1 sestet abbaabba cdecde OR cdcdee OR cdccdc OR...
19	villanelle	19 lines – 5 tercets + 1 quatrain 2 repeating refrains – 8 of 19 lines are refrain line 1 A' (repeated entirely at 6, 12, & 18) line 3 A" (repeated entirely at 9, 15, & 19) scheme – A'bA" abA' abA" abA' abA" abA'A"
BLANK VERSE		Any number of lines No rhyme Usually iambic pentameter
FREE VERSE		Any number of lines No rhyme No meter

POETRY IS ALSO CLASSIFIED BY CONTENT:

Type of Poetry	Definition	Specific Forms
Narrative Poetry	A nondramatic poem which tells a story or presents a narrative, whether simple or complex, long or short.	ballad epic metrical romance
Dramatic Poetry	Poetry which employs dramatic form or dramatic techniques as a means of achieving poetic ends.	verse drama dramatic monologue verse dialogue
Lyric Poetry	A brief subjective poem marked by imagination, melody, and emotion, but strict definition is impossible.	dirge, epithalamion, elegy, epigram, epitaph, hymn, sonnet, song, light verse, ode, pastoral, vers de societe,

PRJ Your **Poetry Response Journal** should convince me that you have read and thought carefully about the assigned poems. To a limited extent, it is true that a poem means what the reader thinks it means; you must, however, be able to explain your interpretation by specific references to the poem.

If your understanding of the poem is “wrong,” yet your journal clearly proves that you read (or misread) the poem, you may well receive full credit. Your grade is based on what you have to say and how well you say it -- your personal reaction to the poem and your explanation of the logic that led to your interpretation.

Your grade is also based on following directions. I will not grade grammar and usage errors -- but to receive credit, you **MUST** include the following in every **PRJ**:

- ✓ the poem’s title in quotation marks
- ✓ the author’s name
- ✓ a quotation from the poem -- integrated with your own sentence, properly punctuated, and commented upon as necessary to show why you cited that particular line. **No Quote Lumps!**
- ✓ specific references to the poem
- ✓ careful thought

After you’ve included the five **MUSTs** above, you may choose any of these **MAYBEs** to guide your response. You may even choose the same one every time. Consider the possibilities of this “baker’s dozen” --

- [1] your opinion of the poem, good or bad, supported by specific references from the poem
- [2] an analysis of the poet’s persona, i.e. the poem’s speaker
- [3] a discussion of the title’s significance
- [4] a detailed response to a specific line or lines
- [5] a comparison to another poem, song, story, movie...
- [6] an examination of poetic techniques used, such as rhyme, rhythm, simile, metaphor, personification, allusion...
- [7] a close analysis of the poet’s diction, perhaps noting specific word choices, or connotation and denotation
- [8] a transformation of the poem to another form, such as a cartoon, a news story, a letter, a play, a soap opera, a commercial, perhaps a different form of poetry
- [9] an original poem developing in some way from the assigned poem
- [10] a paraphrase of the poem
- [11] a discussion of the writer's life and its relevance to the poem
- [12] a statement relating the poem to your experience or ideas
- [13] an explanation of problems you had in understanding the poem

Length: Approximately 1/2 to 1 page long for each **PRJ**

Format: Blue or black ink, front side of the paper only

Due: Beginning of the hour in the blue wire basket on my desk.

Quoting from a Poem

When you write about a poem or refer to a poem in a literary response journal or an essay, you will frequently need to quote from it. Below are some rules to follow when you quote the words or title of a poem. Examples given in the rules are taken from the poem by William Stafford on the back of this page.

RULE 1: *Whenever you mention the title of a poem, put quotation marks around it.*

In “Fifteen,” William Stafford uses the accidental discovery of an abandoned motorcycle to show the speaker caught between childhood and adulthood.

RULE 2: *Whenever you quote a word or phrase that appears in the poem, put quotation marks around it and INTEGRATE the quoted material within your own sentence.*

The boy describes the motorcycle as if it were alive, calling it his “companion, ready and friendly.”

RULE 3: *Whenever you quote a phrase that begins on one line but ends on the next, indicate where the first line stops by using A SLASH MARK.*

The speaker “indulged/a forward feeling, a tremble” as he is torn between mounting the motorcycle and riding away, or dutifully looking for its owner.

RULE 4: *Whenever you quote four or more lines, indent the passage from both margins, but do not use quotation marks. Cite such a long passage only if it is especially significant. Introduce the quotation, copy the lines EXACTLY as they are in the poem, and then explain the relevance of the citation afterwards.*

The speaker briefly indulges the childish fantasy of stealing the motorcycle and riding away. This moment, however, is truly a “bridge” between childhood and adulthood. Rather than daydream of freedom, he thinks about the situation and crosses over to responsibility. The speaker chooses to look for

the owner, just coming to, where he had flipped
over the rail. He had blood on his hand, was pale --
I helped him walk to his machine. He ran his hand
over it, called me good man, roared away.

This experience implies that being a grownup is dangerous, and perhaps even joyless. An adult, free to fulfill the speaker’s fantasy, risks real dangers. Stunned and wounded, the owner acknowledges the speaker’s maturity by calling him “good man.” Something magical has been lost, however, in the transformation. The motorcycle itself has changed from a “companion” to a lifeless “machine.”

ACTIVITIES: Use the poem by Sylvia Plath on the back of this page. Answer on a separate page.

1. Write a sentence that explains what this poem is about. Use the title of the poem and the writer’s name in your sentence.
2. In another sentence, point out a striking image or comparison in the poem. Quote a phrase, not a complete sentence. Integrate with your own words. NO QUOTE LUMPS!
3. In another sentence, cite an example of personification and explain what it reveals about the speaker. Quote a phrase that begins on one line and continues on the next.
4. In a sentence that contains at least three lines of the poem, comment on how those lines help reveal the poem’s meaning. Introduce the lines, quote exactly, and explain them afterwards.

Fifteen by William Stafford

South of the bridge on Seventeenth
I found back of the willows one summer
day a motorcycle with engine running
as it lay on its side, ticking over
5 slowly in the high grass. I was fifteen.

I admired all that pulsing gleam, the
shiny flanks, the demure headlights
fringed where it lay; I led it gently
to the road, and stood with that
10 companion, ready and friendly. I was fifteen.

We could find the end of a road, meet
the sky on out Seventeenth. I thought about
hills, and patting the handle got back a
confident opinion. On the bridge we indulged
15 a forward feeling, a tremble. I was fifteen.

Thinking, back further in the grass I found
the owner, just coming to, where he had flipped
over the rail. He had blood on his hand, was pale --
I helped him walk to his machine. He ran his hand
over it, called me good man, roared away.

I stood there, fifteen.

Mirror by Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful --
5 The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
faces and darkness separate us over and over.

10 Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

15 I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

How to Read and Understand a Poem

1. Learn some (or many) of the circumstances that led to or surround the composition of the poem.
2. Study the title. Understand each word singly; understand words in combination. Identify any proper names. If the poem is labeled a sonnet, ode, hymn, etc., find out what such a label means. (Use the dictionary; use the introduction of the editors; use an encyclopedia; etc.)
3. If there is such, find a summary of the poem, either the author's own or some editor's or commentator's. Read the summary before reading the poem.
4. Read through the whole poem, or most of it (i.e., a preliminary reading to get the general idea), or read at least as far as you can without becoming hopelessly bogged down.
5. How is the material in the poem treated: realistically, romantically, figuratively, symbolically, satirically, humourously, etc.?
6. If the poem is in stanzas, treat each stanza as a separate paragraph. (Some of the stanzas may overlap or run over.) Write a brief summarizing statement or sentence of each stanza.
7. If there are no stanzas (i.e., if the poem is in blank verse or couplets), watch for such helpful mechanical features as indented lines for paragraphs and/or spacing between parts. Write a brief summarizing statement or sentence of each paragraph or part.
8. Do not expect the sense to end with each line. Watch for punctuation marks. Copy a stanza or two, or more, as if the material were straight prose, but use the same punctuation marks. Especially pay attention to periods or semi-colons (i.e., since they indicate terminating of sense).
9. Pay attention to the headnotes or footnotes by marking the words or phrases in the poem that are headnoted and footnoted.
10. Difficult words or allusions? Check any such difficult or unknown-to-you references or allusions in the footnotes, a dictionary, an encyclopedia, other reference works, or elsewhere.
11. Watch for inversions, transposed words and phrases, insertions, strong parenthetical elements. Rearrange each sentence so that the word order is normal: subject and modifiers, predicate and modifiers, object and modifiers.

12. Read aloud, slowly, watching the punctuation in the rearranged-as-prose version (#8 above) or read aloud the normal-word-order version (#11 above).
13. Now read the poem itself aloud, slowly, for sound, sense, and rhyme.
14. Remember that you learn what poetry is -- and its content -- from carefully reading it aloud and carefully reading it silently. Sometimes it is helpful to hear someone else read the poem aloud. (There are now many records available containing readings of famous poems of famous poets, read by well-trained actors, actresses, and/or readers.)
15. Somewhere, sometime, write a one-sentence statement of the purpose of the poem.
16. Somewhere, sometime, write a one-sentence statement of the content of the poem.
17. Somewhere, sometime, freewrite a personal response to the poem, concentrating only on what you like, love, hate, envy about the poem. Find out what you feel as well as what you think.
18. Try to determine what kind of poem it is (kinds or types of poems are the following: epistolary, expository -- informative or didactic, satirical, meditative, dramatic, narrative, and lyric.)
19. Determine the mood or tone of the poem: joy, sorrow, grief, sadness, consolation, faith, hope, certainty, etc.
20. Determine the pattern of the poem, i.e., both its rhyme scheme (abba, etc.) and metrical pattern (iambic pentameter, anapestic tetrameter, octosyllabic couplet, etc.)
21. If there is an "I" in the poem, check the "I" identity: Is the "I" the writer or is "I" a character created or used by the writer to tell the story or express the ideas of the poem ?
22. If the poem seems difficult and is not comprehended after steps 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, lay it aside for a time. Meditate about it, perhaps subconsciously, and then return to it afresh.
23. Obtain an adequate knowledge of the various technical terms used in poetry: i.e., blank verse, assonance, consonance, rhyme, pentameter, iambic, ode, sonnet, etc., up to about two-to-three dozen such.
24. Watch for added poetical adornments: alliteration, onomatopoeia, similes, metaphors, personifications, hyperbole, litotes, synecdoche, anaphora, puns, double entendre, etc .
25. Learn the major (and minor) facts of the poet's life, as well as the kind of poetry and the mood of poetry he usually writes.

Paraphrasing A Poem

Definition: A paraphrase of a poem is a rewriting of the poem in simple and clear prose. A person paraphrasing a poem tries to use his or her own words (not the poet's) to restate what the speaker is saying. However, he or she also tries to include any important comparisons or images mentioned in the poem.

Read the stanza of poetry below and the two different paraphrases of this stanza. Then answer the questions about these paraphrases.

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
(From "A Poison Tree" by William Blake)

Paraphrase A

The speaker tells us he felt angry at a friend and told him so. As a result, the speaker's anger disappeared. However, when he became angry at a foe, he hid his feelings. As time went on, this hidden anger became stronger.

Paraphrase B

The speaker says if you are angry at someone you like, you will get over it. But if you are angry at an enemy, you will just get madder and madder at him.

1. Writer B uses the word "you" in the paraphrase; Writer A does not. Explain what difference in meaning this creates.

2. What important idea from the poem does Writer B forget to mention in the paraphrase?

3. Writer B uses the words "someone you like" while Writer A says "a friend." B says "an enemy" where A says "a foe." Which writer has been more careful to write the paraphrase in his or her own words? _____

Activity: Write your own paraphrase of the stanza by William Blake, avoiding the errors made by both A and B.

Extensions: Select a poem of at least 14 lines to paraphrase.

Title _____ Poet _____

THE POETRY JOURNAL: A Baker's Dozen of Assignments

Poetry Journals: You are to select poems as directed by your teacher – from your class anthology, from the works of a particular writer, or from any book of poetry.

- ✓ Copy each poem neatly on notebook paper. Demonstrate your best penmanship, or write in calligraphy. (Use common sense about number and length of poems. Obviously, copying one long poem would be equal to copying several shorter ones.)
- ✓ Use your imagination to illustrate each poem creatively. These illustrations may be concrete or abstract, original drawings or pictures cut out of magazines.
- ✓ On a separate sheet of paper, write your personal response to the poem. You may like it or hate it, stick to the poem or fly off on a tangent, paraphrase it or summarize it, model your own poem after it or use one of its lines as a springboard to an original poem. But you must, in some way, indicate **YOUR** response – directly or indirectly.
- ✓ Keep your poetry journal in a notebook. Design a cover and title page for that notebook. Include a table of contents, dedication, introduction, and indices by author, title, and first line.

Poetry Assignments: Use the poems you have copied for the following assignments

1. Select a poem that has given you greater insight into your life or the world around you, and explain why this poem has affected you.
2. Imagine that you are the editor of a literature anthology and that you must choose three poems that are related in some way. Review the poems you have been reading and choose three that are somehow connected to each other. Explain this relationship, giving clear reasons for your choices. Be sure that your reader knows what unites the three poems and how the poems relate to each other.
3. It can be said that poetry is alive and kicking in America. Many records, films, advertisements, posters, and dances are conscious efforts at poetry. Some of these efforts are more successful than others, but all of them provide proof that poetry is not confined to the printed pages of textbooks.

Select one of the above media that you consider poetic and explain what elements of poetry it contains. Restrict your observations to a single recording or film, or consider several advertisements or posters that you have studied. Make a connection between the medium you have selected and poetry clear by mentioning specific elements such as imagery, figurative language, rhymes, or rhythms.

If your imagination needs to be prodded, just think of the many figurative ways in which dirt, evil, danger, pollution, good, popularity, success, and so on, are portrayed on film, videotape, television, or the stage.

4. Many of the poems you have been reading can be contrasted or compared with each other. Choose two poems which demonstrate either similarities or differences in some way and show how they compare or contrast in a clear, supported paragraph. (You may choose two poems which have both similarities and differences. If so, be sure to discuss both aspects.)
5. Choose the poem which you think best demonstrates “poetic” language. Justify your choice in a paragraph which makes specific references to the poem and its exact use of poetic language.
6. Using a separate sheet of paper, write a one-sentence summary of theme or message for every poem in your poetry journal. Be sure to include the title of the poem in your sentence. Do not merely retell what happens in the poem. Tell what the poem MEANS. Make a conscious effort to vary your sentence structure, paying particular attention to sentence openings and punctuation.
7. Choose at least two poems, basing your choice upon the importance of the title to a full understanding of the poem. Explain your choices carefully in a thoroughly supported paragraph.
8. Select one of the poems in your poetry journal to expand to a full-size poster. Obviously, you should select a poem which will fit on a poster and which lends itself to illustration.
9. Create a “hodge-podge” poem by piecing together words, phrases, and lines from the poems in your poetry journal to create an original poem.
10. Make up an essay test on the poems in your poetry journal. This test should include one “thought question” for each poem. Write your test items on index cards, clearly labelling each card with the title and author of the poem.
11. Why study poetry? Write your response in a fully developed essay of at least five paragraphs. Include a thesis sentence and a topic sentence for each developing paragraph. Be careful to start with a catchy opening and to end with a clincher.
12. Pick one poem in your poetry journal to present to your classmates. Your presentation should include the following:
 - A readable copy of the poem for every student in class.
 - An essay of at least five paragraphs on your poem. Your essay should demonstrate your understanding of the poem’s theme, structure, imagery, symbolism, and poetic techniques, such as rhyme, rhythm, simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, etc. Of course, it should also include your personal response to the poem.
 - A readable copy of your essay for every student in the class.
 - An initial oral interpretation of your poem. Be sure that you know how to pronounce every word, that you pause appropriately, and that you read with some “feeling.”
13. Make up your own assignment and submit it to your teacher for approval. Once the assignment is approved, write it neatly on an index card, turn the card in, and do the assignment.

The Epic

The epic is generally defined: A long narrative POEM on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. The traditional epics were shaped by a literary artist from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare (*Beowulf*, *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*). The literary epics were composed by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the traditional form (*The Aeneid*, *Paradise Lost*).

Characteristics common to both types include:

- 1) The **hero** is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance, usually the ideal man of his culture.
- 2) The **setting** is vast in scope.
- 3) The **action** consists of deeds of great valor or superhuman courage (esp. in battle).
- 4) **Supernatural forces** interest themselves in the action and intervene at times.
- 5) The **style of writing** is elevated, even ceremonial.
- 6) Additional **conventions**: (Certainly all are not always present)
 - a. Opens by stating the theme of the epic.
 - b. Writer invokes a Muse.
 - c. Narrative opens *in media res*.
 - d. Catalogs and genealogies are given.
 - e. Main characters give extended formal speeches.
 - f. Use of the epic simile (a more involved, ornate comparison).
 - g. Heavy use of repetition and stock phrases.

Aristotle described six characteristics: “fable, action, characters, sentiments, diction, and meter.” Since then, critics have used these criteria to describe two kinds of epics:

Serious Epic

fable and action are grave
and solemn
characters are the highest
sentiments and diction preserve
the sublime
verse

Comic Epic

fable and action are light
and ridiculous
characters are inferior
sentiments and diction preserve
the ludicrous
verse

When the first novelists began writing what were later called **novels**, they thought they were writing “prose epics.” Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson attempted the comic form. Yet what they wrote were true novels, not epics, and there ARE differences.

The Epic

oral and poetic language
public and remarkable deeds
historical or legendary hero
collective enterprise
generalized setting in time
and place
rigid traditional structure
according to previous patterns

The Novel

written and referential language
private, daily experience
humanized "ordinary" characters
individual enterprise
particularized setting in time
and place
structure determined by actions of
character within a moral pattern

THE SONNET

The sonnet is a lyrical poem of fourteen lines, highly arbitrary in form, and following one or another of several set rhyme schemes. For our purposes, the two most important patterns are the **Petrarchan** (or Italian) and the **Shakespearean** (or English) forms:

The Italian Form	The English Form
A B B A A B B A	A B A B C D C D
octave	quatrain
C C C D D D E C D C C C D D D E C D	E F E F G G
sestet	quatrain
	couplet

The Italian Form: Charles Gayley has noted that “The **octave** bears the burden; a doubt, a problem, a reflection, a query, an historical statement, a cry of indignation or desire, a vision of the ideal. The **sestet** eases the load, resolves the problem or doubt, answers the query, solaces the yearning, realizes the vision.”

The English Form: Hugh Holman has noted that “In the best English sonnets, the three **quatrains** serve as the narrative -- presenting the situation, problem or question -- with a distinct image developed in each quatrain, building toward the couplet. The **couplet** at the end is usually a commentary on the foregoing and is usually epigrammatic in form .”

Examining Individual Sonnets

1. **Form and Pattern:** What is the meter employed? What is the rhyme scheme? Is the sonnet entirely regular in verse form? Is it Italian or English? Does it contain any notable variations from the standard form of either type? How does the poet handle the “turn”? What is the function of each octave and sestet, quatrain and couplet?
2. **Subject and Theme:** What is the situation? Is something happening, being described, or narrated? Or does the poem represent an attitude or an emotion? Who is speaking and to whom? What is the theme? What meaning do you find in the poem?
3. **Language:** Pick out any unfamiliar words and allusions. Define and identify them. Determine what associations- and implications that have in the poem. Identify the significant images. Do these have a general pattern or purpose in the poem?

From "Palmer's Sonnet," *Romeo and Juliet*, I, v, 93-106
by William Shakespeare

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthing hand.

This holy shrine, the gentle sin in this.

My lips two blushing pilgrims ready stand

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

5 Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much.

Which mannerly devotion shows in this:

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch.

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

10 Juliet: Aye, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Romeo: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.

They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Juliet: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Romeo: Then move not while my prayers' effect I take.

Love Is Not All

by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink

Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;

Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink

And rise and sink and rise and sink again;

5 Love cannot fill the thickened lung with breath,

Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;

Yet many a man is making friends with death

Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.

It well may be that in a difficult hour,

Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,

Or nagged by want past resolution's power,

I might be driven to sell your love for peace,

Or trade the memory of this night for food.

10 It well may be. I do not think I would.

Leda and the Swan
by William Butler Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still

Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed

By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,

He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

5

How can those terrified vague fingers push

The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?

And how can body, laid in that white rush,

But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there

The broken wall, the burning roof and tower

10 And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,

So mastered by the brute blood of the air,

Did she put on his knowledge with his power

Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

The Illiterate

by William Meredith

Touching your goodness, I am like a man

Who turns a letter over in his hand

And you might think this was because the hand

Was unfamiliar but, truth is, the man

5 Has never had a letter from anyone;

And now he is both afraid of what it means

And ashamed because he has no other means

To find out what it says than to ask someone.

His uncle could have left the farm to him,

Or his parents died before he sent them word,

Or the dark girl changed and want him for beloved.

Afraid and letter-proud, he keeps it with him.

10 What would you call his feeling for the words

That keep him rich and orphaned and beloved?

The Ballad

Special Notes: Traditional or folk ballads are anonymous medieval ballads, passed down orally in many versions. A ballad is a story sung with music. The narrative may be developed largely through dialogue, with a first-person speaker relating the story rather cryptically, paying little attention to character development, background, or setting. The listener may be required to determine who is speaking in each stanza or fill in what happens between stanzas. The story is also quite formal, using common **motifs** and **conventions**:

1. Appeal to common folk.
2. Dialogue.
3. Stock phrases.
4. Flashback.
5. Inclusion of only one incident.
6. Conventional imagery.
7. Simplicity of plot, language, theme.
8. Use of the supernatural.
9. Use of the ballad stanza form.
10. Repetition and/or refrain.
11. Musical and dramatic quality.
12. Tone of impersonality.

Ballads are usually written in iambic rhythm, with a 4-4-4-4 or a 4-3-4-3 pattern. Most ballads use one of three different types of rhyme: abcb, abac, or aabb. Many include a refrain, or chorus, which may be a line or two of each stanza that is repeated or an entire stanza that can be sung between verses. Some ballads use **incremental repetition**, which is the repetition of a previous line with slight variation each time.

Creative Writing Assignments:

1. Choose a different ballad for four of the following writing assignments. Put each on a separate page and indicate both the original ballad and the new form into which you are transforming it. Retell the story of the ballads you select in a style appropriate to each of the following forms:
 - a. A newspaper story
 - b. A first-person narrative
 - c. A film or movie script
 - d. A diary entry
 - e. A personal letter
 - f. A fairy tale
 - g. A soap-opera plot
 - h. A "Dear Abby" letter
 - i. A political cartoon or comic strip
 - j. An appropriate illustration
2. Compose a ballad of your own on a contemporary subject of your choosing. It will be considerably easier if you have a tune in mind to help you adjust meter to music. If you actually try to sing your ballad, you will have less difficulty with the rhythm. Be especially careful about rhyme—produce something better than the moon/June variety.
3. Write a dramatic monologue, assuming the persona of a character in the ballads we have studied. Remember that a dramatic monologue should reveal character through interior and exterior reaction to a specific event, not tell us what your character is like. **Show** us by experiencing his reaction to an event in the poem. This is difficult, but well worth the effort.
4. Rewrite a story from movies, books, or even history as a ballad. Think of such ballads as "Jesse James" or "John Henry" as models for your original ballad.

Paraphrasing a Ballad: Take each stanza of a ballad and transform it into a sentence. First, you should modernize the archaic language, paying attention to footnotes that gloss the poem for you. You don't have to use all of the words in each stanza in your sentence. You can see that in many of the stanzas there's some repetition, but you might have to add some words here and there to make your sentences grammatically correct. Try to vary the structure of each sentence. For example, read stanza one of

"Sir Patrick Spens"
The king sits in Dumferling toune,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
"O whar will I get a skilly* skipper, *skillful
To sail this new schip of mine?"

Stanza one could be paraphrased or rewritten in any of the following ways:

The king, sitting in Dumferling town drinking his blood-red wine, asked, "Where will I get a good sailor to sail my ship?"

The king, who was sitting in Dumferling drinking wine, asked where he could find a good sailor to sail his ship.

"Where will I find a good sailor to sail my ship?" asked the king as he sat in Dumferling drinking his blood-red wine.

Writing A Précis of a Ballad: Since ballads often telescope the plot or omit many details, it is sometimes difficult to understand them. In order to read a ballad at all, you may need to draw logical conclusions about what probably happened, but there is a real difference between implication and interpretation. The following is a précis of "Sir Patrick Spens." While it includes ideas implied by the ballad, those implications are based on what was stated. A précis is a brief summary that includes only those things which are directly stated or which can be logically implied from what is stated:

Upon the advice of an older knight, the Scottish king wrote a letter to Sir Patrick Spens the best sailor "that ever sailed the sea," and ordered him to undertake a dangerous journey across winter seas. When Spens first read the letter, he thought it was a joke and laughed out loud. Realizing it was sent in earnest, tears filled his eyes. He wondered who could have encouraged the king to select him to sail such perilous seas. When told they were to sail in the morning, a common sailor fearfully told his skipper of an evil omen he had seen the night before, "I saw the new moon yesterday, with the old moon in her arm, and if we go to sea, Master, I fear we'll come to harm." The Scottish ladies and maidens, waiting for their Scottish lords to return from Aberdeen, will see them nevermore. The men kneel at Sir Patrick's feet, fifty fathoms deep.

Write a précis of the ballad you paraphrased stanza-by-stanza in the previous assignment. Be careful not to interpret; stick to summary. For example, while it is safe to conclude that the common sailor who cries "Alas" and tells Sir Patrick of his dream is afraid, it is not safe to conclude that Sir Patrick is the king of the dead merely because the dead lords lie at his feet.

Critical Analysis of a Ballad:

1. Write an essay in which you analyze “House Carpenter” or “Matty Groves,” in terms of the conventions listed under “Special Notes.” Cite lines from the poem to support and illustrate your findings.
2. Compare two versions of “Barbara Allan.” Refer specifically to differences in the two poems, considering event and inference, as well as the words in each.
3. Analyze “Lord Randal” and “Edward, Edward” for similarities and differences in action, theme, and style.
4. Choose a modern popular ballad and compare it to one of the ballads in this unit. In what way have ballads remained the same? In what ways have they changed? Consider special ballad characteristics such as impersonality, repetition and dialogue. (Note that many country and western songs are really ballads.)
5. Ballads often represent the voice of the common man protesting against the social order in which he lives. Examine several of the ballads from this point of view and write an essay supporting the conclusions you reach.
6. Referring to appropriate ballads studied in this unit, write an essay in which you support the following quote by Oxford professor W. P. Ker, one of many eminent modern scholars who have praised the traditional ballad:

It can hardly be questioned by anyone who takes the time to think about the matter, that there is this strange excellence in the ballads, the power not merely of repeating old motives but of turning the substance of daily life into poetry.

7. A ballad tells a story, and a folk ballad, by virtue of having been refined through retelling, tells an intensely compressed story:

The distinctive quality that popular ballads share is spareness: They are apt to deal only with the culminating incident or climax of a plot, to describe that event with intense compression, to put the burden of narration on allusive monologue or dialogue.

Think about how this quotation applies to any two of the ballads in this unit. Write an essay about the two ballads showing the following: (1) how the plot has been compressed to only one or very few incidents; (2) how the burden of the narration has been placed on monologue or dialogue that alludes to past, present, or future events.

8. Categorize the plots, images, and themes that are repeated in the ballads we have studied. Then write an essay analyzing these elements, referring to specific poems to support your conclusions. Consider what these elements reveal about the audience for which the ballads were originally sung.

Extension Activities for the Ballad:

1. Imagine that the ballads studied in this unit are to appear on a record album for which you have been asked to write the jacket notes. The notes you write for each ballad should include a brief summary of the ballad's events and characters and should characterize the ballad according to the subject it deals with. Write your jacket notes, making sure the information is presented clearly and helpfully for potential listeners/readers. Finally, design an appropriate cover for this album.
2. Ballad making is an art that passed from century to century. The authors of these ballads are nameless now, and indeed, were probably forgotten soon after they had completed their compositions. Their subjects have been as varied as their times and their worlds. In America, often with borrowed tunes, ballads have been composed about such diverse persons as Casey Jones, Jesse James, John Henry, "Dugout Doug" MacArthur, Earthquake McGoon, and John Kennedy, and about places as different as Bowling Green and the Big Rock Candy Mountain.
Compose a ballad on a subject of your own choosing. It will be considerably easier if you have a tune in mind to help you, in time-honored fashion, to adjust meter to music. You will be considerably more aware of meter when you have attempted to sing the verbal mouthfuls of what you would like to say and find yourself forced to rework the words into pleasing and proper-sounding lines. Poetry, even simple poetry, is more than merely the rhyming of *moon* with *June*.
3. Websites for Ballads abound, some better than others. Check out the following websites and prepare an annotated bibliography for all five, as well as adding and annotating five you find on your own.

- Medieval English Ballads

<http://www.moonwise.com/ballads.html>

- Writing a Period Ballad

<http://costume.dm.net/~drea/ballads/>

- Sixteenth Century Ballads

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/ballads/ballads.html>

- Medieval Literature Ballads

<http://www.ccps.org/ccps/bmhs/focuswebpages/english/englishballads/Medievalballads.html>

- Folk Music

<http://www.contemplator.com/folk.html>



In the reign of Alexander III of Scotland, his daughter Margaret was escorted by a large party of nobles to Norway for her marriage to King Eric; on the return journey many of them were drowned. Twenty years later, after Alexander's death, his grand-daughter Margaret, the Maid of Norway, was heiress to the Scottish throne, and on the voyage to Scotland she died.

The ballad, which exists in several versions, combines these two incidents.

Sir Patrick Spens

The King sits in Dunfermling town,
 Drinking the blude-reid wine;
 "O whar will I get guid sailor
 To sail this schip or mine?"

Up and spake an eldern knight,
 Sat at the kings richt knee:
 "Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
 That sails upon the se."

The King has written a braid letter,
 And signed it w' his hand,
 And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
 Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
 A loud lauch lauchèd he;
 The next line that Sir Patrick red,
 The teir blinded his ee.

"O wha is this has don this deid,
 This ill deid don to me,
 To send me out this time o' the yeir,
 To sail upon the se!

"Mak haste, mak haste, my mirry men all,
 Our guid schip sails the morne."

"O say na sae, my master deir,
 For I feir a deadlie storme.

"Late late yestreen I saw the new moone
 Wi' the auld moone in hir arme,
 And I feir. I feir. my deir master,
 That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
 To weet their cork-heild schoone,
 Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
 Their hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang may their ladies sit
 Wi' their fans into their hand,
 Or ere they se Sir Patrick Spens
 Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand
 Wi' their gold kems in their hair,
 Waiting for their ain deir lords,
 For they'll see thame na mair.

Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdeen,
 It's fiftie fadom deip;
 And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,
 Wi' the Scots lords at his feit.

The Dramatic Monologue

Narrowly defined, a **dramatic poem** is a play in verse. But today the **dramatic monologue** is usually included in this category because it is sometimes much like a condensed play. Perfected by Robert Browning, the **dramatic monologue**, as a complete form, is represented by such poems as “My Last Duchess,” “The Bishop Orders His Tomb,” and “Andrea del Sarto.” According to M. H. Abrams, the dramatic monologue has the following characteristics:

1. A single person, who is *not* the poet himself, utters the entire poem in a specific situation at a critical moment: the Duke is negotiating with an emissary for a second wife; the Bishop lies dying; Andrea once more attempts wistfully to believe his wife’s lies.
2. This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people; but we know of the auditors’ presence and what they say and do only from clues in the discourse of the single speaker.
3. The monologue is so organized that its focus is on the temperament and character that the dramatic speaker unintentionally reveals in the course of what he says.

The monologue, then, is like a **compressed play** in that it requires a **dramatic situation** and **persona** (an invented speaker) who is usually not the poet. It differs from a **play** in that only one character speaks and from a **soliloquy** in that the speaker in the monologue usually addresses a specific audience.

Distinguishing between the Dramatic Monologue and Other Dramatic Poems

Even Browning, in monologues such as “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister” and “Caliban upon Setebos,” omits the second attribute, the presence of a silent auditor, but attributes one and three are essential distinctions between the **dramatic monologue** and the **dramatic lyric**.

Thus, John Donne’s “The Canonization” and “The Flea,” although very close to the monologue, lack one essential feature: the focus of interest is on the speaker’s elaborately ingenious argument, rather than on the character he inadvertently reveals in the course of arguing.

And although Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” is spoken by one person to a silent auditor (his sister) in a specific situation at a significant moment in his life, it is not properly a dramatic monologue, both because we are invited to identify the speaker with the poet himself, and because the organizing principle is not the revelation of the speaker’s distinctive temperament but the evolution of his observation, thought, memory, and feelings.

Critical Essay: The Dramatic Monologue

Select one of the following thesis statements to support, based upon your reading and analysis of several dramatic monologues.

1. The effectiveness of the dramatic monologue is dependent upon its “reality,” its concentration on a single, vivid, human character, and its complexity.
2. In the dramatic monologue the reader is able to see the character as he sees himself, as we see him, and by implication, as others, usually the listeners, see him.
3. In the dramatic monologue we do not see the character undergoing change for he little knows himself. The character reveals what he reveals largely to the reader who alone knows him fully.
4. The dramatic monologues which imply a listener are psychologically more complex than the merely interior monologues.
5. The dramatic monologue, at once objective and subjective, public and private in its methods, permits the poet to make ethical pronouncements through someone else’s voice.

Dramatic Monologues Recommended for Further Study

Robert Browning:

“My Last Duchess”
“Andrea del Sarto”
“The Laboratory”
“Porphyria’s Lover”
“Fra Filippo Lippi”
“Rabbi Ben Ezra”
“The Bishop Orders His Tomb”
“Soliloquy on the Spanish Cloister”

Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

“Ulysses”
“St. Simeon Stylites”
“Tithonus”

Matthew Arnold

“Dover Beach”

Algernon Swinburne:

“Itylus”
“Hymn to Proserpine”
“Faustine”
“Itylus”

T. S. Eliot:

“Journey of the Magi”
“Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”
“Gerontion”
“Portrait of a Lady”

Modern Monologues from The Poetry Archive

A Statistician to His Love by Peter Goldsworthy
Art Class by Elizabeth Bartlett
Crusoe in England by Elizabeth Bishop
Enemies by Elizabeth Bartlett
From his Childhood by Alan Brownjohn
Parliament Hill Fields by Sylvia Plath
Monologue in the Valley of the Kings by Anthony Thwaite
Poem Before Birth by Louis MacNeice
Siren Song by Margaret Atwood
next to of course god america by e e cummings

Poetry Explication Assignment

Assignment

Write a 1 ½-2 page explication of a poem of your choice. The poem must not be one that we have discussed in class. Make use of the poetry terms we have discussed in class as well as general insight you take from the poem. An effective explication will give a reader both a sense of the literal meaning of the poem as well as an analysis of its poetic devices. Please include a copy of the poem you have chosen with your assignment.

What is Explication?

A **poetry explication** is a relatively short analysis which describes the possible meanings and relationships of the words, images, and other small units that make up a poem. Writing an explication is an effective way for a reader to connect a poem's plot and conflicts with its structural features. This handout reviews some of the important techniques of approaching and writing a poetry explication, and includes parts of two sample explications.

Preparing to Write the Explication

- READ the poem silently, then read it aloud (if not in a testing situation). Repeat as necessary.
- Consider the poem as a dramatic situation in which a speaker addresses an audience or another character. In this way, begin your analysis by identifying and describing the speaking voice or voices, the conflicts or ideas, and the language used in the poem.

The Large Issues

- What is being dramatized? What conflicts or themes does the poem present, address, or question?
- Who is the speaker? Define and describe the speaker and his/her voice. What does the speaker say? Who is the audience? Are other characters involved?
- What happens in the poem? Consider the plot or basic design of the action. How are the dramatized conflicts or themes introduced, sustained, resolved, etc.?
- When does the action occur? What is the date and/or time of day?
- Where is the speaker? Describe the physical location of the dramatic moment.
- Why does the speaker feel compelled to speak at this moment? What is his/her motivation?

The Details

To analyze the design of the poem, we must focus on the poems' parts, namely how the poem dramatizes conflicts or ideas in language. By concentrating on the parts, we develop our understanding of the poem's structure, and we gather support and evidence for our interpretations. Some of the details we should consider include the following:

- **Form:** Does the poem represent a particular form (sonnet, sestina, etc.)? Does the poem present any unique variations from the traditional structure of that form?
- **Rhetoric:** How does the speaker make particular statements? Does the rhetoric seem odd in any way? Why? Consider the predicates and what they reveal about the speaker.
- **Syntax:** Consider the subjects, verbs, and objects of each statement and what these elements reveal about the speaker. Do any statements have convoluted or vague syntax?
- **Vocabulary:** Why does the poet choose one word over another in each line? Do any of the words have multiple or archaic meanings that add other meanings to the line? Use the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a resource.

Patterns

As you analyze the design line by line, look for certain patterns to develop which provide insight into the dramatic situation, the speaker's state of mind, or the poet's use of details. Some of the most common patterns include the following:

- **Rhetorical Patterns:** Look for statements that follow the same format.
- **Rhyme:** Consider the significance of the end words joined by sound; in a poem with no rhymes, consider the importance of the end words.
- **Patterns of Sound:** Alliteration and assonance create sound effects and often cluster significant words.
- **Visual Patterns:** How does the poem look on the page?
- **Rhythm and Meter:** Consider how rhythm and meter influence our perception of the speaker and his/her language.

Sample Poetry Explication

The Fountain

Fountain, fountain, what do you say

Singing at night alone?

"It is enough to rise and fall

Here in my basin of stone."

But are you content as you seem to be

So near the freedom and rush of the sea?

"I have listened all night to its laboring sound,

It heaves and sags, as the moon runs round;

Ocean and fountain, shadow and tree,

Nothing escapes, nothing is free."

-- Sara Teasdale (American, 1884-1933)

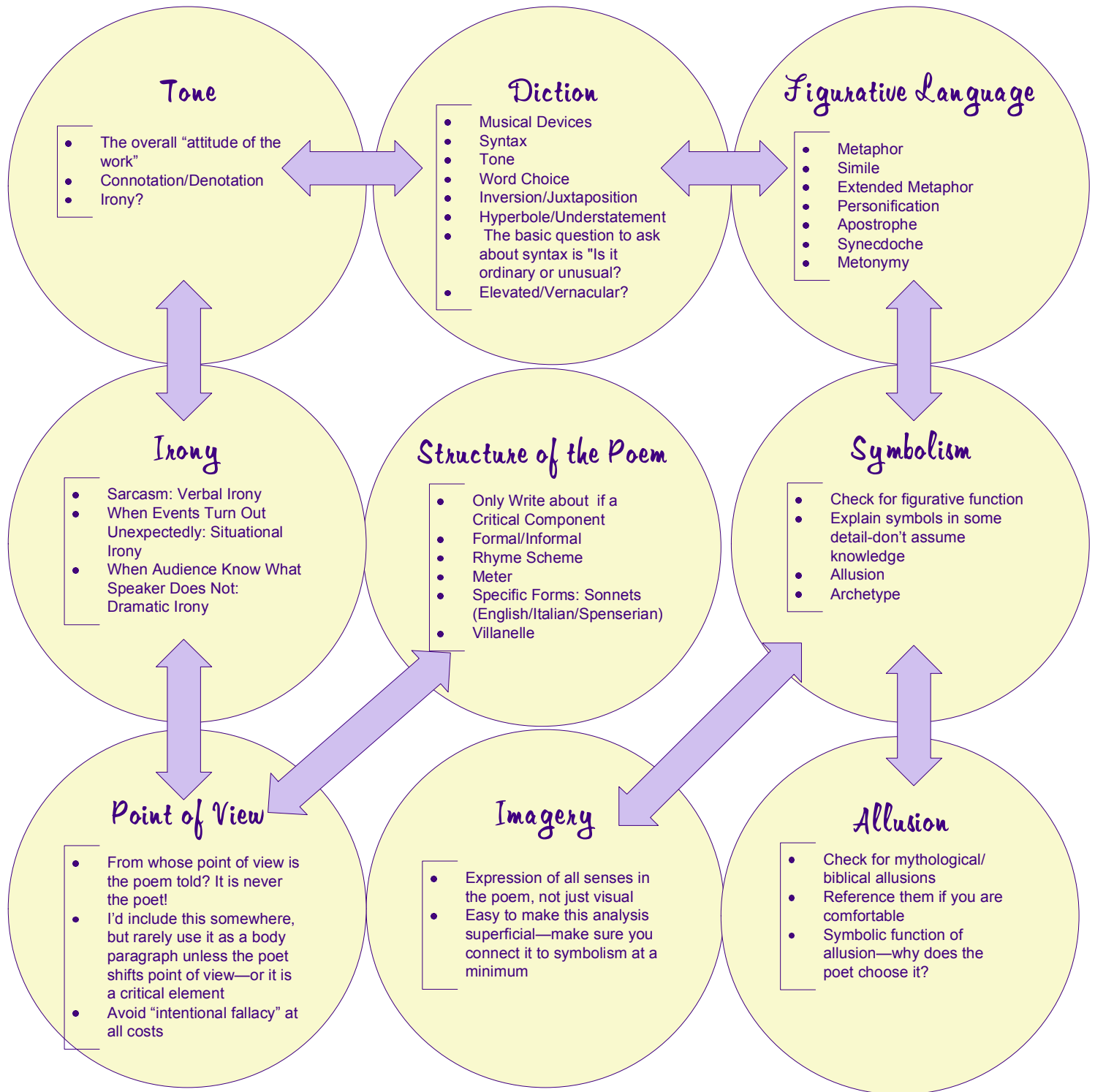
As a direct address to an inanimate object "The Fountain" presents three main conflicts concerning the appearance to the observer and the reality in the poem. First, since the speaker addresses an object usually considered voiceless, the reader may abandon his/her normal perception of the fountain and enter the poet's imaginative address. Secondly, the speaker not only addresses the fountain but asserts that it *speaks and sings*, personifying the object with vocal abilities. These acts imply that, not only can the fountain speak in a musical form, but the fountain also has the ability to present some particular meaning ("what do you say" (1)). Finally, the poet gives the fountain a voice to say that its perpetual motion (rising and falling) is "enough" to maintain its sense of existence. This final personification fully dramatizes the conflict between the fountain's appearance and the poem's statement of reality by giving the object intelligence and voice.

The first strophe, four lines of alternating 4- and 3-foot lines, takes the form of a ballad stanza. In this way, the poem begins by suggesting that it will be story that will perhaps teach a certain lesson. The opening trochees and repetition stress the address to the fountain, and the iamb which ends line 1 and the trochee that begins line 2 stress the actions of the fountain itself. The response of the fountain illustrates its own rise and fall in the iambic line 3, and the rhyme of "alone" and "stone" emphasizes that the fountain is really a physical object, even though it can speak in this poem.

The second strophe expands the conflicts as the speaker questions the fountain. The first couplet connects the rhyming words "be" and "sea" these connections stress the question, "Is the fountain content when it exists so close to a large, open body of water like the ocean?" The fountain responds to the tempting "rush of the sea" with much wisdom (6). The fountain's reply posits the sea as "laboring" versus the speaker's assertion of its freedom; the sea becomes characterized by heavily accented "heaves and sags" and not open rushing (7, 8). In this way, the fountain suggests that the sea's waters may be described in images of labor, work, and fatigue; governed by the moon, these waters are not free at all. The "as" of line 8 becomes a key word, illustrating that the sea's waters are not free but commanded by the moon, which is itself governed by gravity in its orbit around Earth. Since the moon, an object far away in the heavens, controls the ocean, the sea cannot be free as the speaker asserts.

The poet reveals the fountain's intelligence in rhyming couplets which present closed-in, epigrammatic statements. These couplets draw attention to the contained nature of the all objects in the poem, and they draw attention to the final line's lesson. This last line works on several levels to address the poem's conflicts. First, the line refers to the fountain itself; in this final rhymed couplet is the illustration of the water's perpetual motion in the fountain, its continually recycled movement rising and falling. Second, the line refers to the ocean; in this respect the water cannot escape its boundary or control its own motions. The ocean itself is trapped between landmasses and is controlled by a distant object's gravitational pull. Finally, the line addresses the speaker, leaving him/her with an overriding sense of fate and fallacy. The fallacy here is that the fountain presents this wisdom of reality to defy the speaker's original idea that the fountain and the ocean appear to be trapped and free. Also, the direct statement of the last line certainly addresses the human speaker as well as the human reader. This statement implies that we are all trapped or controlled by some remote object or entity. At the same time, the assertion that "Nothing escapes" reflects the limitations of life in the world and the death that no person can escape. Our own thoughts are restricted by our mortality as well as by our limits of relying on appearances. By personifying a voiceless object, the poem presents a different perception of reality, placing the reader in the same position of the speaker and inviting the reader to question the conflict between appearance and reality, between what we see and what we can know.

Useful Strategies for Addressing the Poetry Prompt



Introduction

Introduction: Always should include theme, author and poem, as well as your intended elements

Diction

Diction is, by far, the most flexible element—but can be the most tricky. Focus on important diction, not meaningless detail.

Connections

Consider not making closely related elements each a separate paragraph. You will have a hard time distinguishing between them.

Swell Words

Great poetic verbs: "evokes", "suggests"
Great poetic nouns: "speaker", "reader"
Use them...Myrna will be thrilled!

"My Mother Pieced Quilts"
by Teresa Palomo Acosta

they were just meant as covers
in winters
as weapons
against pounding january winds

5 but it was just that every morning I awoke to these
october ripened canvases
passed my hand across their cloth faces
and began to wonder how you pieced
all these together

10 these strips of gentle communion cloth and flannel
nightgowns
wedding organdies
dime store velvets

how you shaped patterns square and oblong and
round

15 positioned
balanced
then cemented them
with your thread
a steel needle
a thimble

20 how the thread darted in and out
galloping along the frayed edges, tucking them in
as you did us at night
oh how you stretched and turned and re-arranged
your michigan spring* faded curtain pieces

25 my father's sante fe work shirt*
the summer denims, the tweeds of fall

in the evening you sat at your canvas
--our cracked linoleum floor the drawing board
me lounging on your arm

30 and you staking out the plan:
whether to put the lilac purple of easter against
the red plaid of winter-going-
into-spring
whether to mix a yellow with blue and white
and paint the

35 corpus christi* noon when my father held your hand
whether to shape a five-point star from the
somber black silk you wore to grandmother's
funeral

you were the river current
carrying the roaring notes

40 forming them into pictures of a little boy reclining
a swallow flying
you were the caravan master at the reins
driving your threaded needle artillery across
the mosaic cloth bridges

45 delivering yourself in separate testimonies.

oh mother you plunged me sobbing and laughing
into our past
into the river crossing at five
into the spinach fields
50 into the plainview* cotton rows
into tuberculosis wards
into braids and muslin dresses

sewn hard and taut to withstand the thrashings of
twenty-five years

55 stretched out they lay
armed/ready/shouting/celebrating

knotted with love
the quilts sing on

- *michigan spring: in spring migrant workers often go to Michigan to pick crops.
- *sante fe work shirt: work clothes named after the Santa Fe Railroad.
- *corpus christi: a southern Texas city.
- *plainview: a Texas town surrounded by cotton fields.

Study Questions: "My Mother Pieced Quilts"

1. **Imagery.** The opening lines of the poem describe the quilts made by the speaker's mother. What kinds of fabrics did she use? Where did she get her scraps of material?
The speaker reveals family history through the description of the fabrics in the quilt. What family history do the images in lines 24-26 reveal? What family history comes to light in the images of lines 34-37? of lines 48-53?
2. **Metaphor.** Early in the poem the quilts are described as "october ripened canvases." What does "october ripened" imply about them? Explain how the mother's approach to her sewing is artistic.
Two metaphors, in lines 38 and 42, describe the mother. Explain these comparisons and how they work. What does line 45 mean?
3. **Tone.** Discuss the tone of this poem. What lines imply admiration for the mother? What lines imply awe? What lines are particularly joyous?

COMPOSITION:

Draw a sketch for a quilt based on important memories of your own. List and describe the pieces you would use and explain why you chose these particular pieces. Your quilt design may cover only your own important memories or those of your family.

POETRY: Composition Exam

Directions: Read the following poem very carefully. You may use a dictionary, your textbook, and any notes you have to complete the following assignments.

Advice to My Son by Peter Meinke

The trick is, to live your days
as if each one may be your last
(for they go fast, and young men lose their lives
in strange and unimaginable ways)
5 but at the same time, plan long range
(for they go slow: if you survive
the shattered windshield and the bursting shell
you will arrive
at our approximation here below
10 of heaven or hell).

To be specific, between the peony and the rose
plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;
beauty is nectar
and nectar, in a desert, saves--
15 but the stomach craves stronger sustenance
than the honied vine.
Therefore, marry a pretty girl
after seeing her mother;
speak truth to one man,
20 work with another;
and always serve bread with your wine.

But, son,
always serve wine.

1. What advice is given in the first stanza?
2. The advice given in the first stanza seems contradictory. In what ways does the second stanza attempt to resolve the contradiction or explain the “trick”?

3. What do the bread and wine symbolize?
4. The poet has said that the poem attempts to explain the relationship between ideal and real life, beauty and practicality. What images does the poet use to represent these values?
5. How does the use of parentheses affect the meaning of the poem?
6. What do the final two lines reveal about the speaker's attitude?
7. Note and define any unusual vocabulary words. In other words, focus on diction.
8. Circle the first letter of any words that demonstrate alliteration.
9. Explain the significance of the title.

Composition: Examine the following paragraph assignment carefully. Underline the key words used. Underneath the assignment, explain your task in your own words.

Write a paragraph that discusses how Peter Meinke's use of images and poetic techniques reveals and develops the theme of the poem, "Advice to My Son."

On your own notebook paper, write the paragraph described above.

Follow these guidelines:

- Include the title of the poem and the author in the first sentence.
- Quote appropriately from the poem as evidence.
- Punctuate all quotations correctly.
- Spell all words correctly.
- Use proofreading marks to make necessary corrections.

POETRY: Composition Exam

Directions: Listen very carefully as I read the following poem aloud to you. When I finish, you may use a dictionary, your textbook, and any notes you have to complete the following assignments.

Body's Beauty by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told

(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)

That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,

And her enchanted hair was the first gold.

5 And still she sits, young while the earth is old,

And, subtly of herself contemplative,

Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,

Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and the poppy are her flowers; for where

10 Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent

And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?

Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went

Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent

And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

1. Define the following words:

a. enchanted -

b. contemplative -

c. subtly -

d. snare -

2. Scan the poem, marking stressed syllables with and unstressed syllables with .

3. Describe the rhythm of the poem. Note that you need to describe the dominant metric foot and the length of the lines -- two words.

4. Mark the rhyme scheme on the far right side of the poem. Align your letters vertically.
5. Draw a wavy line under any rhyming words that demonstrate slant rhyme.
6. Circle the first letter of any words that demonstrate alliteration.
7. Enclose each simile in parentheses. (*simile*)
8. Enclose each metaphor in brackets. [*metaphor*]
9. Explain any allusions used in the poem.

10. List the main images used in the poem.

11. Explain the significance of the title.

Composition: Examine the following essay assignment carefully. Underline the key words used. Underneath the assignment, explain your task in your own words.

Write an essay that discusses how Dante Gabriel Rossetti's use of images and poetic techniques reveals and develops the theme of the poem, "Body's Beauty."

On your own notebook paper, write the essay described above.

Follow these guidelines:

- Include the title of the poem and the author in the first paragraph
- Underline your thesis sentence twice
- Underline each topic sentence once
- Quote appropriately from the poem as evidence
- Punctuate all quotations correctly
- Spell all words correctly
- Use proofreading marks to make necessary corrections

A "Found" Poem

For this assignment, you will be creating an original **free verse** poem by "finding" well-written lines inside another writer's story. Because this is free verse, your poem will not rhyme or have a regular rhythm. You will transform prose into a poem.

The original short story is
in prose (or paragraphs) _____

To find a poem
arrange words
AND
phrases
to look like a poem
to emphasize
ideas AND feelings
to compress meaning
into every line.

In modern free verse poetry, each **linebreak** is a decision. The flow of words literally gets broken or split, usually before it reaches the right-hand margin and continues on the next line until it gets broken again. And so on. When used well, linebreaks shape the poem and cause readers to continue more slowly. One of the poet's most important resources, linebreaks help you emphasize ideas by setting words apart. Create a "modern" appearance on the page so **your poem "looks" like a poem!**

*A line can stop at a grammatical pause,
and then go on to the next line.*

*This is an example of a word flow that just keeps coming at
you in one poetic line and makes you read quickly it doesn't
want to be broken and lose its frenetic flow till suddenly it
can't hold on any longer and it
bursts, spilling onto the next line
and the next
slowing
you
down.*

Assignment: Several stories we have read are particularly "poetic." Look for descriptions, feelings, thoughts. Try to find a passage with especially vivid vocabulary. Look for figures of speech and other poetic devices. Choose a passage with expressive language and arrange it on the page to look like a poem. Select and arrange phrases from a single story we have read in the book. You may add necessary capitals and connecting words. Choose your phrases from anywhere in the story, in any order, or select a single passage to convert to a poem. Use line breaks for emphasis, and eliminate unimportant words. For example:

13 **Romance at Short Notice**

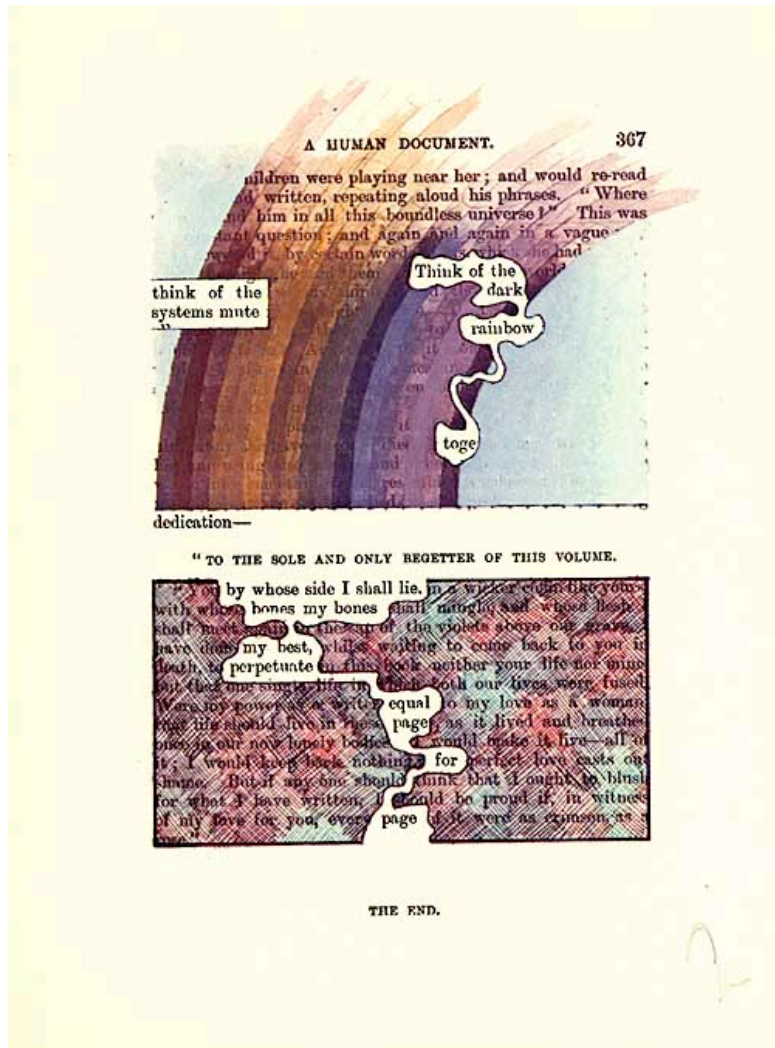
10 *Her great tragedy*
9 *a succession of total strangers*
9 *an undefinable something about the room*
10 *a little shudder*
10 *falteringly human*
9 *a tone of distinct regret*
10 *a whirl of apologies*
12 *dazed horror*
12 *a chill shock of nameless fear*
10 *on still, quiet evenings like this*

From "The Open Window"
by Saki, pp. 9-13

Finder: Sandra Effinger

Cite title of the original story, author, and page number(s) so I know exactly where you found the poem!

A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel



“I took a forgotten Victorian novel found by chance. I plundered, mined, and **undermined** its text to make it yield the **ghosts** of other possible stories, scenes, poems, erotic incidents and **surrealist** catastrophes which seemed to lurk within its wall of words. As I worked on it, I replaced the text I’d stripped away with visual images of all kinds. **It began to tell and to depict**, amongst other memories, dreams and reflections, the **sad story** of one of **love’s casualties.**”

Tom Phillips, *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*. NY: Thames and Hudson, 1987. Now in fourth editions.

Dense novels, because of their length and depth, are most likely to have the rich language where poetry hides.

English teachers have many possibilities:

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad
All Books by Charles Dickens

Other subject areas have their nominees:

The Panda’s Thumb by Stephen Jay Gould
Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton
The Declaration of Independence
Future Shock by Alvin Toffler
Totem and Taboo by Sigmund Freud
Escape from Freedom by Eric Fromm

Entire book available as graphic images at website – <http://humument.com/>

Yahoo Altered Books Group in homage --
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/alteredbooks/>