

Learning to Appreciate Poetry

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Introduction: What is poetry?

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Verse & Rhyme

Look at these two examples from *Romeo & Juliet*. The first is rhyming verse, the second is blank verse.

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night

Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine,
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

The similarity between them is that they both have *rhythm*: they follow the same sort of pattern as a piece of music.

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Rhyme Scheme

Look at the first example again:

| | |
|--|---|
| O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! | a |
| It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night | a |
| Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear ; | b |
| Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear! | b |
| So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows , | c |
| As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows . | c |
| The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand , | d |
| And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand . | d |
| Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! | e |
| For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night | e |

These are called rhyming couplets

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Rhyme Scheme

Now look at this:

| | |
|--|---|
| There was a young girl from the Clyde, | a |
| Who ate green apples and died. | a |
| The apples fermented | b |
| Inside her lamented, | b |
| And formed cider insider her inside! | a |

This is a limerick. Can you see how the rhyme scheme works?

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Rhythm and Metre

Let's look at the limerick again:

There *was* a young *girl* from the *Clyde*,

Who *ate* green *apples* and *died*.

The *apples* fermented

Inside her lamented,

And formed *cider* *insider* her *inside*!

Why have I formatted certain syllables in italics?

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Verse, Rhyme & Scansion

Some more Limericks. These are pretty funny, but there's a serious message here:

There was an Old Man in a tree,
Who was horribly bored by a Bee;
When they said, 'Does it buzz?'
He replied, 'Yes, it does!'
'It's a regular brute of a Bee!'

There was an Old Man in a tree,
Who was horribly stung by a wasp;
When asked, "does it hurt?"
He replied, "No, not very much.
"I'm glad it wasn't a hornet!"

There was once a poet from Japan,
Whose poetry never would scan.
He said, "Try as I might,
It's always a fight
For me to try and fit as many words into the last line as I possibly can!"

Limericks are not true poems, of course, but these examples help us to understand rhyme, rhythm and scansion!

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Figurative Language - Simile

O my love is **like a red, red rose**

That's newly sprung in June;

O my love is **like a melody**

That's sweetly played in tune.

Robert Burns

I wandered **lonely as a cloud**

That floats on high o'er vales and hills.

William Wordsworth

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

William Shakespeare

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Figurative Language - Metaphor

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost **thou** thus,
Through windows, and through curtains **call on us?**

John Donne

Do not go gentle into **that good night**,
Old age should **burn and rave** at close of day;
Rage, rage against the **dying of the light**.

Dylan Thomas

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Alliteration

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Assonance

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost

Learning to Appreciate Poetry: Onomatopoeia

Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
How they **clang**, and **clash**, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear it fully knows,
By the **twanging**,
And the **clanging**,
How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
In the **jangling**,
And the **wrangling**.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Three Structural Terms Worth Knowing

Enjambment: when a sentence continues onto the next line without punctuation, often creating flow or momentum.

Caesura: a pause within a line, usually marked by punctuation, often slowing the reader or adding emphasis.

Volta: a turning point where the poem's mood, argument or perspective changes.

Going back to the beginnings of English poetry

Whan that April with his showres soote
The drouhte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veine in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flowr;
Whan Zephyrus eek with his sweete breethe
Inspired hath in every holt and heethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye
That sleepen al the night with open
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages--
Thanne langen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to seeke
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke



So, what after all, is a poem?

The outpouring of powerful emotions, recollected in tranquility.

Wordsworth

Concentrated language?



So, where do we go from here?

Preparing for the Next Unit

