

What Is Poetry?

Poetry can be thought of as a verbal, written art form that uses a heightened sense of language to convey experience, feeling, or modes of consciousness. There is no concrete definition for poetry. It means many different things to different people.

Poetry is an ancient art form with many forms and styles, each of which has its own unique aspects and characteristics. Poetry is a powerful way to express emotion, and it can be used to explore a wide range of topics, from love and friendship to loss and sorrow. There are many different types of poetry, and each one has its own purpose and form.

One type of poetry is **lyric** poetry, which is often written in the form of a song. Lyric poetry has a strong musical element and often uses rhyme and rhythm to create a sense of unity. Another type of poetry is **narrative** poetry, which tells a story. Narrative poems often include characters, settings, and a plot, and can be written in either a traditional or modern form.

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry that is brief and often uses nature as its subject matter. Haiku is composed of three lines, with the first and third lines having five syllables and the second line having seven syllables. **Free verse** is a form of poetry that is written without any set structure, rhyme or rhythm. This type of poetry allows for more creative expression and can be used to explore a range of topics.

Blank verse is a form of poetry that does not have any kind of rhyme, but does have a set meter. This type of poetry is often used to explore serious topics, such as life and death, and is often found in plays and other dramatic works. **Sonnets** are a type of lyric poetry that is written in fourteen lines and often has two parts, an octave and a sestet. Sonnets often use a specific rhyme scheme and are used to express strong emotion or to tell a story.

Concrete poetry is a type of poetry that uses the visual form of the words to create a visual image. This type of poetry often uses shapes and symbols to convey meaning, and can be used to explore a range of topics. Finally, there is **spoken word** poetry, which is a type of performance art. Spoken word poetry is often performed with music or other accompaniment and can be used to explore a wide range of topics.

Overall, there are many different types of poetry, each with their own unique style and characteristics. Poetry is a beautiful and powerful art form that has been around for centuries. Each form of poetry has its own unique style and purpose, allowing poets to express their emotions and ideas in a creative and imaginative way.

2 Approaches to reading poetry

(1) Read the entire poem for general clarity. Approach every poem with an open mind and view it as a new experience.

(2) Once you achieve a general impression, you can begin to analyze the poem.

a. Contemplate the poem's title. Try and make connections between the title of a poem, its content, and the setting or situation it suggests.

b. Look for sensory images, different patterns, usage of literary devices, rhythm and meter.

(3) The "meaning" of poem is not necessarily the most important element. Explore instead the experience that the words create. If you do notice one possible interpretation of the poem, don't stop there. There may be other possible interpretations that arise from your experience of the words and images. The author is often more interested in the experience behind the interpretations than in the various interpretations themselves.

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Literary Devices: Knowledge of these devices can help you discuss poetry with others, but it will not necessarily help you experience poetry in a deeper sense.

Imagery: The words themselves are not necessarily the most important aspect of poetry. The words invite you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste the details of life in an unusual or unexpected way.

Example:

*The asphalt shrinks into the horizon
He diminishes in my rearview
His body heat dissipating from the passenger seat
His smoke streaming from my ashtray
Cologne lingers
And lingers*

Symbolism allows you to attach ideas to things. In the example below, the author appears to be using both a storm and a flower as symbols for life. Life can be seen both ways, and the poem is clearly not just about storms or flowers.

*There's a hole in your storm
And the clouds of experience bloom Like revolving petals they form
And darken into a crumbling gloom*

Simile and Metaphor: These two literary devices are almost the same. A simile shows one thing as “similar” to something else—as in “kisses as sweet as honey.” A simile usually involves the word “like” or “as.” A metaphor presents one thing as though it actually is something else—as in “Fix upon me the dark embers of your eyes.” Here the author speaks of eyes as though they really are embers.

Personification: giving human qualities to something not human. “The wind murmured in the trees.”

Irony: the use of opposite meanings to intensify the impression of something. There are 3 types of irony:

Verbal Irony: words used to convey the opposite of their apparent meaning, as in when one says “Way to go!” to someone who has made a mistake

Dramatic Irony: when the reader is aware of something that a character in the story is not aware of.

Situational Irony: An assassin gets assassinated by his intended victim.

Hyperbole: literary Exaggeration, as in “I waited in line for centuries.”

Juxtaposition: the combination of different or opposite qualities. “The black flames of Hell.” “The chilling lullaby.”

4

Onomatopoeia: words or phrases that, when they are spoken out loud, sound like what they mean.
“Bang!” “Screech!” “The clop, clop, clop of the approaching horseman.”

*“How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!”
“How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour.”*

Alliteration: words that sound alike at their beginnings.

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

Assonance: words that sound alike in their midsections.

*“Dead in the middle of little Italy, little did we know
that we riddled two middle men who didn't do diddily.”*

Euphony: when a poem or words have a smooth pleasing sound. Usually consist of vowels. i.e. “*The Lotus-Eaters*” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson: “*The mild-eyed melancholy Lotus-eaters came.*”

Cacophony: when a poem or words have a harsh unpleasing sound. Usually consist of unpleasant sounding consonance

*With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.*

Repetition: shows a sense of urgency or importance, and also gives the option of adding music to the writing. Also, repetition of a particular word, phrase, pattern, sound, or syllable is used to get the attention of readers. Particular forms of repetition are anaphora, refrain, syntactical, and sonic.

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Rhythm and Meter: The up and down, the high and low points in a poem comprise its rhythm or its pattern. The repetition of the pattern forms the meter. Combined, these two aspects of a poem create an emotional sensation of stirring or swirling in the gut. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the witches chant (note how the rhythm and meter of the words brings about a sensation of stirring a cauldron:

*Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.*

Rhyme: words sounding alike at their endings. There are, however, different kinds of rhyme besides straight rhyme.

Slant Rhyme: heart/smirk/ fair or suffer/after/ liar

Internal Rhyme: I can't explain it pain has changed me into an untamed beast

Identical Rhyme: dream/ dream, street/ street

Eye Rhyme: wash/cash, cover/over

Homonyms: mine/ mind, peace/ piece

Apocopated Rhymes: when only the first syllable of a word is used in creating a rhyme

*I thought her text was hurtful -
crushing, distant, curt;
when all I'd been was truthful,
the dumb caprice of youth!*

Mind Rhyme: A specific rhyme generated by the context of a verse

Example: "I love your style. Every time I see you I can't help but grin."

"I love your style. Every time I see you I can't help but grin."

If you read this and thought "smile" instead of "grin," then a mind rhyme has just occurred.

Forced Rhyme: an example from William Blake's *The Tiger*:

*What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

Note: Poetry does not have to rhyme. Many people tend to believe the rhyming poetry is somehow inferior to non-rhyming poetry. This is probably based on the impression that rhymes sometimes come across as merely cute or as lacking in deep significance. This belief about rhyme, however, is questionable. Rhyme can often serve to intensify the depth of the emotional impact of a poem by giving it a rhythmic, hypnotic quality. The images presented in a poem run deeper than the imagery described by the words. Often the patterning of the rhyming can produce a more subtle imagery of motion, like swirling or dancing, that involves the reader on a musical level.

Old flames

The cabbage tree was, they said,
dead. There was nothing they
or anyone could do
now or any day –
how sorry they
were, and sad.

But the cabbage tree heard them –
they never noticed
it shaking its head:
it shook it so hard
stars were said to have spread
from where the cabbage tree stood:

a blossoming, new constellation
across that night sky south.

Someone said just
yesterday,
some fires
you can't put out.

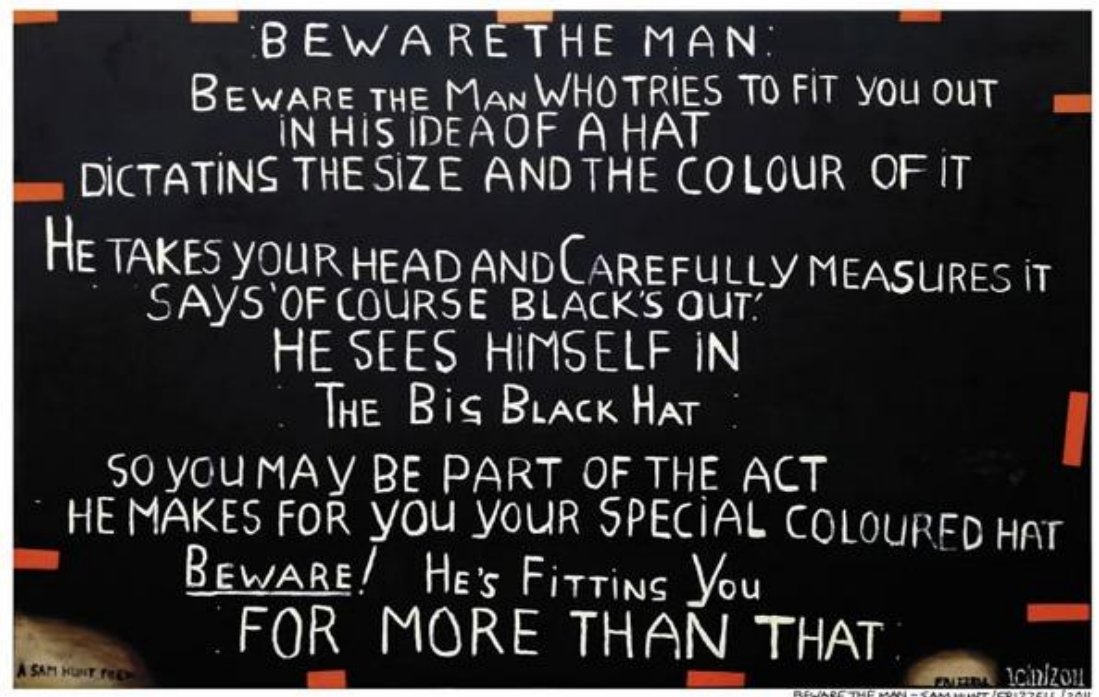
Talking of the weather

Winter's got its teeth in
and it's going to get worse
a lot worse than this
before it gets better

before you come to, brother,
and find overnight a snowfall
lower than any local
today can recall

your dead grandmother
out on the verandah
cannot (rumour) remember
snow as low either

a lot worse than this
before it gets better
and we've not even started, brother,
talking of the weather.



Challenges for today

Use these Hunt(ly) images as subjects for two poems of different forms



CLANCY OF THE OVERFLOW - A.B. "Banjo" Paterson

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,
Just "on spec", addressed as follows: "Clancy, of The Overflow".

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected,
(And I think the same was written in a thumbnail dipped in tar)
'Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:
"Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are."

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy
Gone a-droving "down the Cooper" where the western drovers go;
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townfolk never know.

And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,
And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the tramways and the buses making hurry down the street,
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,
For townfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,
While he faced the round eternal of the cashbook and the journal -
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy, of "The Overflow".

The Bulletin, 21 December 1889.

Paterson was a law clerk with a Sydney-based firm and was admitted as a solicitor in 1886. In the years he practised as a solicitor, he also started writing. From 1885, he began submitting and having poetry published in The Bulletin, a literary journal with a nationalist focus.

Banjo Paterson
CBE



Banjo Paterson, circa 1890

Born	Andrew Barton Paterson 17 February 1864 "Narrambla", near Orange , New South Wales , Australia
Died	5 February 1941 (aged 76) Sydney , New South Wales , Australia

MOSQUITO

On the fine wire of his whine he walked,
Unseen in the ominous bedroom dark.
A traitor to his camouflage, he talked
A thirsty blue streak distinct as a spark.

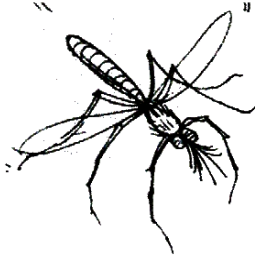
I was to him a fragrant lake of blood
From which he had to sip a drop or die.
A reservoir, a lavish field of food,
I lay awake, unconscious of size.

We seemed fair-matched opponents. Soft he dropped
Down like an anchor on his thread of song.
His nose sank thankfully in; then I slapped
At the sting on my arm, cunning and strong.

A cunning, strong Gargantua, I struck
When he was pinned in the feast of my flesh,
Lulled by my blood, relaxed, half-sated, stuck,
Engrossed in the gross rivers of myself.

Success! Without a cry the creature died,
Became a fleck of fluff upon the sheet.
The small welt of remorse subsides as side
By side we, murderer and murdered, sleep.

JOHN UPDIKE



STUFF

Lovers lie around in it
Broken glass is found in it
Grass
I like that stuff

Tuna fish get trapped in it
Legs come wrapped in it
Nylon
I like that stuff

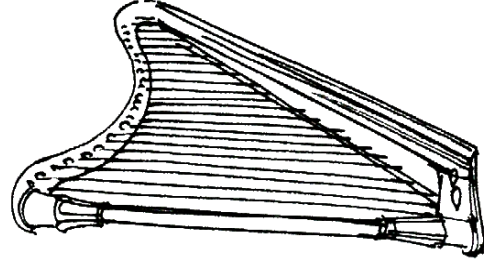
Eskimos and tramps chew it
Madame Tussaud gave status to it
Wax
I like that stuff

Elephants get sprayed with it
Scotch is made with it
Water
I like that stuff

Clergy are dumbfounded by it
Bones are surrounded by it
Flesh
I like that stuff

Harpes are strung with it
Mattresses are sprung with it
Wire
I like that stuff

Carpenters make cots of it
Undertakers use lots of it
Wood
I like that stuff



SIR SMASHAM UPPE

Good afternoon, Sir Smasham Uppe!
We're having tea: do take a cup!
Sugar and milk? Now let me see —
Two lumps, I think? . . . Good gracious me!
The silly thing slipped off your knee!
Pray don't apologise, old chap:
A very trivial mishap!
So clumsy of you? How absurd!
My dear Sir Smasham, not a word!
Now do sit down and have another,
And tell us all about your brother —
You know, the one who broke his head.
Is the poor fellow still in bed?
A chair — allow me sir! . . . Great Scott!
That *was* a nasty smash! Eh, what?
Oh, not at all: the chair was old —
Queen Anne, or so we have been told.
We've got at least a dozen more:
Just leave the pieces on the floor.
I want you to admire our view:
Come nearer to the window, do;
And look how beautiful . . . Tut, tut!
You didn't see that it was shut?
I hope you are not badly cut!
Not hurt? A fortunate escape!

Amazing! Not a single scrape!
And now, if you have finished tea,
I fancy you might like to see
A little thing or two I've got.
That china plate? Yes, worth a lot:
A beauty too . . . Ah, there it goes!
I trust it didn't hurt your toes?
Your elbow brushed it off the shelf?
Of course: I've done the same myself.
And now, my dear Sir Smasham — oh,
You surely don't intend to go?
You *must* be off? Well, come again.
So glad you're fond of porcelain!

E. V. RIEU

LONE DOG

I'm a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone;
I'm a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting on my own;
I'm a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep fat souls from sleep.

I'll never be a lap dog, licking dirty feet,
A sleek dog, a meek dog, cringing for my meat,
Not for me the fireside, the well-filled plate,
But shut door, and sharp stone, and cuff, and kick, and hate.

Not for me the other dogs, running by my side,
Some have run a short while, but none of them would bide,
O mine is still the lone trail, the hard trail, the best,
Wild wind, and wild stars, and the hunger of the quest!

IRENE R. MCLEOD

The Sea

White are the horses that crash on the beach
Golden the sand that the white horses reach.
Grey are the cliffs that tower over all,
Blue of the sea, and white of the fall.
Green of the grass, that covers the cliffs.
Brown is the house where the old man lives.
Grey is his hair, that matches the waves.
Wrinkled his skin, as the old man says:
'Mild was the sea, and blue was the sky,
Those were the days when the boats sailed by.
Now, wild is the sea and grey is the sky,
Stormy the sea as the years race by.'

SUSAN GIBSON*

UNCLE DAN

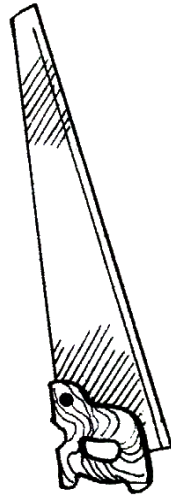
My Uncle Dan's an inventor, you may think that's very fine,
You may wish he was your Uncle instead of being mine --
If he wanted he could make a watch that bounces when it drops,
He could make a helicopter out of string and bottle tops
Or any really useful thing you can't get in the shops.

But Uncle Dan has other ideas:
The bottomless glass for ginger beers,
The toothless saw that's safe for the tree,
A special word for a spelling bee
(Like Lionocerangoutangadder),
Or the roll-uppable rubber ladder,
The mystery pie that bites when it's bit --
My Uncle Dan invented it.

My Uncle Dan sits in his den inventing night and day.
His eyes peer from his hair and beard like mice from a load of hay.
And does he make the shoes that will go walks without your feet?
A shrinker to shrink instantly the elephants you meet?
A carver that just carves from the air steaks cooked and ready to eat?

No, no, he has other intentions --
Only perfectly useless inventions:
Glassless windows (they never break)
A medicine to cure the earthquake
The unspillable screwed-down cup,
The stairs that go neither down nor up,
The door you simply paint on a wall --
Uncle Dan invented them all.

TED HUGHES



THE LESSON

Chaos ruled OK in the classroom
as bravely the teacher walked in
the havocbreakers ignored him
his voice was lost in the din

'The theme for today is violence
and homework will be set
I'm going to teach you a lesson
one that you'll never forget'

He picked on a boy who was shouting
and throttled him then and there
then garrotted the girl behind him
(the one with grotty hair)

Then sword in hand he hacked his way
between the chattering rows
'First come, first severed' he declared
'fingers, feet, or toes'

He threw the sword at a latecomer
it struck with deadly aim
then pulling out a shotgun
he continued with his game

The first blast cleared the backrow
(where those who skive hang out)
they collapsed like rubber dinghies
when the plug's pulled out

When Candle Light

When candle light sings the wings
of moths,

When candle light spreads withered
shadows across the room,

When the luminous flame
burns hot at the tip of a finger,

When all is quiet except for
the fire side crackling.

HEATHER DOCKERAY*

Clouds and Light

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades.
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:
Silver filaments, gold flakes settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun brodered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

from Irradiations by JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Home Coming

The cats welcome
Their returning
Food source.
A performing human
Cued to respond
Marked and
Held in thrall.
Paid off with purrs.

They spar
While waiting
For food to appear.
Sideway glances. Sinuous grace.
Missing nothing.
Craving attention
And food.

Carole A. Stewart

Childhood

When did my childhood go?

Was it the day I ceased to be eleven,

Was it the time I realized that Hell and Heaven,

Could not be found in Geography,

And therefore could not be,

Was that the day!

When did my childhood go?

Was it the time I realized that adults were not all they seemed to be,

They talked of love and preached of love,

But did not act so lovingly,

Was that the day!

When did my childhood go?

Was it when I found my mind was really mine,

To use whichever way I choose,

Producing thoughts that were not those of other people,

But my own, and mine alone,

Was that the day!

Where did my childhood go?

It went to some forgotten place,

That's hidden in an infant's face,

That's all I know.

MARKUS NATTEN*

Rebirth

I thought my poet's soul had died

Withered and dry from lack of feeding
and years of neglect.

I laughed along with others

Who said in jest that they could write a book
- And cried inside.

Sometimes I'd feel it stirring

Giving birth to the yearning

I feel in a stationery store

Surrounded by pens and pencils
and pristine pages that

Lay themselves bare for my creative touch.

But I stood firm against their seduction,
Covered them instead with lecture notes,

essays and statistics.

No danger there of giving birth

To something I could not control.

Perhaps I knew

that more than this lay hidden in my heart.

Flowing from me now, unleashed,

Free to soar, I think in poetry

Brought out from me through being here with you.

Will it have to return

to those dark places of self-containment?

Anna Gwynne

TABLEAU AT TWILIGHT

*I sit in the dusk. I am all alone.
Enter a child and an ice-cream cone.*

*A parent is easily beguiled
By sight of this coniferous child.*

*The friendly embers warmer gleam,
The cone begins to drip ice cream.*

*Cones are composed of many a vitamin.
My lap is not the place to bitamin.*

*Although my raiment is not chinchilla,
I finch to see it become vanilla.*

*Coniferous child, when vanilla melts
I'd rather it melted somewhere else.*

*Exit child with remains of cone.
I sit in the dusk. I am all alone,*

*Muttering spells like an angry Druid,
Alone, in the dusk, with the cleaning fluid.*

HE DIGS, HE DUG, HE HAS DUG

*Say not Eve needed Adam's pardon
For their eviction from the Garden;
I only hope some power divine*

*Gets round to ousting me from mine.
On bended knee, perspiring clammy,
I scrape the soil to feed my family,
Untaught, unteachable, undramatic,
A figure sorry and sciatic.*

*I brood as patiently as Buddha,
Nothing comes up the way it shuddha.
They're making playshoes of my celery,
It's rubbery, and purple-yellery,*

*My beets have botts, my kale has hives,
There's something crawly in my chives,
And jeering insects think it cute*

*To swallow my spray and spit out my fruit.
My garden will never make me famous,
I'm a horticultural ignoramus,
I can't tell a stringbean from a soybean,
Or even a girl bean from a boy bean,*

THE PICKETY FENCE

The pickety fence,
The pickety fence,
Give it a lick it's
The pickety fence
Give it a lick it's
The clickety fence
Give it a lick it's
A lickety fence
Give it a lick
Give it a lick
Give it a lick
With a rickety stick
Pickety
Pickety
Pickety
Pick.

DAVID MCCORD

