



Understanding Poetry

What is poetry?

- In poetry the sound and meaning of words are combined to express feelings, thoughts, and ideas.
- The poet chooses words carefully.
- Poetry is usually written in lines.



Poetry Elements

Writers use many elements to create their poems. These elements include:

- Rhythm
- Sound
- Imagery
- Form



Rhythm

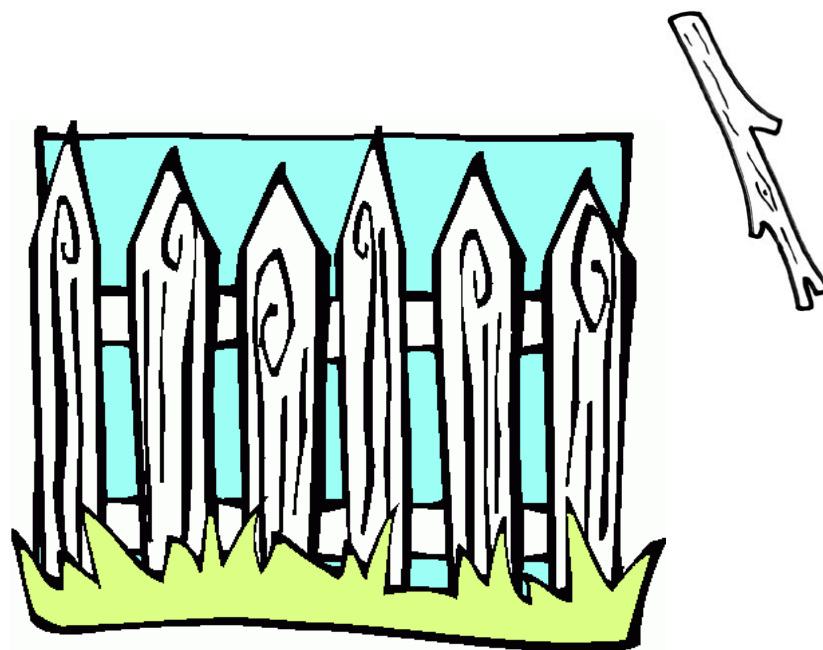
- Rhythm is the flow of the beat in a poem.
- Gives poetry a musical feel.
- Can be fast or slow, depending on mood and subject of poem.
- You can measure rhythm in *meter*, by counting the beats in each line.
- (See next two slides for examples.)



Rhythm Example

The Pickety Fence *by David McCord*

The pickety fence
The pickety fence
Give it a lick it's
The pickety fence
Give it a lick it's
A 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.



**The rhythm in this poem is fast –
to match the speed of the stick
striking the fence.**

Rhythm Example

Where Are You Now?

When the night begins to fall
And the sky begins to glow
You look up and see the tall
City of lights begin to grow –
In rows and little golden squares
The lights come out. First here, then there
Behind the windowpanes as though
A million billion bees had built
Their golden hives and honeycombs
Above you in the air.

By Mary Britton Miller



The rhythm in this poem is slow – to match the night gently falling and the lights slowly coming on.

Sound

Writers love to use interesting sounds in their poems. After all, poems are meant to be heard. These sound devices include:

- Rhyme
- Repetition
- Alliteration
- Onomatopoeia

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Sizzle!!!

POP!!

Rhyme

- Rhymes are words that end with the same sound. (*Hat*, *cat* and *bat* rhyme.)
- Rhyming sounds don't have to be spelled the same way. (*Cloud* and *allowed* rhyme.)
- Rhyme is the most common sound device in poetry.



Rhyming Patterns

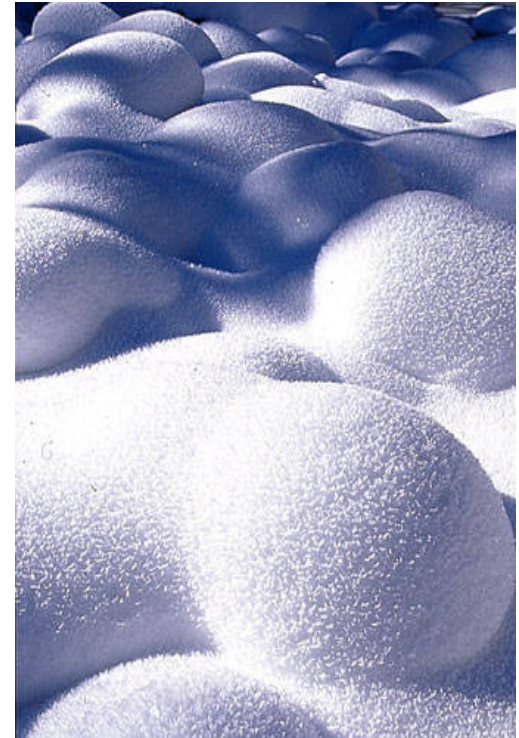
- Poets can choose from a variety of different rhyming patterns.
- (See next four slides for examples.)
- **AABB** – lines **1 & 2** rhyme and lines **3 & 4** rhyme
- **ABAB** – lines **1 & 3** rhyme and lines **2 & 4** rhyme
- **ABBA** – lines **1 & 4** rhyme and lines **2 & 3** rhyme
- **ABCB** – lines **2 & 4** rhyme and lines **1 & 3** do not rhyme

AABB Rhyming Pattern

First Snow

Snow makes whiteness where it **falls**.
The bushes look like popcorn **balls**.
And places where I always **play**,
Look like somewhere else **today**.

By Marie Louise Allen



ABAB Rhyming Pattern

Oodles of Noodles

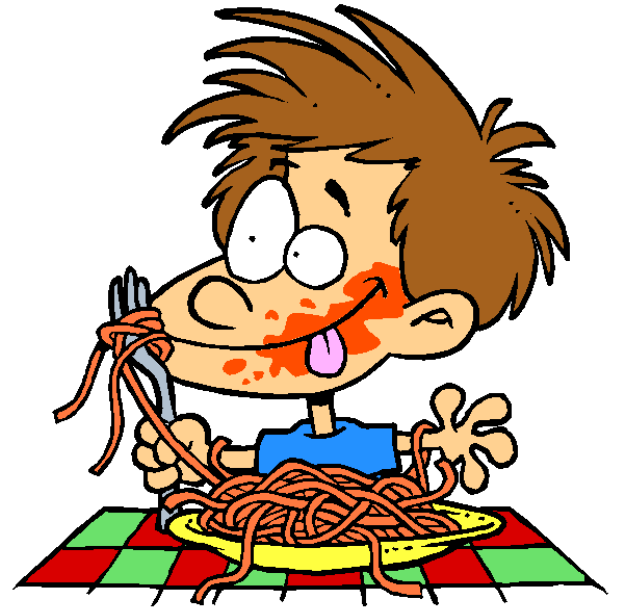
I love noodles. Give me **oodles**.

Make a mound up to the **sun**.

Noodles are my favorite **foodles**.

I eat noodles by the **ton**.

By Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.

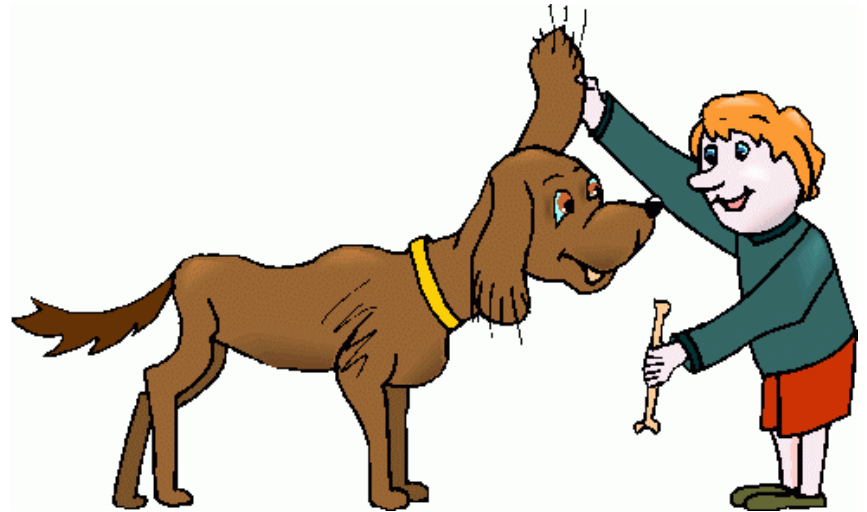


ABBA Rhyming Pattern

From “Bliss”

Let me fetch **sticks**,
Let me fetch **stones**,
Throw me your **bones**,
Teach me your **tricks**.

By Eleanor Farjeon

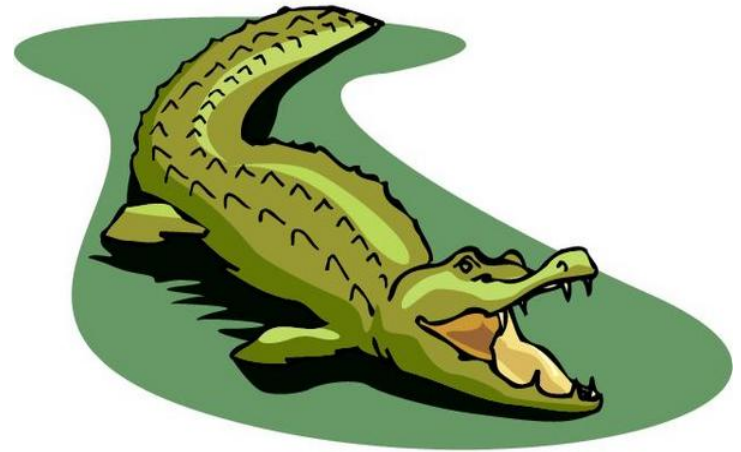


ABCB Rhyming Pattern

The Alligator

The alligator chased his **tail**
Which hit him in the **snout**;
He nibbled, gobbled, swallowed **it**,
And turned right **inside-out**.

by Mary Macdonald



Repetition

- Repetition occurs when poets repeat words, phrases, or lines in a poem.
- Creates a pattern.
- Increases rhythm.
- Strengthens feelings, ideas and mood in a poem.
- (See next slide for example.)

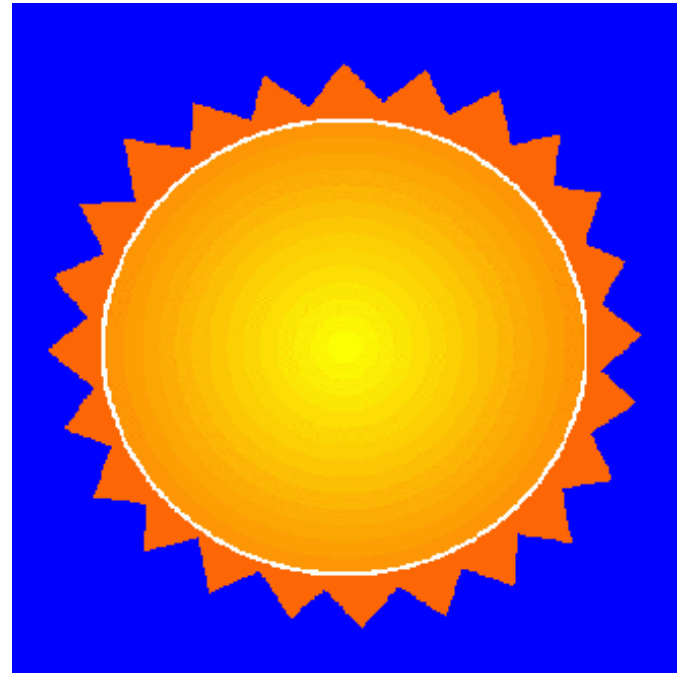


Repetition Example

The Sun

Some one tossed a pancake,
A buttery, buttery, pancake.
Someone tossed a pancake
And flipped it up so high,
That now I see the pancake,
The buttery, buttery pancake,
Now I see that pancake
Stuck against the sky.

by Sandra Liatsos



Alliteration

- Alliteration is the repetition of the first consonant sound in words, as in the nursery rhyme “**P**eter **P**iper **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**eppers.”
- (See next slide for example.)



The snake slithered silently
along the sunny sidewalk.

Alliteration Example

This Tooth

I jiggled it
jaggled it
jerked it.

I pushed
and pulled
and poked it.

But –
As soon as I stopped,
And left it alone
This tooth came out
On its very own!



by Lee Bennett Hopkins

Onomatopoeia

- Words that represent the actual sound of something are words of onomatopoeia. Dogs “*bark*,” cats “*purr*,” thunder “*booms*,” rain “*drips*,” and the clock “*ticks*.”
- Appeals to the sense of sound.
- (See next slide for example.)



Onomatopoeia Example

Listen

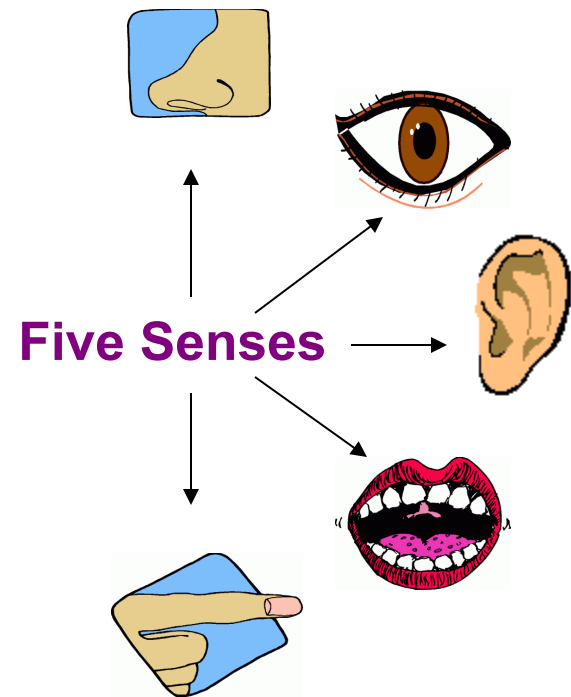
Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch.
Crunch, crunch, crunch.
Frozen snow and brittle ice
Make a winter sound that's nice
Underneath my stamping feet
And the cars along the street.
Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch.
Crunch, crunch, crunch.



by Margaret Hillert

Imagery

- Imagery is the use of words to create pictures, or images, in your mind.
- Appeals to the five senses: smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch.
- Details about smells, sounds, colors, and taste create strong images.
- To create vivid images writers use **figures of speech**.



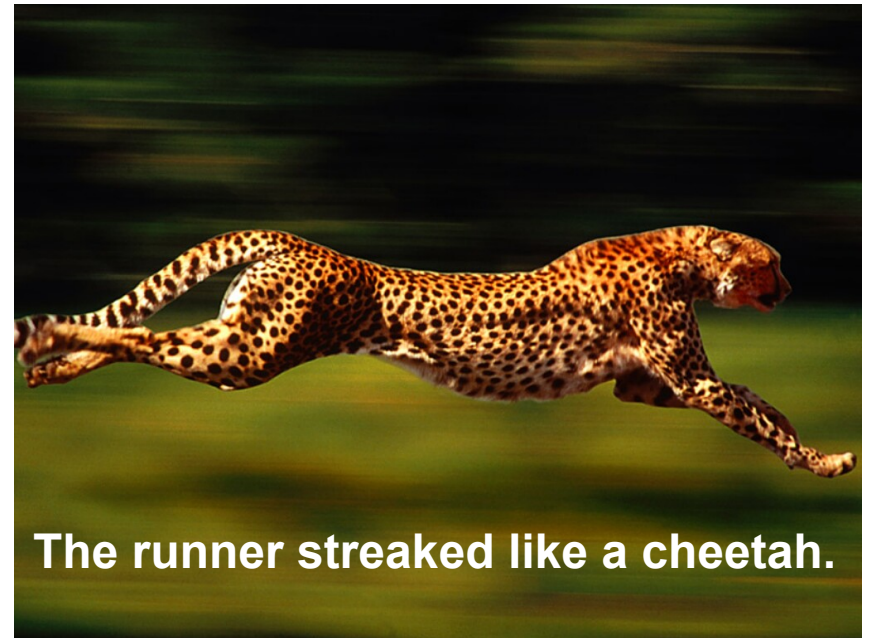
Figures of Speech

- Figures of speech are tools that writers use to create images, or “paint pictures,” in your mind.
- **Similes**, **metaphors**, and **personification** are three figures of speech that create imagery.



Simile

- A simile compares two things using the words “like” or “as.”
- Comparing one thing to another creates a vivid image.
- (See next slide for example.)



The runner streaked like a cheetah.

Simile Example

Flint

An emerald is as green as grass,
A ruby red as blood;
A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
A flint lies in the mud.

A diamond is a brilliant stone,
To catch the world's desire;
An opal holds a fiery spark;
But a flint holds fire.

By Christina Rossetti



Metaphor

- A metaphor compares two things without using the words “like” or “as.”
- Gives the qualities of one thing to something that is quite different.
- (See next slide for example.)



The winter wind is a wolf
howling at the door.

Metaphor Example

The Night is a Big Black Cat

The Night is a big black cat

The moon is her topaz eye,

The stars are the mice she hunts at night,

In the field of the sultry sky.



By G. Orr Clark

Personification

- Personification gives human traits and feelings to things that are not human – like animals or objects.
- (See next slide for example.)



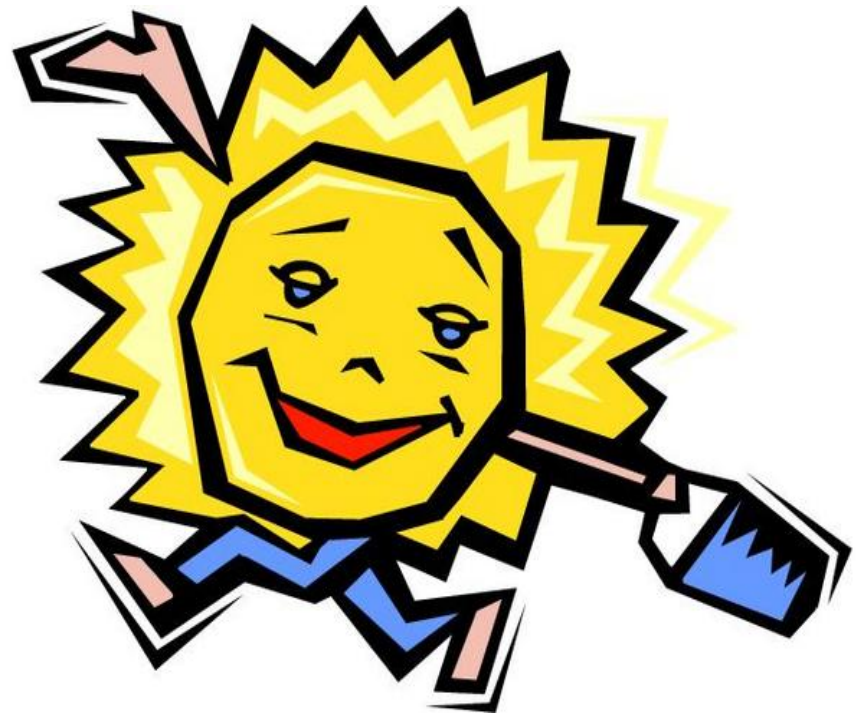
Personification Example

From “Mister Sun”

Mister Sun

Wakes up at dawn,
Puts his golden
Slippers on,
Climbs the summer
Sky at noon,
Trading places
With the moon.

by J. Patrick Lewis



Forms of Poetry

There are many forms of poetry including the:

- Couplet
- Tercet
- Acrostic
- Cinquain
- Haiku
- Senryu
- Concrete Poem
- Free Verse
- Limerick



Lines and Stanzas

- Most poems are written in lines.
- A group of lines in a poem is called a stanza.
- Stanzas separate ideas in a poem. They act like paragraphs.
- This poem has two stanzas.

March

A blue day

A blue jay

And a good beginning.

One crow,

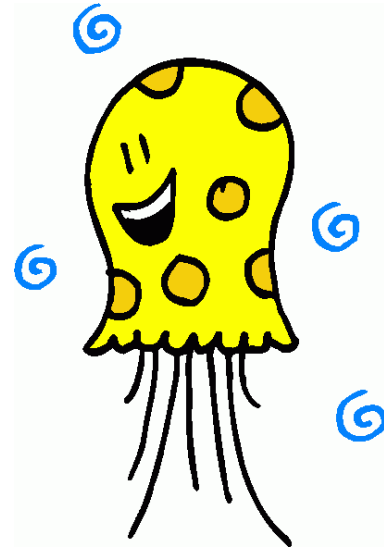
Melting snow –

Spring's winning!

By Eleanor Farjeon

Couplet

- A couplet is a poem, or stanza in a poem, written in two lines.
- Usually rhymes.



The Jellyfish

Who wants my jellyfish?

I'm not sellyfish!

By Ogden Nash

Tercet

- A tercet is a poem, or stanza, written in three lines.
- Usually rhymes.
- Lines 1 and 2 can rhyme; lines 1 and 3 can rhyme; sometimes all 3 lines rhyme.



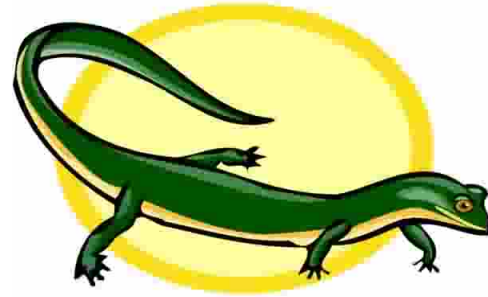
Winter Moon

How thin and sharp is the moon tonight!
How thin and sharp and ghostly white
Is the slim curved crook of the moon tonight!

By Langston Hughes

Quatrain

- A quatrain is a poem, or stanza, written in four lines.
- The quatrain is the most common form of stanza used in poetry.
- Usually rhymes.
- Can be written in variety of rhyming patterns.
- (See slide 9 entitled “Rhyming Patterns.”)



The Lizard

**The lizard is a timid thing
That cannot dance or fly or sing;
He hunts for bugs beneath the floor
And longs to be a dinosaur.**

By John Gardner

Traditional Cinquain

- A cinquain is a poem written in five lines that do not rhyme.
- Traditional cinquain has five lines containing 22 syllables in the following pattern:

Line 1 – 2 syllables

Line 2 – 4 syllables

Line 3 – 6 syllables

Line 4 – 8 syllables

Line 5 – 2 syllables



Oh, cat
are you grinning
curled in the window seat
as sun warms you this December
morning?

By Paul B. Janezco

Word-Count Cinquain

- Word-count cinquain for younger students uses the following pattern:

Line 1: One word (title)

Line 2: Two words (describe the title)

Line 3: Three words (describe an action)

Line 4: Four words (describe a feeling)

Line 5: One word (another word for title)



Owl

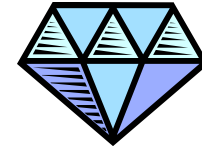
Swift, ferocious

Watches for food

Soaring through the night

Hunter

Diamante



- A diamante is a seven-line poem written in the shape of a diamond.
- Does not rhyme.
- Follows pattern.
- Can use synonyms or antonyms.
- (See next two slides for examples.)

Diamante Pattern

Line 1 – Your topic (noun)

Line 2 – Two adjectives about

Line 3 – Three “ing” words about

Line 4 – Four nouns or short phrase linking topic (or topics)

Line 5 – Three “ing” words about

Line 6 – Two adjectives about

Line 7 – Your ending topic (noun)

Synonym Diamante

Monsters

Creepy, sinister,

Hiding, lurking, stalking,

Vampires, mummies, werewolves and more –

Chasing, pouncing eating,

Hungry, scary,

Creatures



Antonym Diamante

Day

Bright, sunny,

Laughing, playing, doing,

Up in the east, down in the west –

Talking, resting, sleeping,

Quiet, dark,

Night



Haiku

- A haiku is a Japanese poem with 3 lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. (Total of 17 syllables.)
- Does not rhyme.
- Is about an aspect of nature or the seasons.
- Captures a moment in time.



**Little frog among
rain-shaken leaves, are you, too,
splashed with fresh, green paint?**

by Gaki

Senryu

- A senryu follows same pattern as haiku.
- Written in 3 unrhymed lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, with total of 17 syllables.
- Is about human nature, rather than natural world.



**First day, new school year,
backpack harbors a fossil...
last June's cheese sandwich.**

By Cristine O'Connell George

Concrete Poem

- A concrete poem (also called shape poem) is written in the shape of its subject.
- The way the words are arranged is as important what they mean.
- Does not have to rhyme.



Free Verse

- A free verse poem does not use rhyme or patterns.
- Can vary freely in length of lines, stanzas, and subject.

Revenge

When I find out
who took
the last cookie

out of the jar
and left
me a bunch of

stale old messy
crumbs, I'm
going to take

me a handful
and crumb
up *someone's* bed.



By Myra Cohn Livingston

Acrostic

- In an acrostic poem the first letter of each line, read down the page, spells the subject of the poem.
- Type of free verse poem.
- Does not usually rhyme.



Loose brown parachute

Escaping

And

Floating on puffs of air.

by Paul Paolilli

Limerick

- A limerick is a funny poem of 5 lines.
- Lines 1, 2 & 5 rhyme.
- Lines 3 & 4 are shorter and rhyme.
- Line 5 refers to line 1.
- Limericks are a kind of nonsense poem.



There Seems to Be a Problem

I really don't know about Jim.

When he comes to our farm for a swim,

The fish as a rule,

jump out of the pool.

Is there something the matter with him?

By John Ciardi

Nonsense Poems

- A nonsense poem is a humorous poem with silly characters and actions. It is meant to be fun.
- Can be written as a limerick or as another form of poetry.



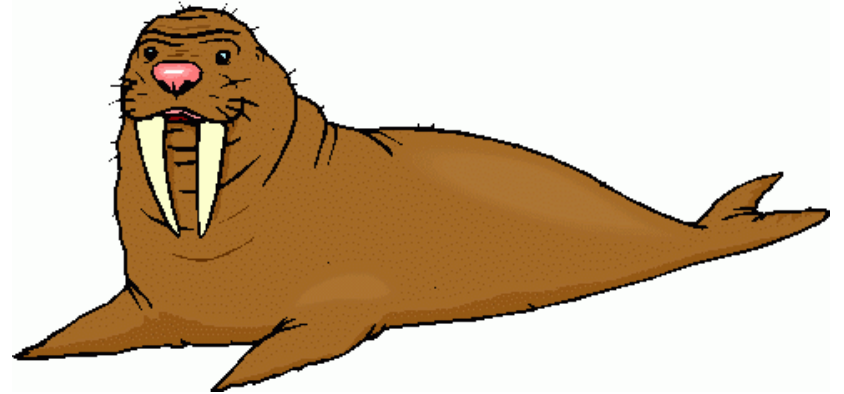
A Princess Laments

**I kissed a frog because I'd heard
That it would turn into a prince.
That's not exactly what occurred,
And I've been croaking ever since.**

by Jack Prelutsky

Word Play

- Some poets use a special kind of word play by making up words or misspelling them on purpose.



The Walrus

The pounding spatter

Of salty sea

Makes the walrus

Walrusty.

By Douglas Florian

Voice



“Voice” is the speaker in a poem. The speaker can be the poet himself or a character he created in the poem. There can be one speaker or many speakers.

- Poet as speaker (slides 47-49)
- Human character in poem as speaker (slide 50)
- Object or animal as speaker (slides 51-52)
- More than one speaker (slides 53-54)

Voice: Poet as Speaker

The Wind

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

by Christina Rossetti



In this poem, the poet speaks of her feelings about the power of the wind.

Voice: Poet as Speaker

The Sugar Lady

There is an old lady who lives down the hall,
Wrinkled and gray and toothless and small.
At seven already she's up,
Going from door to door with a cup.
"Do you have any sugar?" she asks,
Although she's got more than you.
"Do you have any sugar?" she asks,
Hoping you'll talk for a minute or two.

by Frank Asch



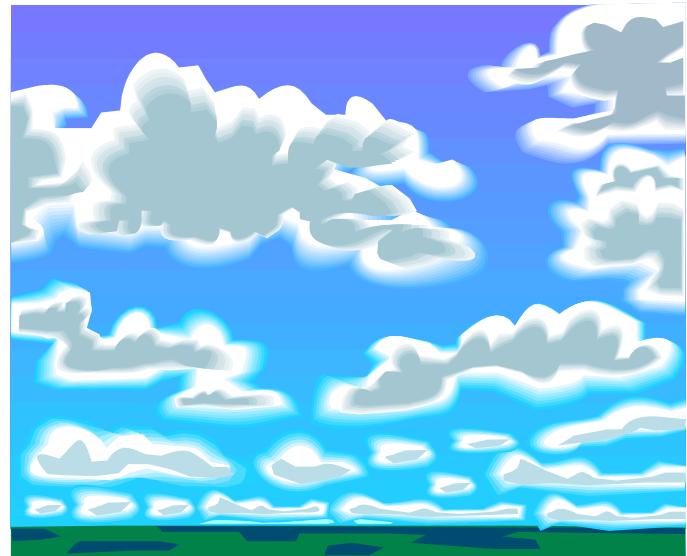
In this poem, the poet tells a story about a lonely old woman hoping to talk.

Voice: Poet as Speaker

Clouds

White sheep, white sheep,
On a blue hill,
When the wind stops
You all stand still.
When the wind blows
You walk away slow.
White sheet, white sheep,
Where do you go?

by Christina Rossetti



In this poem, the poet speaks to clouds - something that cannot answer back. She uses a metaphor when she calls the clouds “white sheep.”

Voice: Human Character as Speaker

For Keeps

We had a tug of war today
Old March Wind and I.
He tried to steal my new red kite
That Daddy helped me fly.
He huffed and puffed.
I pulled so hard
And held that string so tight
Old March Wind gave up at last
And let me keep my kite.

by Jean Conder Soule



In this poem, the voice is that of a child flying a kite on a windy day. The child is the character in the poem.

Voice: Object as Speaker



Crayon Dance

The cardboard ceiling lifts
Pickmepickmepickme, I pray
The fingers do! They choose *me*,
Sky Blue!
Hurrah! Hooray!

by April Halprin Wayland



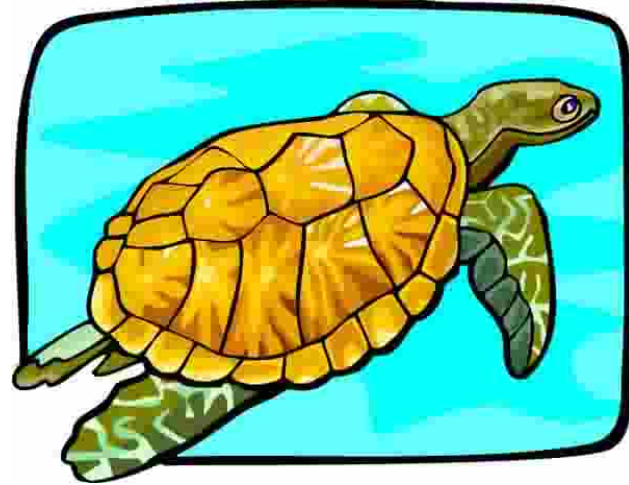
In this poem, the voice is that of a blue crayon, happy to be picked by the artist. The crayon is the character in the poem.

Voice: Animal as Speaker

Turtle in July

Heavy
Heavy hot
Heavy hot hangs
Thick sticky
Icky
But I lie
Nose high
Cool pool
No fool
A turtle in July

by Marilyn Singer



In this poem, the voice is that of a turtle keeping cool on a hot July day. The turtle is the character in the poem.

Voice: Two Speakers

I Talk With the Moon

I talk with the moon, said the owl
While she lingers over my tree
I talk with the moon, said the owl
And the night belongs to me.

I talk with the sun said the wren
As soon as he starts to shine
I talk with the sun, said the wren
And the day is mine.

By Beverly McLoughland



There are two voices in this poem. In the first stanza the voice is that of the night-time owl. In the second stanza the voice is that of the day-time wren.

Voice: Multiple Speakers

Monster Mothers

By Florence Parry Heide

When monster mothers get together
They brag about their babies.
The other day I heard one say,
“He’s got his very first fang today!”

“Mine is ugly.”

“Mine is mean.”

“Mine is turning
nice and green.”



“Mine’s as scaly
as a fish.”

“Mine is sort of
yellowish.”



“Mine breathes fire
and smoke and such.”

“Mine has skin
you’d hate to touch.”

In this poem, there are many voices. The speakers are the monster mothers describing their babies.

Author's Purpose



The poet has an “author’s purpose” when he writes a poem.

The purpose can be to:

- **Share feelings** (joy, sadness, anger, fear, loneliness)
- **Tell a story**
- **Send a message** (theme - something to think about)
- **Be humorous**
- **Provide description*** (e.g., person, object, concept)

**Although description is important in all poems, the focus of some poems is the description itself rather than feelings, story-telling, message, or humor.*

Author's Purpose: Share Feelings

When I Was Lost

Underneath my belt
My stomach was a stone.
Sinking was the way I felt.
And hollow.
And alone.

By Dorothy Aldis



The author's purpose is to share her feelings about being lost and scared.

Author's Purpose: Tell Story

Jimmy Jet By Shel Silverstein

I'll tell you the story of Jimmy Jet –
And you know what I tell you is true.
He loved to watch his TV set
Almost as much as you.

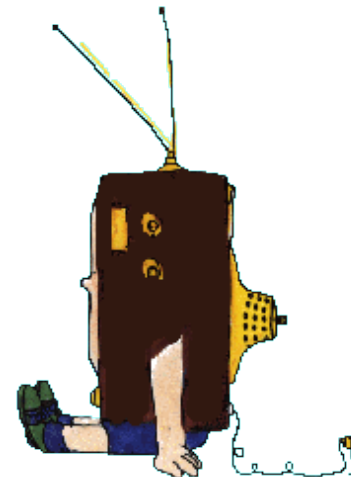
He watched all day, he watched all night
Till he grew pale and lean,
From "The Early Show" to "The Late Late Show"
And all the shows between.

He watched till his eyes were frozen wide,
And his bottom grew into his chair.
And his chin turned into a tuning dial,
And antennae grew out of his hair.

The author's purpose is to tell the story of a boy who watched too much television.

And his brains turned into TV tubes,
And his face to a TV screen.
And two knobs saying "VERT." and "HORIZ."
Grew where his ears had been.

And he grew a plug that looked like a tail
So we plugged in little Jim.
And now instead of him watching TV
We all sit around and watch him.



Author's Purpose: Send Message

Share the Adventure

Pages and pages
A seesaw of ideas –
Share the adventure

Fiction, nonfiction:
Door to our past and future
Swinging back and forth

WHAM! The book slams shut,
But we read it together
With our minds open

by Patricia and Frederick McKissack



The author's purpose is to send a serious message.

The message, or theme, is that reading is an adventure that can be shared.

Author's Purpose: Be Humorous

Insides

I'm very grateful to my skin
For keeping all my insides in –
I do so hate to think about
What I would look like inside-out.

By Colin West

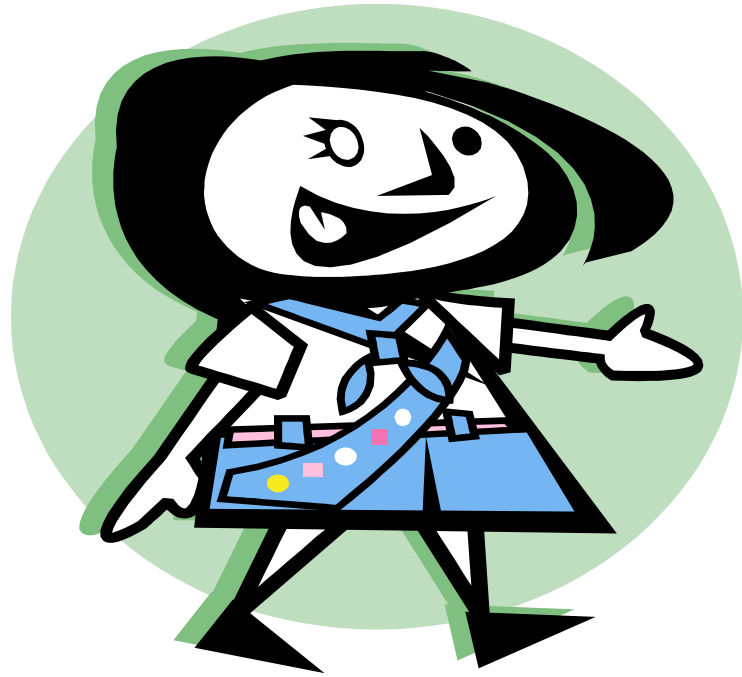


The author's purpose is to write a humorous poem about the purpose of skin.

Author's Purpose: Be Descriptive

Me by Karla Kuskin

“My nose is blue,
My teeth are green,
My face is like a soup tureen.
I look just like a lima bean.
I'm very, very lovely.
My feet are far too short
And long.
My hands are left and right
And wrong.
My voice is like the hippo's song.
I'm very, very,
Very, very,
Very, very
Lovely?”



The author's purpose is to describe a strange-looking person.

Author's Purpose: Be Descriptive

Vacuum Cleaner

Roars over carpet
zig-zag-zips
sucking up fuzz
through metal lips.

By Dee Lillegard



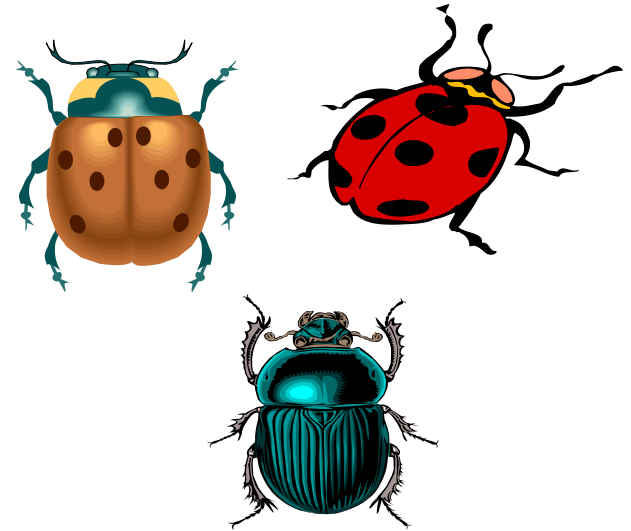
The author's purpose is to describe an object – a vacuum cleaner.

Author's Purpose: Be Descriptive

Beetles

Emerald, ruby, turquoise blue,
Beetles come in every hue:
Beetles that pinch or sting or bite,
Tiger beetles that claw and fight,
Beetles whose burnished armor gleams,
Whirligig beetles that dance on streams,
Antlered beetles in staglike poses,
Beetles that smell – and not like roses,
Others that click like castanets,
That dig or swim or zoom like jets,
Hard as coffee beans, brown as leather,
Or shimmering bright as a peacock feather!

By Ethel Jacobson



The author's purpose is to describe a variety of beetles.

Author's Purpose: Be Descriptive

Understanding

Sun

And rain

And wind

And storms

And thunder go together.

There has to be a bit of each
To make the weather.

By Myra Cohn Livingston



The author's purpose is to describe a concept – weather.

Mood

- Mood is the atmosphere, or emotion, in the poem created by the poet.
- Can be happy, angry, silly, sad, excited, fearful or thoughtful.
- Poet uses words and images to create mood.
- Author's purpose helps determine mood.
- (See slides 65-72 for examples.)



Mood - *Barefoot Days*

Barefoot Days *by Rachel Field*

In the morning, very early,
That's the time I love to go
Barefoot where the fern grows curly
And grass is cool between each toe,
On a summer morning-O!
On a summer morning!

That is when the birds go by
Up the sunny slopes of air,
And each rose has a butterfly
Or a golden bee to wear;
And I am glad in every toe –
Such a summer morning-O!
Such a summer morning!



The mood in this poem is happy. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - Mad Song

Mad Song

I shut my door
To keep you out
Won't do no good
To stand and shout
Won't listen to
A thing you say
Just time you took
Yourself away
I lock my door
To keep me here
Until I'm sure
You disappear.

By Myra Cohn Livingston



The mood in this poem is angry. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - *Poem*

Poem

I loved my friend.
He went away from me.
There's nothing more to say.
The poem ends,
Soft as it began –
I loved my friend:

By Langston Hughes



The mood in this poem is sad. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - *Something is There*

Something is There

Something is there
there on the stair
coming down
coming down
stepping with care.
Coming down
coming down
slinkety-sly.

Something is coming and wants to get by.

By Lilian Moore



The mood in this poem is fearful. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - *Joyful*



Joyful

A summer day is full of ease,
a bank is full of money,
our lilac bush is full of bees,
And I am full of honey.

By Rose Burgunder



The mood in this poem is happy. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - *Foghorns*

Foghorns

The foghorns moaned
in the bay last night
so sad
so deep
I thought I heard the city
crying in its sleep.

By Lilian Moore



*The mood in this poem is sad.
What clues in the poem can you
use to determine the mood?*

Mood - *Magic Landscape*

Magic Landscape

Shall I draw a magic landscape?
In the genius of my fingers
I hold the seeds.
Can I grow a painting like a flower?
Can I sculpture a future without weeds?

By Joyce Carol Thomas



The mood in this poem is thoughtful. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Mood - *Higglety, Pigglety, Pop*

Higglety, Pigglety, Pop!

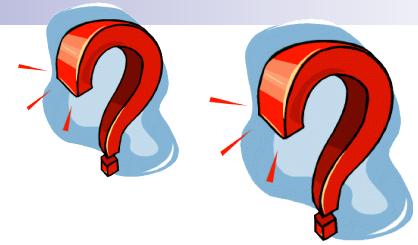
Higglety, Pigglety, Pop!
The dog has eaten the mop;
The pig's in a hurry,
The cat's in a flurry,
Higglety, Pigglety, Pop!

By Samuel Goodrich



The mood in this poem is silly. What clues in the poem can you use to determine the mood?

Reading for Meaning



- To find meaning in a poem, readers ask questions as they read. There are many things to pay attention to when reading a poem:

Title – Provides clues about – topic, mood, speaker, author’s purpose?

Rhythm – Fast or slow? Why?

Sound Devices – What effects do they have?

Imagery – What pictures do we make in our minds?

Figures of Speech – What do they tell us about the subject?

Voice – Who is speaking - poet or character; one voice or more?

Author’s Purpose – Sending message, sharing feelings, telling story, being funny, being descriptive?

Mood – Happy, sad, angry, thoughtful, silly, excited, frightened?

Plot – What is happening in the poem?

Remember, to make meaning, readers must **make connections** and tap into their **background knowledge** and **prior experiences** as they read.

What is poetry?

Poetry

What is poetry? Who knows?
Not a rose, but the scent of a rose;
Not the sky, but the light in the sky;
Not the fly, but the gleam of the fly;
Not the sea, but the sound of the sea;
Not myself, but what makes me
See, hear, and feel something that prose
Cannot: and what it is, who knows?

By Eleanor Farjeon

