



Unit 2: Notes #9

Elements of Poetry

Remember to label your notes by number.
This way you will know if you are missing notes, you'll know what notes you need, etc.
Include the date of the notes given.

Elements of Poetry

•What is poetry?

- Poetry is **not prose**. Prose is the ordinary language people use in speaking or writing.
- Poetry is a **form of literary expression that captures intense experiences or creative perceptions of the world in a musical language**.
- Basically, if prose is like talking, poetry is like singing.
- By looking at the set up of a poem, you can see the difference between prose and poetry.

Distinguishing Characteristics of Poetry

- Unlike prose which has a narrator, **poetry has a speaker.**
 - A *speaker*, or voice, **talks to the reader.** The **speaker is not necessarily the poet.** It can also be a fictional person, an animal or even a thing

Example

But believe me, son.

I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you.

from "Once Upon a Time" by Gabriel Okara

Distinguishing Characteristics of Poetry

- Poetry is also formatted differently from prose.
 - A *line* is a word or row of words that may or may not form a complete sentence.
 - A *stanza* is a group of lines forming a unit. The stanzas in a poem are separated by a space.

Example

Open it.

Go ahead, it won't bite.

Well...maybe a little.

from "The First Book" by Rita Dove

Sound Devices

- *Alliteration* is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.
- *Assonance* is the repetition of vowel sounds within a line of poetry.
- *Consonance* is the repetition of consonant sounds in the middle or end of words within a line of poetry
- *Onomatopoeia* is the use of a word or phrase, such as “hiss” or “buzz” that imitates or suggests the sound of what it describes.

Example of Sound Devices

*“In the steamer is the trout
seasoned with slivers of ginger”
from “Eating Together” by Li-Young Lee*

*And the stars never rise but I
see the bright eyes
from “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe*

Rhyme

- *Rhyme* is the repetition of the same stressed vowel sound and any succeeding sounds in two or more words.
- *Internal rhyme* occurs within a line of poetry.
- *End rhyme* occurs at the end of lines.
- *Rhyme scheme* is the pattern of end rhymes that may be designated by assigning a different letter of the alphabet to each new rhyme

Example

“All mine!” Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule! A

I'm king of a cow! And I'm king of a mule! A

I'm king of a house! And what's more, beyond that, B

I'm king of a blueberry bush and cat! B

I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me! C

For I am the ruler of all that I see!” C

from “Yertle the Turtle”

by Dr. Seuss

“Penelope” by Dorothy Parker

In the pathway of the sun,	A
In the footsteps of the breeze,	B
Where the world and sky are one,	A
He shall ride the silver seas,	B
He shall cut the glittering wave.	C
I shall sit at home, and rock;	D
Rise, to heed a neighbor’s knock;	D
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;	E
Bleach the linen for my bed.	E
They will call him brave.	C

Rhythm and Meter

- *Rhythm* is the pattern of sound created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line. Rhythm can be regular or irregular.
- *Meter* is a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables which sets the overall rhythm of certain poems. Typically, stressed syllables are marked with / and unstressed syllables are marked with ∪ .
- In order to measure how many syllables are per line, they are measured in feet. A *foot* consists of a certain number of syllables forming part of a line of verse.

Iambic Pentameter

- The most common type of meter is called *iambic pentameter*
- An *iamb* is a foot consisting of an initial unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For example, return, displace, to love, my heart.
- A *pentameter* is a line of verse containing 5 metrical feet.

Significance of Iambic Pentameter

- Iambic Pentameter is significant to the study of poetry because
 - 1. It is the closest to our everyday speech
 - 2. In addition, it mimics the sound of heart beat; a sound common to all human beings.
 - 3. Finally, one of the most influential writers of our times uses iambic pentameter in all that he writes – William Shakespeare.

Examples

Example #1

And death is better, as the
millions know,

Than dandruff, night-
starvation, or B.O

*from "Letter to Lord Byron" by
W.H. Auden*

Example #2

When you are old and
grey and full of sleep

And nodding by the fire,
take down this book.

W.B. Yeats

Connotation and Denotation

Connotation - the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word.

Denotation - the strict dictionary meaning of a word.

Example: You may live in a *house*, but we live in a *home*.

Which of the following has a more favorable connotation?

thrifty

penny-pinching

pushy

aggressive

politician

statesman

chef

cook

slender

skinny

Elements of Poetry

When we explore the connotation and denotation of a poem, we are looking at the poet's **diction**.

Diction – the choice of words by an author or poet.

Many times, a poet's diction can help unlock the tone or mood of the poem.

Narrative Poetry

- *Narrative poetry* is verse that tells a story.
- Two of the major examples of narrative poetry include:
 - *Ballads* – a song or poem that tells a story. Folk ballads, which typically tell of an exciting or dramatic event, were composed by an anonymous singer or author and passed on by word of mouth for generations before written down. Literary ballads are written in imitation of folk ballads, but usually given an author.
 - *Epics* – a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject that is centered on the actions of a heroic figure

Ballad Poetry

“Blowin’ In The Wind”

Written by: Bob Dylan

How many roads must a man
walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, 'n' how many seas must a
white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the
cannonballs fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin'
in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people
exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn
his head
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the
wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man
have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he
knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the
wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Dramatic Poetry

- *Dramatic poetry* is poetry in which one or more characters speak.
 - Each speaker always addresses a specific listener.
 - This listener may be silent (but identifiable), or the listener may be another character who speaks in reply.
 - Usually the conflict that the speaker is involved with is either an intense or emotional.

Lyric Poetry

- *Lyric poetry* is poetry that expresses a speaker's personal thoughts and feelings.
 - Lyric poems are usually short and musical.
 - This broad category covers many poetic types and styles, including haikus, sonnets, free verse and many others.

Haikus

- The traditional Japanese *haiku* is an unrhymed poem that contains exactly 17 syllables, arranged in 3 lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables each.
- However, when poems written in Japanese are translated into another language, this pattern is often lost.
- The purpose of a haiku is to capture a flash of insight that occurs during a solitary observation of nature.

Examples of Haikus

Since morning glories
hold my well-bucket hostage

I beg for water

- Chiyo-ni

First autumn morning:
the mirror I stare into
shows my father's face.

- Kijo Murakami

Sonnets

- 14 line poem with a specific rhyme scheme
- Background of Sonnets
 - Form invented in Italy.
 - Most if not all of Shakespeare's sonnets are about love or a theme related to love.
 - Sonnets are usually written in a series with each sonnet a continuous subject to the next. (Sequels in movies)

Sequence of Sonnets

- Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets and can be broken up by the characters they address.
 - **The Fair Youth:** Sonnets 1 - 126 are devoted to a young man of extreme physical beauty. The first 17 sonnets urge the young man to pass on his beauty to the next generation through children. From sonnet 18 on, Shakespeare shifts his viewpoint and writes how the poetry itself will immortalize the young man and allow his beauty to carry on.
 - **The Dark Lady:** Sonnets 127 - 154 talk about an irresistible woman of questionable morals who captivates the young poet. These sonnets speak of an affair between the speaker and her, but her unfaithfulness has hurt the speaker.
 - **The Rival Poet:** This character shows up during the fair youth series. The poet sees the rival poet as someone trying to take his own fame and the poems refer to his own anxiety and insecurity.

Structure of Sonnets

The traditional Elizabethan or Shakespearean **sonnet** consists of fourteen lines, made up of three **quatrains** (stanzas of 4 lines each) and a final **couplet** (two line stanza). Sonnets are usually written in **iambic pentameter**. The quatrains traditionally follow an *abab* rhyme scheme, followed by a rhyming couplet.

Example

Sonnet 18

William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Free Verse

- *Free verse* is poetry that has no fixed pattern of *meter, rhyme, line length, or stanza arrangement*.
- When writing free verse, a poet is free to vary the poetic elements to emphasize an idea or create a tone.
- In writing free verse, a poet may choose to use repetition or similar grammatical structures to emphasize and unify the ideas in the poem.

Free Verse

- While the majority of popular poetry today is written as free verse, the style itself is not new. Walt Whitman, writing in the 1800's, created free verse poetry based on forms found in the King James Bible.
- Modern free verse is concerned with the creation of a brief, ideal image, not the refined ordered (and artificial, according to some critics) patterns that other forms of poetry encompass.

Example of Free Verse

The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirmed case,
He will never sleep any more as he did it in the cot in his mother's
bedroom;

The dour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns is quid of tobacco, his eyes blurred with the manuscript;
The malformed limbs are tied to the anatomist's table,
What is removed drops horribly in the pail;
The quadron girl is sold at the stand....the drunkard nods by the
barroom stove...

Excerpt from "Song of Myself" (section 15)

Walt Whitman

Villanelle

- Background of Villanelle
 - The villanelle did not start off as a fixed form. During the Renaissance, the *villanella* and *villancico* (from the Italian *villano*, or peasant) were Italian and Spanish dance-songs. French poets who called their poems “villanelle” did not follow any specific schemes, rhymes, or refrains. Rather, the title implied that, like the Italian and Spanish dance-songs, their poems spoke of simple, often pastoral or rustic themes.

Structure of the Villanelle

- The highly structured villanelle is a nineteen-line poem with two repeating rhymes and two refrains.
- The form is made up of five tercets followed by a quatrain.
- The first and third lines of the opening tercet are repeated alternately in the last lines of the succeeding stanzas; then in the final stanza, the refrain serves as the poem's two concluding lines.
- The rhyme scheme is usually *aba aba aba aba aba abaa*

Jesús José Medrano went away
no more motel rooms to clean
he asked my dad to take his place

when Dad cried and looked the other way
the mortician closed the coffin on the body
Jesús José Medrano went away

He wore his best gray suit that day
hovered slowly above the family
he asked my dad to take his place

My father marched the casket to the grave
the relatives cried in the out-loud dream
Jesús José Medrano went away

My grandfather, farmworker among grapes,
measured a man tying vines in his teens
he asked my dad to take his place

Como un hombre, he would say
my father's tears never seen
Jesús José Medrano went away
he asked my dad to take his place

Example

**“Villanelle” by
Michael Louis
Medrano**

Ballad

- A song or poem, especially a traditional one or one in traditional style, telling a story in a number of short regular stanzas
- **Folk Ballad** – ballad relating to the traditional culture

Epic

- A long, serious, **poetic** narrative about a significant event, often featuring a hero.
- Before the development of writing, **epic poems** were memorized and played an important part in maintaining a record of the great deeds and history of a culture.

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine
that day;

The score stood four to two with but one inning
more to play.

And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows
did the same,

A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair.

The rest Clung to that hope which springs eternal
in the human breast;

They thought if only Casey could but get a whack
at that—

We'd put up even money now with Casey at the
bat.

...

Example:

**“Casey at
the Bat” by
Ernest L.
Thayer**

Epic Poem Patterns & Examples

- Many of these begin *in medias res*, in the middle of the story, and may digress into the past later on in the poem.
- There are many journeys into the underworld.
- There are grand battle-scenes punctuated by extended similes, ambitious analogies that stretch the imagination but strive for literary glory.
- Many will feature the might of armies in long digressions featuring weaponry and war games.
- *The Epic of Gilgamesh; The Illiad; The Odyssey; The Aeneid*