English 9

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What is Poetry?

When we begin analyzing the basic elements of poetry, we should first know what poetry is all about in the first place. Poetry can be defined as ‘literature in a metrical form’ or ‘a composition forming rhythmic lines’. In short, a poem is something that follows a particular flow of rhythm and meter. Compared to prose, where there is no such restriction, and the content of the piece flows according to story, a poem may or may not have a story, but definitely has a structured method of writing.

Elements of Poetry

There are several elements that make up a good poem. In brief, they are described below:

* Alliteration: Two or more words which have the same initial sound.
* Assonance: A partial rhyme, which has the same internal vowel, sounds amongst different words.
* Metaphor: An indirect comparison, which does not use the words “like” or “as”.
* Onomatopoeia: Words that sound like their meaning. For example, buzz, moo, pow.
* Repetitions: They are the repetition, of the same word throughout the poem to emphasize significance.
* Rhyme: The repetition of sounds within different words, being either the end, middle or beginning.
* Rhythm: The flow of words within each meter and stanza.
* Simile: A direct comparison using the words “like” or “as”.
* Style: The way the poem is written. Free-style, ballad, haiku, etc. Includes length of meters, number of stanzas along with rhyme techniques and rhythm.
* Symbol: Something that represents something else through association, resemblance or moral principle. (Patriotism)
* Theme: The message, point of view and/or idea of the poem.

Types of Poetry

Here is a list of the some types of poems commonly used by poets all over the world:

* Ballad: This is an old style of writing poetry, which was used to tell stories. A ballad usually has stanzas made up of either seven or eight or ten lines, and ends with a short four or five line stanza. Each stanza ends with the same line, which is called ‘a refrain’.
* Couplet: Perhaps the most popular type of poetry used, the couplet has stanzas made up of two lines, which rhyme with each other.
* Quatrain: This kind of poem has four lines in a stanza, of which the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other and have a similar syllable structure.
* Cinquain: This is another unique type of poetry style; it is made up of five lines. The first line is just one word, which is often the title of the poem. The second line has two words, which describe the first line. The third line has three words, and is mostly the action part of the poem. The fourth line is four words describing the feelings. And the fifth line, again, has just one word, which is the title of the poem.
* Iambic Pentameter: This is a very complicated style of writing poetry, but was often used by classical poets. This style uses the syllable stresses to create the musical sound. There is one short sounding syllable followed by one long sounding syllable, at the end of each of the five stanzas in a row.
* Sonnet: This type of poem contains fourteen lines and follows conventional structures of rhyme.
* Haiku: This is again a very structured method of writing poetry. This has it origins in Japan.

This method does not use rhyme. There are three lines of five, seven and five syllables each. The poem must essentially talk about some aspect of Nature.

* Free Verse: This is a method of writing poetry, which does not essentially follow any structure or style.
* Epic: This poem is usually a long and descriptive one, which tells a story. Epics usually are longer than most poems and may even take up a book. Example: Homer’s ‘Iliad’.
* Limerick: This is a very witty (humorous) and often vulgar kind of a poem, which is quite short.

As you read the material identify these parts on each poem.

* Title: Usually at the top of the work, some poems have a title and some don’t.
* Stanza: A stanza is a group of lines in a poem, often separated by a space.
* Line: Poems are made of lines. Stanzas sometimes organize lines. As you read each poem, identify the number of lines within each stanza.
* Rhyme scheme: Pattern of rhyming lines is called the rhyme scheme. Not all poems have a rhyme scheme, but most do.
* Poet: Usually you will find the author’s name at the bottom of the poem, but on occasions where the poem is made into a book, you’ll usually find it on the cover and title page.

***The Courage That My Mother Had*** (title)

 Line 1------- The courage that my mother had ------------------------------------

 Went with her, and is with her still:

Rock from New England quarried;  1st stanza

Now granite in a granite hill.

The golden brooch my mother wore (5) ---------------------------

She left behind for me to wear; -------------------------------

I have no thing I treasure more:

 Line 8--------Yet, it is something I could spare.  2nd stanza

Oh, if instead she'd left to me

The thing she took into the grave!-- (10) -------------------

That courage like a rock, which she ----------------

Has no more need of, and I have.-------------------- 3rd stanza

By Edna St. Vincent Millay (poet)

***Parade***

By Rachel Field

This is the day the circus come

With blare of brass, with the beating drums,

And the clashing cymbals, and with roar

Of wild beasts never heard before

Within town limits. Spick and span

While shine each gilded cage and van;

Cockades at every horse’s head

Will nod, and riders dressed in red

Or blue trot by. There will be floats

In shapes like dragons, thrones and boats,

And clowns on stilts; freaks big and small,

Till leisurely and last of all

Camels and elephants will pass

Beneath our elms, along our grass.

1.How many stanzas does this poem have?

2.What is the author’s name?

3.What is the poem’s title?

4.How many lines does this poem have?

5.Does this poem have a rhyming scheme?

These are the basic elements of poetry. They are an essential part of what any good poem is all about, structurally. Of course, it does not mean, that all poems must have all these elements. It depends entirely upon the poet, who is has all these tools at his disposal, to use in order to convey his ideas most effectively.