Understanding and Appreciation of Poetry

Prepared by
Morris Schreiber

SCHOLASTIC RECORDS SL 9120

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Poets quoted:
Christina Rossetti
John Masefield
William Butler Yeats
Rudyard Kipling
Alfred Noyes
Edgar Allan Poe
Christopher Morley
Hamlin Garland
Percy Bysshe Shelley
William Shakespeare
Carl Sandburg
Matthew Arnold
John Greenleaf Whittier
Alfred Lord Tennyson
Robert Frost
Samuel Johnson
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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UNDERSTANDING and APPRECIATION of POETRY

prepared and narrated by Morris Schreiber

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SIDE I
Band 1

I. THE RHYTHMS OF POETRY

...LISTEN TO--

The beating of a human heart!
(Sound of heart)

The rise and fall of the surging sea!
(Sound of waves crashing and receding)

The patter of rain on a roof!
(Sound of rain falling)

The tramp of marching feet!
(Sound of marching)

...All these--the beating heart, the breaking waves, the falling rain, the marching feet--are part of the great pulsing rhythms of life!

...RHYTHMS, too, are the life-blood of poetry... Generally speaking, rhythms pulse through poetry, giving it life and vigor, lifting it above its more workaday cousin, prose.

Consider the first rhythm we heard--that of a human heart...
(Sound of heart)

A doctor who heard the heart beating described it as:

"A hollow, muscular organ which contracts rhythmically and maintains the circulation of the blood."

A woman poet also heard the heart beat. But she wrote:

"My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot,
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose bough is bent with thick-set fruit."

...The poetess was Christina Rossetti, the poem, "A Birthday."

...The second rhythm we heard was that of the sea...
(Sound of waves crashing and receding)

A ship news reporter watched a great ocean liner sailing majestically into port. In his story he reported:

--the number of passengers aboard the liner.
--the hour it docked
--how long the journey took
--which prominent people were aboard.

But a poet who loved the sea, who, in his youth, had been a sailor on the seven seas, saw it through different eyes. He wrote of the everlasting call of the sea, of the fever it stirred in his blood in these words:

"I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;

And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the
white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face, and a gray dawn
breaking."

The poem is "Sea Fever," the poet, John Masefield, present Poet Laureate of England.

...The third rhythm we heard was that of rain falling...
(Sound of rain falling)

--During the baseball season rain held up an important game. The manager and the players grumbled angrily about it.

But a poet saw the rain in a different light. He wrote:

"What a bliss to press the pillow
Of a cottage-chamber bed,
And to listen to the patter
Of the soft rain overhead!"

...The last sound we heard was that of marching feet.
(Sound of marching)

A general heard that sound, heard his soldiers marching -- but saw them impersonally -- as a key line of defense.

But a soldier-poet who knew what war meant first-hand wrote:

"We're foot--slog--slog--slog--sloggin' over Africa!
Foot--foot--foot--foot--sloggin' over Africa--
(Boots--boots--boots--boots--movin' up and down
again!)
--There's no discharge in the war!"

The poet was Rudyard Kipling, the poem, "Boots."

Band 2

II. SENSORY AND EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF POETRY

Two men look at the same thing--but--
A poet sees more than ordinary men.
A poet hears, tastes, smells, touches--in short,
FEELS more than ordinary men.

He is like a sensitive receiving set--with all five channels--his five senses--all tuned to the universe, night and day.

Hence, a poet takes life, experience, the world about him and writes about it in a special way:

To begin with, his PICTURES are sharper.

Listen to the dramatic opening of the famous poem by Alfred Noyes, "The Highwayman." He is describing a man on horseback riding to see his sweetheart. Notice the vivid pictures, the eerie landscape, the striking figure of the highwayman:

"The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty
trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy
seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple
moor,
And the highwayman came riding,
Riding--riding,
The highwayman came riding up to the old inn door.

"He'd a French cocked hat on his forehead, a bunch
of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet and breeches of brown
doe skin,
They fitted with never a wrinkle, his boots were
up to the thigh!
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky."

The poet has just painted word pictures which make the highwayman come vibrantly alive. But the poet does not stop with pictures. Often his sound effects are more striking than those in ordinary prose.

Roused from his sleep in the middle of the night by the terrifying sound of bells, the great American poet, Edgar Allan Poe, describes his feelings:

"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,
How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the
anger of the bells,
Of the bells,
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells."

In this vigorous tone poem, "The Bells," Poe has used sound words with brilliant, chilling effect to accentuate and sustain a mood of fear.

The poet's sense of taste is also more acute than that of the average man. For example: Most of us have at some time in our lives experienced extreme thirst. But rarely has thirst been depicted more starkly or acutely than by the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his long narrative poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," when he describes the sailors dying of thirst in these words:

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
We could not laugh nor wail...
And every tongue through utter drought
Was withered at the root,
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot."

Here the poet evokes the sense of taste--where men lie parched, choked, a situation in which there is

"Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink."

The sense of smell is also sharper in the poet. Christopher Morley, author of the poem, "Smells," describes some that appeal to him most unforgettably in these words:

"These are the odors I love well:
The smell of coffee freshly ground,
Or rich plum pudding, holly-crowned;
Or onions fried and deeply browned.
The fragrance of a fumy pipe.
The smell of apples, newly ripe,
And printer's ink in leaden type

Woods by moonlight in September
Breathe most sweet; and I can remember
Many a smoky campfire ember.

Camphor, turpentine, and tea,
The balsam of a Christmas tree,
These are whiffs of gramarye...
A ship smells best of all to me!"

In this poem the sense of smell, the olfactory sense, evoked pleasurable scenes and recollections.

In some poems the sensitive poet describes scenes in which the sense of touch predominates with overpowering effect. In the following stanza, Bess, sweetheart of "The Highwayman," has been captured and tied up by the redcoats to prevent her from warning her lover. In the lines describing her struggles notice how strong is the poet's appeal to the sense of touch:

"She twisted her hands behind her, but all the knots
held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with
sweat or blood!

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the
hours crawled by like years,
Till now, on the stroke of midnight, cold, on the
stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at
least was hers!"

--All these sensory impressions, these appeals to sight, sound, taste, smell, touch--the poet stores, puts away--for the day when he can open his memory book and bring them glowingly back to life in a poem...

...Not only are the poet's senses more acute; his feelings and emotions are stirred more deeply than those of ordinary men. He is moved by such emotions as love, pity, tenderness, righteous anger far more than the average person. Often, too, he is more daring, move vigorous, outspoken. In his poem "Do You Fear the Wind?" Hamlin Garland cries out against the timorous, the people afraid to face life squarely and meet its challenges:

"Do you fear the force of the wind,
The slash of the rain?
Go face them and fight them,
Be savage again!
Go hungry and cold like the wolf,
Go wade like the crane;
The palms of your hands will thicken,
The skin of your cheeks will tan,
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,
But you'll walk like a man!"

...The poet also has a more vivid imagination. He finds comparisons and resemblances where the average man finds few or none at all. Mr. Average Man looks at the moon on a dim and gloomy night and sees only a pale moon shining. Alfred Noyes, the poet, sees the moon and compares it to an eerie ship. He writes: "The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas." Mr. Average Man looks out at the world on a foggy morning and sees only a haze or mist in the air. But in the brilliant imagination of the eminent American poet, Carl Sandburg,

"The fog comes
On little cat feet,
It sits looking
Over harbor and city
On silent haunches,
And then moves on."

--Thus we see that the magic of poetry lies--

--first, in its RHYTHMS, the pulse, swing, or music of its lines...

--secondly, in a stirring of the SENSES AND EMOTIONS...

--thirdly, in its CHALLENGE TO THE IMAGINATION...

These are three of the magic ingredients of poetry. Any poem that has all three is generally a poem of very high quality. But one more vital ingredient is necessary to lift such a poem from the category of "high" to "superior," to place it among the great poems that will live.

That fourth and final ingredient is a striking or unusual THEME, an idea that lifts a poem above the trite or ordinary. Such a poem is "Ozymandias," by Percy Bysshe Shelley. As I read it aloud, look for its unusual theme, the striking idea that elevates it to the highest realm of poetry:

"I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name Is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

What is the theme of this poem? What makes it so striking? The answer is: ironic contrast: the proud, vaunted works of the tyrant now lie in ruins, his mighty monument reduced to a heap of stones.

As you listened to this fine poem being read aloud, you probably had little difficulty in recognizing it as a superior work. It had that magic, indefinable quality--that unique combination of rhythm, sensory and emotional appeal, challenge to the imagination, and striking theme. But it was this last quality--its sharply stated theme that lifted it above the ordinary, that identified it as poetry, not prose. But have you ever tried to give a definition of poetry, to crystallize it into words. What is a poem?

Band 3

III. POETRY DEFINED

Many people--including poets themselves--have tried to define a "poem." Here are some attempts at stating what poetry is or telling what poetry means to them personally. Which of their definitions do you like best? WHY?

1. Poe calls poetry "the rhythmic creation of the beautiful."

2. Voltaire maintains that poetry is "the music of the soul, and above all, of great and feeling souls."

3. Coleridge offers this definition "Prose is words in their BEST order; poetry, the BEST WORDS in the BEST ORDER."

4. Shelley declares that a poem is "the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth."

5. Robert Frost believes that a living poem starts "with a lump in the throat, a homesickness or a lovesickness. It is a reaching out toward expression, an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words."

--All five definitions are excellent. Each comes close to giving the essence of a poem--its passion for truth, its unique way of saying things, its selectivity of language, its rhythmic surge. The last definition, by Robert Frost, however, describes how most poems actually come into being:

In the beginning, the poet is stirred by a strong and overpowering emotion. He strives to put the emotion into words. He decks his thought in picturesque, expressive langauge. He then tries to find the most imaginative way of expressing his ideas. If he is successful, the result is a poem, an intensely personal poem--a poem peculiar to that poet and to no other.

And now let us consider some specific examples of these definitions. Here are brief excerpts from three poems. WHICH DEFINITIONS DO THEY ILLUSTRATE? Listen to the first:

"And the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.
And so, all the night-tide I lie down by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life, and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea.
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

This stanza, from Poe's sad and lovely tribute to his deceased wife, Virginia Clemm, whom he calls "Annabel Lee," illustrates his own definition, "Poetry is the rhythmic creation of the beautiful." Notice the smooth flow of the lines, the graceful rhythms--their appeal enhanced by the long vowels--long "e" in "beams," "dreams," and "feel," long "i" in "bright," "eyes," "night," "tide," "life,"

"bride." Notice the liquid "l's" in each of the words: "beautiful Annabel Lee." Notice the simple but beautifully expressive language of the poem and the haunting mood of melancholy it evokes.

Here is a second quotation, from Portia's speech in "The Merchant of Venice," by William Shakespeare. Portia, disguised as a man, tries to convince Shylock, seeking his "pound of flesh," to be merciful. The scene is a court of law in Venice. Portia speaks:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd.
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest:
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown."

These lines best illustrate Shelley's definition:

"A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." Shakespeare, through Portia, declares that showing mercy and forgiveness toward one's fellow men in the face of grievance or injury elevates both the one who is merciful and the one who receives mercy--a basic truth of life itself, brilliantly and eloquently stated.

Now, the third quotation from John Masefield's poem, "The West Wind":

"It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes,
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils...

Here is surging memory, the longing for a return to one's land and to healing nature. "The West Wind" best illustrates Frost's definition of poetry: "A living poem starts with a lump in the throat, a homesickness or a lovesickness. It is a reaching out toward expression, an effort to find fulfillment."

Band 4

IV. THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

In one of our definitions of poetry, we found Coleridge describing it as "the best words in the best order."

But suppose you were reading a poem and came across such words as "slugger," "con men," and "wopped." How would you react? Would you dismiss them as slang words, unsuitable, in poor taste, lacking the elegance you usually associate with poetic language? Yet these were the "best" words for the particular poem in which each appeared, the "best" the poet could find to express the special mood, emotion, or purpose of the poem.

The first word, "slugger," comes from Carl Sandburg's "Chicago," and he uses it in the verse, "Here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities," to describe the bold, dynamic quality of the great city of Chicago. In context, i.e., set within the framework of the line, "slugger" vitalizes and reinforces the other words of the verse. It is, therefore, an excellent choice. The same holds true for "con men" in another of Sandburg's poems called "Cool Tombs," in which he describes General Grant's troubles, as President, with corruption in government. If we read the complete line in which the words "con men" appear, we find it to be a sad and poignant one describing the tragedy of a great general who was betrayed by men he trusted. Here is the line: "And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes...in the dust, in the cool tombs." Similarly, with our third word, "wopped." It comes from Rudyard Kipling's poem "Gunga Din," which tells the story of a regimental waterboy of India. Though the soldiers were often impatient with him and "wopped" or hit him when he was slow to serve them, he proved his heroism at a crucial moment in battle. "Wopped" serves the poet's purpose better than "hit" or "struck." It captures the flavor of the soldiers' rough talk; and it is in keeping with the rest of the poem.

Compare such language with that which we find in the following lines of Shelley, with their sombre majesty:

"O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
 Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

Here the poet is moved by a restless, uncontrollable force of Nature, poised like "an enchanter," to work its will. The poet, awed by Nature's mystery and power, chooses solemn, dark-hued words to describe his feelings. These are the "best" words for his purpose--and in the "best order"--bearing out Coleridge's definition of poetry.

Besides choosing the best possible words for the purpose--what Flaubert called "le mot precis," the precise or exact word--the poet has other reservoirs of language at his command:

He can employ figures of speech, such as simile and metaphor, to enhance his meaning. Simile and metaphor make comparisons, point out resemblances, similes, directly, metaphors, indirectly.

A famous simile by Coleridge in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" describes the vessel, becalmed in the tropics, "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." In Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," the poem just studied,

"...the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

Here the leaves, scattered and blown about by the wind, are compared to tormented ghosts or spirits. In similes, comparisons are usually expressed directly with "like" or "as" as the words linking the things or persons compared.

Metaphors, on the other hand, compare indirectly, by implication. When we call a ship "queen of the sea," we imply that a ship is as regal or majestic as our conception of a queen. When we quote Shakespeare's famous line, "All the world's a stage," we imply that our lives are played out, act by act, in the theatre of the world. Shakespeare compares seven decades of human life to seven acts of a play, but he compresses this striking idea into five simple words, a metaphor, "All the world's a stage."

Other figures of speech sharpen the language with human qualities or emotions. One such figure is called personification. When we speak of "Mother Nature," we attribute the kindly, loving qualities of a human mother to Nature, an abstract force. John Milton calls Time, "the subtle thief of youth," another example of personification.

In metonymy, another frequently used figure of speech, we use the name of one thing for that of another to which it is closely related. For example, in the saying, "The pen is mightier than the sword," "the pen" stands for the writer who creates with it, "the sword," for the warrior who wields it. The statement means that the written word in the cause of peace can often be more persuasive than the threat of brute force.

Another striking figure of speech is hyperbole or exaggeration. There is deliberate overstatement to create an effect. In prose we find it in a description of Samuel Johnson's strong liking for tea in the line, "He swallowed his tea in oceans." In poetry we find it in Byron's lines:

"Roll on, thou dark and deep blue ocean, roll!
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain."

To show the vast, engulfing power of the sea against the greatest strength that Man can muster against it Byron speaks of "ten thousand fleets." Similarly, to show how Julius Caesar surpasses ordinary men Cassius uses hyperbole or exaggeration, raising him to the stature of a giant in the lines:

"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
 Like a Colossus. and we petty men

Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

As figures of speech, simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, and hyperbole give precision and vigor to poetic thought and imagination. They also impart color to the language of poetry. In addition, a resourceful poet who wishes to infuse a musical quality into his lines often employs such devices as alliteration, onomatopoeia, and rhyme.

In alliteration, the poet uses similarity of sound to heighten his effect. In an alliterative line two or more words in proximity start with the same consonant sound or sounds. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" Coleridge describes the voyage of the ship as follows:

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

In the first line two words--"fair" and "foam" are alliterative, each starting with the consonant "f." In the second line three words are alliterative--"furrow," "followed," and "free"--for the same reason. A third example of alliteration can be found in the last line, in which "silent" and "sea" both start with "s." Another unique example of alliteration from the same poem, contributing to its vivid imagery, appears in this stanza:

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony."

Notice, too, the effectiveness of repeating the words "alone" and "all." This device, which here conveys a mood of desperate loneliness and isolation, is called repetition. It is also used in the next line, "Alone on a wide, wide sea!"

SIDE II
Band 1

Another strong appeal to the ear can be made through using onomatopoeia in poetry. Here the poet conveys his effect through choosing words which imitate the sound of the thing or action described. Examples of onomatopoeic words which we employ daily are "hiss," "gurgle," "whiz," "bang," "thud," "murmur," "rustle," and "screech." Something drops with a thud. The word "thud" approximates the sound made when the object strikes the floor. A subdued current of conversation is conveyed by the word "murmur," another example of onomatopoeia. An automobile, suddenly braked, will often "screech" to a halt. Again the idea is expressed in the sound of the word.

Unusual examples of onomatopoeia in poetry occur in Poe's poem "The Raven." In the lines--

"The silken, sad, uncertain, rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before."

--we can actually hear the ominous movement of the curtains through the use of the word "rustle" and the "s" sounds which precede it in the words, "silken," "sad," and "uncertain." Note also the alliteration in this line and the following one (in the words, "filled," "fantastic," and "felt").

Band 2:

Rhyme although not essential to poetry, when effectively used creates harmonies pleasing to the ear. Rhyme depends upon similarity of sound. It is terminal in nature. Repeating the final sound or sounds of the last word in two or more lines of poetry gives us rhyme. In Poe's poem "The Raven" the sound of "ore" occurs at the end of many lines and at the close of every stanza. Running like a refrain through the poem, particularly, is the bird's dirge-like answer, "Nevermore!" The "ore" sound gives unity to the poem through rhymed variations on it such as "Lenore," "yore," "forevermore," "door," and "lore."

Rhyme at the close of lines is called end rhyme; rhyme within a line is called internal rhyme. Here are examples of each in the same poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top."

"Drop," at the end of the second line, rhymes with "top," at the close of the fourth line. This is end rhyme. Within the first line "cheered" rhymes with "cleared." This is internal rhyme.

The pattern of rhyme in a poem, or the way in which rhyme is used to highlight the lines, is called the rhyme scheme. Observe how it is used in the following stanza, which opens Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan":

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."

"Khan," the word at the end of the first line is designated as rhyme "a." Wherever an end rhyme based upon "Khan" appears, it, too, is designated as "a." Since "ran" and "man" rhyme with "Khan," each is an "a" rhyme. "Decree," at the end of the second line, is the first new rhyme. "Decree," at the end of the second line, is the first new rhyme after the "a" rhyme, "Khan." "Decree" is, therefore, called a "b" rhyme, following alphabet sequence. "Decree" rhymes with "sea," at the close of the poem. Therefore, both words are "b" rhymes. The rhyme scheme of the whole stanza is, therefore, a, b, a, a, b. A third and new rhyme would be called "c," a fourth new one "d," and so forth. Thus we see how a skilful poet weaves rhyme into his work and heightens its effect through an organized plan of rhyme. This plan is the rhyme scheme.

But sometimes a poet's need to find a suitable rhyme can force him to change an idea or the wording of an idea. Rhyme thus puts shackles on the poet and dictates meaning--instead of serving solely as a means of reinforcing sound. It, then, exercises what John Dryden, the English poet and critic, called "the tyranny of rhyme." For this reason some poets have dispensed with rhyme, creating "blank verse" and "free verse," both of which we shall examine later. Another form of rhyme which poets sometimes use is called "assonance." Assonance is imperfect rhyme such as the rhyming of "sail" with "rain," but it is frequently used to give variety to exact rhyme.

But with or without rhyme a great poem should quicken the mind or heart, should invite one to return again and again to savor it. It should also have an inner unity of thought and language, so closely interwoven that the changing of a key word or phrase will upset that harmony and render it less forceful, less appealing to the discriminating ear.

To illustrate this point let us examine the following lines. In each excerpt some words or phrases have been changed. As you listen to the verse read aloud, see if you can--

--detect where a change has been made,
--tell why you believe what you hear is not the original phrase.

The first is from Keats' "Ode to Autumn":

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close allied friend of the maturing sun.

...The answer is "allied." The original word was "bosom"---"bosom friend." "Bosom friend" is a much warmer, more accurate description of close friendship than the colorless word "allied," which suggests a military or political partnership or association.

Now, for the second selection, from Sonnet XVIII. by Shakespeare. Here two words have been changed. Can you find them? Here are the lines:

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Destructive winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a time."

In this selection the two substitutions are "destructive" and "time." In line 3, "destructive winds" should read "rough winds." "Rough," the original word, is more colorful and specific than "destructive," more in keeping with the poet's feeling of resentment at the harshness of the winds which hurt the flowers--the "darling buds" he loves so well.

The second change occurs in the last word of the stanza, the word "time." It should read "date." Again, "date" is a more appropriate word than "time." "Date" delimits "time," which is a general term. It is a more precise word, more in keeping with the legal concept of "lease"--and the date when the lease terminates, in this case, the end of summer.

Another point. Since alternate lines in this Shakespearean sonnet rhyme, (1st and 3rd, 2nd and 4th), "temperate," which ends line 2 must rhyme with "date," not "time."

Here is further proof that the poet must choose his words with particular care, must demonstrate freshness and originality, and must avoid the trite and obvious. In the brief association test that follows, I shall dictate the first part of a familiar simile. You will be asked to complete that simile by recording the first word that comes to your mind.

On a sheet of paper number 1 to 4. When I say "blank," complete the simile:

1. As fresh as a ____.
2. As tall as a ____.
3. As hungry as a ____.
4. As thin as a ____.

...Students who took such a test for the most part recorded such answers as:

1. As fresh as a daisy.
2. As tall as a giant.
3. As hungry as a bear.
4. As thin as a rail.

Probably some of you, too, responded in this way under pressure, on the spur of the moment. But how much more striking and vivid, how much more arresting are such answers as:

1. As fresh as a young child's smile.
2. As tall as a lie.
3. As hungry as ambition.
4. As thin as a poor man's purse.

These similes were written after more careful reflection, with the writer rejecting the obvious and the trite, the worn and familiar in favor of the new and the unusual thought and turn of phrase. This is the approach which the poet uses. He is never satisfied with the hackneyed phrase, worn out through a thousand repetitions. He seeks a new distinctive way of saying things.

Thus, we see that the language of poetry, its finely shaded words, its striking images, its unusual comparisons, often lifts poetry above its more earthbound cousin, prose, and provides us with a profound emotional experience.

Band 3

V. THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY

Just as the colorful word and the imaginative phrase are indispensable in the language of poetry, so is a sense of form in its pattern or structure.

No architect, no composer, no writer can build or create without this sense of form or organization. Students of poetry who "wish to write as they please," without troubling to learn the fundamentals of meter, often produce formless, uneven work. Theirs is the right to experiment with new forms or to express themselves in new ways. But this requires poetic maturity, - at the very least, "basic training" in metrics. An architect may design and create startling new types of buildings, but he must know how the more traditional ones are put together.

Form and order are everywhere in our physical universe--in the crystalline structure of a tiny snowflake, in the rhythmic cycle of night and day, in the march of the seasons. Mathematics is all form and order. A symphony or an opera is a highly organized work of music. Poetry, close relative of music, also requires structure and form. Even in prose, with its far less rhythmic flow, some orderly patterns can be found. Listen to the roll call of the following names:

McKee	Fragonard	Chevalier
Spencer	Patterson	Meredith
Henderson	Durant	Hopkins
Du Maurier	Sherman	Barnett

--Did you notice any rhythmic pattern in these names?

Probably not in the order in which I read them. But if I were to rearrange them in four groups of three names each, thus:

Group I.	Group II	Group III	Group IV.
McKee	Spencer	DuMaurier	Henderson
Durant	Sherman	Fragonard	Patterson
Barnett	Hopkins	Chevalier	Meredith

--you would note the following:

The first three names, in Group I., have two syllables each, with the accent on the second syllable (McKeé, Duránt, Barnétt).

The second three names, in Group II., are the reverse of the first set. They are two-syllable names with the accent on the first syllable, (Spéncer, Shérman, Hópkins).

The third set of three names, in Group III., has three syllables each, with the accent on the last syllable, thus: Dumauriér, Fragonárd, Chevaliér).

The fourth set, in Group IV. also reverses the process. Each name has three syllables, with the accent on the first syllable, thus: Hénderson, Pátterson, Méredith.

--If our very names have rhythm, how much more do meaningful words, the bricks of written and spoken language!

Here are WORDS that fall into the same rhythmic patterns as the names:

1. Two-syllable words, accent on the second syllable:
   --surpríse, repórt, accépt.

2. Two-syllable words reversing the stress, with the accent on the first syllable:
   --háppy, prómise, óutlet.

3. Three-syllable words, accent on the last syllable:
   --interrúpt, understánd, apprehénd.

4. Three-syllable words, reversing the process, with the accent on the first syllable:
   --sómersault, ábnegate, pánoply.

...Now, STOP THE RECORD for a few minutes and find as many similar two-syllable and three-syllable words as you can. Start RHYTHMIC WAVES around the class, with each pupil uttering a two-syllable word in succession, then a three-syllable word in succession.

Band 4

METRICS

It is this rhythmic two-syllable and three-syllable pattern that is at the basis of metrics--the cornerstone of poetry. Each two-syllable or three-syllable grouping forms a basic unit or a foot of poetry. Poetry is measured or marked off-scanned, as it is sometimes referred to--in these units of feet.

With these patterns in mind let us now examine an actual line of poetry. The line is from the opening of William Butler Yeats' poem "When You Are Old." Notice, as I read it, how the stress or accent falls on every second syllable:

"Whĕn yóu/ ăre óld/ ănd gréy/ ănd fúll/ ŏf sléep/."

Since each word in this line is a monosyllable, or one-syllable word, it is fairly easy to scan.

But in many cases in poetry the accent falls on a syllable in the middle of a word, as follows:

"thĕ quá/lĭtý/ ŏf mér/cў ís/ nŏt stráin'd/.

or

"Ă móurn/ĭng fí/gŭre wálks/ ănd wíll/ nŏt rést/."

Only occasionally does the beat fall upon a single word within a line. In the line above, "A mourning figure walks and will not rest," the first foot is made up of "A," a single word, and "mourn," which is part of another word, "mourning." The second and third feet are also made of parts of words, thus: "--ing fi/" and "-gure walks./" In the last two feet, however, single words constitute the foot. Thus, "--and will/ not rest./"

This meter--the two-syllable foot with the accent on the second syllable--is one of the most common in English poetry. It is called the IAMBIC meter. It was used by Shakespeare, Milton, and many other famous poets. As used by Shakespeare in his plays, with five iambic feet to a line, without rhyme, it is called iambic pentameter, a form of blank or unrhymed verse.

The REVERSE of the iambic foot, the two-syllable foot with the accent on the FIRST syllable, is called a TROCHEE. It is the meter in which Poe wrote his famous poem, "The Raven." Listen to the TROCHAIC beat or rhythm:

"Ónce ŭ/ pón ă/ mídnĭght/ dréarў,/ whíle Ĭ/ póndĕred/
weák ănd/ wéarў/.

Thus, in the TWO-SYLLABLE GROUP we have the IAMBIC and the TROCHAIC meter, with each foot the reverse of the other.

In the three-syllable group accents generally fall on either the first or last syllable. Where does it fall in this line of 3-syllable feet--first or last syllable?

"I am monarch of all I survey...

ANSWER: On the last syllable of each foot. Listen once more: "Ĭ ăm món/ ărch ŏf áll/ Ĭ sŭrvéy/."

This meter of three-syllable feet, in which the accent falls on the last syllable, is called the ANAPESTIC, the foot, an ANAPEST. Here it is again in another line:

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold."
Can you mark it off or scan it?

ANSWER: "Thĕ Ăssýr/ ĭan căme dówn/ lĭke ă wólf/
ŏn thĕ fóld/."

Just as the IAMBIC and TROCHAIC feet are the reverse of each other, the ANAPEST is the reverse of another foot: See if you can find this opposite in the line that follows:

"This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks..."

--Did you find it? This foot is called the DACTYL, three syllables with the accent on the first syllable. This is how we scan it:

"Thís ĭs thĕ/ fórĕst prĭ/mévăl thĕ/ múrmŭrĭng/
píncs ănd thĕ/ hémlŏcks/.."

(Note that "hemlocks," the last foot has only two syllables. The reason for this variation will be explained later).

Here is another example of the dactyl:

"Júst fŏr ă/ hándfŭl ŏf/ sílvĕr hĕ/ léft ŭs/."

What variation do you notice in the last foot?

Note: The syllable receiving the accent is called the long syllable; the unaccented syllable or syllabies are called short. They are marked thus: "˘"

The four meters we have just studied--IAMBIC, TROCHAIC, ANAPESTIC, AND DACTYLIC--are "THE BIG FOUR" of poetry. Yet although they govern almost all English poetry, no poem is all iambic, or all trochaic, or all anapestic, or all dactylic. To write such verses would be to create poems of sing-song, monotonous regularity.

So poets VARY their lines, interjecting an occasional anapest into an iambic line or a dactyl into a trochaic line. Whichever meter predominates give its name to the line. Note this line from Shelley's poem "The Cloud":

"I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores."

Here the first foot, "I pass," is IAMBIC. But the remaining three feet:
"--through the póres"
"--of the ó-"
"--cean ănd shóres
are all anapests. Since there are three anapests to one iambic foot, anapests PREDOMINATE. Therefore, this is an anapestic line.

Varying or using different meters within the same line not only helps to reduce monotony; it also enables the poet to express his mood or idea more effectively. Scanning will show us this:

The iambic foot is generally more dignified and serious than the trochaic, which has a more tripping or lilting rhythm. In the three-syllable group the pace is faster. Anapests tend to skip along; dactyls move briskly, too, but in a more stately fashion. Note this mixture of seriousness and light humor in this stanza from Nathalia Crane's poem "The Janitor's Boy." By VARYING dignified iambic feet with merry anapests,

"Ŏh, Í'm/ ĭn lóve/ wĭth thĕ ján/ĭtŏr's bóy,/
Hĕ's bú/sy ăs hé/ căn bé./
Ănd dówn/ ĭn thĕ cél/lăr hĕ's mák/ ĭng ă ráft/
óut ŏf/ ăn óld/ sĕttée/.

--the poet achieves a mood of mock seriousness.

Though there are other metres such as --

--the SPONDEE, two long syllables as in "gréy stónes"...
--the PYRRHIC, two short syllables as in "and the"...
--the AMPHIBRACH, short, long, short, as in the word "rĕléntlĕss" ...
and
--the AMPHIMACER, long, short, long, as in the word "ímpŏrtúne"...

--these are all really subordinate to, or variations of, "THE BIG FOUR" metres, which are basic. These other metres are used only occasionally by the poet.

Band 5

With this knowledge of metrics--the basic structure of poetry--at his command, the poet is free to ex-

press himself in different types of poetry. The personal form, in which he expresses his FEELINGS or EMOTIONS is the lyric. It includes such familiar types as the ode and sonnet--"Ode to a Skylark" by Shelley and Milton's sonnet "On His Blindness." The narrative type tells a story in a poem which varies in length. A short form of narrative is the old English ballad. A long narrative poem is that brilliant study of the supernatural, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Coleridge. The longest type of narrative poem is the epic, an adventure work of massive proportions, usually the story of a nation or people, such as "The Odyssey" by Homer or "The Aeneid" by Vergil.

With a secure knowledge of structure, the poet is even better qualified to try his hand at creating in free verse or vers libre. This form as it is known and practiced in America was largely originated by Walt Whitman in the nineteenth century. Instead of the stanza of conventional poetry the unit of free verse is the line, which varies in length. What the poet wishes to convey determines how long the individual line will be.

Free verse lacks a fixed or regular rhythm. Yet, though irregular in rhythm, it has a cadence or rhythm of its own which can be sensed or felt. Free verse also provides the poet with the same emotional or imaginative outlet for it, too, is often filled with striking images and ideas. It has dispensed, as we said earlier, with what it regards as the shackles of rhyme. Neither prose nor poetry in the traditional sense, it, nevertheless, offers more leeway for expression to the poet in its very flexibility.

In this example of free verse by Walt Whitman, pioneer in the field, note:

1) The subtle rhythms or cadences...
2) The varying length of line...
3) The building up to a climax...
4) The imaginatively stated theme: Nature on charts vs. Nature on the soul of Man...

As I read the poem aloud, look for these elements. Which are common to all poetry? Which are largely found in free verse?

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

"When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I, sitting, heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till, rising and gliding out, I wandered off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and, from time to time,
Looked up in perfect silence at the stars."

Thus, to selectivity of language, striking images, emotional and imaginative appeal the poet must add the final tool--a knowledge of basic poetic structure, whether he writes traditional verse or free verse. Only through the combination of these elements can he give the proper color, vigor, and life to his ideas, in whatever poetic form he chooses.

Band 6.

VI. THE BALANCE SHEET--POETRY VS. PROSE

We have considered the rhythms of poetry, its sensory and emotional appeal, its language, its technical structure, and some types of poetry
Let us now try to summarize the essential differences between poetry and prose.

To strike this final balance let us look once more at Coleridge's excellent definition:

PROSE: Words in their BEST order.
POETRY: The BEST words in the BEST order.

With these definitions as yardsticks, evaluate the following three examples of prose and poetry. Each states the same idea in a different way.

1. One is prose.
2. One is poetry.
3. One is poetic prose--containing elements of both forms.

You are asked to--
--identify each and
--give reasons for your choice

Here are the lines:

A. Life is unreal and dream-like.
B. Over this short, troubled life there will finally drop the veil of sleep.
C. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

ANSWERS:

The first version, A., is PROSE. True, it contains the basic idea that life is a dream and it is succinctly phrased. But it lacks the rhythmic flow, the eloquence, and the subtlety of expression of the true poetic version, C., the lines spoken by Prospero in Shakespeare's play "The Tempest." Version B. is POETIC PROSE. It has strong poetic overtones and symbolism in the dropping of "the veil of sleep." Yet the words "short" and "troubled," used to describe "life" are unimaginative and colorless. They are general terms, lacking both vigor and poetic shading. In addition, although the line has a rhythmic quality, it is not as smooth or as graceful in rhythm as the poetic version:

".............We are such stuff
As dreams are made on and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Thus, in summary, though prose and poetry sometimes overlap:

PROSE	POETRY
--Addresses itself largely to the facts. It tries to keep the reader informed and to mold opinion.	--Appeals to the senses and emotions.
--Is more flexible in its organization. Paragraph units vary in length and arrangement.	--Has a tighter structure and is rhythmic in design.
--Offers room for expansion and elaboration.	--Is more condensed and compressed.
--Is content with low level flights. Rarely soars.	--At its best, lifts the top off the imagination.
-Generally speaks to the mind.	--Speaks to the soul and the spirit.

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