

“The How to and Why of Poetry Writing”  
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Introduction: Writing poetry is an excellent way to express a point of view effectively, and often painlessly. Poetry can provide inspiration and encouragement to motivate the reader to look to God in faith. In this workshop, we will focus on rhyming poetry, both classic and contemporary.

*“My heart is overflowing with a beautiful thought! I will write a lovely poem to the King, for I am as full of words as the speediest writer pouring out his story” (Psalm 45:1, TLB). “Beautiful words stir my heart. I will recite a lovely poem about the king, for my tongue is like the pen of a skillful poet” (NLT).*

Poetic License: The right assumed by poets to alter or invert standard syntax or deviate from strict fact or conventional rules of form and style, diction or pronunciation for the desired artistic effect.

Finding Your Voice: While imitation and ideas may come from a good poet, I believe each poet should discover his/her voice and write from that perspective.

Using Imagery:

- Powerful figurative language appeals to the five senses and helps the reader create mental pictures through imagination.

Varying Images of the Same Object or Incident:

- People can witness an accident or tragedy, yet emerge with varying impressions.
- Example: “The Blind Men and the Elephant”
- *Each man touched the elephant at a different place and came away with varying impressions.*

Some Effective Poetic Tools:

- Theme: General idea the poet wants readers to grasp; conveys purpose and message.
- Line: Instructs reader to break and controls rhythm of poem.
- Stanza: Equivalent to a paragraph in an essay; word groupings that form a structure.

Metaphor – A figure of speech that, for the sake of comparison, describes an object or action in a way that isn’t literal or true. A metaphor may be used to explain an idea in an indirect way.

Why Metaphors in Poetry:

- To add color and interest through abstract concepts
- For comparison and symbolism
- Expressions that, taken literally, would not make sense

Examples of Metaphors:

- Every family has a “black sheep.”
- How many brides get “cold feet?”
- How many “nuts” fell off his family tree”

Hyperbole – (Greek word meaning excess.) Exaggerated, ridiculous overstatements or claims not meant to be taken literally, but used to make a point.

Why Hyperbole in Poetry: Paint a better picture of intense feelings we desire to express; catch the attention of readers.

Hyperbole in Everyday Speech:

- It's raining cats and dogs.
- My parents would kill me if they knew this.
- His words cut like a razor.
- I love you to death.
- If I've heard it once, I've heard it a million times!

Alliteration: This literary device uses a series of words beginning with the same consonant sound, but not necessarily with the same letter. (Examples: ramps/camps; jump/stump; ran/can)

Alliteration Tongue Twisters: (Stay muted and say them with me.)

- "She sells sea shells at the seashore."
- "Peter Packer picked a peck of pickled peppers."
- "I saw a saw that could out saw any saw I ever saw."
- Sleepy sheep sleep soundly in a shed.
- The big black bear beckons her babies.

Alliteration Children Enjoy:

- Little Larry likes licking large licorice lollipops.
- Shirley, shut the shutters, since the sound makes me shudder.
- Carmen, come and clean the cobwebs from the corners.
- Betty baked a big buttery cake and brought it to the birthday bash.
- Patty plants pretty peonies in the pink pot.

Rhythmic Flow: Poetry, like music, can have a specific cadence to set the mood. A good poet can use words and sounds to evoke certain emotions.

Why Rhythmic Flow: Rhythm, or so many "feet" per line helps to convey the intended message and encourages reader to follow the "beat" such as one would in music.

Examples of Rhythm: (Excerpt from poem I wrote for my sister's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.)

*If her singing voice you have not heard,  
I assure you she sings like a mocking bird.  
She can hit the high notes with nary a miss.  
Few ninety-year-olds can sing like this!*

Construction of Rhythmic Poetry:

- Use of changing rhythms or recurring refrains
- Use of limerick format

- Use of sonnet format

Rhythm and/or Rhyme: Rhythm and rhyme are easily confused, but are different concepts; some readers find rhyming poetry more colorful and memorable.

Example of Rhyming Line By Line: (“Cinder Girl” by Geraldine Taylor)

“And so our start was touch of dawn,  
With amber hue, for I was drawn  
To eyes so welcoming and warm  
I never guessed you’d do me harm.”

Construction of Rhyming Poetry:

- All lines rhyme in a short poem or alternate lines rhyme
- Each line rhymes with the one before it
- Rhyming words at strategic points such as within the line.

Classic Poetry: Poetry that has stood the test of time, or used by English professors to teach the craft.

(Example: “The Raven” employs multiple poetic forms, and evokes strong emotions.)

- “The Raven” is a narrative poem by American writer Edgar Allan Poe, first published in 1845.
- The narrator converses with a raven as he mourns the loss of his perfect maiden Lenore.
- Poe uses the refrains: “nothing more/ever more/,” but eventually resorts to “nevermore!”

Alliteration and Rhyme in Preaching

- “When You Pray, Say...” (The Lord’s Prayer)
  - Recognize: We have an adversary.
  - Rejoice: We have an advocate.
  - Remember: We have the armor.
- “Persistent, Persevering, Prevailing Prayer” (Jesus heals a demon possessed girl.)
  - Deceived By Despair
  - Driven to Desperation
  - Destined for Deliverance

Points for Poetic Pundits to Ponder:

- Did I write from knowledge or experience, giving it authenticity?
- What emotions are evoked in my poetry: guilt, anger, pain, love, anguish, grief, happiness, elation, gratitude, encouragement, motivation to take a certain action?
- Does my poem have a central theme, and does the title agree with its content?
- Does it follow a logical progression that is easily understood?
- Is the rhythm or flow consistent?
- Should I invest in a rhyming dictionary?