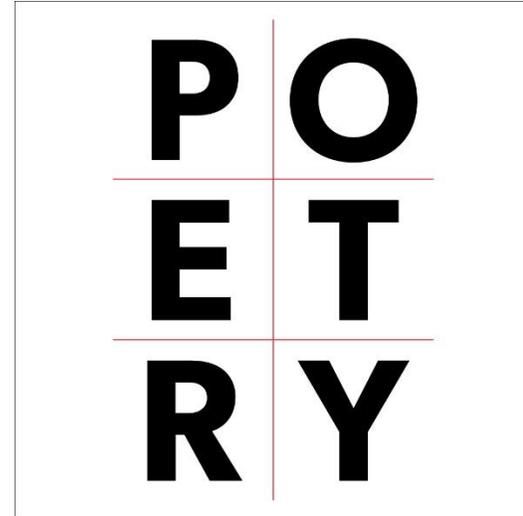


# Thinking about poetry

“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility.”

**William Wordsworth**

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## FOUNDATIONS

The narrator of a poem is the **speaker**.

The basic structure of poetry is **line** and **stanza**.

Most poetry is either **lyric** or **narrative**.

Poetry does not necessarily **rhyme**; if it does, it may follow a set **rhyme scheme**.

### Epitaph on a Friend

An honest man here lies at rest,	A
The friend of man, the friend of truth,	B
The friend of age, and guide of youth:	B
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,	C
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd;	C
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;	D
If there is none, he made the best of this.	D

*Robert Burns*

### Sonnet 29

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,	A
I all alone beweep my outcast state,	B
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,	A
And look upon myself and curse my fate,	B

*William Shakespeare*

Most traditional poetry is **metrical verse**.

A popular contemporary form of poetry is **free verse**.

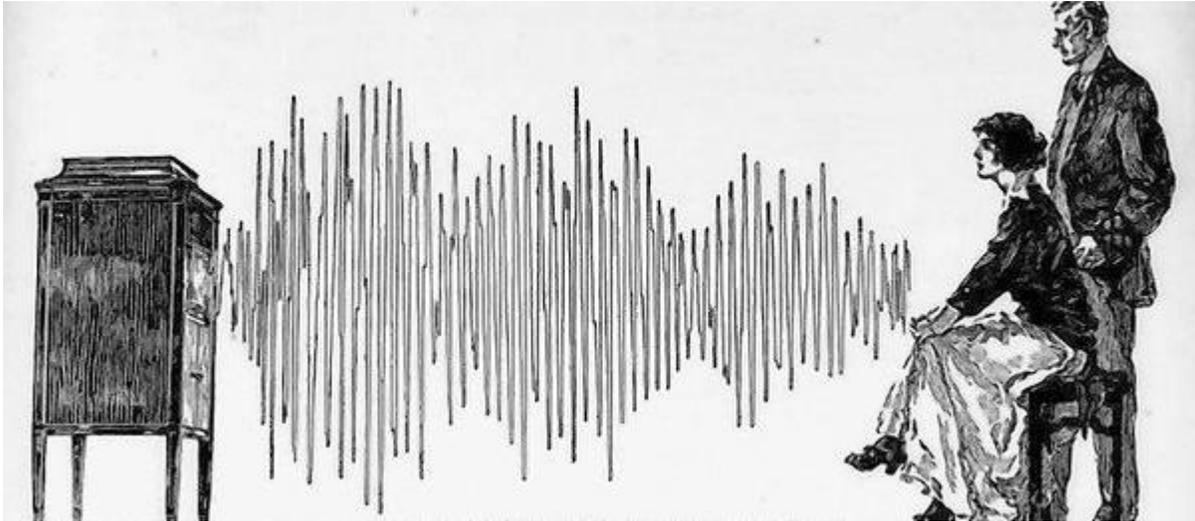
### **Free Verse**

I now delight  
In spite  
Of the might  
And the right  
Of classic tradition,  
In writing  
And reciting

Straight ahead,  
Without let or omission,  
Just any little rhyme  
In any little time  
That runs in my head;  
Because, I've said,  
My rhymes no longer shall stand arrayed  
Like Prussian soldiers on parade  
That march,  
Stiff as starch,  
Foot to foot,  
Boot to boot,  
Blade to blade,  
Button to button,  
Cheeks and chops and chins like mutton.  
No! No!  
My rhymes must go  
Turn 'ee, twist 'ee,  
Twinkling, frosty,  
Will-o'-the-wisp-like, misty;

*Robert Graves*

## SOUND DEVICES



Poetry is as much about sound as it is about meaning.

Remember the basic dichotomy of sound in language:

**cacophony/  
dissonance**

vs.

**euphony/  
harmony**

Some ways that writers create **euphonious** sounds:

### **alliteration**

**B**ehemoth **b**iggest **b**orn of earth upheaved / His vastness.

**F**red **f**lung **F**ilbert **f**ar into the **f**orest.

### **assonance**

Hear the **m**ellow wedding **b**ells.

I must **conf**ess that in my **que**st I felt **depre**ssed and **rest**less.

## consonance

If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,  
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer,  
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire.

I held my nose in the breeze so I would not sneeze on your knees.

## internal rhyme

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary

I had a cat who wore a hat.  
He thought himself cool but looked like a fool.

## parallelism

We have asked, we have pleaded, we have entreated. But they mocked us and our words came to nothing. Thus we ask no more, we plead no more, and we entreat no more.

She wonders who she is,  
She wonders where she is going,  
She wonders why she wonders.

## refrain

### Annabel Lee

It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of Annabel Lee;  
And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we loved with a love that was more than love—  
I and my Annabel Lee—  
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful Annabel Lee;  
So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,  
Went envying her and me—  
Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we—  
Of many far wiser than we—  
And neither the angels in Heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For 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.

*Edgar Allen Poe*

## ATMOSPHERE

Poetry is also about **atmosphere** or **mood**.

You Are Happy

The water turns  
a long way down over the raw stone,  
ice crusts around it

We walk separately  
along the hill to the open  
beach, unused  
picnic tables, wind  
shoving the brown waves, erosion, gravel  
rasping on gravel.

In the ditch a deer  
carcass, no head. Bird  
running across the glaring  
road against the low pink sun.

When you are this  
cold you can think about  
nothing but the cold, the images

hitting into your eyes  
like needles, crystals, you are happy.

*Margaret Atwood*

→ In many poems, the atmosphere IS the meaning . . .