

Kealing Magnet 8 Poetry Packet

Name _____

Teacher _____

Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

from *The Apple that Astonished Paris*, 1996
University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, Ark.

American Poetry

Louis Simpson

Whatever it is, it must have
A stomach that can digest
Rubber, coal, uranium, moons, poems.
Like the shark it contains a shoe.
It must swim for miles through the desert
Uttering cries that are almost human.

Epitaph for a Waiter

David McCord

By and by,
God caught his eye.



Underwoods: Epigram

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850 - 1894

Of all my verse, like not a single line;
But like my title, for it is not mine.
That title from a better man I stole:
Ah, how much better, had I stol'n the whole.

Abandoned Farmhouse

Ted Kooser

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes
on a pile of broken dishes by the house;
a tall man too, says the length of the bed
in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,
says the Bible with a broken back
on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;
but not a man for farming, say the fields
cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall
papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves
covered with oilcloth, and they had a child,
says the sandbox made from a tractor tire.
Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves
and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole.
And the winters cold, say the rags in the window frames.
It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, says the empty house
in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields
say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars
in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste.
And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard
like branches after a storm--a rubber cow,
a rusty tractor with a broken plow,
a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

From *Sure Signs: New and Selected Poems*. Copyright ©
1980 by Ted Kooser.

Sound Devices

First, read and discuss the definition of alliteration. Then, read the first poem (*Ode to the West Wind*) out loud. Mark examples of alliteration which are present in the poem. Discuss as a class what you have marked and how it affects the poetry.



Proceed with this model of looking at poetic devices and examples for “assonance” and each other device in succession. You may want to consider the meaning of the poem and why the poet chose those sounds.

Alliteration: The repetition of initial consonant sounds. (Peter paid with pounds of pennies; Some say life is simple if not sublime).

Assonance: The relatively close juxtaposition of the same or similar vowel sounds, but with different end consonants in a line or passage, thus a vowel rhyme, as in the words, date and fade. (Please heed this only decree, we shall be free)

Consonance: Essentially, the repetition of consonant sounds. A pleasing combination of sounds; sounds in agreement with tone. Also, the close repetition of the same consonants of stressed syllables with differing vowel sounds, such as *boat* and *night*, or the words *drunk* and *milk* in the final line of Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan.” e.g. A dove moved silently above the waves.

Onomatopoeia: the formation or use of words which imitate sounds, like whispering, clang and sizzle, but the term is generally expanded to refer to any word whose sound is suggestive of its meaning.

Rhyme: The repetition of the accented vowel sound and all succeeding sounds, as in old - cold, make - wake, feign - rain.

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that’s best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow’d to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair’d the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o’er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,
So soft, so calm, so eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!
-Lord Byron

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves;
And mid-May’s eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
-from *Ode to a Nightingale* by Keats

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;

-exerpts from *Ode to the West Wind* by Shelley

I heard a fly buzz when I died;
The stillness round my form
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the heavens of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,
And breaths were gathering sure
For that last onset, when the king
Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away
What portion of me I
Could make assignable,-and then
There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,
Between the light and me;
And then the windows failed, and then
I could not see to see.

-Emily Dickinson

This Is Just to Say
William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Fueled
Marcie Hans

Fueled
by a million
man-made wings of fire—
the rocket tore a tunnel
through the sky—
and everybody cheered.
Fueled
only by a thought from God—
the seedling
urged its way through the thicknesses of black—
and as it pierced
the heavy ceiling of the soil—
and launched itself
up into outer space—
no
one
even
clapped.



Glucose Self-Monitoring
Katy Giebenhain

A stabbing in miniature, it is,
a tiny crime,
my own blood parceled
drop by drop and set
on the flickering tongue
of this machine.
It is the spout-punching of trees
for syrup new and smooth
and sweeter
than nature ever intended.

It is Sleeping Beauty's curse
and fascination.
It is the dipstick measuring of oil
from the Buick's throat,
the necessary maintenance.
It is every vampire movie ever made.
Hand, my martyr without lips,
my quiet cow.
I'll milk your fingertips
for all they're worth.
For what they're worth.
Something like a harvest, it is,
a tiny crime.

Making the Ordinary Extraordinary



Hand Shadows
Mary Cornish

My father put his hands in the white light
of the lantern, and his palms became a horse
that flicked its ears and bucked; an alligator
feigning sleep along the canvas wall leapt up
and snapped its jaws in silhouette, or else
a swan would turn its perfect neck and drop
a fingered beak toward that shadowed head
to lightly preen my father's feathered hair.
Outside our tent, skunks shuffled in the woods
beneath a star that died a little every day,
and from a nebula of light diffused
inside Orion's sword, new stars were born.
My father's hands became two birds, linked
by a thumb, they flew one following the other.

**Lying in a Hammock at William Duffey's Farm
in the Pine Island, Minnesota**
James Wright

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,
Asleep on the black trunk,
Blowing like a leaf in a green shadow.
Down the ravine behind the empty house,
The cowbells follow one another
Into the distances of the afternoon.
To my right,
In a field of sunlight between two pines,
The droppings of last year's horses
Blaze up into golden stones.
I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.
A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.
I have wasted my life.

Wax Lips
Cynthia Rylant

Todd's Hardware was dust and a monkey—
a real one, on the second floor—
and Mrs. Todd there behind the glass cases.
We stepped over buckets of nails and lawnmowers
to get to the candy counter in the back,
and pointed at the red wax lips,
and Mary Janes,
and straws full of purple sugar.
Said goodbye to Mrs. Todd, she white-faced and silent,
and walked the streets of Beaver,
our teeth sunk hard in the wax,
and big red lips worth kissing.

Why Line Breaks Matter

When you are writing a poem, how do you know where to end the line of verse? How you want the poem to sound will often determine where you break your lines, for to some extent your line breaks are the poem's musical notation, determining pauses, tension, emphasis, and pace. Here are several common reasons for breaking a verse line at a particular place:

1. To stop a line of poetry at the end of a sentence or phrase unit, as in the following poem:

The moon is like an etching,
Fine-lined against the sky.
The gingko is like a crude sketch,
Hardly worthy to be signed.
-Eve Merriam, "Simile: Willow and Gingko"

2. To create a pace and/or sense of unbroken flow, breaking the line in the middle of a phrase unit, forcing the reader to either ignore the line end or pause slightly where, if it were prose, you normally would not pause, as in the following excerpt:

his hair was
wild and uncombed
and he was
barefoot
-Charles Bukowski, from "The Man with Beautiful Eyes"

3. To give special emphasis to a particular word or phrase by puffing it at the end of the line, which often calls for more attention to it. In the following excerpt, the poet is working against the natural pauses, enjambling her lines for increased tension:

Darker now. I put out
the wet laundry. In the wind
the pulley creaks and shifts.
My dresses lift, tugging
at the pins. I go in
to where my daughter sleeps.
-Kim Addonizio, from "Night Feeding"



4. To use line breaks as punctuation to clarify syntax and meaning, as in the following excerpt:

There were some dirty plates
and a glass of milk
beside her on a small table
-William Carlos Williams, from "The Last Words of My English Grandmother"

5. To keep the poem "tight" and minimalist, the thought and emotion emerging with great compression and energy. Use short lines for this effect, as in the excerpt below:

Kiki Diaz spits
just like I used to spit
back when I was growing up
thirty years ago
in Memphis
on Prescott Street.
-Bobby Byrd, from "Good Field, No Hit"

6. To achieve a sweeping lyricism for large-spirited poems, keeping the lines longer, as in the following excerpt:

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left.)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the
dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
-Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself"

7. To surprise the reader or create irony, as in the following excerpt:

Smokey the Bear heads
into the autumn woods
with a red can of gasoline
and a box of matches.
-Billy Collins, from "Flames"

Adapted from Kowitz, Steve. *In the Palm of Your Hand*.
Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 1995. R.P. Dietz

8. To create a pattern, as in an anaphoric poem, where each line begins with the same word or phrase, as in the first excerpt; to create energy, where repetition of the first word gives momentum to the lines, compelling them forward as in the second excerpt.

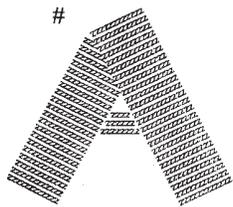
In November I lost my foodstamps, the computer said I did not exist
 In November I lost my best friend who said I did not exist
 In November I lost my manuscripts and felt as if I did not exist
 In November I sent 2 postcards to my mother who wrote back saying she
 had not heard from me and DID I
 STILL EXIST?

-Harold Norse, from "In November"

Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-lived
 swan is curving and winding,
 Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her near-
 human laugh,

-Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself"

9. To create a visual design, as in concrete or shape poems.



-Norman Henry Pritchard II

10. To mask a rhyme. In the excerpt from "Night Feeding", the rhymes *pins/wind* and *creaks/sleeps* are muted by line breaks.

11. To experiment or play with how the words look on the page, as in the following excerpt:

Imagine Whitman remembering each blade of grass.
 Imagine Stalin phoning Mayakovski.
 Imagine Stalin phoning Frank.
 You can't imagine that?
 Frank phoning Stalin?
 Of course.
 -Andrei Codrescu, from "The Inner Source"

12. To enjoy the freedom to do whatever looks/feels/sounds right - there are no rules in poetry!

How Poetry Comes to Me

Gary Snyder

It comes blundering over the
 Boulders at night, it stays
 Frightened outside the
 Range of my campfire
 I go to meet it at the
 Edge of the light

Small Song

A.R. Ammons

The reeds give
 way to the

wind and give
 the wind away

In Kyoto ...

Basho

Translated By Jane Hirshfield

In Kyoto,
 hearing the cuckoo,
 I long for Kyoto.

Haiku

Taniguchi Buson:

The piercing chill I feel:
 my dead wife's comb, in our bedroom,
 under my heel . . .

To a Poor Old Woman

William Carlos Williams

munching a plum on
 the street a paper bag
 of them in her hand

They taste good to her
 They taste good
 to her. They taste
 good to her.

You can see it by
 the way she gives herself
 to the one half
 sucked out in her hand

Comforted
 a solace of ripe plums
 seeming to fill the air
 They taste good to her



Sestina

Elizabeth Bishop

September rain falls on the house.
In the failing light, the old grandmother
sits in the kitchen with the child
beside the Little Marvel Stove,
reading the jokes from the almanac,
laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears
and the rain that beats on the roof of the house
were both foretold by the almanac,
but only known to a grandmother.
The iron kettle sings on the stove.
She cuts some bread and says to the child,

It's time for tea now; but the child
is watching the teakettle's small hard tears
dance like mad on the hot black stove,
the way the rain must dance on the house.
Tidying up, the old grandmother
hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
hovers half open above the child,
hovers above the old grandmother
and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
She shivers and says she thinks the house
feels chilly, and puts more wood in the stove.

It was to be, says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
With crayons the child draws a rigid house
and a winding pathway. Then the child
puts in a man with buttons like tears
and shows it proudly to the grandmother.



Structure

But secretly, while the grandmother
busies herself about the stove,
the little moons fall down like tears
from between the pages of the almanac
into the flower bed the child
has carefully placed in the front of the house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
The grandmother sings to the marvelous stove
and the child draws another inscrutable house.

Eating Poetry

Mark Strand

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.
There is no happiness like mine.
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.
Her eyes are sad
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.
The light is dim.
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,
their blond legs burn like brush.
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand.
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,
she screams.

I am a new man.
I snarl at her and bark.
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Vowels

Christian Bok

loveless vessels

we vow

solo love

we see

love solve loss

else we see

love sow woe

selves we woo

we lose

-2001

THE SONNET

A sonnet is a 14-line poem that generally follows one of two primary structures: either Petrarchan or Shakespearean. The first, is distinguished by its two-part division into the octave and the sestet: the octave consists of eight lines rhyming

abbaabba

and the sestet, or second division, consists of six lines generally rhyming

cdedce, cdccdc, or cdedce.

The octave presents the narrative, states the proposition or raises a question; the sestet drives home the narrative by making an abstract comment, applies the proposition, or solves the problem. *Iambic pentameter* is essentially the meter, but here again certain poets have experimented with hexameter and other meters.

The English (Shakespearean) sonnet, on the other hand, is different. It characteristically embodies four divisions: three quatrains (each with a rhyme-scheme of its own) and a rhymed couplet. Thus the typical rhyme-scheme for the English sonnet is

abab cdcd efef gg.

The couplet at the end is usually a commentary on the foregoing, an epigrammatic close.

The Spenserian sonnet combines the Italian and the Shakespearean forms, using three quatrains and a couplet but employing linking rhymes between the quatrains, thus

abab bcbc cdcd ee.

The Forge

Seamus Heaney

All I know is a door into the dark.
Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,
The unpredictable fantail of sparks
Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.
The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,
Horned as a unicorn, at one end and square,
Set there immovable: an altar
Where he expends himself in shape and music.
Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter
Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and flick
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.

If We Must Die

Claude McKay

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

An Echo From Willowood

Christina Rossetti

"O ye, all ye that walk in Willowood."

D.G. Rossetti

Two gazed into a pool, he gazed and she,
Not hand in hand, yet heart in heart, I think,
Pale and reluctant on the water's brink,
As on the brink of parting which must be.
Each eyed the other's aspect, she and he,
Each felt one hungering heart leap up and sink,
Each tasted bitterness which both must drink,
There on the brink of life's dividing sea.
Lilies upon the surface, deep below
Two wistful faces craving each for each,
Resolute and reluctant without speech: —
A sudden ripple made the faces flow
One moment joined, to vanish out of reach:
So those hearts joined, and ah! were parted so.



My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun (Sonnet 130)

William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Literary Devices in Poetry

Allusion: A casual, brief, symbolic reference to a well-known or familiar person, geographical place, event, literary work, author, work of art, or historical idea. The allusion may be obvious or subtle, generally, however, allusions tend to be indirect or passing. Allusions are commonly made to the Bible, nursery rhymes, myths, and Shakespeare. Allusions depend upon shared experiences between the reader and the writer since they are a type of shorthand. allusion = reference to something outside the main text.

Example 1: J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* offers many subtle allusions encouraging the reader to ask himself, "What does this remind me of?" Chapter 1 has a subtle allusion to prayer: As soon as Mr. Bilbo Baggins asks for help, he receives it.

Example 2: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*

Chapter 1 refers to the beatitudes (Christ's teachings) — "Well," said the Lieutenant who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tittle; "Well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting..."

Example 3: Catch 22 = When someone refers to a situation as a "Catch 22" they are referring to a no-win situation. Taken from Joseph Heller's book, *Catch 22*.

Paradox: true, profound statements that initially appear seemingly untrue or self-contradictory.

Examples: Fight for peace. Do not read this sentence. The beginning of the end. Make it idiot proof and someone will make a better idiot. Being "born again." The sounds of silence.

Hyperbole: A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect.

Examples: I could sleep for a year. This book weighs a ton. I'm starving, and it's only 10:30 am. I could eat a cow.

Example: From Macbeth:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Here, Macbeth says that all the ocean water will not clean his hand of blood; rather the blood from his hand will turn the green seas red. Shakespeare uses this hyperbole to stress the enormity of the guilt Macbeth feels for murdering Duncan.

Oxymoron: figure of speech placing contradictory ideas side by side for descriptive purposes.

Examples: Dodge Ram, genuine imitation, jumbo shrimp slightly pregnant (a woman is either pregnant or she is not)

Example :

Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
O heavy lightness, serious vanity;
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!

Act I, scene I
William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

Also, Juliet says, "My only love sprung from my only hate," referring to the fact that her beloved Romeo was born in the family which is the enemy of her family.

Irony. A mode of expression, through words (verbal irony) or events (irony of situation), conveying a reality different from and usually opposite to appearance or expectation. Can be verbal (such as sarcasm) or situational. Irony can be witty, funny, or sad.

For example, in the film *Brazil* (dir. Terry Gilliam) we learn that the action takes place at 8:49 am sometime in the 20th century. The irony is that we know exactly when it happens (8:49), but apparently we only know in what century.

The fire station burning to the ground or a lifeguard drowning in the bathtub are simple examples of situational irony.

An example of dramatic irony (where the audience has knowledge that gives additional meaning to a character's words) would be when King Oedipus, who has unknowingly killed his father, says that he will banish his father's killer when he finds him.

Ironically, some of the greatest proponents of peace, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Jesus of Nazareth, all died violently.

My Parents Kept Me from Children Who Were Rough

Stephen Spender

My parents kept me from children who were rough
Who threw words like stones and who wore torn clothes
Their thighs showed through rags. They ran through the street
And climbed cliffs and stripped by the country streams.

I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron
Their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms.
I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys
Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.

They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges
Like dogs to bark at my world. They threw mud
While I looked the other way, pretending to smile.
I longed to forgive them, but never smiled.

The Moon

Robert Bly

After writing poems all day,
I go off to see the moon in the pines.
Far in the woods I sit down against a pine.
The moon has her porches turned to face the light,
But the deep part of her house is in the darkness.

The Hand That Signed the Paper

By Dylan Thomas

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder;
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;
A goose's quill has put an end to murder
That put an end to talk.

Embrace

Billy Collins

You know the parlor trick.
Wrap your arms around your own torso
and from the back it looks like
someone is embracing you,
her hands tearing at your shirt,
her fingernails teasing your neck.

From the front it is another story.
You never looked so utterly alone,
with your crossed elbows and screwy grin.
You could be waiting for a tailor
to fit you for a straitjacket,
one that would hold you really tight.

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.
-1945

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever;
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the hand that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not
soften

The crusted wound nor stroke the brow;
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.

from *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*. David Higham Associates, London, agents for the Trustees of the Copyrights of Dylan Thomas.

Hazel Tells LaVerne

Katherine Howard Machan

last night
im cleanin out my
howard johnsons ladies room
when all of a sudden
up pops this frog
musta come from the sewer
swimmin aroun an tryin ta
climb up the sida the bowl
so i goes ta flushm down
but sohhelpmegod he starts talkin
bout a golden ball
an how i can be a princess
me a princess
well my mouth drops
all the way to the floor
an he says
kiss me just kiss me
once on the nose
well i screams
ya little green pervert
am i hitsm with my mop
an has ta flush
the toilet down three times
me
a princess

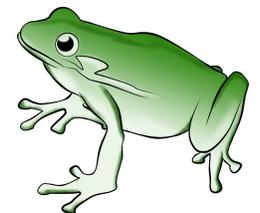
-1976

you fit into me

Margaret Atwood

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye -1971



Scansion and Meter

rhythm: the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line.

meter: the number of feet in a line.

scansion: Describing the rhythms of poetry by dividing the lines into feet, marking the locations of stressed and unstressed syllables, and counting the syllables.

Thus, when we describe the rhythm of a poem, we “scan” the poem and mark the stresses (/) and absences of stress (^) and count the number of feet.

In English, the major feet are:

iamb (^/)

^ / ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ /
The falling out of faithful friends, renewing is of love

trochee (/^)

/ ^ / ^ / ^ / ^
Double, double toil and trouble

anapest (^^/)

^ ^ / ^ ^ / ^ ^ /
I am monarch of all I survey

dactyl (/^^)

/ ^ ^ / ^^
Take her up tenderly

spondee (//)

pyrrhic (^^)

Iambic and anapestic meters are called rising meters because their movement rises from unstressed syllable to stressed; trochaic and dactylic meters are called falling. In the twentieth century, the bouncing meters--anapestic and dactylic--have been used more often for comic verse than for serious poetry.

Spondee and pyrrhic are called feet, even though they contain only one kind of stressed syllable. They are never used as the sole meter of a poem; if they were, it would be like the steady impact of nails being hammered into a board--no pleasure to hear or dance to.

Consider how Williams uses rhythm to create a dance-like feeling in this ekphrastic poem:

The Dance

William Carlos Williams

In Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess, the dancers go round, they go round and around, the squeal and the blare and the tweedle of bagpipes, a bugle and fiddles tipping their bellies (round as the thick-sided glasses whose wash they impound) their hips and their bellies off balance to turn them. Kicking and rolling about the Fair Grounds, swinging their butts, those shanks must be sound to bear up under such rollicking measures, prance as they dance in Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess.

From Here to There

By Jeff Hardin

My father wrestles with the chain, slams it tangled toward the truckbed where it catches tailgate, slither-clangs to a heap beneath his feet. Like a serpent of heavy links, like the unwieldy weight his bogus life has been, his trying to move it from here to there. He curses God, who made him fail. he turns, commands me pick up what I can.

I do: his stubborn will, his quiet code, the all day bouts of walking through the yard to find out what the moles have thieved. The stare. The muscle pulled. The knife slammed down to hush the dinner talk. I've heaved to get to here, mid-life, his life, to pack it up for good.

The scansion of this quatrain from Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 shows the following accents and divisions into feet (note the following words were split: behold, yellow, upon, against, ruin'd):

^ / ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ /
 That time | of year | thou mayst | in me | be hold |
 ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ /
 When yel | low leaves, | or none, | or few, | do hang |
 ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ /
 Up on | those boughs | which shake | a gainst | the cold, |
 ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ / ^ /
 Bare ru | in'd choirs | where late | the sweet birds sang |

From this, we see the rhythm of this quatrain is made up of one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable, called an iambic foot. We also see there are five feet per line, making the meter of the line pentameter. So, the rhythm and meter are iambic pentameter.

Perform scansion on these two excerpts:

The morns are meeker than they were,

The nuts are getting brown;

The berry's cheek is plumper,

The rose is out of town.

--Emily Dickinson

Bats have webby wings that fold up;

Bats from ceilings hang down rolled up;

Bats when flying undismayed are;

Bats are careful; bats use radar;

--Frank Jacobs, "The Bat"

A Downward Look

James Merrill

Seen from above, the sky
Is deep. Clouds float down there.

Foam on a long, luxurious bath.
Their shadows over limbs submerged in "air",

Over protuberances, faults,
A delta thicket, glide. On high, the love

That drew the bath and scattered it with salts

Still radiates new projects old as day,
And hardly registers the tug

When, far beneath, a wrinkled, baby hand
Happens upon the plug.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Hymn #101 by Joe Pug

Yea I've come to know the wish list of my father
I've come to know the shipwrecks where he wished
I've come to wish aloud among the over dressed crowd
Come to witness now the sinking of the ship
Throwing pennies from the sea top next to it
And I've come to roam the forest past the village
With a dozen lazy horses in my cart
I've come here to get high,
To do more than just get by.
I've come to test the timber of my heart
Oh, I've come to test the timber of my heart
And I've come to be untroubled in my seeking
And I've come to see that nothing is for naught
I've come to reach out blind
to reach forward and behind
For the more I seek the more I'm sought
Yea, the more I seek the more I'm sought.

And I've come to meet the sheriff and his posse
To offer him the broadside of my jaw
I've come here to get broke
Then maybe bum a smoke
We'll go drinking two towns over after all
Oh, we'll go drinking two towns over after all.

And I've come to meet the legendary takers
I've only come to ask them for a lot
Oh they say I come with less
than I should rightfully possess
I say the more I buy the more I'm bought
And the more I'm bought the less I cost
And I've come to take their servants and their surplus
And I've come to take their raincoats and their speed
I've come to get my fill
To ransack and spill
I've come to take the harvest for the seed
I've come to take the harvest for the seed

And I've come to know the manger that you sleep in
I've come to be the stranger that you keep
I've come from down the road
And my footsteps never slowed
Before we met, I knew we'd meet
Before we met, I knew we'd meet

And I've come here to ignore your cries and heartaches
I've come to closely listen to you sing
I've come here to insist
That I leave here with a kiss
I've come to say exactly what I mean
and I mean so many things.

And you've come to know me stubborn as a butcher
and you've come to know me thankless as a guest
will you recognize my face when gods awful grace
strips me of my jacket and my vest
and reveals all the treasure in my chest

The Unkindest Cut

J. Patrick Lewis

Knives can harm you, heaven forbid;
Axes may disarm you, kid;
Guillotines are painful, but
There's nothing like a paper cut!

Lightning Bugs

Earnest Slyman

In my backyard,
They burn peepholes in the night
And take snapshots of my house.

Wolves

John Haines

Last night I heard wolves howling, their voices coming from afar
over the wind-polished ice—so much brave solitude in that sound.
They are death's snowbound sailors: they know only a continual
drifting between moonlit islands, their tongues licking the stars.
But they sing as good seamen should, and tomorrow the sun will find them yawning and blinking
the snow from their eyelashes.
Their voices rang through the frozen water of my human sleep,
blown by the night wind
with the moan for an icy sail.

Rite of Passage

Sharon Olds

As the guests arrive at our son's party
they gather in the living room—
short men, men in first grade
with smooth jaws and chins.
Hands in pockets, they stand around
jostling, jockeying for place, small fights
breaking out and calming. One says to another
How old are you? —Six. —I'm seven. —So?
They eye each other, seeing themselves
tiny in the other's pupils. They clear their
throats a lot, a room of small bankers,
they fold their arms and frown. *I could beat you
up*, a seven says to a six,
the midnight cake, round and heavy as a
turret behind them on the table. My son,
freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,
chest narrow as the balsa keel of a
model boat, long hands
cool and thin as the day they guided him
out of me, speaks up as a host
for the sake of the group.
We could easily kill a two-year-old,
he says in his clear voice. The other
men agree, they clear their throats
like Generals, they relax and get down to
playing war, celebrating my son's life.

from *Strike Sparks: Selected Poems 1980-2002*

kidnap poem

by Nikki Giovanni

ever been kidnapped
by a poet
if i were a poet
i'd kidnap you
put you in my phrases and meter
you to jones beach
or maybe coney island
or maybe just to my house
lyric you in lilacs
dash you in the rain
blend into the beach
to complement my see
play the lyre for you
ode you with my love song
anything to win you
wrap you in the red Black green
show you off to mama
yeah if i were a poet i'd kid
nap you

Love Song: I and Thou

Alan Dugan

Nothing is plumb, level, or square:
the studs are bowed, the joists
are shaky by nature, no piece fits
any other piece without a gap
or pinch, and bent nails
dance all over the surfacing
like maggots. By Christ
I am no carpenter. I built
the roof for myself, the walls
for myself, the floors
for myself, and got
hung up in it myself. I
danced with a purple thumb
at this house-warming, drunk
with my prime whiskey: rage.

White Winter Hymnal

-The Fleet Foxes

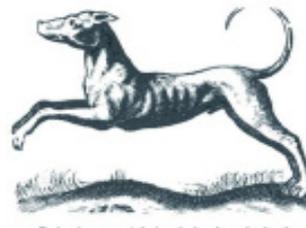
I was following the pack
all swallowed in their coats
with scarves of red tied 'round their throats
to keep their little heads
from fallin' in the snow
And I turned 'round and there you go
And, Michael, you would fall
and turn the white snow red as strawberries
in the summertime

Pragmatist

Edmund Conti

Apocalypse soon
Coming our way
Ground zero at noon
Halve a nice day.
-1985

Oh I spat rage's nails
into the frame-up of my work:
it held. It settled plumb,
level, solid, square and true
for that great moment. Then
it screamed and went on through,
skewing as wrong the other way.
God damned it. This is hell,
but I planned it. I sawed it,
I nailed it, and I
will live in it until it kills me.
I can nail my left palm
to the left-hand crosspiece but
I can't do everything myself.
I need a hand to nail the right,
a help, a love, a you, a wife.



The limerick's never averse

by Laurence Perrine

The limerick's never averse
To expressing itself in a terse
Economical style,
And yet, all the while,
The limerick's *always* a verse.

A short poem need not be small.

-Marvin Bell

What is an epigram? A dwarfish whole;
Its body brevity, and wit its soul.

-Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1802

Coward

A. R. Ammons

Bravery runs in my family.

Flames

By Billy Collins

Smokey the Bear heads
into the autumn woods
with a red can of gasoline
and a box of matches.

His hat is cocked
at a disturbing angle.

The moonlight catches the
teeth of his smile.
His paws, the size of catcher's mitts,
crackle into the distance.

He is sick of dispensing
warnings to the careless,
the half-wit camper
the dumbbell hiker.

He is going to show them
how a professional does it.

light
—Aram Saroyan

Crossing the Swamp

Mary Oliver

Here is the endless
wet thick
 cosmos, the center
 of everything — the nugget
of dense sap, branching
vines, the dark burred
 faintly belching
 bogs. Here
is *swamp*, here
is struggle,
 closure —
 pathless, seamless,
peerless mud. My bones
 knock together at the pale
 joints, trying
 for foothold, fingerhold,
mindhold over
 such slick crossings, deep
 hipholes, hummocks
 that sink silently
into the black, slack
 earthsoup. I feel
 not wet so much as
 painted and glittered
with the fat grassy
 mires, the rich
 and succulent marrows
 of earth — a poor
dry stick given
 one more chance by the whims
 of swamp water — a bough
 that still, after all these years,
could take root,
 sprout, branch out, bud —
 make of its life a breathing
 palace of leaves.

The Day the Saucers Came

Neil Gaiman

That Day, the saucers landed. Hundreds of them, golden,
Silent, coming down from the sky like great snowflakes,
And the people of Earth stood and
stared as they descended,
Waiting, dry-mouthed, to find out what waited inside for us
And none of us knowing if we would be here tomorrow
But you didn't notice it because

That day, the day the saucers came, by some coincidence,
Was the day that the graves gave up their dead
And the zombies pushed up through soft earth
or erupted, shambling and dull-eyed, unstoppable,
Came towards us, the living, and we screamed and ran,
But you did not notice this because

On the saucer day, which was zombie day, it was
Ragnarok also, and the television screens showed us
A ship built of dead-men's nails, a serpent, a wolf,
All bigger than the mind could hold,
and the cameraman could
Not get far enough away, and then the Gods came out
But you did not see them coming because

On the saucer-zombie-battling-gods
day the floodgates broke
And each of us was engulfed by genies and sprites
Offering us wishes and wonders and eternities
And charm and cleverness and true
brave hearts and pots of gold
While giants feefofummed across
the land and killer bees,
But you had no idea of any of this because

That day, the saucer day, the zombie day
The Ragnarok and fairies day,
the day the great winds came
And snows and the cities turned to crystal, the day
All plants died, plastics dissolved, the day the
Computers turned, the screens telling
us we would obey, the day
Angels, drunk and muddled, stumbled from the bars,
And all the bells of London were sounded, the day
Animals spoke to us in Assyrian, the Yeti day,
The fluttering capes and arrival of
the Time Machine day,
You didn't notice any of this because
you were sitting in your room, not doing anything
not even reading, not really, just
looking at your telephone,
wondering if I was going to call.

On a Cape May Warbler Who Flew Against My Window

Eamon Grennan

She's stopped in her southern tracks
Brought haply to this hard knock
When she shoots from the tall spruce
And snaps her neck on the glass.

From the fall grass I gather her
And give her to my silent children
Who give her a decent burial
Under the dogwood in the garden.

They lay their gifts in the grave:
Matches, a clothes-peg, a coin;
Fire paper for her, sprinkle her
With water, fold earth over her.

She is out of her element forever
Who was air's high-spirited daughter;
What guardian wings can I conjure
Over my own young, their migrations?

The children retreat indoors.
Shadows flicker in the tall spruce.
Small birds flicker like shadows —
Ghosts come nest in my branches.



Manners

Elizabeth Bishop

For a Child of 1918

My grandfather said to me
as we sat on the wagon seat,
"Be sure to remember to always
speak to everyone you meet."

We met a stranger on foot.
My grandfather's whip tapped his hat.
"Good day, sir. Good day. A fine day."
And I said it and bowed where I sat.

Then we overtook a boy we knew
with his big pet crow on his shoulder.
"Always offer everyone a ride;
don't forget that when you get older,"

my grandfather said. So Willy
climbed up with us, but the crow
gave a "Caw!" and flew off. I was worried.
How would he know where to go?

But he flew a little way at a time
from fence post to fence post, ahead;
and when Willy whistled he answered.
"A fine bird," my grandfather said,

"and he's well brought up. See, he answers
nicely when he's spoken to.
Man or beast, that's good manners.
Be sure that you both always do."

When automobiles went by,
the dust hid the people's faces,
but we shouted "Good day! Good day!
Fine day!" at the top of our voices.

When we came to Hustler Hill,
he said that the mare was tired,
so we all got down and walked,
as our good manners required.

Ode to American English

Barbara Hamby - 2004

I was missing English one day, American, really,
with its pill-popping Hungarian goulash of everything
from Anglo-Saxon to Zulu, because British English
is not the same, if the paperback dictionary
I bought at Brentano's on the Avenue de l'Opera
is any indication, too cultured by half. Oh, the English
know their dahlias, but what about doowop, donuts,
Dick Tracy, Tricky Dick? With their elegant Oxfordian
accents, how could they understand my yearning for the hotrod,
hotdog, hot flash vocabulary of the U. S. of A.,
the fragmented fandango of Dagwood's everyday flattening
of Mr. Beasley on the sidewalk, fetuses floating
on billboards, drive-by monster hip-hop stereotypes shaking
the windows of my dining room like a 7.5 earthquake,
Ebonics, Spanglish, "you know" used as comma and period,
the inability of 90% of the population to get the present perfect:
I have went, I have saw, I have tooken Jesus into my heart,
the battle cry of the Bible Belt, but no one uses
the King James anymore, only plain-speak versions,
in which Jesus, raising Lazarus from the dead, says,
"Dude, wake up," and the L-man bolts up like a B-movie
mummy, "Whoa, I was toasted." Yes, ma'am,
I miss the mongrel plentitude of American English, its fall-guy,
rat-terrier, dog-pound neologisms, the bomb of it all,
the rushing River Jordan backwoods mutability of it, the low-rider,
boom-box cruise of it, from New Joisey to Ha-wah-ya
with its sly dog, malasada-scarfing beach blanket lingo
to the ubiquitous Valley Girl's like-like stuttering,
shopaholic rant. I miss its quotidian beauty, its querulous
back-biting righteous indignation, its preening rotgut
flag-waving cowardice. Suffering Succotash, sputters
Sylvester the Cat; sine die, say the pork-bellied legislators
of the swamps and plains. I miss all those guys, their Tweety-bird
resilience, their Doris Day optimism, the candid unguent
of utter unhappiness on every channel, the midnight televangelist
euphoric stew, the junk mail, voice mail vernacular.
On every boulevard and rue I miss the Tarzan cry of Johnny
Weismueller, Johnny Cash, Johnny B. Goode,
and all the smart-talking, gum-snapping hard-girl dialogue,
finger-popping x-rated street talk, sports babble,
Cheetoes, Cheerios, chili dog diatribes. Yeah, I miss them all,
sitting here on my sidewalk throne sipping champagne
verses lined up like hearses, metaphors juking, nouns zipping
in my head like Corvettes on Dexadrine, French verbs
slitting my throat, yearning for James Dean to jump my curb.

Number One Jackson Pollock

Nancy Sullivan (1948)

No name but a number.
Trickles and valleys of paint
Devise this maze
Into a game of Monopoly
Without any bank. Into
A linoleum on the floor
In a dream. Into
Murals inside of the mind.
No similes here. Nothing
But paint. Such purity
Taxes the poem that speaks
Still of something in a place
Or at a time.
How to realize his question
Let alone his answer?



War Photograph

by Kate Daniels

A naked child is running
along the path toward us,
her arms stretched out,
her mouth open,
the world turned to trash
behind her.

She is running from the smoke
and the soldiers, from the bodies
of her mother and little sister
thrown down into a ditch,
from the blown-up bamboo hut
from the melted pots and pans.
And she is also running from the gods
who have changed the sky to fire
and puddled the earth with skin and blood.
She is running--my god--to us,
10,000 miles away,
reading the caption
beneath her picture
in a weekly magazine.
All over the country
we're feeling sorry for her
and being appalled at the war
being fought in the other world.
She keeps on running, you know,
after the shutter of the camera
clicks. She's running to us.
For how can she know,
her feet beating a path
on another continent?
How can she know
what we really are?
From the distance, we look
so terribly human.

Gretel in Darkness

Louise Gluck

This is the world we wanted. All who would have seen us dead
Are dead. I hear the witch's cry
Break in the moonlight through a sheet of sugar: God rewards.
Her tongue shrivels into gas....

Now, far from women's arms
And memory of women, in our father's hut
We sleep, are never hungry.
Why do I not forget?
My father bars the door, bars harm
From this house, and it is years.

No one remembers. Even you, my brother.
Summer afternoons you look at me as though you meant
To leave, as though it never happened. But I killed for you.
I see armed firs, the spires of that gleaming kiln come back, come back--

Nights I turn to you to hold me but you are not there.
Am I alone? Spies
Hiss in the stillness, Hansel we are there still, and it is real, real,
That black forest, and the fire in earnest.

I Envy the Wind

Lucinda Williams

I envy the wind
That whispers in your ear
That howls through the winter
That freezes your fingers
That moves through your hair
And cracks your lips
And chills you to the bone
I envy the wind

I envy the rain
That falls on your face
That wets your eyelashes
And dampens your skin
And touches your tongue
And soaks through your shirt
And drips down your back
I envy the rain

I envy the sun
That brightens your summer
That warms your body
And holds you in her heat
And makes your days longer
And makes you hot
And makes you sweat
I envy the sun
I envy the wind, I envy the rain,
I envy the sun, I envy the wind

Nighthawks

Samuel Yellen (1952)

The place is the corner of Empty and Bleak,
The time is night's most desolate hour,
The scene is Al's Coffee Cup or the Hamburger Tower,
The persons in this drama do not speak.

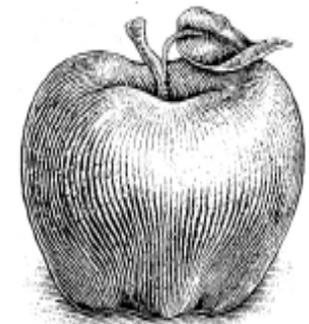
We who peer through that curve of plate glass
Count three nighthawks seated there--patrons of life:
The counterman will be with you in a jiff,
The thick white mugs were never meant for demitasse.

The single man whose hunched back we see
Once put a gun to his head in Russian roulette,
Whirled the chamber, pulled the trigger, won the bet,
And now lives out his x years' guarantee.

And facing us, the two central characters
Have finished their coffee, and have lit
A contemplative cigarette;
His hand lies close, but not touching hers.

Not long ago together in a darkened room,
Mouth burned mouth, flesh beat and ground
On ravaged flesh, and yet they found
No local habitation and no name.

Oh, are we not lucky to be none of these!
We can look on with complacent eye:
Our satisfactions satisfy,
Our pleasures, our pleasures please.



Barbed Wire by Henry Taylor



One summer afternoon when nothing much was happening, they were standing around a tractor beside the barn while a horse in the field poked his head between two strands of the barbed-wire fence to get at the grass along the lane, when it happened--something

they passed around the wood stove late at night for years, but never could explain--someone may have dropped a wrench into the toolbox or made a sudden move, or merely thought what might happen if the horse got scared, and then he did get scared, jumped sideways and ran

down the fence line, leaving chunks of his throat skin and hair on every barb for ten feet before he pulled free and ran a short way into the field, stopped and planted his hoofs wide apart like a sawhorse, hung his head down as if to watch his blood running out,

almost as if he were about to speak to them, who almost thought he could regret that he no longer had the strength to stand, then shuddered to his knees, fell on his side, and gave up breathing while the dripping wire hummed like a bowstring in the splintered air.

Edgar Degas: The Millinery Shop

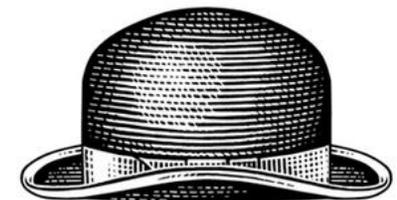
Adam Zagajewski (1994)

Hats are innocent, bathed in the soft light which smooths the contours of objects. A girl is working. But where are brooks? Groves? Where is the sensual laughter of nymphs? The world is hungry and one day will invade this tranquil room. For the moment it contents itself with ambassadors who announce: I'm the ochre, I'm the sienna. I'm the color of terror, like ash. In me ships sink. I'm the blue, I'm cold, I can be pitiless. And I'm the color of dying, I'm patient. I'm the purple (you don't see much of me), for me triumphs, processions. I'm the green, I'm tender, I live in wells and in the leaves of birch trees. The girl whose fingers are agile cannot hear the voices, for she's mortal. She thinks of the coming Sunday and the rendezvous she has with the butcher's son who has coarse lips and big hands stained with blood.

Happiness

Carl Sandburg

I asked professors who teach the meaning of life to tell me what is happiness. And I went to famous executives who boss the work of thousands of men. They all shook their heads and gave me a smile as though I was trying to fool with them. And then one Sunday afternoon I wandered out along the Desplaines river And I saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with their women and children and a keg of beer and an accordion.



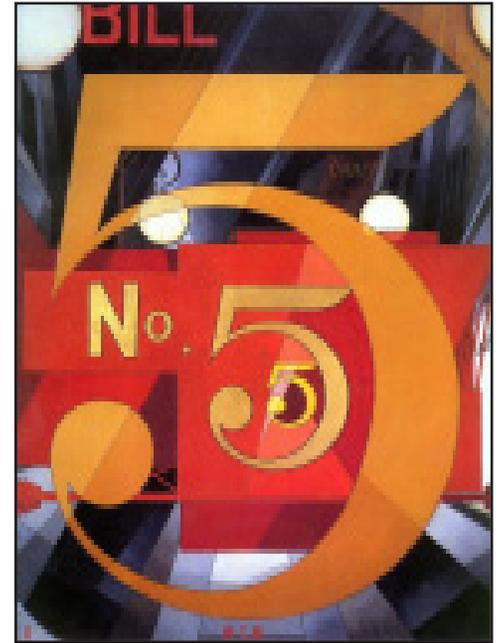
Girl Writing a Letter

by William Carpenter

A thief drives to the museum in his black van. The night watchman says Sorry, closed, you have to come back tomorrow. The thief sticks the point of his knife in the guard's ear. I haven't got all evening, he says, I need some art. Art is for pleasure, the guard says, not possession, you can't something, and then the duct tape is going across his mouth. Don't worry, the thief says, we're both on the same side. He finds the Dutch Masters and goes right for a Vermeer: "Girl Writing a Letter." The thief knows what he's doing. He has a Ph.D. He slices the canvas on one edge from the shelf holding the salad bowls right down to the square of sunlight on the black and white checked floor. The girl doesn't hear this, she's too absorbed in writing her letter, she doesn't notice him until too late. He's in the picture. He's already seated at the harpsichord. He's playing the G Minor Sonata by Domenico Scarlatti, which once made her heart beat till it passed the harpsichord and raced ahead and waited for the music to catch up. She's worked on this letter for three hundred and twenty years. Now a man's here, and though he's dressed in some weird clothes,

he's playing the harpsichord for her, for her alone, there's no one else alive in the museum. The man she was writing to is dead — time to stop thinking about him — the artist who painted her is dead. She should be dead herself, only she has an ear for music and a heart that's running up the staircase of the Gardner Museum with a man she's only known for a few minutes, but it's true, it feels like her whole life. So when the thief hands her the knife and says you slice the paintings out of their frames, you roll them up, she does it; when he says you put another strip of duct tape over the guard's mouth so he'll stop talking about aesthetics, she tapes him, and when the thief puts her behind the wheel and says, drive, baby, the night is ours, it is the Girl Writing a Letter who steers the black van on to the westbound ramp for Storrow Drive and then to the Mass Pike, it's the Girl Writing a Letter who drives eighty miles an hour headed west into a country that's not even discovered yet, with a known criminal, a van full of old masters and nowhere to go but down, but for the Girl Writing a Letter these things don't matter, she's got a beer in her free hand, she's on the road, she's real and she's in love.

This poem was written based on a news event. March 18, 1990, In Boston, two men disguised as police officers pulled off what remains the biggest art heist in history - handcuffing security guards inside the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and then taking an estimated \$300 million in art. Among them were three Rembrandts, a Vermeer, a Manet, and five by Degas.



"THE FIGURE 5 IN GOLD"
CHARLES DEMUTH

The Great Figure William Carlos Williams

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold
on a red
fire truck
moving
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city

Poem of Choice Rubric

Name: _____
 Title of Piece: _____
 Theme: _____
 Grade/Comments: _____

<p>5 “A+” 96-100</p>	<p>A “5” meets all of the requirements of a “4,” but it also appeals to the reader because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses advanced poetic techniques such as rhythm, symbolism, parallelism, connotative language • it evokes emotion (humor, anger, pain, joy, fear) • operates on a number of different levels • sophisticated vocabulary, structure, or ideas are present • poet “plays” with language in an interesting way
<p>4 “A” 95</p>	<p>the entire piece builds up to and supports the intended theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The piece effectively integrates a variety of sound devices, which may include... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Alliteration — Assonance — Consonance — Onomatopoeia — Rhyme • The piece effectively integrates a variety of other poetic devices, such as... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Enjambment (attention to line breaks) — Metaphor — Simile — Imagery — Personification <p>title is meaningful and thought-provoking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • piece reveals evidence of serious revision, polishing and editing • drafts show support group comments, author provides evidence of 2 macro edits and 2 micro edits • poem is clear and makes sense • self-evaluation rubric is thorough • well-written author’s note is attached • writing has been proofread and corrected for mechanics, punctuation is consistent
<p>3 “B” 85</p>	<p>Contains most of the characteristics of a “4,” but...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the piece reveals but does not adequately support a theme • piece integrates some sound devices • piece integrates some poetic devices • contains some mechanical errors • poem may have moments of unclarity or vagueness • final product may not include all components of the writing process (see criteria for a “4”)
<p>2 “C” 75</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a theme is not apparent • the piece fails to integrate sound and poetic devices • poem may include distracting lack of clarity • poem may lack specific, concrete details • organizational problems detract from the meaning or flow • structure may be too simplistic • word choice may be awkward, simplistic, or cliché • final product may be missing several components of the writing process
<p>1 “Yikes” 0-65</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serious mechanical errors detract from understanding • meaning is unclear • poem is vague; no concrete descriptors of abstract ideas • piece exhibits little or no attempt to incorporate writing techniques • piece fails to meet length requirements • topic may be inappropriate for audience • final product reveals little or no evidence of the writing process

