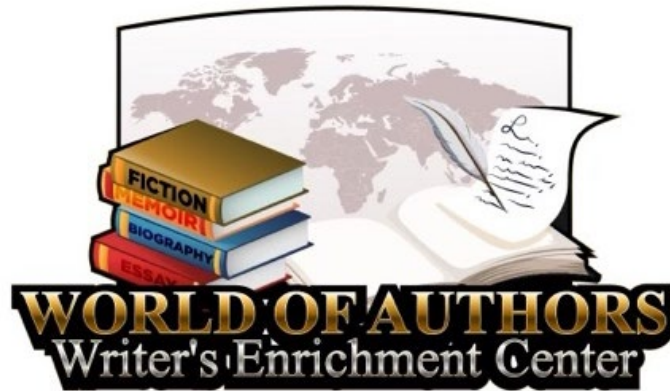


"THE PULSE OF POETRY"

A COMPANION GUIDE FOR WRITING AND APPRECIATING VERSE



*3 Eagle Center, Suite 2
O'Fallon, IL. 62269*

Website: Worldofauthors.com

Email: rharwell@worldofauthors.com

Telephone: 618-589-3488

By: R. Warren Harwell, (MFAW)

Master of Fine Arts in Writing

President and Founder, World of Authors, LLC

Introduction to Poetry

Poetry is the dance of language, the music of thought and feeling. Whether you are new to writing poems or have scribbled verses for years, this booklet is here to guide and inspire you as you embark on or continue your poetic journey. At today's Poetry Jam, we celebrate the art of self-expression and the power of words to move, heal, and unite.

What is Poetry?

Poetry is a form of literary art that uses language in imaginative and often condensed forms. More than rhymes or meter, poetry captures the rhythm of life, the vividness of emotion, and the play of sound and meaning. It can be bold or subtle, formal or experimental, personal or universal.

- Imagination: Poetry asks us to see the world with new eyes.
- Emotion: Great poems are immersed with feelings—joy, sorrow, wonder, rage, love.
- Economy of Language: Every word matters.
- Musicality: The sound and rhythm of words are as important as their meaning.

Why Write Poetry?

- To explore your thoughts and feelings.
- To give voice to the voiceless, including yourself.
- To capture fleeting moments or profound truths.
- To play with language and discover its possibilities.
- To connect with others through shared experiences.

Elements of a Poem

A poem is not just lines on a page. It is a tapestry woven from several elements:

- Imagery: Creating pictures with words by appealing to the senses.
- Sound: Rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and the music of language.
- Form: The structure of a poem—its shape, length, and flow.
- Figurative Language: Metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism.
- Theme: The underlying message or insight the poem offers.
- Voice: The unique perspective and style of the poet.

Types of Poetry

There are as many forms of poetry as there are poets. Here are a few you might encounter or wish to try:

- **Free Verse:** Poetry without a fixed pattern of rhyme or meter. Allows for creative freedom. (e.g., “*I, Too*” by Langston Hughes).
- **Haiku:** A traditional Japanese form with three lines (5-7-5 syllables per line) that captures a moment in nature. (e.g., “*The Old Pond*” by Matsuo Basho):

“An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond
Splash! Silence again.”

- **Sonnet:** A 14-line poem, often about love, with a specific rhyme scheme: Shakespearean = ABAB CDCD EFEF GG; or Petrarchan = ABBAABBA CDECDE or ABBAABBA CDCDCD (e.g., *Sonnet #18* by Shakespeare):

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature’s changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand’rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”

- **Limerick:** A humorous five-line poem with a bouncy rhythm and rhyme scheme (AABBA). (e.g., “*The Tale Of The Man From Nantucket*” by Professor Dayton Voorhees):

“There once was a man from Nantucket
Who kept all his cash in a bucket
But his daughter, named Nan,
Ran away with a man
And as for the bucket, Nantucket”

- **Acrostic:** The first letter of each line spells a word or message. (e.g., “*Our Love!*” by John Peter Read):

“L is for ‘laughter’ we had along the way.
O is for ‘optimism’ you gave me every day.
V is for ‘value’ of being my best friend.
E is for ‘eternity’, a love that has no end.”

- **Narrative Poem:** Tells a story, sometimes with characters and dialogue. (e.g., “*The Iliad*” by Homer):

“Sing, Goddess, Achilles’ rage,
Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks
Incalculable pain, pitched countless souls
Of heroes into Hades’ dark,
And left their bodies to rot as feasts
For dogs and birds, as Zeus’ will was done.
Begin with the clash between Agamemnon-
The Greed warlord – and godlike Achilles.”

- **Spoken Word:** Poetry meant to be performed **aloud**, often **powerful** and **rhythmic**.

Getting Started: Tips & Prompts

Let Yourself Explore

Don’t worry about perfection. Begin with curiosity and openness. Jot down thoughts, images, or phrases that catch your attention. Sometimes, a poem grows from a single word or memory.

Find Your Voice

Your voice is your signature as a poet. It is shaped by your experiences, your reading, and your worldview. Read widely but write in a way that feels authentic to you.

Use Prompts to Spark Creativity

- Describe a place you love without naming it.
- Write a poem as if you are a color, an animal, or an inanimate object.
- Capture the feeling of a particular season or weather.
- Begin with “I remember...” and see where it leads.
- Take a line from a favorite song or poem and make it your first line.

Elements of a Poem

Let’s break down the building blocks of poetry:

Imagery

Poetry comes alive through the senses. Use language that appeals to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

Example:

“The morning air is cool,
a silver mist curling
around silent trees.”

Sound Devices

- Rhyme: Words ending with the same sounds. (“Sky”/“high”)
- Alliteration: Repeating initial sounds. (“Softly sing the summer song”)
- Assonance: Repeating vowel sounds. (“Deep green leaves”)
- Onomatopoeia: Words that sound like their meaning. (“Buzz,” “whisper”)

Figurative Language

- Simile: Comparing things using “like” or “as.” (“Her voice was like honey.”)
- Metaphor: Saying one thing is another. (“The world is a stage.”)
- Personification: Giving human qualities to non-human things. (“The wind danced.”)

Rhythm and Meter

Poetry is often designed to be heard. Read your poem aloud. Does it have a beat? Do the lines flow or break sharply? Try short and long lines. Play with pauses.

Line Breaks and White Space

How you arrange lines on the page affects how a poem is read. Use breaks to create emphasis, surprise, or emotion.

Overcoming Writers’ Block

It’s normal to feel stuck. Here are some ways to get moving:

- Change Your Setting: Go somewhere new—a park, a café, even a different room.
- Use Prompts: Try starting with a specific word or phrase.
- Collaborate: Write with others. Trade lines, build a poem together.
- Take Breaks: Sometimes, stepping away helps ideas return.

Editing and Revising Your Poems

Writing is rewriting. Most poets return to their work, shaping and refining until each word feels right.

- Read your poem aloud. Does it flow? Does it sound the way you want?
- Be ruthless: cut words, lines, or images that don’t serve the poem.

- Ask for feedback from trusted peers or mentors.
- Trust your instincts—sometimes a “mistake” leads to something fresh and original.

Sharing Your Poetry

Poetry is meant to be shared—whether whispered to a friend, performed at a poetry reading, or published in print or online. At a poetry reading, performance is part of the art. Think about how your voice, pacing, and gesture bring your words to life. Be respectful and supportive of other poets. Applaud bravery and honesty. Celebrate diversity—different styles, themes, and emotions enrich our poetic community.

Poetry Journal Pages

Use the space below (and extra pages!) to jot down lines, sketches, or anything that inspires you during the Poetry Reading:

- Line or image I love: _____
- Poem title idea: _____
- Theme I want to explore: _____
- Words that intrigue me: _____

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: Do poems have to rhyme?
- A: No! Many great poems use free verse or blank verse. What matters most is how the poem makes you and your audience feel.
- Q: What if I make a mistake on stage?
- A: Keep going! Most people won't notice. Mistakes are part of the journey.
- Q: How long should my poem be?
- A: As long—or as short—as it needs to be. Focus on saying what you want to say.

Further Resources

- Books: “Poetry Handbook” by Mary Oliver, “The Poet’s Companion” by Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux
- Websites: Poetry Foundation, Poets.org, Button Poetry
- Local Workshops: Check your library or community center for poetry groups and open mics

Final Thoughts

Remember, every poem started with a blank page. Your voice is important. Your perspective is unique. Poetry is not about rules but about discovery—of yourself, of others, and of the infinite possibilities of language.

May this Poetry Reading spark new inspiration, lasting friendships, and poems that echo long after the last line is read. Embrace the journey. Speak your truth. Let the poetry reading ignite your imagination and carry your voice into the world. We can’t wait to hear your story.

Happy writing!

R. Warren Harwell
President & Founder of World of Authors, LLC
Email: rharwell@worldofauthors.com
Website: worldofauthors.com
Phone: (618) 589-3488

