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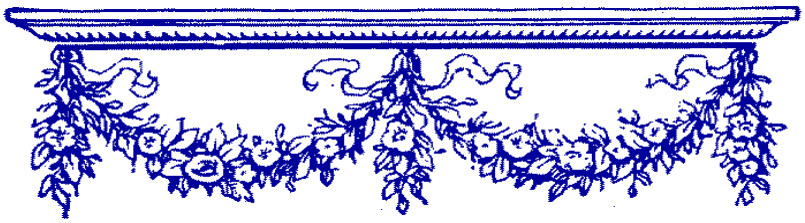


Moping Melancholy Mad

An Introduction to Poetry

by Robert W. Watson

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 1
Is Studying Literature Necessary? 3
"Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff" by A. E. Housman 4
How Does the Poet Compose a Poem? 7
"The Philosophy of Composition" by Edgar Allan Poe 7
Poetry and Figurative Expression 12
What is Poetry? 13
Figurative Expression 13
Simile 13
"I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud" by William Wordsworth 13
Metaphor 14
"What Is Our Life?" by Sir Walter Raleigh 14
Personification 15
"Death Be Not Proud" by John Donne 15
Poetry and Patterned Repetition: Sounds 16
Alliteration 16
"Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins 16
Assonance 17
Consonance 17
Onomatopoeia 17
Excerpt from *Paradise Lost, Book X* by John Milton 17
Cacophony and Euphony 18
"Holy Sonnet X" by John Donne 18
"The Lotos-Eaters" by Lord Tennyson 19
"The Bells" by Edgar Allan Poe 20
Poetry and Patterned Repetition: Stress 24
"Metric Feet" by Samuel Coleridge 24
Iamb 24
"An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog" by Oliver Goldsmith 25
Trochee 26
"The Tyger" by William Blake 26
Anapest 27
"The Destruction of Sennacherib" by Lord Byron 27
Dactyl 28
Excerpt for "Eve" by Ralph Hodgson 28
Spondee 29
Metric Lines 29
Poetry and Patterned Repetition: Sonnets and Stanzas 30
Italian Sonnet 30
"Sonnet I" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning 30
English Sonnet 31
"Sonnet LXI" by William Shakespeare 31
Spenserian Stanza 32
Excerpt from *The Faerie Queen* by Edmund Spenser 32
Couplet 33
Excerpt from *Eloisa to Abelard* by Alexander Pope 33

Tercet 34
"Upon Julia's Clothes" by Robert Herrick 34
Quatrain 34
Poetry and Compression of Thought 35
"In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound 35
Multiple Meanings 35
"The Collar" by George Herbert 35
Imagery 37
"Meeting at Night" by Robert Browning 37
Symbolism 38
"The Lady of Shalott" by Lord Tennyson 38
Poems That Delight 44
"The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe 44
"To a Fish" by James Leigh Hunt 48
"A Fish Answers" by James Leigh Hunt 48
"The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes 49
"Charge of the Light Brigade" by Lord Tennyson 51

Chapter One
Is Studying Literature Necessary?

BEFORE we look at the particular subject of poetry, we need to ask ourselves, "Is studying literature necessary?" Perhaps a better question would be: "What is the possible justification for studying literature in high school as a discipline?" If the sole purpose for your reading literature is to prepare you for answering a few questions about authors and their works on a multiple-choice test, then literature would have very little value. In fact, it would be a great waste of time. Your science, math, and history courses provide enough of this kind of learning for you. However, if we can get above the normal "fill-in-the-blanks" mentality, then we will discover that literature has immense value to our minds and, more importantly, to our souls.

First, literature develops our sense of the value of words. Our English language is rich in words and meanings. When you tell a lady that she is "a vision," this is quite different than if you were to say that she is "a sight." A truly educated person learns to appreciate vocabulary. An author or poet may spend days or weeks just trying to find that one word that will complete his thought. Authors write deliberately in that almost every word is considered. As you study this segment of your course, you should learn to appreciate words. Also, as you read the poetry, you will be doing the poet—and yourself—a disservice by quickly skimming over his work. You should read every poem at least twice, very carefully and thoughtfully.

Second, literature allows us to feel and experience emotion. Here the study of literature surpasses all other disciplines. It is difficult to get emotional over periodic tables, or math equations, or knowing that bananas are exported from Costa Rica. Yet with literature, we can live through the characters and experience the joy, the sorrow, the happiness, and the sadness that they feel. We can feel the fear of a Robinson Crusoe when he learns that others are on his island, or the love of a Pip for an Estella. Or the joy of a Christian as he sees the Celestial City. Every emotion imaginable can be felt as you journey through the pages of a good book.

Third, literature nourishes the imagination. You will travel to places where few have gone. Indeed, you will meet some strange creatures such as the scorpion people in *Gilgamesh* or Grendel in *Beowulf*. You will travel to Alaska and try to survive a snow storm. You will go into the underworld with Ulysses and Æneas, walk the streets of London with Pip, and ride into battle on a charger with Wilfred of Ivanhoe. You may never venture out of your state, but you can travel the world in every age through literature.

And fourth, literature teaches us about human nature and human life. Thousands upon thousands of books and poems have been written since the beginning of time. The books that continue to be read in every age are those that seem to be timeless; in other words, these books and poems speak about human emotions, trials, and triumph. You will learn that life is not fair and there is not always a happy ending. I am sorry if I am the one that has to tell you, but troubles are coming your way—lots of troubles and problems. Literature and poetry will help you to prepare for life—real life; not life that is experienced on television where the plot is resolved within an hour's time; but life that requires you to meet problems head on. You will learn about yourself through the characters in the stories and poems. Some of the characters you will like; others you will despise; but all will be memorable and will reflect a little bit of all of us.

Above all, the study of literature and poetry is the study of a form of art, because literature affects the emotions. Thus, the chief end to the reading of literature and poetry is to delight.

Edwin Markham stated, “In order to add to our limited experience in time, and in space, and in thought, we must turn to literature, and especially to poetry which is the most condensed and noble form in which men have recorded emotion and wisdom.” Since life is short, we cannot do or see everything; but we can enjoy many unique experiences and exciting trips as we travel the world of literature. Truly classical literature represents the best of the best. We can gain much wisdom and insight from the greatest creative minds that the human race has ever produced. But remember, the chief end to literature is to delight. Therefore, enjoy!

Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff

A. E. Housman

“Terence, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can’t be much amiss, ’tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the horned head:
We poor lads, ’tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.
Pretty friendship ’tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad.”

Why, if ’tis dancing you would be,
There’s brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?
Oh many a peer of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God’s ways to man.
Ale, man, ale’s the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world’s not.
And faith, ’tis pleasant till ’tis past:
The mischief is that ’twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow fair
And left my necktie God knows where,

And carried half way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad,
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.
But take it: if the smack is sour
The better for the embittered hour;
It will do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may,
In the dark and cloudy day.

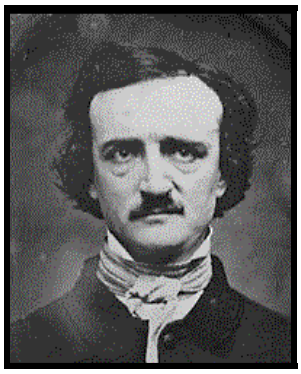
There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that sprang to birth
From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;

They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.—
I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.

Chapter Two
How Does the Poet Compose a Poem?

THE writing of a poem requires great skill with language. This chapter is an edited version of Edgar Allan Poe's wonderful essay, "The Philosophy of Composition." Reading this essay will accomplish two things. First, you will learn the thought process for writing poetry from one the greatest poets and writers of all times. Second, it should refute the myth that you may hear from time to time that Poe wrote "The Raven" while under the influence of drugs. To write good poetry, one cannot be drunk, on drugs, or even very tired. Try writing a few lines of poetry yourself, and you will understand what I mean. I am not saying that Poe did not have his shortcomings and faults; he was a sinner like all of us. However, the writing of "The Raven" was not produced by a man on drugs. To write well requires using one's fullest mental capacity, fully alert and fully conscious.

As a magazine editor, Poe wrote many editorials and essays. Poe is one of those gifted writers who could skillfully write essays, stories, and poetry equally well.



The Philosophy of Composition
Edgar Allan Poe

FOR my own part, I have…the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions, and, since the interest of an analysis or reconstruction…is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select 'The Raven' as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.…

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since no poet can afford to dispense with anything that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least, one-half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem.…

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul—not of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is most readily attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me), which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement or pleasurable elevation of the soul. It by no means follows, from anything here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects, I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis.…As commonly used, the refrain not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the application of the refrain—the refrain itself remaining for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the nature of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief.…This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long "o" as the most sonorous vowel in connection with "r" as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had pre-determined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact it was the very first which presented itself.

The next desideratum was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I had at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a human being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object—supremeness or perfection at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious—When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the application of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the variation of application. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original nonchalance by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether

because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in my mind the climax or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer—that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning—at the end where all works of art should begin—for it was here at this point of my preconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

> "Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil!
> By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
> Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
> It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
> Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
> Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the [climax].…

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The locale being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely suggested by the

bird—the bust of Pallas being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter"…

The effect of the denouement being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness—…

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanour. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the denouement—which is now brought about as rapidly and as directly as possible.

With the denouement proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanour, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer, "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination….

The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of Mournful and never ending Remembrance is permitted distinctly to be seen:

> And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
> On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
> And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
> And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
> And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
> Shall be lifted—nevermore!

Chapter Three
Poetry and Figurative Expression

What is Poetry?

IN the world of literature, all works are separated into two categories—poetry and prose. The definition for prose is very simple: prose is anything that is not poetry. So in order to know the difference between the two, we need to concentrate on defining poetry.

Poetry represents an elevated use of one's language in that poetry requires skills beyond normal and daily communication. Some critics have suggested that poetry is actually a lower form of the art of writing. After all, barbarous peoples from the earliest days of civilization wrote in poetry, like the Sumerians, Hebrews, and Greeks. The critics argue that when civilization greatly advanced itself in modern times, the overwhelming choice for literature became prose and not poetry. Whatever the reasons for prose taking the preeminence, this fact does not suggest that prose is a higher form of writing than poetry.

When we consider that God created Adam, He gave to Adam a brain with full mental capacity. We are told that humans use approximately ten percent of their mental capacity. Of course, evolutionists and others who reject the Biblical record, believe that humans have the potential to increase the use of the mental powers. However, the opposite is true. We as humans will continue to lose our mental abilities. After the fall of Adam, human mental ability has steadily gone downward, like all things in this world. Therefore, the earliest generations of mankind had a greater mental ability than we today. If this is so, then the writings of the Hebrews, Anglo-Saxons, and other "barbarous" peoples represent the best of their languages in which their recorded their legends and wisdom.

From Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," you have learned that Poe believed that Beauty belongs to the realm of poetry, because poetry and Beauty affect our souls. While Truth and Passion can be a part of poetry, prose seems to be a better vehicle for these qualities rather than poetry. Can Beauty be found in prose? Certainly. But Poe is saying that Beauty is "the sole legitimate province of the poem."

C. Day Lewis wrote, "A baby uses all his senses to make discoveries: He is like an explorer in a new world, full of wonder and surprise at the novelty of everything. In a way, a poet is a man who never grows out of that sense of wonder…Science is the chief way of learning through our heads. But that's not the *only* way of learning about the world—perhaps not even the best way…It is the inclusion of *feeling* that makes the difference between poetry and science…There, then, is the great use of poetry. It tells us about the world through our feelings. It sharpens our senses, makes us more keenly and fully aware of life, exercises our imagination and stores up treasures in our memory."

Arlo Bates remarked in his book, "Talks on the Teaching of Literature," that the "only excuse poetry can have for existing is that it fulfils an office impossible for prose.…Beyond the entirely unanalytical enjoyment of verse, the native responsiveness to rhythm, and the uncritical pleasure with which one learns to love literature and to seek it as a means of pleasure, the first, the most primary, the absolutely indispensable fact to be thoroughly impressed on a young student is that poetry uses form as a part of its language."

While the observations by Poe and Lewis are correct, it is Bates who offers us the key to the significant difference between prose and poetry: form. In the English language, the form

for poetry relies upon the following literary qualities: the use of figurative expression, patterned repetition, and compression of thought.

Figurative Expression

IN poetry, figurative expression is a departure from the "normal" use of language in order to achieve special meanings or effects. The use of figurative expression allows various types of comparisons between distinctly different things. The most common devices are discussed on the following pages.

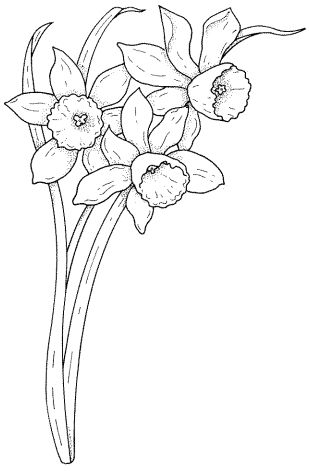
Simile

THE simile is an *expressed* comparison between two unlike things in which the words "like" or "as" are used. For an example, "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass"—Psalm 102:11. Robert Burns perhaps has written the most well-known simile of all: "O my love's like a red, red rose."

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud
William Wordsworth

1 I wandered lonely as a cloud
2 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
3 When all at once I saw a crowd,
4 A host, of golden daffodils;
5 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
6 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

7 Continuous as the stars that shine
8 And twinkle on the milky way,
9 They stretched in never-ending line
10 Along the margin of a bay:
11 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
12 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
13 The waves beside them danced; but they
14 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
15 A poet could not but be gay,
16 In such a jocund company;



17 I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
18 What wealth to me the show had brought:
19 For oft, when on my couch I lie
20 In vacant or in pensive mood,
21 They flash upon that inward eye
22 Which is the bliss of solitude;
23 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
24 And dances with the daffodils.

Metaphor

THE metaphor is a stated identity, rather than a comparison, when one thing is described in the terms of another. For an example, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"—Psalm 119:105.

What Is Our Life?

Sir Walter Raleigh

1 What is our life? A play of passion,
2 Our mirth the music of division,
3 Our mother's wombs the tiring-houses be,
4 Where we are dressed for this short comedy.
5 Heaven the judicious sharp spectator is,
6 That sits and marks still who doth act amiss.
7 Our graves that hide us from the setting sun
8 Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
9 Thus march we, playing, to our latest rest,
10 Only we die in earnest, that's no jest.

Personification

PERSONIFICATION gives life or human qualities to an inanimate object or an animal. For an example, “The mountain sat upon the plain / In his eternal chair”—Emily Dickinson.

Death Be Not Proud

John Donne

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou think’st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and souls delivery.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy, or charmes can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

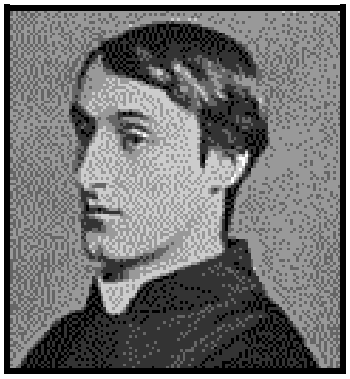
Chapter Four
Poetry and Patterned Repetition: Sounds

EVERYONE knows that the English language is composed of words that are formed from letters; and each of these letters have different sounds. Without sounds, speech would be impossible. I suppose that we could communicate quite well without speech so long as we could write out our intentions and requests. However, much of the beauty of poetry is by reading the poetry aloud. The poet is careful to consider the different sounds and how these sounds can create moods and special effects. In this chapter, you will discover some of the various ways sounds can be used in poetry.

Alliteration

THE repetition of sounds in a sequence of words is called alliteration. Generally, the sounds are consonants and are found at the beginning of the word. In William Shakespeare's "Sonnet XXX," we have a nice example of alliteration with the repetition of *s*, *th*, and *w*.

> When to the **s**essions of **s**weet **s**ilent **th**ought
> I **s**ummon up remembrance of **th**ings past,
> I **s**igh the lack of many a **th**ing I **s**ought
> And **w**ith old **w**oes new **w**ail my dear time's **w**aste.



Pied Beauty
Gerard Manley Hopkins

1 Glory be to God for dappled things,
2 For skies of couple-color as a brinded cow,
3 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
4 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls, finches' wings;
5 Landscape plotted and pieced, fold, fallow and plough,
6 And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
7 All things counter, original, spare, strange,
8 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
9 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim.
10 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change;
11 Praise him.

Assonance

ASSONANCE is the repetition of the same vowel sounds in stressed syllables in a sequence of words. An example of this devise is found in the opening lines of George Herbert's "The Collar." Note the long *i* sounds.

I struck the board, and cr**i**ed, No more.
I will abroad.
What? shall I ever s**i**gh and p**i**ne?
My l**i**nes and l**i**fe are free; free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store.

Consonance

THE repetition of consonants in a series of words, but with a change in vowels in the stressed syllable is called consonance. For an example, see "Pied Beauty," lines 8 and 10: "fickle, freckled" and "fathers-forth."

Onomatopoeia

GENERALLY, a word that resembles the sound is called onomatopoeia. Common examples include "bang," "boom," "buzz," and "hiss." But, by using certain sounds, you can achieve a striking effect. Notice the hum of the bees in these lines from Lord Tennyson's "Come Down, O Maid."

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

In the following excerpt, notice how John Milton uses the *s* sound to create the effect that there is a lot of hissing going on around Satan. The first two lines are spoken by Satan to the fallen angels.

Excerpt from Paradise Lost (Book X)
John Milton

"…What remains, ye Gods,
But up and enter now into full bliss."
So having said, awhile he stood, expecting
Their universal shout and high applause
To fill his ear, when contrary he hears
On all sides, from innumerable tongues
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn; he wonder'd, but not long
Had leisure, wond'ring at himself now more;
His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,
His Arms clung to his Ribs, his legs entwining

Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain, a greater power
Now rul'd him, punisht in the shape he sinn'd,
According to his doom: he would have spoke,
But hiss for hiss return'd with forked tongue
To forked tongue, for now were all transform'd
Alike, to Serpents all as accessories
To his bold Riot: dreadful was the din
Of hissing through the Hall, thick swarming now
With complicated monsters, head and tail.

Cacophony and Euphony

NO doubt you have already noticed in life that some sounds are a pleasure to listen to, while others are not. Squeaks and rattles are annoying. But sounds produced by song birds and a flowing brook are a delight. Some sounds are musical and other are not. The classification of these different kinds of sounds are discussed below.

Cacophony are sounds that are harsh, coarse, and unmusical to the ear. These sounds are *b*, *d*, *g*, *k*, *p*, and *t*. By the way, the harshest sound in the English language is the *b*. Often poets will use cacophony in order to depict a battle or violence. A good example of cacophony comes from William Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Whereat, with blade, with bloody, blameful blade, / He bravely broached his boiling, bloody breast." Notice that the word "cacophony" is itself harsh sounding.

Holy Sonnet X

John Donne

Batter my heart, three-personed God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town to another due,
Labor to admit to you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lovèd fain
But am betrothed unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Euphony are sounds that are smooth and musical to the ear. These sounds include all of the long vowel sounds, *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, soft *v* and soft *f*.

The Lotos-Eaters
Lord Tennyson

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave

On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more";
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

The Bells

Edgar Allan Poe

Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells—
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

Hear the mellow wedding-bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight
From the molten-golden notes!
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats

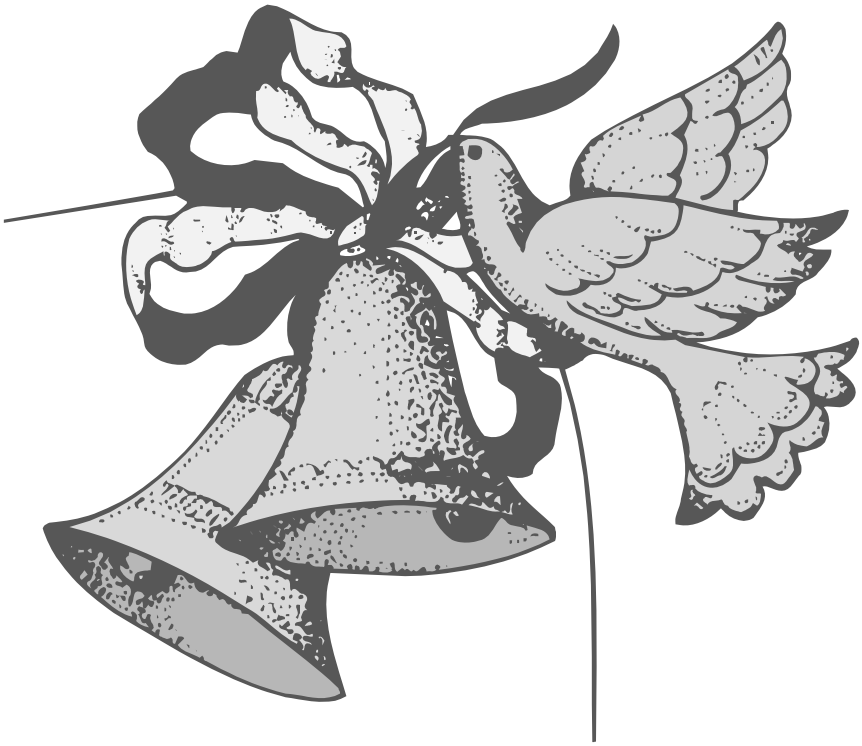
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gust of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells
On the Future! how it tells
Of rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

Hear the loud alarum bells—
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulancy tells!
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire
Leaping higher, higher, higher
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavor,
Now—now to sit or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
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 of the swelling in the anger of the bells—
Of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,—
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

Hear the tolling of the bells—
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
In a silence of the night
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats,
Is a groan:
And the people—ah, the people—
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,
And who, tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone—
They are neither man nor woman—
They are neither brute nor human—
They are Ghouls!
And their king it is who tolls;
And he rolls, rolls, rolls, rolls,
A paean from the bells!
And his merry bosom swells
With the paean of the bells!
And he dances and he yells;
Keeping time, time, time
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the paean of the bells—
Of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells,
To the sobbing of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,

As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells,—
Of the bells, bells, bells—
To the tolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,—
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.



Chapter Five
Poetry and Patterned Repetition: Stress

SPOKEN language has a natural rhythm. Some words are emphasized, like nouns, verbs, and adjectives, while other words, like articles and prepositions, are weakly stressed. When we divide this natural rhythm into equal units, we call this division a **metric foot**, or **meter**. Anything written in meter is called **verse**. The classification of meters are determined by stresses, whether weak (∪) or strong (/). There are five common metric feet: **Iamb, Trochee, Anapest, Dactyl, and Spondee**.

Metric Feet
Samuel Coleridge

/ ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
Tro-chee trips from long to short.
∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
From long to long in so-lemn sort
/ / / / / / / ∪ / ∪
Slow spon-dee stalks; strong foot! yet ill a-ble
/ ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪
E-ver to come up with Dac-tyl tri-syl-la-ble.
∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
I-am-bics march from short to long:—
∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ / ∪ ∪ /
With a leap and a bound, the swift A-na-pests throng.

Note: The placing of weak and strong stresses above the words in a line of poetry is called **scanning**. In your student guide to this book, you will have the opportunity to scan some poetry. But now, let us take a closer look at each of the different metric feet.

Iamb

THE iambic foot consists of two syllables—a weak stress is followed by a stronger one. This foot is by far the most common.

∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
Good peo-ple all, of ev-ery sort,
∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
Give ear un-to my song

An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog
(*From The Vicar of Wakefield*)
Oliver Goldsmith

1 Good people all, of every sort,
2 Give ear unto my song,
3 And if you find it wondrous short,
4 It cannot hold you long.

5 In Islington there was a man,
6 Of whom the world might say,
7 That still a godly race he ran,
8 Whene'er he went to pray.

9 A kind and gentle heart he had,
10 To comfort friends and foes;
11 The naked every day he clad,
12 When he put on his clothes.

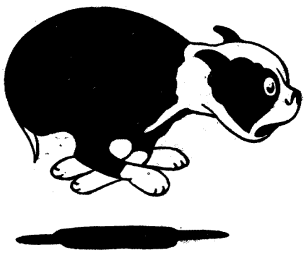
13 And in that town a dog was found,
14 As many dogs there be,
15 Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
16 And curs of low degree.

17 This dog and man at first were friends;
18 But when a pique began,
19 The dog, to gain his private ends,
20 Went mad, and bit the man.

21 Around from all the neighboring streets
22 The wond'ring neighbors ran,
23 And swore the dog had lost his wits,
24 To bite so good a man.

25 The wound it seem'd both sore and sad
26 To every Christian eye;
27 And while they swore the dog was mad,
28 They swore the man would die.

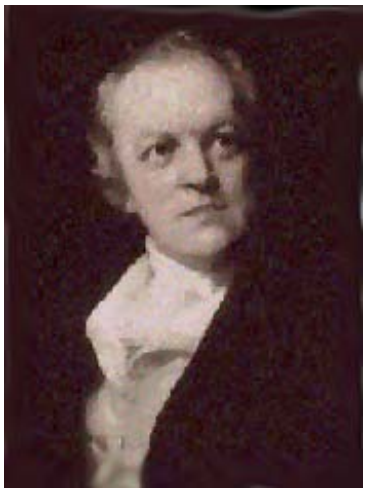
29 But soon a wonder came to light,
30 That show'd the rogues they lied:
31 The man recover'd of the bite—
32 The dog it was that died.



Trochee

THE trochaic foot consists of two syllables—a strong stress followed by a weak one. Oftentimes, with this foot, poets will drop the last unstressed syllable, as in this poem.

/ ◡ / ◡ / ◡ /
Ty-ger! Ty-ger! burn-ing bright,
/ ◡ / ◡ / ◡ /
In the for-est of the night



The Tyger
William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Anapest

THE anapestic foot consists of three syllables—two weak stresses followed by a strong one.

◡ ◡ / ◡ ◡ / ◡ ◡ / ◡ ◡ /
The As-syr-ian came down like a wolf on the fold

The Destruction of Sennacherib
Lord Byron

1
1 The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
2 And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
3 And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
4 When the blue wave rolls nightly on the Galilee.

2
5 Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
6 That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
7 Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
8 That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

3
9 For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
10 And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
11 And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
12 And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!

4
13 And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
14 But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
15 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
16 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

5
17 And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
18 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
19 And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
20 The lances unlifted, the trumpets unblown.

6
21 And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
22 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
23 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
24 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Dactyl

THE Dactylic foot consists of three syllables—one strong stress followed by two weak ones.

/ ◡ ◡ / ◡ ◡
Eve, with her bas-ket, was
/ ◡ ◡ / ◡ ◡
Deep in the bells and grass.

Excerpt from "Eve"
Ralph Hodgson

1 Eve, with her basket, was
2 Deep in the bells and grass,
3 Wading in bells and grass
4 Up to her knees.
5 Picking a dish of sweet
6 Berries and plums to eat,
7 Down in the bells and grass
8 Under the trees.

9 Mute as a mouse in a
10 Corner the cobra lay,
11 Curled round a bough of the
12 Cinnamon tall....

13 Now to get even and
14 Humble proud heaven and
15 Now was the moment or
16 Never at all.

17 "Eva!" Each syllable
18 Light as a flower fell,
19 "Eva!" he whispered the
20 Wondering maid,
21 Soft as a bubble sung
22 Out of a linnet's lung,
23 Soft and most silverly
24 "Eva!" he said.…

Oh, had our simple Eve
Seen through the make-believe!
Had she but known the
Pretender he was!
Out of the boughs he came,
Whispering still her name,
Tumbling in twenty rings
Into the grass.

Here was the strangest pair
In the world anywhere,
Eve in the bells and grass
Kneeling, and he
Telling his story low....
Singing birds saw them go
Down the dark path to
The Blasphemous Tree.

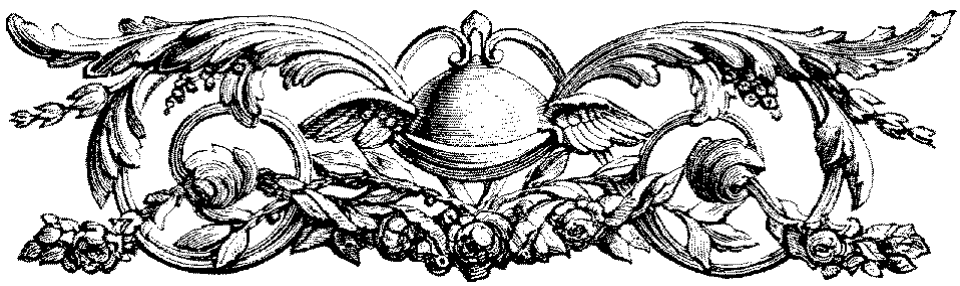
Spondee

THE spondaic foot consists usually of two syllables, both of which have about equal strong stresses. See “Metric Feet” by Samuel Coleridge on page 24 for an example.

Metric Lines

LINES of verse are classified according to the number of feet contained in the line.

Monometer:	one foot
Dimeter:	two feet
Trimeter:	three feet
Tetrameter:	four feet
Pentameter	five feet
Hexameter:	six feet
Heptameter:	seven feet
Octameter:	eight feet



Chapter Six
Poetry and Patterned Repetition:
Sonnets and Stanzas

IN general, the sonnet is a single stanza with fourteen lines in iambic pentameter. Sonnets are classified according to the rhyme scheme.

Italian Sonnet

THE Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet has two parts: an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines). The octave always has a rhyme scheme of *a b b a a b b a*. The sestet has no set scheme and may vary among poets.

Sonnet I from *Sonnets of the Portuguese*
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

1	I thought once how Theocritus had sung	a
2	Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,	b
3	Who each one in a gracious hand appears	b
4	To bear a gift for mortals, old or young;	a
5	And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,	a
6	I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,	b
7	The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,	b
8	Those of my own life, who by turns had flung	a
9	A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,	c
10	So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move	d
11	Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;	c
12	And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—	d
13	Guess now who holds thee?—Death, I said, But, there,	c
14	The silver answer rang,—Not Death, but Love.	d

Note: The words "move," "strove," and "love" are examples of **eye-rhymes**; that is, the words look alike, but do not sound at all the same. At the time of the writing of the poem, the words may have been pronounced the same, but over time, the pronunciations became different.

English Sonnet

THE English sonnet always has a scheme of *a b a b c d c d e f e f g g.* This form of sonnet is also called the Shakespearean sonnet, because William Shakespeare helped develop the English sonnet.

Sonnet LXI
William Shakespeare

1	Is it thy will thy image should keep open	a
2	My heavy eyelids to the weary night?	b
3	Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,	a
4	While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?	b
5	Is it thy spirit that thou send’st from thee	c
6	So far from home into my deeds to pry,	d
7	To find out shames and idle hours in me,	c
8	The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?	d
9	O, no! thy love, though much, is not so great:	e
10	It is my love that keeps mine eye awake;	f
11	Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,	e
12	To play the watchman ever for thy sake:	f
13	For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,	g
14	From me far off, with others all too near.	g

Spenserian Stanza

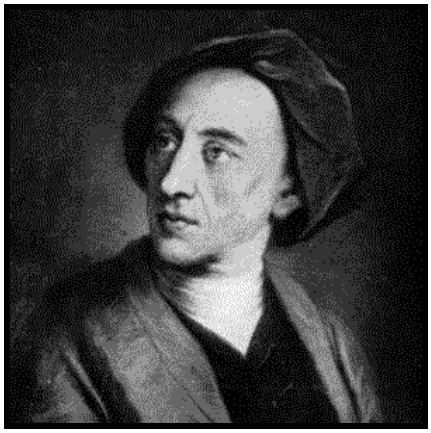
EDMUND SPENSER devised an elaborate stanza that is nine lines, the first eight being iambic pentameter and the last line being iambic hexameter. The rhyme scheme is *a b a b b c b c c*. The stanza is used best for long narrative poems. While *The Faerie Queene* is the best example, other poets have used the stanza, such as Lord Tennyson in "The Lotus Eaters." Following are the first five stanzas from Canto I.

Excerpt from *The Faerie Queene, Canto I*
Edmund Spenser

1	A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain,	a
2	Yclad in mighty arms and silver shield,	b
3	Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain,	a
4	The cruel marks of many a bloody field;	b
5	Yet arms till that time did he never wield:	b
6	His angry steed did chide his foming bitt,	c
7	As much disdaining to the curb to yield:	b
8	Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,	c
9	As one for knightly joists and fierce encounters fit.	c
10	But on his breast a bloody Cross he bore,	
11	The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,	
12	For whose sweet sake that glorious badge he wore,	
13	And dead as living ever him ador'd:	
14	Upon his shield the like was also scor'd,	
15	For sovereign hope, which in his help he had:	
16	Right faithful true he was in deed and word,	
17	But of his cheer did seem too solemn sad;	
18	Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad.	
19	Upon a great adventure he was bound,	
20	That greatest Gloriana to him gave,	
21	That greatest Glorious Queen of Fairylond,	
22	To win him worship, and her grace to have,	
23	Which of all earthly things he most did crave;	
24	And ever as he rode, his heart did yearn	
25	To prove his puissance in battle brave	
26	Upon his foe, and his new force to learn;	
27	Upon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearn.	
28	A lovely Lady rode him fair beside,	

Upon a lowly Ass more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a veil, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a black stole she did throw,
As one that inly mourned: so was she sad,
And heavy sat upon her palfrey slow:
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milk white lamb she lad.
So pure and innocent, as that same lamb,
She was in life and every virtuous lore,
And by descent from Royal linage came
Of ancient Kings and Queens, that had of yore
Their scepters stretched from East to Western shore,
And all the world in their subjection held;
Till that infernal fiend with foul vapor
Forwasted all their land, and them expelled:
Whom to avenge, she had this Knight from far compelled.

Couplet



WITHOUT a doubt, the greatest poet who used and mastered the rhyming couplet was Alexander Pope. These few lines are from Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*.

Excerpt from *Eloisa to Abelard*
Alexander Pope

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns;
What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?
Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?
Yet, yet I love!—From Abelard it came,
And Eloisa yet must kiss the name.

Dear fatal name! rest ever unreveal'd,
Nor pass these lips in holy silence seal'd.
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,

Where mix'd with God's, his lov'd idea lies:
O write it not, my hand—the name appears
Already written—wash it out, my tears!
In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,
Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.

Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains:
Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;
Ye grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn!
Shrines! where their vigils pale-ey'd virgins keep,
And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep!
Though cold like you, unmov'd, and silent grown,
I have not yet forgot myself to stone.
All is not Heav'n's while Abelard has part,
Still rebel nature holds out half my heart;
Nor pray'rs nor fasts its stubborn pulse restrain,
Nor tears, for ages, taught to flow in vain.

Tercet, or triplet

THE tercet, or triplet, is merely a stanza with three lines where each line rhymes.

Upon Julia's Clothes
Robert Herrick

Whenas in silks my Julia goes
Then, then, (methinks) how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free;
Oh, how that glittering taketh me!

Quatrain

THE quatrain is by far the most common stanza in English poetry. The stanza has four lines with any number of rhyme schemes. For an example, see "An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog" by Oliver Goldsmith on page 25.

Chapter Seven
Poetry and Compression of Thought

MANY students believe most poetry is too difficult to understand. The main reason for this perceived difficulty is poetry tends to compress ideas with just a few words. What may take a novelist a paragraph to describe, the poet will try to express the same idea in a few lines of verse. It is this compression of thought that leaves students and others throwing up their hands and giving up on the poet. But if you understand the nature of poetry and that the ideas are compressed, then you will not be so quick to read through the poem thoughtlessly. As stated before, you do an injustice to the poem by skimming over the lines.

In a Station of the Metro
Ezra Pound

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Multiple Meanings

THE poet can achieve compression of thought by using words that have multiple meanings. For an example, George Herbert's "The Collar," has many possible meanings in just the title! Herbert was a preacher who at one time got disgusted with the ministry and wanted to quit. So, what are the meanings for the word "collar"? Say the word out loud. Now the word could be "collar," "caller," or "choler." The meaning could be a preacher's collar, or slave collar; the collar that is part of the harness that allows an animal to pull a load; a rope; the Lord as the Caller of the preacher; or anger. In every case, each meaning fits nicely with the following poem.

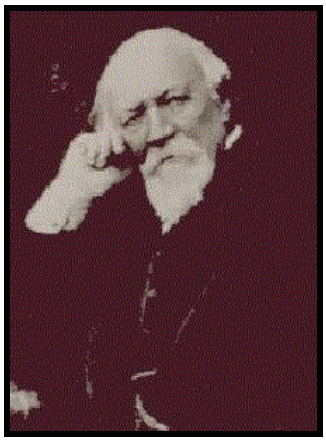
The Collar
George Herbert

1 I struck the board, and cried, No more.
2 I will abroad.
3 What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
4 My lines and life are free; free as the road,
5 Loose as the wind, as large as store.
6 Shall I be still in suit?
7 Have I no harvest but a thorn
8 To let me blood, and not restore
9 What I have lost with cordial fruit?
10 Sure there was wine
11 Before my sighs did dry it: there was corn

Before my tears did drown it.
Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
All wasted?
Not so, my heart: but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures: leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit, and not forsake thy cage,
Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
Good cable, to enforce and draw,
And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
Away; take heed:
I will abroad.
Call in thy death's head there: tie up thy fears.
He that forbears
To suit and serve his need,
Deserves his load.
But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child*:
And I reply'd, *My Lord*.

Imagery

IMAGERY uses words that appeal to our sense of taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. Often imagery is defined as the production of a picture made of words, or thought pictures.



Meeting at Night
Robert Browning

1 The gray sea and the long black land;
2 And the yellow half-moon large and low;
3 And the startled little waves that leap
4 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
5 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
6 And quench its speed I' the slushy sand.

7 Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
8 Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
9 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
10 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
11 And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
12 Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Symbolism

WHEN a word has a deeper meaning than the meaning of the word itself, this extended meaning is called symbolism. Symbols are quite common. For example, the flag of the United States of America has greater significance than just some colored cloth sewn together to form a red, white, and blue banner. The Christian cross represents more than just two boards joined perpendicular to each other. A lot of meaning can be packed into a symbol.

Poets will use symbols to represent different ideas. Once you understand some of these symbols, the understanding of much poetry will become easier. For example, what are some of the symbols that represent death? A few are—a setting sun (death of a day), night, Winter (death of a year), sleep, and the colors black and gray. Likewise, some symbols for life are—a rising sun, Spring, youth, and flowers in bloom.

The Lady of Shalott

Lord Tennyson

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver

Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
  Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
  The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
  Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
  The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
  Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
  Lady of Shalott."

PART II

  There she weaves by night and day
  A magic web with colours gay.
  She has heard a whisper say,
  A curse is on her if she stay
    To look down to Camelot.
  She knows not what the curse may be,
  And so she weaveth steadily,
  And little other care hath she,
    The Lady of Shalott.
And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.

There she sees the highway near
  Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
  Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
  Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
  The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
  And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half sick of shadows," said
  The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
  Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
  Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.

The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,

Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
  The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
  All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
  The Lady of Shalott."

Chapter Eight
Poems That Delight

The Raven
Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—

Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—

This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my heart grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—

Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, “Lenore!”
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word “Lenore!”

Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—

’Tis the wind and nothing more!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he; not an instant stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven.
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast above the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow will he leave me, as my hopes have flown before.”

Then the bird said, “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore

Of ’Never-nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore

Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet violet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by angels whose faint foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he has sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from the memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

91 “Prophet!’ said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
92 By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
93 Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
94 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore—
95 Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?”

96 Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

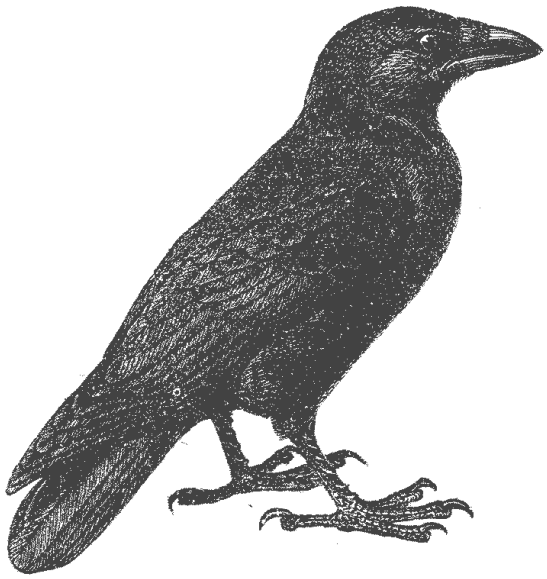
97 “Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked upstarting—

98 “Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
99 Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
100 Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
101 Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”

102 Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

103 And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
104 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
105 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
106 And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor,
107 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

108 Shall be lifted—nevermore.



To a Fish
James Leigh Hunt

You strange, astonished-looking, angle-faced,
Dreary-mouthed, gaping wretches of the sea,
Gulping salt water everlastingly,
Cold-blooded, though with red your blood be graced,
And mute, though dwellers in the roaring waste;
And you, all shapes beside, that fishy be—
Some round, some flat, some long, all devilry,
Legless, unmoving, infamously chaste:

scaly, slippery, wet, swift, staring wights,
What is't ye do? What life lead? eh, dull goggles?
How do ye vary your vile days and nights?
How pass your Sundays? Are ye still but joggles
In ceaseless wash? Still naught but gapes and bites,
And drinks and stares, diversified with boggles?

A Fish Answers
James Leigh Hunt

Amazing monster! that for aught I know,
With the first sight of thee didst make our race
For ever stare! O flat and shocking face,
Grimly divided from the breast below!
Thou that on dry land horribly dost go
With a split body and most ridiculous pace,
Prong after prong, disgracer of all grace,
Long-useless-finned, haired, upright, unwet, slow!

breather of unbreathable, sword-sharp air,
How canst exist? How bear thyself, thou dry
And dreary sloth? What particle canst share
Of the only blessed life, the watery?
I sometimes see of ye an actual pair
Go by! linked fin by fin! most odiously.

The Highwayman
Alfred Noyes

The wind was a torrent of darkness upon the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight looping 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, and a bunch of lace at his chin;
He'd a coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of fine doe-skin.
They fitted with never a wrinkle; his boots were up to his thigh!
And he rode with a jeweled twinkle—
His rapier hilt a-twinkle—
His pistol butts a-twinkle, under the jeweled sky.
Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,
He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred,
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter—
Bess, the landlord's daughter—
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.
Dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim, the ostler listened—his face was white and peaked—
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter—
The landlord's black-eyed daughter;
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say:
"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart; I'm after a prize tonight,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light.
Yet if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."
He stood upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair in the casement! His face burnt like a brand
As the sweet black waves of perfume came tumbling o'er his breast,
Then he kissed its waves in the moonlight
(O sweet black waves in the moonlight!),
And he tugged at his reins in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.
He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon.
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,

When the road was a gypsy's ribbon over the purple moor,
The redcoat troops came marching—
Marching—marching—
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.
    They said no word to the landlord; they drank his ale instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot of her narrow bed.
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets by their side;
There was Death at every window,
And Hell at one dark window,
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that he would ride.
    They had bound her up at attention, with many a sniggering jest!
They had tied a rifle beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!
"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her. She heard the dead man say,
"Look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though Hell should bar the way."
    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, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!
    The tip of one finger touched it, she strove no more for the rest;
Up, she stood up at attention, with the barrel beneath her breast.
She would not risk their hearing, she would not strive again,
For the road lay bare in the moonlight,
Blank and bare in the moonlight,
And the blood in her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's refrain.
    Tlot tlot, tlot tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hooves, ringing clear;
Tlot tlot, tlot tlot, in the distance! Were they deaf that they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding—
Riding—riding—
The redcoats looked to their priming! She stood up straight and still.
    Tlot tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot tlot, in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment, she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight—
Her musket shattered the moonlight—
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.
    He turned, he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood

Bowed, with her head o'er the casement, drenched in her own red blood!
Not till the dawn did he hear it, and his face grew grey to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.
    Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!
Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon, wine-red was his velvet coat
When they shot him down in the highway,
Down like a dog in the highway,
And he lay in his blood in the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

    And still on a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a gypsy's ribbon looping the purple moor,
The highwayman comes riding—
Riding—riding—
The highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.
    Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard,
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred,
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter—
Bess, the landlord's daughter—
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

Charge of the Light Brigade

Lord Tennyson

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!"

Was there a man dismayed?
Not tho’ the soldiers knew

Someone had blundered:

Theirs was not to make reply,
Theirs was not to reason why,
Theirs was but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.
Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon in front of them

Volleyed and thunder’d;

Storm’d at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell,

Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air,
Sab’ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while

All the world wondered:

Plunging in the battery smoke,
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre-stroke

Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not—

Not the six hundred.

39 Cannon to the right of them,
40 Cannon to the left of them,
41 Cannon in front of them

42 Volleyed and thundered;

43 Stormed at with shot and shell,
44 While horse and hero fell,
45 They that fought so well,
46 Came thro’ the jaws of Death,
47 Back from the mouth of Hell,
48 All that was left of them,

49 Left of the six hundred.

50 When can their glory fade?
51 Oh, the wild charge they made!

52 All the world wondered.

53 Honor the charge they made!
54 Honor the Light Brigade,

55 Noble Six Hundred!