A poem is a type of writing in which the poet chooses and arranges words to create a strong feeling through meaning, sound, and rhythm.

Structure of Poetry

A simple way to recognize a poem is by its structure. Poetry has certain structural elements that are different from prose.

- Every poem has lines, which are rows of words. Unlike sentences, lines in a poem do not always follow rules of capitalization and punctuation.
- Lines in a poem are often broken up into stanzas, or groups of lines set apart by spaces. Stanzas are somewhat like paragraphs in prose. Each stanza fits into the overall structure of a poem. Poets may use more than one stanza to develop their ideas or theme. They may also break lines and stanzas in unusual places to get the reader's attention or to create a certain effect.

Sounds of Poetry

Poetry is meant to be read aloud, so poets play with the sounds of words to create a certain effect.

- Rhyme describes words with the same ending sound. Many poems have lines that end with words that rhyme. Usually a poem has a rhyme scheme. The ending of certain lines rhyme with each other. Rhyme schemes are shown by a sequence of letters, such as abab. An abab rhyme scheme stands for a four-line stanza in which lines 1 and 3 rhyme (a) and lines 2 and 4 rhyme (b).
- Rhythm creates the “beat” of the poem. It is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.
- Meter is a recurring pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.
- Repetition is the repeating of words or lines in poetry. Repetition may help to unify a poem or to reinforce the meaning or theme.
- Alliteration is the repetition of an initial consonant sound.
**Point of View, Theme, and Tone**

**Point of view** is the position or outlook from which the speaker tells a story or observes something. The *speaker* in a poem is like the narrator of a story; he or she is the voice of the poem, which may be the voice of the poet or that of another person or character.

Often, the speaker in a poem reflects on a topic and reveals the poem’s theme. The *theme* is the central idea that a poem explores.

The speaker’s voice has a certain tone. The *tone* is the mood the poem creates for the reader. The tone of a poem may be playful, angry, melancholy—and it can change as the speaker’s reflection on a topic moves in a different direction.

**Forms of Poetry**

The form of a poem often adds to its meaning. Many forms of poetry follow certain rules of structure, rhyme, and sometimes topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lyric poem</td>
<td>a short poem that is like a song</td>
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<tr>
<td>ode</td>
<td>a poem that has two or more stanzas with similar structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>haiku</td>
<td>a very short poem with seventeen syllables in three lines; usually about nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>sonnet</td>
<td>a poem that has fourteen lines with ten to twelve syllables per line; first eight lines develop one idea, last six lines question that idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballad</td>
<td>a short poem with stanzas of two to four lines and a refrain that repeats; tells a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free verse</td>
<td>a poem that does not follow any rules of rhythm or rhyme</td>
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**Language Spotlight • Denotations and Connotations**

Poets rely on both the denotations and connotations of words to convey meaning. Their choice of words can affect the tone of a poem.

- **Denotations** are the dictionary definitions of words. For example, both *hideous* and *homely* mean “having an unpleasant appearance.”
- **Connotations** are meanings suggested or implied by a word, separate from its dictionary definition. The connotation of *hideous* is terribly ugly. A movie monster may be hideous. The connotation of *homely* is plain and drab. Unfashionable clothing may be homely.

Would you rather have a pet that was *hideous* or *homely*? Why?
Read the poems.

Pretty Words

by Elinor Wylie

Poets make pets of pretty, docile words:
I love smooth words, like gold-enameled fish
Which circle slowly with a silken swish,
And tender ones, like downy-feathered birds:

Words shy and dappled, deep-eyed deer in herds,
Come to my hand, and playful if I wish,
Or purring softly at a silver disk,
Blue Persian kittens, fed on cream and curds.

I love bright words, words up and singing early;

Words that are luminous in the dark, and sing;
Warm lazy words, white cattle under trees;
I love words opalescent, cool, and pearly,
Like midsummer moths, and honied words like bees,
Gilded and sticky, with a little sting.

The Fruit Garden Path

by Amy Lowell

The path runs straight between the flowering rows,
A moonlit path, hemmed in by beds of bloom,
Where phlox and marigolds dispute for room
With tall, red dahlias and the briar rose.

'Tis reckless prodigality which throws
Into the night these wafts of rich perfume
Which sweep across the garden like a plume.
Over the trees a single bright star glows.

Dear garden of my childhood, here my years

Have run away like little grains of sand;
The moments of my life, its hopes and fears
Have all found utterance here, where now I stand;
My eyes ache with the weight of unshed tears,
You are my home, do you not understand?
**Answer the following questions.**

1. This question has three parts.

   **Part A**
   Which is true about both “Pretty Words” and “The Fruit Garden Path”? Circle all that apply.
   
   A. Lines 1–4 and 5–8 have an abba rhyme scheme.
   B. Both stanzas of each poem have the same rhyme scheme.
   C. Each stanza has the same number of lines.
   D. Each poem has 14 lines.

   **Part B**
   Based on your answer in Part A, what type of poems are these?
   
   A. odes
   B. sonnets
   C. ballads
   D. free verse

   **Part C**
   In Part B you identified the form of both poems. How does knowing their form help you understand their meaning?

   __________________________________________________________________________

   **Hint** What do you know about the structure and rhyme of each form of poetry? Poets use different forms of poetry to create different meanings.

2. Read the lines from “Pretty Words” in each choice. Then, match each line to the kind of figurative language it shows.

   A. Poets make pets of pretty, docile words
   B. I love smooth words, like gold-enameled fish
   C. I love bright words, words up and singing early

   1. personification
   2. metaphor
   3. simile

   **Hint** Personification, metaphor, and simile are kinds of figurative language. What do you know about how each one creates a different kind of image?
The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**
What is the tone of “Pretty Words”?  
A. angry  
B. somber  
C. reflective  
D. celebratory

**Part B**
The poet uses repetition to help establish the tone you identified in Part A. Circle at least two lines that show this repetition.

**Hint** Remember that the tone of a poem is related to its mood. What is the mood of “Pretty Words”? 

The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**
At what point does the tone of “The Fruit Garden Path” change?  
A. line 5  
B. line 8  
C. line 9  
D. line 11

**Part B**
Which sentence supports the answer in Part A? Choose all that apply.  
A. The poet describes the garden to the reader and then turns and sorrowfully speaks to the garden directly.  
B. The poet uses an allusion to explain why the garden upsets her.  
C. The poet changes the rhyme scheme.  
D. The poet develops only one idea in this poem.

**Hint** Where does the language change to show a new idea? How is this change also reflected in the structure of the poem?
The Death of the Old Year

by Alfred Tennyson

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing:
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,

For the old year lies a-dying.

Old year, you must not die;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still: he doth not move:
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true truelove,
And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year, you must not go;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old year, you shall not go.

He froth’d his bumpers¹ to the brim;
A jollier year we shall not see.
But tho’ his eyes are waxing dim,
And tho’ his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I’ve half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.

¹ bumper: a brimming cup or glass
He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o’er.

30 To see him die across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before.
   Every one for his own.
   The night is starry and cold, my friend,

35 And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend,
   Comes up to take his own.

   How hard he breathes! over the snow
   I heard just now the crowing cock.
   The shadows flicker to and fro:

40 The cricket chirps: the light burns low:
'”Tis nearly twelve o’clock.
   Shake hands, before you die.
   Old year, we'll dearly rue for you:
   What is it we can do for you?

45 Speak out before you die.

   His face is growing sharp and thin.
   Alack! our friend is gone.
   Close up his eyes: tie up his chin:
   Step from the corpse, and let him in

50 That standeth there alone,
   And waiteth at the door.
   There’s a new foot on the floor, my friend,
   And a new face at the door, my friend,
   A new face at the door.
Answer the following questions.

1. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

   **Part A**
   What does the dying old friend personify in this poem?
   
   A. winter snow  
   B. church bells  
   C. a starry cold night  
   D. the old year

   **Part B**
   Which line from the poem supports the answer to Part A?
   
   A. Toll ye the church-bells sad and slow  
   B. For the old year lies a-dying  
   C. Full knee-deep lies the winter snow  
   D. The night is starry and cold, my friend

2. The following question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

   **Part A**
   Read the line from the poem.

   And the winter winds are wearily sighing:

   What figure of speech does the poet use in this line? Circle all that apply.
   
   A. simile  
   B. metaphor  
   C. personification  
   D. alliteration

   **Part B**
   What imagery does your answer to Part A create? How does this add meaning to the poem? Write two to three sentences to explain your answer.