

Poetry

Poetry is language used to put the thoughts of the poet into a special language. Its words form patterns of verse, sound and of thought.

You can tell that it is poetry by the way it sounds when you read it aloud. You can see the pattern and you can hear the rhythm and rhyme.

Poetry is one of the oldest and most important branches of literature. From the earliest times, people have enjoyed songs as they worked and played, and poets have recited stories of gods and heroes. Millions of people read and recite prose and poetry and some are even ambitious to write their own once in a while.

Types of Poetry

There are two main types of poetry, lyric and narrative, however, some people consider dramatic as a third main type of poetry.

Lyric poems are usually short and some have a songlike quality. The poet expresses his personal reactions to things that he sees, hears, thinks and feels. There are eight various types of lyrics: Ballade; Elegy; Epigram; Hymn; Idyl; Ode; Song; and Sonnets.

Narrative poems tell a story and are usually long. The poet suggests the setting,

The Development of Poetry

Throughout history, various systems verse writing have developed of the variations in culture and language. The bound verse and the free verse are only two of the systems. The early Hebrews wrote in a phrase-pattern something like the English free verse. The Anglo-Saxons wrote words beginning with the same stress sound, or words beginning with the same consonant sounds. Medieval French poets counted syllables as the basis of their verse and used repeated vowel sounds and various consonants at the end of the lines. Later French poets invented elaborate rhyme schemes. Other people have developed various systems of writing poems, Persians, people of India and Japanese. One famous Japanese form has only 3 lines and no rhyme or rhythm like that of the Western poetry, but it does follow strict rules.

Poetry of the People.

Poetry is not only world-wide, but also older than other forms of literature. No one knows where many of the ~~more~~ nursery rhymes originated. When European settlers came to the United States in the 1600's and 1700's, they brought many poems with them. Different versions of these poems survived, some in Canada and others in the Appalachian Mountains and were finally put in writing.

Folk Poetry includes the words to folk songs, spirituals, cowboy songs and sea chanteys. Folk poets have written ballads about the railroad engineer, "Casey Jones" and the outlaw Jesse James.

The Three Traditions

It is also important to trace the development of poetry under the three major traditions; classical, romantic and realistic.

The classical tradition starts in the poetry of the ancient Greeks. They originated many forms of poetry including the epic, ode, elegy, idyl and epigram. Latin poets based their work largely on Greek forms. The spirit of the classical poetry is more often formal.

characters and events, and gives them meaning. The most important types of narrative are Epics and Ballads. People often think of fables and romances as prose, however, many of the earlier examples were written as narrative poems.

Dramatic poems resemble narrative poems because they tell a story and they are fairly long. The difference is the poet tells the story through the speech of one or more characters in the story.

Image and Picture

The poet doesn't work with the melody of language only, but also with the pictures it creates in the reader's mind. However the poet does not have to limit himself to things that can be seen, he often suggests movement and sound.

Thought and Feeling

Sometimes the poet deals with complicated ideas and emotion, even with themes that may seem simple.

In developing his thought the poet makes literal and personal illusions or treats his theme with irony.