

How Do You Know It's Poetry?

It's almost easier to say what poetry isn't. let's say the following: a composition written for the purpose of giving artistic or emotional pleasure. It is characterized as having imagination, truth, sense impressions, meaning, and is often expressed in rhythmic language.

Differences Between Poetry and Prose

Poetry is:

- generally shorter in length
- relies on rhythmical and musical nature of language
- Makes greater use of 'compressed language' – saying a lot in a little space
- Relies heavily on figurative language and poetic devices
- More theme oriented, less plot driven
- Poetry uses stanzas, prose uses paragraphs

Poetry Terms Every Man, Woman, and Child Should Know

Simile – uses 'like' or 'as' in a comparison

- e.g. *'his voice was like thunder'*
'love is as a tender flower in the desert'

Metaphor – a direct comparison between two objects, using substitution

- e.g. *'he's an enraged bull'*
'when you were young and your heart was an open book'

Personification – giving human qualities to non-human objects

- e.g. *'the lonely sea'*
'the river sang noisily'

Hyperbole – use of gross (gross as in BIG, not gross as in 'you stepped in something moist!') exaggeration to make a literary point

- e.g. *'this homework will take forever!'*
'they were packed into the bus like sardines'

Alliteration – the close repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words

- e.g. *'a big, black bruiser of a bear'*
'were those your delicate digits I saw buried in his beefcake biceps?'

Onomatopoeia – words that give meaning through their sounds

e.g. *'the mosquito buzzed inside the tent'*
'the sizzling steak hissed invitingly'

Imagery – the use of descriptive language to convey a mental picture

e.g. *'his worry pressed down on him like the hands of a menacing giant'*
'the soft creak of the boat's oars echoed across the still lake in the misty morning'

Symbolism – representing something (an idea, concept, emotion, etc.) with a symbol

e.g. *'he extended an olive branch after the fight'*
'the grim reaper waited at the roadside'

Mood – the way a poem makes you feel – happy, sad, angry, etc.

Irony – a device where the writer expresses a meaning contradictory to the stated or intended meaning

Theme – the central idea or meaning of a poem. It's the same for a story, a novel, etc. For crying out loud! The theme for 'In the Heat of the Night' is NOT girls named Delores are kind of dumb. It COULD be that the actions and character of one man triumph over prejudice. Mmmmkay?