



# *What Makes a Good Poem?*

- ❖ Every element in a poem has to contribute meaning to the poem
- ❖ The diction, images, and figures of speech are **fresh** and **original**
- ❖ Excellent poems have a combination of thought, emotion, language, and sound that are fresh and original. It doesn't imitate previous literature or pre-established ways of thinking or feeling.

# *Sentimentality*

- ❖ The indulgence in emotion for its own sake, or expression of more emotion than an occasion warrants
- ❖ It aims primarily at stimulating the emotions directly rather than at communicating experience truly and freshly

# *Creatures of the Fire by Joanna Fuchs*

Splash into the pleasure, all  
consuming;  
I'm joyfully insane,  
My passion for you deep, and  
fully blooming;  
Long after, sweet warm flickers  
still remain.

This part of the poem expresses cliché's and over dramatic emotions about love, making it sentimental and an overused idea.

# *Rhetorical poetry*

- ❖ Rhetorical poetry uses a language more glittering and high flows than its substance warrants. It is theatrical, over elegant, artificially articulate, and trite.
- ❖ Rhetorical poetry is not excellent because it is fancy, hollow language that doesn't have a correspondingly reality of emotion or thought underneath those words.

# *Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Whereat with blade, with  
bloody, blameful blade,  
He bravely broached his boiling  
bloody breast.

This verse goes uses “glittering” diction for the bloody sword he is about to kill himself with. There is no meaning achieved through the excessive and overdramatic language

# *Didactic Poetry*

- ❖ Didactic poetry is intended to strictly teach the reader.
- ❖ All poetry should have underlying principles which are **subtle**.
- ❖ Poetry becomes didactic poetry when there is a fixation on lecturing, scarcity of its imagery and figurative language, and its lack of poetic freshness.
- ❖ Didactic poetry becomes didactic verse when didactic purpose overtakes poetic purpose.

# *The Rhodora by Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Early to bed and early to rise,  
Makes a man healthy ,  
healthy, and wise.

The poem lacks a specific situation, i.e. the speaker is not recounting how going to bed early has changed him. There is no imagery, figurative language, or even elevated diction.

# Activity 1

Compare and Contrast Don Ionne's *Rain When You Want Sunshine* and Emily Dickinson's *We Grow Accustomed to the Dark*

# Rain When You Want Sunshine

It rained this weekend, again  
I wanted sunshine  
In the yard, in my life

I didn't curse God  
I just felt sorry for myself

Too much rain in my life  
Too many days without sunshine  
Too many things slipping through my  
fingers

Lost and wasted chances  
Spilling on the floor  
Cluttering my life  
Like the dump where we shot rats  
When I was a boy with hope, and  
dreams

It's not the rain that bothers me  
It's the dreariness, the gloom

The heavy gray clouds pinning me to  
the muddy earth  
Covering up the dream I hoped could  
be my life

# We Grow Accustomed to the Dark

We grow accustomed to the Dark -  
When light is put away -  
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp  
To witness her Goodbye -

A Moment - We uncertain step  
For newness of the night -  
Then - fit our Vision to the Dark -  
And meet the Road - erect -

And so of larger - Darknesses -  
Those Evenings of the Brain -  
When not a Moon disclose a sign -  
Or Star - come out - within -

The Bravest - grope a little -  
And sometimes hit a Tree  
Directly in the Forehead -  
But as they learn to see -

Either the Darkness alters -  
Or something in the sight  
Adjusts itself to Midnight -  
And Life steps almost straight

*Which poem (judging by the criteria we just gave you) seemed better?*

- Do they contain any Sentimentalities?
- What about rhetorical language?
- Does every element in the poem contribute to its meaning? (look at structure and punctuation specifically)

# *Invictus*

## *By William Ernest Henley*

Out of the night that covers  
me,  
Black as the pit from pole to  
pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of  
circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried  
aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of  
chance  
My head is bloody, but  
unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and  
tears  
Looms but the horror of the  
shade,  
And yet the menace of the  
years  
Finds and shall find me  
unafraid.

It matters not how strait the  
gate,  
How charged with  
punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

# *What did you notice?*

Situation	Imagery	Figurative Language	Diction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This poem serves to describe the speaker's feelings.</li><li>• The speaker tells the story of how he rose from the darkness, through the pain and suffering, to come to the conclusion that he is in charge of his life.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the first stanza he describes himself emerging from "night" of the black pit. He thanks the gods for his "unconquerable soul" which paints a picture of freedom and invincibility.</li><li>• In the second stanza he describes himself as bloodied "but unbowed" which evokes an image of perseverance and strength.</li><li>• The third stanza illustrates death watching him and eventually coming to collect him.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The entire poem is an extended metaphor that parallels the struggles of everyday life and the eventual time of death.</li><li>• Black can be a symbol for death which would foreshadow the introduction of death later.</li><li>• Blood can be a symbol of life-force and it leaving his body could be a symbol for aging.</li><li>• Saying he is the captain indicates he is directing his fate.</li></ul>	<p>The level of diction in this poem could be considered to be of medium level.</p>

# *Why is Invictus a good poem?*

- ❖ Invictus is not sentimental poetry because its emotions are used to prove a point and increase the effect on the reader.
- ❖ By the level of diction, having modest vocabulary, and rhetorical devices Invictus is not considered to be purely rhetorical poetry. It has meaning underneath the surface of the text.
- ❖ Because Invictus tells a story and is not flat nor trite and is an extended metaphor; Invictus is not didactic poetry either.
- ❖ Since it lacks these qualities the literary value of the poem rises.

## *Things to keep in mind:*

- ❖ All poetic is a matter of degree: there are poems that are great and break these rules, these are mainly just guidelines.
- ❖ When making judgments on literature, *always be honest. Distinction between poems is not always bad or good; it can just be of varying degrees of poetic merit.*