What Is Poetry?

Warm-Up

Think about a poem you've read or seen recently, what it was about, how it made you feel, what themes were present in the poem.

If you can't think of any poems, instead think of a story you've read, film or TV show you've seen, or any other piece of media you've experienced lately.

Thinking about all these things, write a follow up or piece inspired by said poem/story.

You have **5 minutes**.

What is a Poem?

A poem is "literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound and rhythm."

A poem is a story told with rhythm. Stories can be about anything, real or imaginary, but a good story will ultimately leave us feeling something – weather it'll be joy, sadness, a sense of wonder, or anything in-between.

Language

Many poets will use specific language to invoke certain emotions and feelings in their poems.

When writing a happy poem, authors will include images of happy things, even if that is not specifically what the poem is about, and may even make comparisons between the two (including puppies in a happy poem about childbirth).

If a poet wants to their audience to get a feeling of sadness or despair with their poem, they might include words like 'darkness'.

If a poet wants their audience to get a feeling of happiness or joy with their poem, they may include words like 'light'.

Metaphors and similes such as these put an image of something in the mind of the audience, and they then associate how they feel about this image with the poem: For example, including something about a sunny day (her hair was bright like a summer's day) will invoke the joyous emotions we feel about sunny days.

- Simile:

Saying something is like something else

"Her eyes were like fire because they burned so brightly"

- Metaphor:

Describing something as something else

"Her eyes were fire, burning brightly"

Remember those days when you were
young? Life was as easy as it could be.
There were laughs and stories and dreams.
You saw the sunshine and you were free.

Well there comes a point when you realize
That you finally have to grow up
And that hiding under your covers
Won't ever be quite enough.

I know those days when it feels like
There's no way you can keep going on.
Life just isn't worth living,
And nothing could be more wrong.

You feel like there's no solution
To this riddle or game they call life.
And when it's your darkest hour,
It is then that I'll show you the light.

The light at the end of the tunnel
When you thought maybe this was the end.
I promise there's beautiful sunshine
On this dark road with sharp turns and
bends.

Though it may not always seem it,
There's still happiness in this place.
And what you have to realize
Is that it takes a little faith.

I have always been here with you,
Just as I always will be,
And when life knocks you down so low,
Just put your trust in me.

So remember those days when you were
young.
Life was as easy as it could be.
There were laughs and stories and dreams.
You saw the sunshine and you were free.

Well now here in your darkest hour,
Get under the covers and turn out the light.
Close your eyes and dream, my child.
Let me hold your heart tonight
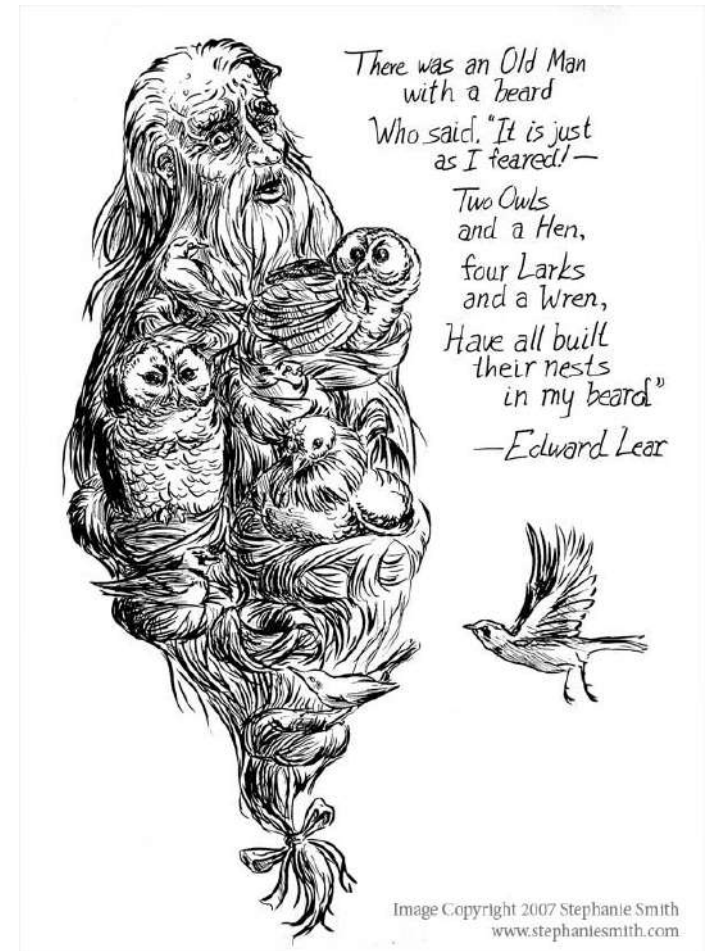
The anatomy of a poem

Poems are normally split into different paragraphs, called 'Stanzas', each usually consisting of one line or more.

There will normally be intent behind the start and beginning of each Stanza. For example, the author is finishing one thought and moving onto another. Here is a short poem with two Stanza's:

"The one who arrives after you will remind me love is supposed to be soft.

He will taste like poetry I wish I could write."

When a poem includes illustration, the Stanza's may move around the image, incorporating it into the poem

There was an Old Man
with a beard
Who said, "It is just
as I feared! —
Two Owls
and a Hen,
four Larks
and a Wren,
Have all built
their nests
in my beard"
—Edward Lear

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Once, I was a mermaid with
other mermaids,
decked out and parading down the
boardwalk.
My gown trailed me, a tail of cerulean,
my cheeks the colour the sky glistens
when it strikes the ocean.

Early that morning, the day the parade
flooded the streets with sea wreckage
and freaks, with connoisseurs, my
lover finished painting on my face.
His hat leaned sideways,

parrot feathers brassy as beetle wings
staining his hair. Two women dressed
as crabs scuttled down the lane before
us. My mouth blew bubbles, small
tender ohs exploding.

Seven moves later, three states: the
gown still hangs in the folds of my
closet. When I take it out, my soul, like
some glass weight washed on the sand,
shivers. A great breath of wind.

Often, I see a dark fedora tumbling past
me to break against the waves. Often, I
see mermaids trailing riotous hair,
their mouths unmoved by pity or the
dark heart of the sea.

Lets write with what we know

We're going to write a poem using what we now know about poems:

Think about the story you want to tell, how you want your audience to feel.

Think about the language you want to use and how it will affect the poem.

Try writing in Stanza – think about where and why you want each Stanza to end.

This can be about anything you want, but if you're stuck for ideas, try writing about a real experience you've had or an imaginary one.

You have **15 minutes**. We're going to try working in silence, however if you're confused, have any questions about a certain word you want to use or your Stanzas, feel free to ask.