

**Presentation to SAETA Conference**  
***English – For the Fun of It***  
**Lelita Baldock**

**Poetry**

***Introduction***

**The school and class context**

This is a unit of work I ran during my final eight week practicum.

I was at a city based Private school with a large student population of varied social and economic backgrounds.

The class I taught was a year nine English class of medium level students. Three of the students were on a negotiated curriculum programme.

**How the Unit ran.**

I started the Unit with an overview of what poetry is and what some features of poetry are.

Then we looked at Haiku and Limericks to help get the students used to rhyme and rhythm. The use of limericks really helped to gain the interest of the boys in the class.

Then we looked at Sonnets. In this section we looked at a range of sonnet styles without naming each different type and studying the strict structural differences. The idea was to introduce students to sonnets in general. So we just looked at how sonnets have around fourteen lines and at some different rhyming patterns that are used.

We also looked at how sonnets were often written in response to other sonnets, thereby getting the students to look at sonnet culture. This really engaged their interest. After that we focused on War Sonnets. They loved War Sonnets, and thoroughly enjoyed analysing them.

After Sonnets we looked at Gothic Poetry. Any type of Gothic literature is something I would highly recommend. Students love to look at the features of Gothic literature and analysing Gothic poetry allowed for this.

To finish off the Unit we looked at Song Lyrics and analysed them as if they were poetry. This was great. Students were asked to look at the meaning of the lyric and how the music enhanced this meaning.

**Assessment Tasks**

The students did a range of assessment tasks. During the study of the different styles of poetry the students wrote their own examples of Haiku, Limerick, Sonnet and Gothic poetry and put them together in a poetry folio of their own works. Then students wrote a poetry analysis essay on a poem of their choice. And lastly the students gave an oral presentation analysing a song of their choice.

## *Handouts for students*

### **Features of Poetry**

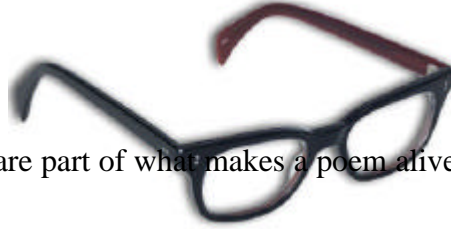
A poem can be analysed, dissected, put under the microscope: and the closer and more detailed the examination, the more one finds to admire, as with any work of art.

The successful study of a poem depends on having a few essential features of poetry at your fingertips.

**Here there are:**

### **Poetry appeals to the senses**

Shapes, colours, textures, tastes and smells are part of what makes a poem alive. Sense invokes the reader's imagination.



### **Poetry expresses feelings or emotions**

Anger, excitement, fun, idleness, despair, pity.

All emotions can be expressed by the poet, we respond because we can sympathise, or have felt the same emotions ourselves.

### **Rhythm and rhyme are commonly part of the form of poetry**

**Rhythm:** Words arranged so that stresses fall regularly

**Rhyme:** line endings linked by the same kind of sound

Different styles of poem use these features in different ways to create various poetic styles.

### **Stanza is like a paragraph in a poem**

**Figures of speech** - enhance the poem's meaning.

**Simile** – points out a similarity between one thing and another. Uses words such as 'like' 'as' 'as if' ...

e.g AS black AS night

**Metaphor** – makes a comparison like similes but the comparison is stated. Words such as 'like' and 'as' are not used

e.g night IS my cloak

**Personification** – When non-living things are given human qualities.

e.g Night stares through the window

**Alliteration** – Occurs when the initial letters of a series of words are the same, giving a certain sound effect to the poem

e.g Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating

**Assonance** – repetition of the sound in the middle of the word

e.g cool room

**Onomatopoeia** – occurs when words seem to imitate actual sounds

e.g shrill, muttered, grumbling, plop, squeal.

## Haiku

### Features of a Haiku

#### 1) Three lines long

- 1<sup>st</sup> line has five syllables
- 2<sup>nd</sup> line has seven syllables
- 3<sup>rd</sup> line has five syllables

#### 2) Seasonal theme

- Each Haiku has a theme within it that suggests a time of year:  
Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring

#### 3) Traditionally Haiku do not Rhyme.

### Examples:

#### **Butterflies**

Butterflies are cute  
Fluttering their scaly wings  
Very very fast

#### **Autumn**

First autumn morning  
The mirror I stare into  
Shows my father's face

#### **Flowering**

The moment two bubbles  
Are united, they both vanish  
A lotus blooms

#### **Hail**

They fell in showers  
Like diamonds upon the ground  
Big hailstones were found

#### **Fog**

On the mountain top  
The fog fell down thick and fast  
It was like pea soup

#### **Rain**

Tip – tap goes the rain  
As it hits the window pane  
I can hear the rain

### **Text your understanding:**

- 1) What does the haiku 'Autumn' mean?
- 2) What is non-traditional about the haiku 'Hail' and 'Rain'?
- 3) Can you find any poetic features in these haiku examples? Give at least two.
- 4) How do the titles of the haiku interact with the poems and give meaning?

Higginson (1985) *The Haiku Handbook*, Kodansha International Ltd, Japan

## Limericks

### **Features of a Limerick:**

- \* 5 lines long
- \* Lines 1, 2, 5 rhyme and have a rhythm that goes “ta-DUM, ta-ta-DUM, ta-ta-DUM
- \* Lines 3, 4 rhyme and have rhythm that goes “ta-DUM, ta-ta-DUM”

Limericks are humorous and often have a twist at the end that is revealed in the last line

### **Examples:**

There was an Old Mán with a béárd,  
Who sáid, “It is júst as I féáred!  
Two Ówls and a Hén,  
Four Lárks and a Wrén  
Have áll built their nésts in my béárd!”

There was a young girl in a tree,  
Who was horribly bored by a bee.  
When they said, “Does it buzz?”  
She replied, “Yes, it does!!  
It's a regular brute of a bee!”

A flea and a fly in a flue  
Were caught, so what could they do?  
Said the fly, "Let us flee."  
"Let us fly," said the flea.  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

There once was a pauper named Meg  
Who accidentally broke her leg  
She slipped on the ice  
Not once, but thrice  
Take no pity on her, I beg

## Sonnets

- ? 14 lines
- ? 4 sections – the first three are made up of four lines, the fourth is made up of two lines
- ? Rhyme pattern – e.g abab, abba, abca, aabb
- ? Often ending in a **rhyming couplet**, meaning the last two lines Rhyme

### An example of a sonnet:

#### **Ypres**

She was a city of patience; of proud name,  
Dimmed by neglecting Time; of beauty and loss;  
Of acquiescence in the creeping moss.  
But on a sudden fierce destruction came

Tigerishly pouncing: thunderbolt and flame  
Showered on her streets, to shatter them and toss  
Her ancient towers to ashes. Riven across,  
She rose, dead, into never-dying fame.

White against heavens of storm, a ghost, she is known  
To the world's ends. The myriads of the brave  
Sleep round her. Desolately glorified,  
She, moon-like, draws her own far-moving tide

Of sorrow and memory; toward her, each alone,  
Glide the dark dreams that seek an English grave  
(Laurence Binyon)

## War Sonnets

Remember: Often sonnets were written in response to another sonnet to enhance the subject, answer the subject, reflect a different view point or give an opinion of the subject.

### **The Soldier**

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

(Rupert Brooke)

### **The Mother** – this sonnet was written in response to **The Soldier**

If you should die, think only this of me  
In that still quietness where is space for thought,  
Where parting, loss and bloodshed shall not be,  
And men may rest themselves and dream of nought:  
That in some place a mystic mile away  
One whom you loved has drained the bitter cup  
Till there is nought to drink; has faced the day  
Once more, and now, has raised the standard up.

And think, my son, with eyes grown clear and dry  
She lives as though for ever in your sight,  
Loving the things *you* loved, with heart aglow  
For country, honour, truth, traditions high,  
--Proud that you paid their price. (And if some night  
Her heart should break--well, lad, you will not know.

(May Hersel – Clarke)

