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Topic: Importance of Imagery in Poetry

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What is the importance of Imagery in Poems?

In **poetry**, **imagery** is a vivid and vibrant form of description that appeals to readers' senses and imagination

Let's consider this sentence:

The strawberries were blood-red with ripeness and almost scraped the ground on a long line of wild bushes.

What picture do you see in your mind when you read this? You probably imagined the deep color of the ripe strawberries, the warmth of the summer sun, and perhaps the feeling of the grainy smoothness of the fruit. **Imagery** in poetry creates similar snapshots in a reader's mind.

Poets use imagery to draw readers into a **sensory** experience. Images will often provide us with mental snapshots that appeal to our senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.



- Imagery gives the reader a visual perspective of the player's actions as well as contributes to the excitement and tension in the poem.
- Imagery is integral to the poem's meaning and the experience of reading it.
- In essence, images show us meaning; when we compare the snapshots in our mind to our own memories or experiences, we connect emotionally to the poem.
- Imagery can either expose us to new experiences or reveal our own experiences in a new light. Because most poems are brief, a poet has the challenge of creating an entire world for the reader in a few short

lines, and images or even the story that arises from a series of images is the most efficient route to this communication.

- Imagery is used in such a way that appeals to the readers' senses. Imagery refers the use of some words that give the readers a visual representation. Through the use of imagery, the readers can visualize the ideas or thoughts represented in the literature.
- The use of imagery is prevalent in different types of literature. Poets, novelists use this to create a mood, so that the readers get interest while reading the poems or novels, etc. It is seen both in poems and proses. Sometimes, imagery can be used symbolically. While analyzing any literature, the imagery used in that work should be considered as it allows the readers to understand the mood as well as symbolism.
- With the use of vast literary tools such as; simile, metaphor onomatopoeia, metonymy and personification and synecdoche amongst others, writers can successfully bring to our consciousness the beautiful picture of things that exists and those that don't.
- The pleasure most people get from imagery alone, makes them prefer poetic imagists to non imagist. The love for imagery made it seem, to the poets of the early 20th century, as though it was the most important aspect of poetry. Of course, not every poet adopts imagery, however, poetic archives without imagist poems sometimes seems empty and unworthy of the reader's attention.
- Sometimes, instead of using metaphors or its poetic cohorts, imagists use concrete detail in bringing poems to life.

- **Function of Imagery**

The function of imagery in literature is to generate a vibrant and graphic presentation of a scene that appeals to as many of the reader's senses as possible. It aids the reader's imagination to envision the characters and scenes in the literary piece clearly. Apart from the above-mentioned function, images drawn by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, personification, and onomatopoeia, serve the function of beautifying a piece of literature.

Examples of Imagery

Example #1: Romeo and Juliet (By William Shakespeare)

Imagery of light and darkness is repeated many times in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Consider an example from Act I, Scene V:

“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear ...”

Romeo praises Juliet by saying that she appears more radiant than the brightly lit torches in the hall. He says that at night her face glows like a bright jewel shining against the dark skin of an African. Through the contrasting images of light and dark, Romeo portrays Juliet's beauty.

Example #2: To Autumn (By John Keats)

John Keats' To Autumn is an ode rich with auditory imagery examples. In the last five lines of his ode he says:

“Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.”

The animal sounds in the above excerpt keep appealing to our sense of hearing. We hear the lamb bleating and the crickets chirping. We hear the whistles of the redbreast robin and the twitters of swallows in the skies. Keats call these sounds the song of autumn.

Example #3: Once More to the Lake (By E. B. White)

In prose, imagery aids writers to accomplish a vivid description of events. Below is an example of an effective use of imagery from E. B. White's Once More to the Lake:

“When the others went swimming my son said he was going in, too. He pulled his dripping trunks from the line where they had hung all through the shower and wrung them out. Languidly, and with no thought of going in, I watched him, his hard little body, skinny and bare, saw him wince slightly as he pulled up around his vitals the small, soggy, icy garment. As he buckled the swollen belt, suddenly my groin felt the chill of death.”

The images depicting the dampness of clothes, in the above lines, convey a sense of the chilly sensation that we get from wet clothes.

Example #4: Great Expectations (By Charles Dickens)

In Great Expectations, written by Charles Dickens, Pip (the hero of the novel) uses many images to describe a damp morning in a marsh:

“It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window... Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, ... On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village—a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there—was invisible to me until I was quite close under it.”

The repeated use of the words “damp” and “wet” makes us feel how miserable it was for him that damp and cold morning. The thick “marsh-mist” aids our imagination to visualize the scene of morning in a marshland.

Example #5: Goodbye Mr. Chips (By James Hilton)

“Brookfield he had liked, almost from the beginning. He remembered that day of his preliminary interview—sunny June, with the air full of flower scents and the plick-plock of cricket on the pitch. Brookfield was playing Barnhurst, and one of the Barnhurst boys, a chubby little fellow, made a brilliant century. Queer that a thing like that should stay in the memory so clearly.”

This is an excellent example of the use of imagery in Goodbye Mr. Chips by James Hilton. First the word sunny refers to the visual imagery. The flower scent refers to the sense of smell, and then the plick-plock refers to the sense of hearing.

Example #6: Daffodils (By William Wordsworth)

“I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”

This is a very good example of imagery in Wordsworth’s Daffodils. The poet uses the sense of sight to create a host of golden daffodils beside the lake. Their fluttering and dancing also refers to the sight.

Example #7: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (By Robert Frost)

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep ... “

Robert Frost uses visual imagery in these lines of his famous poem as, “the woods are lovely, dark and deep.”

Example #8: My November Guest (By Robert Frost)

“My Sorrow, when she’s here with me,
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
Are beautiful as days can be;
She loves the bare, the withered tree;
She walked the sodden pasture lane.”

This poem by Robert Frost is yet another good example of imagery. In the second line, the poet uses dark days, which is an instance of the use of visual imagery. In the fourth line, the bare, withered tree uses the imagery of sight. In the fifth line, the sodden pasture is also an instance of tactile imagery.

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