

Name: _____ Section: _____ Date: _____

Assignment #1: Examples of Lyrical Poetry

Lyric – poetry that expresses the poet’s thoughts and feelings. It does not tell a complete story, as narrative poetry does, but creates a mood through vivid images. It uses very descriptive language and often the lyric poem has a “musical” quality. Often sensory images are used. Lyric poems can be made up of even stanzas or uneven stanzas. The majority of poetry is lyrical; however, there are also many subcategories of lyrical poetry.

Rhyming, with even stanzas and parallelism

“Four Little Foxes”

by Lew Sarett

Speak gently, Spring, and make no sudden sound;
For in my windy valley, yesterday I found
New-born foxes squirming on the ground—

Speak gently.

a

a

a

b

Walk softly, March, forbear the bitter blow;
Her feet within a trap, her blood upon the snow,
The four little foxes saw their mother go—

Walk softly.

c

c

c

b

Go lightly, Spring, oh, give them no alarm;
When I covered them with boughs to shelter them from harm,
The thin blue foxes suckled on my arm—

Go lightly.

d

d

d

b

Step softly, March, with your rampant hurricane;
Nuzzling one another, and whimpering with pain,
The new little foxes are shivering in the rain—

Step softly.

e

e

e

b

Rhyme scheme uses end rhyme & imperfect rhyme (gently, softly, lightly) for the last word in each stanza.

“When Sue Wears Red”

by Langston Hughes

When Susanna Jones wears red
Her face is like an ancient cameo
Turned brown by the ages.
Come with a blast of triumphs, Jesus!

When Susanna Jones wears red
A queen from some time-dead Egyptian night
Walks once again.
Blow triumphs, Jesus!

And the beauty of Susanna Jones in red
Burns in my heart a love-fire sharp like a pain.
Sweet silver triumphs, Jesus!

No set rhyme, but strong figurative language, sensory imagery, repetition, and parallelism

Hughes was one of the masters of jazz poetry that came out of the Harlem Renaissance movement.

“The Courage That My Mother Had” by Edna St. Vincent Millay

The courage that my mother had
Went with her, and is with her still:
Rock from New England quarried;
Now granite in a granite hill.

a

b

c

b

The golden brooch my mother wore
She left behind for me to wear;
I have no thing I treasure more:
Yet, it is something I could spare.

d

e

d

e

Oh, if instead she'd left to me

f

The thing she took into the grave!—
That courage like a rock, which she
Has no more need of, and I have.

g

f

g

Rhyme scheme uses end rhyme & eye rhyme for certain pairings such as “grave” and “have.”

Millay’s poem has slightly uneven stanzas and rhythm, end rhyme (including eye rhyme), repetition, and figurative language.

“The Sea”

by James Reeves

The sea is a hungry dog,
Giant and grey.
He rolls on the beach all day.
With his clashing teeth and shaggy jaws
Hour upon hour he gnaws
The rumbling, tumbling stones,
And ‘Bones, bones, bones, bones!’
The giant sea-dog moans,
Licking his greasy paws.

And when the night wind roars
And the moon rocks in the stormy cloud,
He bounds to his feet and snuffs and sniffs,
Shaking his wet sides over the cliffs,
And howls and hollos long and loud.

But on quiet day in May or June,
When even the grasses on the dune
Play no more their reedy tune,
With his head between his paws
He lies on the sandy shores,
So quiet, so quiet, he scarcely snores.

In the lyrical poem “The Sea,” the poet uses rhyming couplets and strong personification, alliteration, and figurative language.

“The Rose That Grew From Concrete”

by Tupac Shakur

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else ever cared.

Shakur uses some end rhyme and a singular internal rhyme to establish the rhythm, along with strong figurative language. It's a powerful short poem set in only one stanza, which helps to demonstrate that poems do not have to be lengthy to capture a mood or impart a message to the reader.

“Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Angelou uses structured end rhyme and repetition (in the form of refrain), along with occasional alliteration and parallelism to set a clear tone within her lyrical poem.

Not all lyrical poems need to be serious...many have either a light or humorous tone. Here are a few examples below.

“Daddy Fell Into the Pond” by Alfred Noyes

Everyone grumbled. The sky was grey.
We had nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day,
And then there seemed to be nothing beyond,
Then
Daddy fell into the pond!

And everyone's face grew merry and bright,
And Timothy danced for sheer delight.
"Give me the camera, quick, oh quick!
He's crawling out of the duckweed!" Click!

Then the gardener suddenly slapped his knee,
And doubled up, shaking silently,
And the ducks all quacked as if they were daft,
And it sounded as if the old drake laughed.
Oh, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond
When
Daddy fell into the pond!

“Learning” by Judith Viorst

I'm learning to say thank you.
And I'm learning to say please.
And I'm learning to use Kleenex,
Not my sweater, when I sneeze.
And I'm learning not to dribble.
And I'm learning not to slurp.
And I'm learning (though it sometimes really hurts me)
Not to burp.
And I'm learning to chew softer
When I eat corn on the cob.
And I'm learning that it's much
Much easier to be a slob.

“Go Wind” by Lillian Moore

Go wind, blow
Push wind, swoosh.
Shake things
take things
make things
fly.

Ring things
swing things
fling things
high.

Go wind, blow
Push things
wheee.

No, wind, no
not me –
not me.

“Rebecca” By Hilaire Belloc
(Who Slammed Doors For Fun And Perished Miserably)

A trick that everyone abhors
In little girls is slamming doors.
A wealthy banker's little daughter
Who lived in Palace Green, Bayswater
(By name Rebecca Offendort),
Was given to this furious sport.

She would deliberately go
And slam the door like billy-o!
To make her uncle Jacob start.
She was not really bad at heart,
But only rather rude and wild;
She was an aggravating child...

It happened that a marble bust
Of Abraham was standing just
Above the door this little lamb
Had carefully prepared to slam,
And down it came! It knocked her flat!
It laid her out! She looked like that.

Her funeral sermon (which was long
And followed by a sacred song)
Mentioned her virtues, it is true,
But dwelt upon her vices too,
And showed the deadful end of one
Who goes and slams the door for fun.

The children who were brought to hear
The awful tale from far and near
Were much impressed, and inly swore
They never more would slam the door,
-- As often they had done before.

**Be sure to check out
the numerous
Literary Artist
Winners who have
written both serious
and not so serious
lyrical poems.**