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**POETRY**

Poetry is generally a compressed form of literary expression of human thought and feeling, perhaps the most misunderstood of the genres because it seems to demand the most of its readers. The observer-reader may be frustrated because more setting to see, more details to examine, more events to react to, failing to realise that the reader often needs to bring to the poem more than the poem gives. It also acts as a catalyst of the imagination and feeling.

In its broadest sense, writing that aims to present ideas and evoke an emotional experience in the reader through the use of meter, imagery, connotative and concrete words and a carefully constructed structure based on rhythmic patterns. Poetry typically relies on words and expressions that have several layers of meaning. It also makes use of the effects of regular rhythm on the ear and may make a strong appeal to the senses through the use of imagery. Edgar Allen Poe’s ‘Annabel Lee’ and Walt Whitman’s ‘Leaves of Grass’ are famous examples of poetry.

The poem is a combination of form, image, sound and rhythm to which the reader is able to respond. More completely than the other forms of literary expression, has the capacity to move from the world of outward circumstance to the inner world of feeling. It depends more exclusively than the other genres upon the particularity of the word and the image to evoke feelings.

It is written in verse, that is, it is usually in lines known as verse. The use of verse is hence different from the biblical sense of chapter and verse. It simply refers to poems written in rhythmic patterns and lines.

Consider the following poem:

***We have come home***

We have come home

From the bloodless wars

With sunken hearts - Our boots

Full of pride

From the true massacre

Of the soul.

**Lenrie Peters**

As you have understood, poems are written in specialized language. In this poem, the words are not usually used in the ordinary sense of a word. They have surface and deeper meaning. For example: sunken hearts (shows lack of joy) bloodless wars (conflicts that are not bloody), boots (not used in the same sense of boots but means our hearts or that we walk with pride).

**Characteristics of poetry**

Poetry is delineated as one of the genres of literature. Poetry, (that is, poems), is written in verse form. The following are generally the characteristics of poetry.

Poetic reality: This is one feature of poetry which expresses the vital truth of human reality and feeling. It is derived from the reality of inner experience and not the form of reality of everyday experience.

Language: Another important feature of poetry is the dexterous or sophisticated way in which the poet manipulates the ordinary language. This is why special consideration is given to the connotative and denotative meanings of all words used in poems. There is often an elaborate use of images, symbols (words representing concrete objects) and a re-structured sentence pattern. Let's illustrate all these in an extract of a poem titled “Night Rain”.

Read the poem titled “Night Rain” and bring out the following poetic characteristics: a) Vital truth of human experience b) Feelings or sensations c) Connotative meaning d) Denotative meaning e) Images f) Symbols.

**Night Rain**

What time of the night it is

I do not know except like some fish

Doped out of the deep

I have bobbed up belly wise

From the stream of sleep

And no cocks crow

It is drumming hard here

And I suppose everywhere droning

With insistent ardour upon

Our roof-thatch and shed.

John Pepper Clark

**Note:** Consult a good dictionary and / or book of literary terms for lexical meanings.