

## English 146 Poetry Introduction:

Some ways in which poetry differs from prose

A]. fixed line lengths and stanza divisions. (Prose is divided into paragraphs). Give line numbers in MLA citation (Prose gives page number). A later file on using MLA for poetry will provide more detail on documenting quotations from a poem.

B.] Traditional form poetry uses rhythm—recurring sound patterns within a line. Prose does not. (Free verse poetry does not either).

Prose: However, your youthfulness will continue  
Poetry: But thy eternal summer shall not fade.

Prose: There is no one simple process for interpreting literature.  
Poetry: There are many techniques for the process of reading a text.

C]. does not have to contain a plot (though it may)  
4 forms:

1. **Descriptive**: describes a static scene at a fixed point in time—a word painting.
2. **Narrative** like stories, has a plot, a series of linked events leading to a resolution, and conflict
3. **Dramatic** like a scene from a play. Characters speak alone (monologue) or to each other (dialogue) in a fixed definite setting such as could be represented on a stage.
4. **Meditative** (ex some sonnets, odes: developing an argument, or defining a concept or addressing and attempting to solve a specific abstract problem ex. some descriptive poems that use an object or setting as a take off point for a philosophical meditation.

D]. may rhyme [some traditional form poems; free verse poetry does not rhyme]

E] more intense, frequent use of imagery (symbols, metaphors, similes) than prose.

F] not as formal in sentence structure and grammar and punctuation as prose (this is even more pronounced with “free verse” –see *Elements of Literature* 1356).