**COURSE NAME: CREATIVE WRITING**

**PROGRAMME: BAED**

**COURSE CODE LIT 2202**

**YEAR 2 SEMESTER 2**

**Credit Units 45**

**Course Description:**

The course provides an introduction to the writing of four main genres of poetry, Novel, drama and creative non-fiction, as well as the subgenres of the novel such as romance, adventure, crime. Students will be introduced to the techniques for getting started as a writer, generating material, finding a voice, understanding the narrator vs the author and some practical information about publishing and the writing life will be covered. They will be introduced to choices of point-of-view in fiction, basic requirements of narrative scene, dialogue, narrative structure in fiction and nonfiction, techniques of lively writing, metaphoric language and poetic forms. This course also places an emphasis, on revision as part of the creative process, with the ultimate goal being to help students discover and refine their voices as writers.

**Course objectives**

Students will be able to:

* Nurture their ability to write creatively and expressively in various genres and subgenres
* Grasp the conduct of committed creative writers
* Increase knowledge of creative writing and appropriate vocabulary for creative writing
* Bridge the gap from theory to practical creativity of literature
* Communicate effectively as writers, revise and proof read their work ready for publication

**Learning Outcomes**

**Students will:**

* Produce fiction and nonfiction, pieces that are original and professionally written
* Articulate an awareness of the difference between their individual works and that of others in terms of style and genre
* Write using good techniques and a variety of vocabulary, proof read and revise their work ready for publication.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**FICTION PROSE STORY**

**Introduction**

**-**The Inspirational Ideas

-The process of developing your idea into a story,

-How to tell the story: a story is as good as the way it’s told.

-Developing your Style

-Subgenres of the novel- romance, crime, adventure, travel, young Adult (YA), horror, Bildungsroman etc

**NON-FICTION WRITING**

Introduction

Writing a memoir

Writing a biography

**DRAMA**

-Introduction

- Sub-Genres- comedy, tragedy, satire, tragi-comedy

-Subject matter

-Steps in writing the play

-knowledge of the stage

-adaptations from novels/short stories

-Producing the play for the stage:

-Stage, movement

-language, Diction, dialogue Spectacle

-costumes, make up, music and song

**-POETRY WRITING**

**-**Introduction

**-S**etting, Atmosphere, mood & tone

Genres – Acrostic, Abc, ballad, narrative, epic, free verse, etc.

-Speaking voice (persona

-Subject matter

-Diction

-Sound: Rhyme & rhythm

**Mode of Assessment**

Tests, Assignments 40%, Examinations 60%

**Methods of Delivery**

Lectures, tutorials, discussions, presentations

**Reading List**

Sizwe Bansi is Dead by Athol Fugard

Around the World I Eighty Days by Jules Verne

Such a Long Letter by Mariama Ba

Poems of: David Rubadiri, Dennis Brutus, Robert Frost, Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye

Hall, Oakley. (1989).*The Art And Craft of Novel Writing*: Cincinatti. Story Press

Sutherland, Efua. (1987). *The Marriage of Anasewa*. London. Longman

Blau, Sheridan. (1992). *The Writer’s Craft: Idea to Expression*. Illinois: MacDouglasLittell.

Burnet, Sylvan, Marton Berman and William Burto. (1988). *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. 2nd Edition. Illinois. Scott Foresman

Ojaide, Tanure. (2005) *A Creative Writing Handbook for African Writers and Students*. Lagos: Malthouse

Allen, J. et al (2001).***Literature.***Boston: McDougal Littell.

Brown, J. et al. (2001). ***Writer’s Choice: Grammar and Composition.*** New York: McGraw Hill.

Burroway, J. (1991). ***Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*.** Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

Casterton, J. (1986). ***Creative Writing: A Practical Guide.*** London: Macmillan Education.

Julia, B. & Paul, M. (2001). ***The Creative Writing Course Book*.** London: Macmillan.

Penfield, E. (2001). ***Literary Visions.*** New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Roberts, E. V. (1988). ***Writing Themes about Literature.*** New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Ruddel, M. P. (2005). ***Teaching Content Reading and Writing.*** New York: John Willey and Sons.

Stanford, J. A. (2003). ***Responding to Literature.*** Boston: McGraw Hill.

**1. DEFINITION OF CREATIVE WRITING**

Creative Writing can be defined as, “A form of writing that expresses writer's feelings, emotions, experiences, ideas, or thoughts obtained at a conscious or subconscious level. It is more driven by the writer's need to “express”, and is generally articulated in the most unique, inventive, and poetic way”.

**The purpose:** The purpose of creative writing is to both ***entertain*** and ***share human experience*,** for example love or loss. Writers attempt to get at a truth about humanity through poetics and storytelling. If you'd like to try your hand at creative writing, just keep in mind that whether you are trying to express a feeling or a thought, the first step is to use your imagination.

Types of creative writing include:

* Fiction (novels, novellas, and short stories)
* Songs and Poetry
* Plays
* Nonfiction eg: Speeches, Memoirs and Personal essays

As you can see, some nonfiction types of writing can also be considered creative writing. *Memoirs and personal essays*, for example, can be written creatively to inform your readers about your life in an *expressive way.* Because these types are written in first person, it's easier for them to be creative.

TECHNIQUES used in creative writing include:

* Character development
* Plot development
* Vivid setting
* Underlying themes
* Point of view
* Dialogue
* Anecdotes
* Metaphors and similes
* Figures of speech
* Imaginative language
* Emotional appeal
* Description

**2) THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FICTION AND NON FICTION**

For writers and readers alike, it’s sometimes hard to tell the difference between fiction and nonfiction. In general, **fiction** refers to plot, settings, and characters created from the imagination, while **nonfiction** refers to factual stories focused on actual events and people. However, the difference between these two genres is sometimes blurred, as the two often intersect.

Before we go any further, it’s important to note that both fiction and nonfiction can be utilized in any medium (film, television, plays, etc.). Here, we’re focusing on the difference between fiction and nonfiction in literature in particular

**What Is Fiction?**

***Fiction is fabricated and based on the author’s imagination. Short stories, novels, myths, legends, and fairy tales are all considered fiction, but settings, plot points, and characters in fiction are sometimes based on real-life events or people.*** *For instance, Ngugi wa Thiongo sets many of his stories* and novels in in his home country Kenya

Additionally, science fiction and fantasy books placed in imaginary worlds often take inspiration from the real world. A recent example of this is N.K. Jemisin’s [*The Broken Earth*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01NGTJDSR/ref=as_li_tf_il?ie=UTF8&tag=boorio-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399349&creativeASIN=B01NGTJDSR)trilogy, in which she [uses actual science and geological research](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-fi-fantasy/the-logistic-of-throwing-mountains-n-k-jemisin-discusses-the-broken-earth-trilogy/) to make her world believable.

Fiction often uses specific narrative techniques to heighten its impact. Salvatore says that some examples of these components are:

“The use of rich, evocative sensory detail; the different pacing tempos of dramatic and non-dramatic events; the juxtaposition of summarized narrative and dramatized scenes; the temporary delay and withholding of story information, to heighten **suspense** and complicate plot; the use of different points of view to narrate, including stark objective effacement and deep subjective interiority; and the stylized use of language to narrate events and render human consciousness.”

**What Is Nonfiction?** Nonfiction, by contrast, is factual and reports on true events. Histories, biographies, journalism, and essays are all considered nonfiction. Usually, nonfiction has a higher standard to uphold than fiction. A few smatterings of fact in a work of fiction does not make it true, while a few fabrications in a nonfiction work can force that story to lose all credibility.

An example is when James Frey, author of [*A Million Little Pieces*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0307276902/ref=as_li_tf_il?ie=UTF8&tag=boorio-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399349&creativeASIN=0307276902)*,*was [kicked out of Oprah’s Book Club](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/27/books/27oprah.html) in 2006 when it came to light that he had fabricated most of his **memoir**.( A type of biography which picks on the most import points of the author)

However, nonfiction often uses many of the techniques of fiction to make it more appealing.  This has given rise to a new trend called **creative nonfiction**, which uses the techniques of fiction to report on true events as described in the following way: -

**“Refers to the use of literary craft, the techniques ﬁction writers, playwrights, and poets employ to present nonﬁction—factually accurate prose about real people and events—in a compelling, vivid, dramatic manner. The goal is to make nonﬁction stories read like ﬁction so that your readers are as enthralled by fact as they are by fantasy.”**Although it’s sometimes hard to tell the difference between fiction and nonfiction, especially in the hands of a skilled author, just remember this: **If it reports the truth, it’s nonfiction. If it stretches the truth, it’s fiction.**

**3) SOURCES OF MOTIVATION AND INSPIRATION**

Focus on becoming so great *you can’t be ignored.* Most writers are worried about what the competition is doing and idolize their favorite writers. Instead, you’ll focus on being so good the competition will start to watch *you.* Embrace the attitude of Michael Jordan in his first few seasons. He *knew the league was going to belong to him* before it actually did. He put his head down, did the work, and demolished the competition to become the **Greatest of All Time.** You can be the same. Put your head down, write, and one day people will say “Who is *this*?”

**3.1 SOURCES OF IDEAS**

So now that you want to write, how can you get ideas? This brings us to the next question:

**Where do ideas come from?**

How do writers know what to write about?

Writers are often asked the question, "Where do you get your ideas from?" as though there is a special place where you can buy them from. Ideas come from everywhere around us. Once the writer has a passion, he/she must be observant and note what can add to the story.

**COMMON SOURCES OF IDEAS**

**IDEAS/CONCEPTS**

Basically, creative writing is an imaginative art. But before you can imaginatively create a story or a poem, you must have been struck by an idea or concept. However, in some cases, especially in poetry, the poems flow in the poet’s imagination and he/she only records what is in imagination. This is inspired creativity. Some writers claim to have written while in a trance. So creativity here is spontaneous creativity which is not based on idea but the idea emerges after the work is complete. Remember, the creative writer is the conscience of the society so should reflect the society objectively. You should be able to extol when necessary and criticize where criticism is required and condemn despicable acts.

**ENVIRONMENT**

A writer is a product of his background. The environment of the writer has a great influence on his/her writing. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* would not have been written by him if he were from Igboland. A non-Igbo man or woman who has lived in Igboland could depict the Igbo culture in a novel but not with much detailed information on an aspect of the culture of the people and its significance.

As a creative writer, you have to keep your eyes and ears ‘**wild, wide open’.** This is the only way you could see and hear beyond everyone else in that environment. The filth in your surrounding acquires new meaning for you, new significance and a symbol of something, you could explore. This could be as a result of the people’s way of life or attitude to public utilities which in turn could be a consequent of neglect, bad leadership or lack of patriotism. These alternatives will help you to build the structure of your story which must have some semblance of life. It is very important.

**EVENTS**

Closely related to environment is events and maybe individuals, inter-personal relationships. An event could spark off the creativity/spirit in you. You may not build an entire story on it but it could form part of the story. Your ability to situate that event appropriately in the story is what matters. This helps to make your story coherent. Good novels, plays, short stories and poems thrive on coherence.

**INDIVDUALS**

Specific individuals in your society could ignite the creative impulse in you. Your story could revolve around this individual or he/she plays a significant role in the story or has a significant impact on the character of your protagonist. There is a saying that anyone who survives childhood has at least a story in him or her. The individual could therefore be you or any other person who has played a significant role in your life or the lives of others. (It could be how this individual you admire or hate behaves). It could be how this individual relates to the people around him or her that inspire you.

**MYTH**

Writers, from the origin of literature, have taken their germinal ideas from myth. The myths are either central to the works or are reflected in the works. In poetry, the most concise genre of literature, a myth could be the germinal idea and an entire poem becomes an exploration of that myth. Read Wole Soyinka’s Abiku to assess the explication of that belief system in Yorubaland.

**LEGENDS**

Legends deal with communal heroes or heroines. They are men and women who have performed certain feats in the past. A good example of such heroine is Queen Amina of Zaria. Ngugi Wa Thong’O is an African writer who portrayed a legendary hero of the celebrated in Mau-Mau anti-colonial rebellion freedom fighting in Kenya. In one of his plays, *The Trial of Dedin Kimathi*, he presents the celebration of such a hero. However, in A Gain of Wheat, he presents such presumed legendary heroes who fought for uhuru-Independence as traitors. Some of them are Mugo, Gikonyo, Karanja, and Numbi who presumably played heroic roles in the struggle.

**HISTORY**

History and legend are interrelated. Both are set in the remote and immediate past of the people. This is unlike myth which is set in the primordial past. Many Nigeria writers have drawn the inspiration for some of their works from history. Many Nigerian writers especially novelists have written novels on the Nigerian Civil War. Each writer presents his own perspective on the war. Poets and dramatists are not left out in recounting historical experiences imaginatively. One could say that each writer mediates history in order to present an artistically satisfying experience

**Point of View**

**What is Point of View?**

* Seeing and Speaking  
  When you've got an idea for a story, a few characters, an idea of the plot maybe, you have to figure out who is going to tell it. This is where **point of view** comes in.
* The **point of view** determines whose eyes the reader experiences the story through. It can be a key choice, as different points of view have different strengths and weaknesses.
* Many Points of View: There are many points of view for a writer to choose from, and each has different problems, responsibilities and effects.

**The available points of view are first, second and third person. What does this mean, exactly?**

* The Narrator is the key to this…:

1. **The First Person**

* A story written in the first person is told by an "I".
* Where "I" can be the main character, a less important character witnessing events, or a person retelling a story they were told by someone else.
* **Examples?**
* Nonfiction: almost all is written in first person (autobiographical style).
* Fiction: The short pieces we wrote last week.
* **Here are some things to consider about the pieces written in first person.**
* First of all, you need to decide **how** this story is being told.
* Is the narrator thinking it to his/herself?
* Is the character writing it down? And if they are writing it down:
* Is it something meant to be read by the public? Or is it a private diary?
* A story meant for one other person?
* **The way the first person narrator is relating the story will affect how you write it. This means that:**
* The language you choose will be different. If you are writing in a diary to yourself, there are things you may not need to include because you know them e.g. setting. Whereas, if you are writing for someone else to read, you might need to set a scene so that can understand where you are, your mood etc. The reader should have at least some sense of this as well. The way they interpret a story could be very different if it is told as a secret diary or if it is a public statement.
* **What are the advantages/disadvantages of writing in the first person?**
* This point of view is often effective in giving a sense of closeness to the character. It can be very easy to get the reader to identify or sympathize with your main character when the reader is seeing everything through that character's eyes.
* First person makes for very effective fiction, but the use of "I" has limitations, because the character who is telling the story can't reveal any more information than he himself knows. No character in a story can see inside any other character.

**Variations of First Person Narrator**

* **First Person Protagonist:** For this point of view, a character relates events that occurred to them; the "I" is the main character, telling her or his own story.

**e.g.** I missed the bus that morning because I couldn't convince myself to get out of bed. It was just too cosy under the blanket, with the cat curled up next to me. I was going to have to walk all the way to work.

* **First Person Witness:** The story of the main character is told by another character observing the events.

**e.g.** She missed the bus. She'd probably spent an hour arguing with herself that she really should get up. I could picture her there, curled up in bed with the cat next to her. Now she was going to have to walk to work.

* **First Person Re-teller:** The story is told, not by a witness to the events, but by someone who has heard the story from yet another person.

**e.g.** She missed the bus. I don't know why; probably couldn't get out of bed. You know how warm it gets when you're all curled up in the blankets. She had a cat, too, and somehow a cat makes it harder to get up in the morning. So she missed the bus, and would have to walk all the way to work.

1. **The Second Person**

* In second person, the narrator addresses the protagonist as "you." Often, this kind of story has the narrator speaking to a younger version of their self.
* This point of view is very rare because it is extremely difficult to pull off. The reader may feel that they are the one spoken to, and will find it difficult to accept that they are doing the things the narrator tells them they are doing. If you choose to tell a story in second person, it is very important to make it clear to the reader who is being addressed, so they can trust in the teller and accept the story as given.
* **e.g.** You missed the bus again because you just couldn't convince yourself to get out of bed. The comforter made a cosy nest around you, and there was the cat, a warm ball of fur curled next to you. So you had to walk all the way to work.

1. **The Third Person**

* Characters are referred to as "he" and "she" in third person. In this case the narrator (who may be indistinguishable from the author) is not a character in the story. Depending on the type of third person point of view, the narrator may know -- and be able to tell about -- the thoughts and feelings of all characters, or only one character, or they may only be able to report what is seen or heard.
* Sometimes a third person narrator requires the reader to accept the narrator's authority, which they may be hesitant to do. Just because a narrator sounds like they know it all, doesn't mean they do. This may be why the first person point of view has become more and more popular -- it can be harder to get the reader to identify with a nameless, third person teller. However, third person narration is very flexible and should not be discarded without thought. It is still the most common point of view, and for good reason.
* When a writer is turning personal experiences into fiction, it is often easier to write in third person (even if they intend to put the final draft in first person). This is because the third person distances the reader (and the writer) from events. It is easier to write about personal things when you write as if they are happening to someone else. It is also easier to change events -- often necessary to turn reality into fiction -- when you aren't claiming that it was you who experienced them.

**Variations of the Third Person Narrator**

* **Third Person Omniscient:** The narrator knows everything; all thoughts, feelings, and actions may be related to the reader (or they may be withheld).

**e.g.** She missed the bus. She spent nearly an hour arguing with herself about getting up. You have to be awake now, it's a work day. But it's so warm. Just a few more minutes. You'll be late. I don't care. Yes you do. Curled up there with the cat, it was so hard to move, so warm and cosy. And so she missed the bus, and swore, and told herself how stupid she was. Then she started the long walk to work.

* **Third Person Objective:** The narrator can only relate to the reader what is seen or heard. A good writer can tell a completely objective story in such a way that the reader is able to determine the feelings and sometimes even the thoughts of the characters through what those characters say and do, even though the thoughts and feelings are never described.

**e.g.** She arrived panting at the bus stop when the bus was already long gone. She looked at her watch and swore. "Damn warm blankets," she said. "Damn warm, purring cat." She sighed and walked along the sidewalk in the direction of her office building.

* **Third Person Limited:** The narrator is able to see into the mind of a single character. Sometimes the point of view may zoom in so close to that character that the narrator begins to use that character's manner of speech and thought, and sometimes the narrator may step back to take a more objective view. This point of view is sort of the "default" in fiction -- it is the most common because it can be used the most effectively in the majority of situations. If there is no reason not to use a third person limited point of view, then it is probably the best choice (but you will find it useful to experiment before choosing the point of view for any given story; third person limited may often work, but it isn't always the best point of view. Don't be afraid to use other points of view, just make sure you have a reason for your choice). In longer forms like novels, third person limited can be made even more effective by changing the character that the point of view is limited to. You must always be sure the reader knows when you have switched points of view and who you have changed to, however. If you are going to use shifting third person points of view, it is often best to change at a chapter or section break, at least until you are proficient enough at it that you won't lose your reader.

**e.g.** She arrived panting at the bus stop only to see a far-off glimpse of the back of the bus, moving quickly away. She glanced at her watch. It was already half past eight. "Damn warm blankets," she said, thinking of how it had felt to be curled up and warm in bed. She had argued with herself for an hour about how she should get going. She had stayed in bed so long she didn't even have time for a shower, and now she'd missed the bus. It was the warm cat curled up next to her that had made it so hard to get out of bed. "Damn warm, purring cat," she said, and headed along the sidewalk to work.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**Tone**  
Tone of voice is something you'll have whether you use your natural voice or an adopted voice. It reflects an attitude towards events and the world in general, and will affect the reader's perceptions of the work. If you recognize how you feel about what you are writing, you will be able to exploit those feelings and that tone to add to your writing.

Experiment with point of view and narrative voice to see what things you can do with them. Finding the right point of view and the right voice for each individual piece of fiction is vital. Getting one of them wrong can result in a story that just doesn't quite work.

**Directions: Read the following passages and determine the narrative perspective, then explain how you were able to identify the point of view.**

Narrative Perspective (point of view): first-person, second-person, third-person

**1. The Great Pizza Fight**

Bosco held the slice of pizza in his palm as the tomato sauce dripped through his fingers. He didn't know what to do. The restaurant was afire with slices of pizza flying through the air. Splat! A greasy slice of sausage splattered on Bosco’s table. The sauce splashed up and hit his friend Johnnie in the chest. "Ugh!" He shouted as he fell into Vince's arms.

Narrator’s Point of View:

Explain your Answer

**2. Cool Breeze on a Hot Day by Amy Scott**

"Ice cream! Ice cream!" I heard the street vendor shouting as he pushed his wheelbarrow down the block. Ice cream sounded really tasty on a day like this. I plunged my hands into my pockets and examined the contents: one pair of house keys, a pack of gum that was almost empty, and a few coins. I pulled the coins from my pockets and counted them. It didn't take long. Three hundred shillings. I saw a line of children from the neighbourhood in front of the street vendor. Each walked away happier than the former. My mouth tasted like hot ashes.

Narrator’s Point of View:

Explain your Answer

**3. Growing Tomatoes by Luke Pitts**

Your tomato plants may be resilient, but there are a couple things that you can do to help them grow rich and lush. First, you should water the tomato plant in the morning. Tomatoes grow best when they can aspirate, or drink water, all day in the sun. If you water them at night, they will have a harder time releasing excess water. Second, you should give them the correct amount of water. Follow the chart on page 67 to determine how much water you should give your tomato plants.

Narrator’s Point of View:

Explain your Answer

**4. Great Dane by Wilma Walker**

The dog licked Alice's face, leaving behind a sticky trail. "Yuck!" Alice shouted while wiping the wetness from off of her face. Alice didn't like the dog that her parents got her. She had wanted a cute little dog that could sit in her lap and wear tiny sweaters, not a great big hound that knocked over her dolls with its tail and left pools of salvia everywhere. "Go away!" Alice shouted at the great hulking beast. If the dog understood what she was saying, he didn't seem to show it.

Narrator’s Point of View: (Explain your Answer)

**Characterisation**

**Types of Characters in Fiction**

*"What does characterization do for a story? In a nutshell, it allows us to empathize with the protagonist and secondary characters, and thus feel that what is happening to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us; and it also gives us a sense of verisimilitude, or the semblance of living reality. An important part of characterization is dialogue, for it is both spoken and inward dialogue that afford us the opportunity to see into the characters' hearts and examine their motivations. In the best of stories, it is actually characterization that moves the story along, because a compelling character in a difficult situation creates his or her own plot."*  
  
Karen Bernardo, *Characterization in Literature*  
  
**Non-fiction** also contains characters who act within the story. Though these characters are real people in non-fiction, they still are represented in writing with the same tools and techniques as fictional characters. Non-fiction stories rely on the same reader empathy as fiction stories, so they must also contain sympathetic or interesting characters for the reader to follow. Because a reader may not know the real-life person in the story, an author must introduce and characterize the person just as a fiction writer would, including physical details and descriptions of their behavior.

**In fictional literature**, authors use many different types of characters to tell their stories. Different types of characters fulfill different roles in the narrative process, and with a little bit of analysis, you can usually detect some or all of the types below.

* Major or central characters are vital to the development and resolution of the conflict. In other words, the plot and resolution of conflict revolves around these characters.
* Minor characters serve to complement the major characters and help move the plot events forward.
* Dynamic - A dynamic character is a person who **changes over time**, usually as a result of resolving a central conflict or facing a major crisis. Most dynamic characters tend to be central rather than peripheral characters, because resolving the conflict is the major role of central characters.
* Static - A static character is someone who **does not change over time**; his or her personality does not transform or evolve.
* Round - A rounded character is anyone who has a **complex personality**; he or she is often portrayed as a conflicted and contradictory person.
* Flat - A flat character is the opposite of a round character. This literary personality is notable for **one kind of personality trait or characteristic**.
* Stock - Stock characters are those types of characters who have become **conventional or stereotypical** through *repeated use*in particular types of stories. Stock characters are instantly recognizable to readers or audience members (e.g. the femme fatale, the cynical but moral private eye, the mad scientist, the geeky boy with glasses, the comic relief, and the faithful sidekick). Stock characters are normally one-dimensional flat characters, but sometimes stock personalities are deeply conflicted, rounded characters (e.g. the "Hamlet" type).
* Protagonist - The protagonist is the central person in a story, and is often referred to as the story's main character. He or she (or they) is faced with a conflict that must be resolved. The protagonist may not always be admirable (e.g. an anti-hero); nevertheless, s/he must command involvement on the part of the reader, or better yet, empathy.
* Antagonist - The antagonist is the character(s) (or situation) that represents the opposition against which the protagonist must contend. In other words, the antagonist is an obstacle that the protagonist must overcome.
* Anti-Hero - A major character, usually the protagonist, who lacks conventional nobility of mind, and who struggles for values not deemed universally admirable. They can be vulgar, manipulative and self-centred e.g. HOUSE OF CARDS TV show…Nevertheless, they are the centre of the story and we are drawn to the challenges they must overcome and the goals they seek to achieve.
* Foil - A foil is any character (usually the antagonist or an important supporting character) whose personal qualities contrast with another character (usually the protagonist). By providing this contrast, we get to know more about the other character.
* Symbolic - A symbolic character is any major or minor character whose very existence represents some major idea or aspect of society.
* Direct presentation (or characterization) - This refers to what the speaker or [narrator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrator) **directly says or thinks** **about a character**. In other words, in a direct characterization, the reader is ***told***what the character is like. When Dickens describes Scrooge like this: "I present him to you: Ebenezer Scrooge....the most tight fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!" - this is very direct characterization!
* Indirect presentation (or characterization) - This refers to what the *character* says or does. The reader then **infers** what the character is all about. This mimics how we understand people in the real world, since we can't "get inside their heads". In other words, in an indirect characterization, it's ***the reader*** who is obliged to figure out what the character is like. And sometimes the reader will get it wrong.

**Ten (Direct or Indirect) Ways in which a Character Can Be Revealed**  
a. By psychological description.  
b. By physical description.  
c. By probing what s/he thinks.  
d. By what s/he says.  
e. By how s/he says it.  
f. By what s/he does.  
g. By what others say about him or her.  
h. By his or her environment.  
i. By her reaction to others.  
j. By his reaction to himself.

**http://learn.lexiconic.net/images/redbut.gifThings to Remember:**

1. Literary characters may embody more than one of these character types at the same time. A dynamic character may also be the antagonist, and a protagonist can also be, say, a flat and stock character (i.e. the one-dimensional hero).
2. Here's a **very common mistake**: while characters are often round and dynamic, that does not mean these two terms mean the same thing. The former refers to a character's **complexity**, while the latter refers to a character's **development** over time. Students also make this mistake with flat and static characters.

**Understanding Conflict**

External conflict used to be the primary form of conflict in genre or popular fiction. Only in more literary works did heroes grow, change, or even question themselves much. Your genre fiction protagonist knew he or she was a better person than the villain and had no reason to change. So the tension in the story was all about whether the hero could outwit or outfight the villain at the climax, which made for rather shallow characterization.

Today however, even writers of children's books and cartoons put much more emotional depth in their stories by giving their main character’s **internal conflict as well as external conflict**. Here's an easy way to distinguish between the two in terms:

**EXTERNAL CONFLICT**

The best way to understand external conflict is that it relates to the Story Goal. Every story is an effort to solve or resolve a problem or achieve a goal. The Story Goal is the outcome being sought (and this Goal propels the plot).

While most of the characters in your story will be involved in or affected by this effort in some way or other, the main external conflict will be between two characters.

* Your Protagonist will be the primary character who pursues the Story Goal and the person whose action or choice determines the outcome.
* Your Antagonist will be the character opposed to the Story Goal, who wants the Protagonist to fail, and who does everything in his/her power to make sure the Goal is not attained.

In literature classes, we were taught that external conflict came in several varieties:

* Man vs. Man (Or to be politically correct Person vs. Person)
* Person vs. Nature
* Person vs. Society
* Person vs. Machine
* Person vs. some supernatural agency such as gods, demons, fate, etc.

However, we can simplify this and say your Antagonist can be dressed up in any guise (as a person, animal, force of nature, monster, society, institution, machine, abstract idea, etc.). All that matters is that he/she/it can effectively oppose the Protagonist's effort to achieve the goal.

*Most of the time, human Antagonists are the source of external conflict in stories, simply because Protagonists tend to be human and a conflict between two evenly matched opponents is more interesting. The outcome is less certain. It wouldn't be much of a fight, after all to pit your macho hero against a lowly earthworm – unless you give that earthworm some unnatural abilities to even out the odds.*

Similarly, a reader might have a hard time accepting a human who wrestles Mother Nature to the ground, unless Mother Nature had somehow been dethroned and lost all her powers. Otherwise, battling gods or Nature is a futile endeavour, the subject of tragedy. For instance, in Ernest Hemingway's novel The Old Man and the Sea, the sea is the Antagonist which thwarts the old fisherman's goal of taking home a prize fish. The Sea doesn't do this intentionally. It isn't even possessed of consciousness or intelligence (except perhaps in the man's mind). It's just a force too powerful to be beaten.

*You might expect that an external conflict between a person and society would be similar. Like Nature, society is also a large entity, seemingly too big for a single person to combat. That's how it's portrayed in novels such as George Orwell's 1984. However, Western culture also has a fondness for Protagonists who stand up to society and win.*

Of course, no matter how evenly or unevenly matched your Protagonist and Antagonist are, external conflict alone is often not enough to sustain your readers' interest. You see, readers will come to know your main character throughout the course of your story. They know what type of person he/she is, his abilities, and his approach to solving problems. And if all your main character has to contend with is external conflict, the story can appear a little **two-dimensional** - even if you portray the external conflict in an interesting and unexpected way.

If you really want to give your story some depth, you need **internal conflict.**

**Internal Conflict**

* Internal conflict concerns your main character's self-doubt - his or her dilemma over the best way to achieve the Story Goal. All of us have been in situations where we were outside our comfort zone, where we were uncertain if our usual way of being or behaving is the right way to achieve our goals.
* For instance, suppose you spend several years at university being the life of the party and hanging out with very laid-back, unpretentious, Arts students. Then one day, you have your first job interview with a really big company. This prospect leads to some internal conflict.
* How should you present yourself at the interview?
* Should you change your appearance and personality to look like someone who would fit in with the corporate world? Should you buy a suit and some real shoes, get a haircut, etc.?
* Is it time to drop swear words and colloquial language from your vocabulary?
* Maybe you should lose your cynicism about the corporate world and start gushing optimism and enthusiasm?
* On the other hand, you might decide to stick with who you are. After all, you've had success with your approach in other endeavours. You get along well with people. The interviewers might value honesty over pretension. Maybe this company has a more relaxed atmosphere that rewards individuality and creativity more than conformity? Maybe you would find more happiness working for a company that better fits your values? Either way, no matter how well you research the company ahead of time, you still won't know for certain the right way to present yourself until you actually get a job offer.

**In this scenario, the external conflict is you vs. all the other applicants competing for the job. The internal conflict is your dilemma over the best way to present yourself at the interview.**

**Readers relate to characters who have internal conflicts as well as external conflicts**. More importantly, your main character's internal conflict creates suspense, because readers won't know how he will resolve his personal dilemma until the moment of crisis. Will your main character make the right choice? What is the right choice? These questions keep your readers interested in the story.

* To repeat: your main character will begin your story with a habitual way of handling problems. However, in the course of pursing the Story Goal and coping with the external conflict, the main character should start to feel internal conflict about whether his way of doing things will result in victory.
* The best way to create this internal conflict is to have your main character encounter an Impact Character – a character with a very different approach to solving problems. The main character then has a reason to wonder whose approach is better – his or the impact character's.

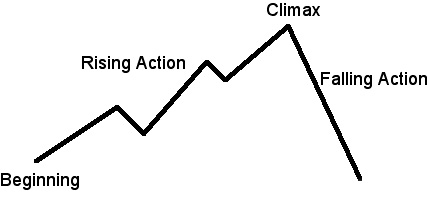
*For instance, in the above scenario, let's imagine you have a roommate who's also applying for jobs. But unlike you, he fits the corporate mould perfectly. He's the kind of guy who wore a suit and tie to his university classes. He speaks the language of the corporate world naturally and espouses corporate values. Plus, he's so optimistic and confident about his chances of landing the perfect job that you start to wonder whether you should change your style to match his.* ***Other examples from our own work?***

**a) Plot: Setting & Structure.**

A. **Plot**

**Definition of Plot:**  Events that form a significant pattern of action with a beginning, a middle and an end.  They move from one place or event to another in order to form a pattern, usually with the purpose of overcoming a conflict. The plot is more formally called a **narrative**.

**Elements of Plot:**



**Beginning**  
   
1. **Plot Line:**  a graph plotting the ups and downs of the central character's fortunes.  A very conventional plot might look like the one above.

2. **Initial Situation**

i. [**Characters**](http://learn.lexiconic.net/characters.htm): Who are the central characters?  What do they aspire to?  
ii. [**Setting**](http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsoffiction.htm#setting): Where/when do the characters live? Does the setting contribute to the narrative?  
iii. [**Conflicts**](http://learn.lexiconic.net/elementsoffiction.htm#conflict): What are the challenges facing the protagonist(s)? What are the conflict(s) that he or she (or they) will have to overcome?

The beginning is often called the **introduction**or **exposition**. By establishing the characters, setting and initial conflicts, the beginning "sets the scene" for the rest of the narrative. Dickens' famous opening line in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," is a classic piece of exposition that helps establish the social and political background of the novel.  
  
  
  
**Rising Action**  
  
3.**Incentive Moment:**

i. Which event thrusts itself into the tension of the characters' situation and triggers the action of the story? A new event frequently jostles the smoothness of things and changes the course of action.

4. **Episodes:**  After the introduction, a story usually presents a series of separate events in the plot, building from one situation to the next.  A new episode (or scene) begins when the place and time change, or when something really important interrupts what has been happening. With each successive episode, the conflict becomes more and more intense, demanding some sort of resolution.  
  
  
**The Climax**  
  
5. **Climax:**  the critical point at which the central character is about to win or lose all.  When the probable outcome of the main conflict is finally revealed (i.e. the turning point), the story has reached its climax.  In a Shakespearian tragedy, the climax occurs when the main character's "momentum" switches from success to failure.  Beyond that point, the ending is inevitable. However, the climax does not mark the end of conflict**;** it only determines how the conflict will be decided. The climax usually occurs anywhere from 50% to 90% of the completed story.  
  
**Falling Action**  
  
6. **Falling Action (or Resolution or Denouement):** the events that occur after the climax that tie up "loose ends"; they perform the necessary plot actions to fulfill the protagonist's fortunes that are now clear after the climax. It is a tricky part of a narrative to write as the author has to decide which parts of the plot to tie up and which to leave as questions for the reader to think about (or leave for a future story). Part of the decision regarding what to tie up and what to leave open often depends on the extent to which the author wants to satisfy the reader's need for a sense of justice or closure.

7. **Epilogue:** the part that tells the reader what happens to the characters well **after** the story is finished. It's seen in longer narratives (like novels and movies) rather than short fiction, but even then it is only used occasionally. 

**RULES FOR WRITING DIALOGUE**

The following rules should help you learn to write dialogue properly. Notice the punctuation in the following examples, especially. In addition to these hints on form, please remember that dialogue should be natural for the characters speaking (be sure to keep in mind your characters’ personality traits).

1. Use quotation marks around the words which the character says:

“It’s sure cold out here,” Mark said.

2. Begin a new paragraph each time a different person speaks – this can help to cut down on the number of dialogue tags required.

“Did you say your prayers tonight?”

“I meant to, but I got to trying to cipher out how much twelve times thirteen is, and - ” “Oh, we are lost beyond all help! How could you neglect such a thing at such a time as this?”

Remember to indent the beginning of each dialogue paragraph, just as you would in any other type of writing.

3. Only the exact words of a person are in quotation marks. Also, when splitting a quotation with a dialogue tag, do not capitalize words which do not begin new sentences.

“I really don’t know,” he said, “whether she loves me or not.”

4. When several sentences are quoted together to form a paragraph, put just one set of quotation marks around the whole quotation. If someone gives a long speech, for example.

5. Periods and commas are always placed inside the quotation marks.

6. An exclamation point (!) or a question mark (?) is placed inside the quotation marks when it punctuates a quotation, but outside the quotation when it punctuates the main sentence.

She looked at me and asked, “Are you alright?”

(? punctuates the quote)

Did the teacher really say, “Finish this today”?

(? punctuates the main sentence)

**Problem: What About Complete Sentences?**

* Sometimes, our school teachers encourages us to speak and write in complete sentences .e.g.

                  “Good morning, James. It’s nice to see you again.”

                  “Thank you, Lisa, you as well. How have you been?”

                  “I’ve been very well lately, thank you, and you?”

**BUT: who talks like that?!**

Unless you’re writing dialogue in complete sentences for one character in your work of fiction, perhaps to emphasize a cultural difference or a high-class upbringing, few people really talk that way. What worked for Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* isn’t going to work with today’s readers.

* **Now what?**

I’ll let you in on a secret. You’re going to have to disappoint your English teachers.

Try an experiment. Go to a public place and eavesdrop. It helps maintain your cover if you’re not obvious about it, but just listen to the flow of conversation around you. You’re likely to hear snippets:

                  “Hey, man.”

                  “No.”

                  “Shut up.”

                  “Get lost, will you?”

                  “Pregnant? Julie?”

                  “I can’t— no, I don’t feel—”

Not many of these are complete sentences, by grammatical standards. but they’re what people generally use in conversation.

* It’s not a crime to use a complete sentence—“Get away from me, Jim, before I call the police”—but opportunities don’t come up very often. Dialogue will flow and read more naturally on the page if you train yourself to write the way you hear people around you speaking.
* **B. Problem: Punctuating Dialogue**

Periods, commas, ellipses, quotation marks, you get the idea.

Don’t panic. Punctuating dialogue doesn’t have to be complicated, and your editor and proof-reader will thank you for putting in the extra effort.

Here’s what you need to know about the most common punctuation in dialogue:

* When dialogue ends with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark, put the punctuation inside the quotation mark:

                  “Sam came by to see you.”

                  “Come home with me?”

                  “I hate you!”

* When punctuating dialogue with commas and an attribution before the dialogue, the comma goes after the attribution, and the appropriate punctuation mark goes inside the quotation mark at the end of the dialogue:

                  Mom said, “Sam came by to see you.”

* When punctuating dialogue with commas and adding an attribution after the dialogue, the comma goes inside the quotation mark:

                  “She came home with me,” Will said.

* When you’re punctuating dialogue with commas and adding a pronoun attribution, the comma goes inside the quotation mark, and the pronoun is not capitalized:

                  “I hate you,” she said.

* With dialogue that trails away, as though the speaker has gotten distracted, use an ellipsis inside the quotation mark:

                  “I just don’t know …” Jenny said.

* When dialogue is abruptly interrupted or cut off, use an em-dash inside the quotation mark:

                  “Well, I don’t think—”

                  “Because you *never* think!”

* For a non-dialogue beat to break up a line of dialogue, use either commas or em-dashes:

                  “And then I realized,” Jane said with a sigh, “that he lied to me.”

                  “Without the antidote”—Matt shook his head—“I don’t think we can save him.”

* When the speaker has started to say one thing, and changed his or her mind to say something else, use the em-dash:

                  “I don’t want to—I mean, I *won’t* hurt her.”

* Note that semicolons and colons are rarely used in most contemporary fiction. They tend to appear too academic on the page, and if you use one or the other, or both, you run the risk of reminding the reader that they’re reading a story. Try not to do anything that breaks that fourth wall and calls attention to the mechanics of the story itself.

**C. Problem: The Great He Said/She Opined Debate**

* Another subject covered in English classes is the importance of using synonyms and avoiding repetition. Thousands of budding writers all over the world heard those words and deduced that they would be penalized if they repeated the word *said* in any work of fiction they ever wrote. So they dutifully found thesauruses and started looking up other words to use.
* I’d like to submit that thousands of budding writers have been misled.

Stop! Do not touch your thesaurus to find another word that means *said*. The attribution *said* is fine. In fact, when readers are skimming along through a novel at warp speed, the word *said* is just like a punctuation mark—it doesn’t even register in readers’ minds (unless used incorrectly, and it would be hard to do that). But if you draw attention to the mechanics of your story with dialogue like this, you’re guaranteed to lose your reader in total frustration:

*“Luke,” she opined, “I need you.”*

*“Rihanna,” he implored, “I know you think you do, but—”*

*“No!” she wailed. “Please!”*

*Chris shouted, “You don’t know what you’re talking about!”*

*“You’re being so mean to me,” Rihanna wept.*

* With an exchange like that one, you might as well run screaming out of the book straight at the reader, waving a neon sign that says: **HEY, DON’T FORGET THAT THIS IS ONLY A WORK OF FICTION AND THESE CHARACTERS AREN’T REAL!!!**

Why would you nail yourself into your own proverbial coffin like that? Instead, if you need an attribution, use *said*. If you must use something different for the occasional question, you could throw in “asked” for variety, but not too often.

**DRAMA**

**Definition of Drama**

The word drama comes from a Greek word meaning to “do” or to “act”. The word theatre also comes from a Greek word meaning to “see” or to “view”. These words/ideas – “doing or seeing” describe clearly what drama is. They refer to both the play and its performance. In drama, a story is told through actions and dialogue.

In drama, participants or actors pretend to be people or things which they are not in reality. The performance is usually carried out for entertainment. It also carries a message. Drama or theatre, a story is told through actions/ or spectacle through the use of sound and visual effects.

Drama differs from a novel in that drama vs intended to be acted or performed on stage. It is a much more precise and its end usually timed. There is no room for long description or explanation. Characters in drama are therefore much more articulate than in novels or real life.

**Subject matter**

The subject matter is the topic of discussion in the play. In many plays, the subject matter is extracted from the title of the play. In Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* for instance, the theme could be tradition versus modernity or to be more explicit, the triumph of African Tradition over Western Culture but the subject is the fame of Sidi (the Jewel) a young and beautiful girl and her fall through her a seduction by the Bale (the Lion) who is old enough to be her father. In many plays, the title explains the subject matter. This play presents a relationship between the Lion, Bale and the Jewel, Sidi. This alliance does not only affect her growing fame adversely but also deprives her of a marriage to a younger man, Lakunle. So in the play, the title illuminates the subject matter of the play. Also, in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, Efua Sutherland explores the theme of love but the subject matter is how Ananse marries his daughter to a chief she has never met.

**The Story**

Every play tells an imaginary story through action. This story is the unification of the events or incidents in the play in such a way that it forms a coherent whole. The story holds the audience and raises its expectations on this or that aspect of the play as it progresses. They watch or read the play following the story with keen interest as they want to know what happens next. A good play tells an interesting story and holds the audience spellbound while an uninteresting story sends it to sleep.

**What is Plot**

Plot is the organization of the vents of a play. In simple terms, it is the arrangement of the story in the play so that it will have a beginning, middle and an end. In the novel, the novelist presents his plot by describing the characters, their actions and the environment where they operate, their motivations, their hopes, and aspirations, but the playwright presents his plot mainly through dialogue in the interaction of the characters.

Aristotle sees plot as the most important element of drama. He refers to it as the soul of tragedy. A good plot should have a beginning, middle and an end.

**Characters**

Like I said in the introduction, characters could be human beings, they could be animals as we find in allegorical plays. When you create your human characters, you should endow them with moral and dispositional qualities to make them real. You know that as a playwright you do not have the time and space for vivid description of characters, events and the environment like the novelist. You should therefore give the necessary information about characters through the dramatis personae at the beginning of the play, stage directions and through the dialogue. It is only through these means that you can present your comments on the character’s age, his physical attributes, his mode of dressing, his temperament and other information you need.

**Characterization**

Characters live on stage as they act out the story. Characterization is the ability of portraying/creating the characters. The aspect of your conceptualization that gives birth to the characters is called characterization. In your imagination you create these characters and decide the best attribute for each of them. When you form/conceive your idea, the next step is to develop it and then think of appropriate characters you will need to tell your/their story effectively. Your ability to create the right characters, make them appear at the right places at the right time, say the right or wrong things (depending on the effect you want to create) at the appropriate or inappropriate times and places is referred to as characterization.

**Movement**

Drama thrives on action. Characters in the play are involved in action and the performance of the play; the action is realized through the movement of the characters on stage. As a playwright you must learn to inject action into your play to make it vibrant and interesting. The action is realized in movement on stage. If you do not have sufficient action in your play, it becomes drab ad boring. You should be aware of the entrances, exists and other movements of your characters. It is not only the director that concerns himself with movement on stage.

**POETRY**

**Three Genres of Poetry**

The great philosopher Aristotle suggested that poetry is divided into **three genres**: comedy, tragedy and epic. Aristotle claimed comedy is an imitation of what is inferior in a way that is laughable. He then said that both tragedies and epics are made to portray suffering in a way to produce certain effects with the only difference between the two being epics used in a one-verse form and is narrative. Today, poetry is still considered the owner of the three main poetic forms: [**lyric**](http://www.poemofquotes.com/articles/lyric-poetry-types.php)**,** [**narrative**](http://www.poemofquotes.com/articles/narrative-poetry-history-and-use.php)**, dramatic.** Each form can then be divided into many subdivisions, each consisting of a [rhyme scheme](http://www.poemofquotes.com/articles/rhyme-glossary.php), rhythm and/or style.

Lyric

An emotional writing focusing on thought and emotion - can consist of a song-like quality. Subdivisions include elegy, ode and sonnet. Lyric poetry does not attempt to tell a story. Popular lyric poems include the works of [Sappho](http://www.poemofquotes.com/sappho/), "Go, lovely Rose" by Edmund Waller and the many sonnets of [William Shakespeare](http://www.poemofquotes.com/williamshakespeare/).

Narrative

A poem which tells a story. Includes the subdivision epic, a long story which tells of the heroic ideals of a particular society, and ballad, which generally tell of an event of interest such as a crime. Ballads were originally intended to be sung while dancing. Popular narrative works are "The Canterbury Tales" by [Geoffrey Chaucer](http://www.poemofquotes.com/geoffreychaucer/), "The Divine Comedy" by [Dante](http://www.poemofquotes.com/dantealighieri/), "Hiawatha" by [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](http://www.poemofquotes.com/henrywadsworthlongfellow/), "[Raven](http://www.poemofquotes.com/edgarallanpoe/raven.php)" by [Edgar Allan Poe](http://www.poemofquotes.com/edgarallanpoe/), "

Dramatic

Any drama written in verse which is meant to be spoken, usually to tell a story or portray a situation. The majority of dramatic poetry is written in **blank verse**. Other forms of dramatic poetry include, but are not limited to, dramatic monologues, rhyme verse and closet drama. Important **dramatic works** include those by Shakespeare, [Ben Jonson](http://www.poemofquotes.com/benjonson/) and [Christopher Marlowe](http://www.poemofquotes.com/christophermarlowe/).

These three genres--lyrical, narrative, and dramatic--create an important presence in writing around the world and make **up** [**every type of poetry**](http://www.poemofquotes.com/articles/poetry_forms.php) ever created.

This is because each of these three genres can easily be divided into sub-groups and those sub-groups into more sub-groups and so on and so forth. Essentially, they can make up an endless amounts of styles using endless amounts of techniques. **New styles are created almost every day with the most famous being picked up by poetry journals around the world. Eg in Uganda, poetry is currently very popular.** With the emergence of the internet, the amount of poetry being read around the world has only increased and will continue to increase at the same pace for years to come.

**Popular Poetry Forms (that are also easy to write)**

[ABC](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/abc)

**Definition**

See note below: Poetry in which every word begins with a successive letter of the alphabet. The first word begins with A, the second with B, etc. (OR) A poem that has 5 lines that create a mood, picture, or feeling. Lines 1 through 4 are made up of words, phrases or clauses - and the first word of each line is in alphabetical order from the first word. Line 5 is one sentence, beginning with any letter.  
  
Note: ABC as a form has been used to describe anything from an Abecedarian poem (above), to an Acrostic poem, and other things. ABC typically has been used as a catch-all for sequential alphabet poems that may not necessarily use the entire alphabet like an Abecedarian poem. So, in reality, "ABC" is just an acrostic poem using successive letters of the alphabet per line or stanza.

**Example:** A better cat doesn't exist, four gentle hearts insist. Juggling kittens, leaping, mewing, now overturning pillows--quietly rush, sustain terror--understand: Vitality will explode yawning zzz's! (by LaVerna B. Johnson)

(OR)

Although things are not perfect  
Because of trial or pain  
Continue in thanksgiving  
Do not begin to blame  
Even when the times are hard  
Fierce winds are bound to blow

[Acrostic](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/acrostic) **Or Name Poems**

**Definition**

A poem, usually in verse, in which the first or the last letters of the lines, or certain other letters, taken in order, form a name, word, phrase, or motto.

**Example**

Here is an example in English, an Edgar Allan Poe poem titled simply *An Acrostic*:

***E****lizabeth it is in vain you say*  
*"****L****ove not" — thou sayest it in so sweet a way:*  
***I****n vain those words from thee or L.E.L.*  
***Z****antippe's talents had enforced so well:*  
***A****h! if that language from thy heart arise,*  
***B****reath it less gently forth — and veil thine eyes.*  
***E****ndymion, recollect, when Luna tried*  
***T****o cure his love — was cured of all beside —*  
***H****is follie — pride — and passion — for he died.*

While a name verse poem can be as simple as using an adjective to describe a person that begins with each letter of that person's name, these poems can also be far more beautiful works of art. For example, here is a name poem for a person named *Alexis*:

[Ballad](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/ballad)

**Definition: A story in a song**, usually a narrative song or poem. Any form of story may be told as a ballad (not to be confused with a ballade), ranging from accounts of historical events to fairy tales in verse form. It is usually with foreshortened alternating four- and three-stress lines ('ballad meter') and simple repeating rhymes, and often with a refrain.  
  
A popular kind of narrative poem, adapted for recitation or singing; esp., a sentimental or romantic poem in short stanzas.

**Example**

ANNABEL LEE : by Edgar Allan Poe  
(1849)  
  
It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;--  
And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.  
She was a child and I was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we loved with a love that was more than love--  
I and my Annabel Lee--  
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven  
Coveted her and me.  
  
And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud by night  
Chilling my Annabel Lee;  
So that her high-born kinsman came  
In her sepulchre there by the sea--  
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

[Bio](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/bio)

**Definition**

A poem written about one self's life, personality traits, and ambitions.

**Example**

Line 1: First name  
Line 2: Four traits that describe you  
Line 3: Brother/ Sister of ... (may substitute son/daughter of)  
Line 4: Lover of ... (Give names of three people or ideas)  
Line 5: Who feels ... (Give three feelings)  
Line 6: Who fears ... (Give three items)  
Line 7: Who would like to see ... (Give three items)  
Line 8: Resident of ... (Give city and state)  
Line 9: Last name only  
  
Example: Devin Dusseau  
  
Devin  
Mother, daughter, friend, teacher  
Sister of Deanna, Denise, and Danny  
Lover of Grace, flowers, and Michigan Football  
Who feels pain, love, and excitement  
Who fears failure, loss, and large spiders  
Who would like to see Florence, Hawaii, and Brazil  
Resident of Adrian, Michigan  
Dusseau

[Blank verse](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/blank_verse)

**Definition**

A type of poetry, distinguished by having a regular meter, but no rhyme. In English, the meter most commonly used with blank verse has been iambic pentameter. The iambic pentameter form often resembles the rhythms of speech. Verse that does not employ a rhyme scheme. Blank verse, however, is not the same as free verse because it employs a meter e.g. Paradise Lost by John Milton which is written in iambic pentameters.

**Example**

You stars that reign'd at my nativity,  
Whose influence hath alloted death and hell,  
Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist  
Into the entrails of yon labouring clouds,  
That when they vomit forth into the air,  
My limbs may issue from their smoky mouths,  
So that my soul may but ascend to Heaven.

[Free verse](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/free_verse)

**Definition**

A term describing various styles of poetry that are not written using strict meter or rhyme, but that still are recognizable as 'poetry' by virtue of complex patterns of one sort or another that readers can perceive to be part of a coherent whole.

**Example**

Fog  
by Carl Sandburg

THE FOG comes  
on little cat feet.  
  
It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

[Narrative](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/narrative)

**Definition**

Narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story. In its broadest sense, it includes epic poetry; some would reserve the name narrative poetry for works on a smaller scale and generally with more direct appeal to human interest than the epic.

**Free Verse Poems**

Because free verse poems are the least well defined, there are numerous examples of free verse poems. This excerpt from *This is Marriage*, is by Marianne Moore is one such example:

This institution, perhaps one should say enterprise out of respect for which one says one need not change one's mind about a thing one has believed in, requiring public promises of one's intention to fulfil a private obligation: I wonder what Adam and Eve think of it by this time, this fire-gilt steel alive with goldenness;

This excerpt from *Little Father* by Li-Young Lee is another example of free verse poetry:

I buried my father in my heart.

Now he grows in me, my strange son,

My little root who won’t drink milk,

Little pale foot sunk in unheard-of night,

Little clock spring newly wet

In the fire little grape, parent to the future

Wine, a son the fruit of his own son,

Little father I ransom with my life.

**Epic Poems**

An epic is a long and narrative poem that normally tells a story about a hero or an adventure. Epics can be oral stories or can be poems in written form.  *The Illiad* and the *Odyssey* are examples of famous epic poems, as is *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

***The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

By the shore of Gitchie Gumee,

By the shining Big-Sea-Water,

At the doorway of his wigwam,

In the pleasant Summer morning,

Hiawatha stood and waited.

**Ballad Poems**

Ballad poems also tell a story, like epic poems do. However, ballad poetry is often based on a **legend or a folk tale**. Ballad poems may take the form of songs and may contain a moral or a lesson.

***The Mermaid* by Unknown author**

Oh the ocean waves may roll,

And the stormy winds may blow,

While we poor sailors go skipping aloft