**What is Poetry?** It is a literary work in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm; poems collectively or as a genre of literature.

So, the obvious question that lies before us is ‘What makes a poem…a poem?’ Poetry generally has certain recognisable characteristics.

**One –** poems emphasise language’s musical qualities. This can be achieved through rhyme and rhythm.

**Two –** poems use condensed language.

**Three –** poems often feature intense feelings.

Poetry, like art itself, has a way of challenging simple definitions. What should also be kept in mind is that a poem does not need to be lyrical. Poetry has a shape that we usually recognise. Its line breaks help readers navigate the rhythms of a poem.

But even if the line breaks are not there, we could still have a prose poem. These poems use vivid images and wordplay but are formatted like paragraphs. When we look at poetry less as a form and more as a concept, we can see the poetic all around us.

These could be found in all kinds of places from spiritual hymns to social media. Poetry has evolved over time and perhaps now more than ever, the line between poetry, prose, song and visual art has blurred.

However, what remains constant is the fact that the word poetry actually began in verb form, coming from the ancient Greek *poiesis*, which means to create.

Poets, like craftsman, still work with the raw materials of the world to come up with new understandings and comment on what it is to be human in a way only humans can. Researchers in Dartmouth tested this idea by asking robots to write poetry.

A panel of judges sorted through stacks of submissions to see if they could distinguish those made by man and machine. Predictably enough, even though scientists have successfully used artificial intelligence in manufacturing, medicine, and even journalism, poetry is a different story.

The robots were caught red-handed 100% of the time.

As human beings we are all creatures of habit. Our schedules, routines, and time tables are largely characterised by repetition and certain set patterns. But we do not just live our lives with these and obviously rely on emotions, feelings and imagination to relate to the world around us.

In language, rhythm and repetition are often used as the building blocks of poetry. There is the rhythm of language. With so many uses, repetition is one of the poet’s most malleable and reliable tools.

It can lift or lull the listener, amplify or diminish the line, unify or diversify ideas. Even rhythm itself is a form of repetition. Yet for all its varied uses, too much repetition can backfire. Imagine writing the same sentence on the blackboard 20 times, again and again, and again and again.

Or imagine a young child clamouring for her mother’s attention, ‘Mom, mom, mommy, mom, mom’. Not exactly what we might call poetry. So, what is poetic repetition and why does it work?

Possibly most familiar is rhyme, the repetition of like sounds in word endings. Repetition in a sense creates an expectation. We begin to listen for the repetition of those similar sounds. When we hear them, the found pattern is somewhat pleasurable.

We hear the echo in the oral chatter. Yet, rhyme need not surface solely at a line’s end. You could have alliteration or front rhyme. Great examples include tongue twisters.

Betty bought some butter but the butter was bitter so Betty bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better. Here the pleasure in pattern is apparent as we trip over the front rhyme.

But tongue twisters also perhaps highlight the need for variation in poetic repetition. While challenging to say, they are seen by some as lesser imitations of poetry because they hammer so heavily on the same sounds closer to that blackboard style of repetition.

Ultimately, this is the poet’s balancing act, learning when to repeat, when to riff (a short repeated phrase), when to satisfy expectations and when to thwart them, and in that balance it may be enough to remember that we all live in a world of wide variation and carry with us our own rhythm and beat, our own repetition wherever we go.