

History through Poetry



10th Grade

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From St. John's Gospel

In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.

In him was life;
And the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in the darkness.

En arche en ho logos
Kai ho logos en, pres ton theon,
Kai theos en ho logos
Houtos en en arche, pres ton theon.

En auto tyoe en
Kai he tyoe en
To phos, ton anthropen,
Kai to phos en te skotis phainei.

Quotes on Poetry.

"Poetry should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts and appear almost as a remembrance."

~ John Keats

Poetry should be relatable to the reader, and the experiences or thoughts described in a poem should seem like the reader's own personal memory rather than the poet's.

"Poetry teaches the enormous force of a few words."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

By listening to poetry one can learn the power of just a few words. A few carefully chosen words can evoke joy, pain, nostalgia, and other emotions in the flash of a moment.

"I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of Beauty."

~ Edgar Allan Poe

He would describe poetry as a form of rhythmic words that is the creation and heart of all beauty.



Introduction to Poetry

There are many different art forms: poetry, music, dance, painting, photography, etc., and yet only poetry and music can be performed with nothing but the human body. Poetry is an ephemeral art that takes nothing — only air — and turns it into a world of words floating like little boats on the river of one's breath. Poetry is meant to be heard, making it very personal as no two people sound or speak alike. A person's larynx is as individual as his fingerprint.

Ancient people believed that poetry was the greatest truth and wisdom of all time and the poet was considered a wise man and great leader, almost like a priest. The names of time periods were even named for the poets: the Age of Homer ~ 800 - 600 B.C.E., the Age of Dante ~ 13th century, the Age of Shakespeare ~ 16th century, etc. In fact, ancient people believed that poetry was so important that the creation of the world occurred through the spoken word. In St. John's Gospel, first written in Greek, it says:

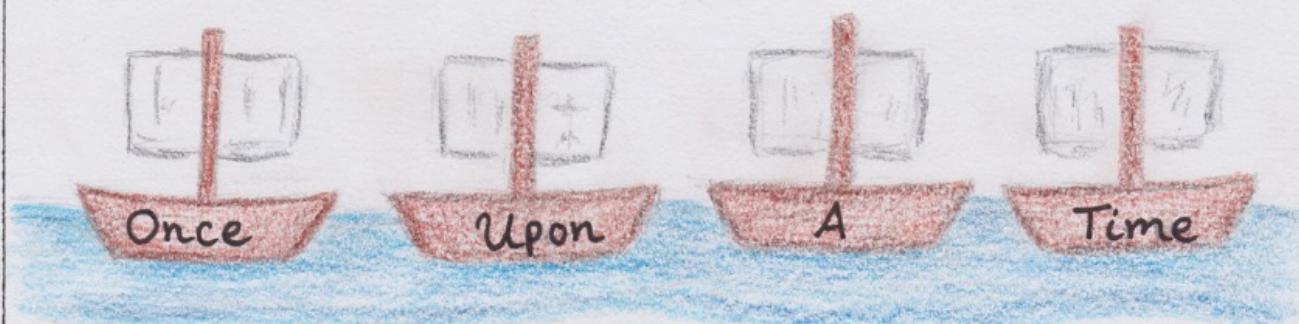
"In the beginning was the Word."

Similarly an ancient Mexican saying goes:

"In the beginning the Word gave origin to the Father."

To name something was to give it a reality. In the biblical story of Adam and Eve, Adam is instructed to name all the animals. As he names each creature, it comes into existence.

People believed that the spoken word was truth, and therefore a binding contract. Words could do harm, and words could heal. They were not only considered a sacred truth, but also the identity of the person who uttered them.



Quotes on Wonder

A Great Time

Sweet chance, that led my steps abroad
Beyond the town, where wild flowers grow—
A rainbow and a cuckoo, Lord!
How rich and great times are now!

Know, all ye sheep
And cows that keep
On staring that I stand so long
In grass that's wet from heavy rain—
A rainbow and a cuckoo's song
May never come together again,
May never come
This side the tomb.

~ W.H. Davies



Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.
~ Greek proverb

My gazing soul could dwell an hour
On some gilded cloud or flower.
~ Henry Vaughn

I wish as a gift to each child in the world a sense
of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout
life as an unfailing antidote against boredom and
disenchantment of later years: the sterile preoccupation
with things artificial, the alienation from the sources
of our strength.

~ Rachel Carson

Wonder

One of the five capacities of the poet is wonder — openness to the world, a sense of reverence and devotion. When one has a sense of wonder, he/she cannot be prejudiced. Children are born full of wonder, and it is only later that they are influenced by the biased opinions of others around them. A poet must connect to the child in him or herself, the part that has wonder for every aspect of life.

In the time of ancient Greece there were centers called Mystery Centers, which had secret communities of chosen priests who studied the mysteries of the universe. These centers had initiation rites for the young boys who wished to join their studies. A boy would be sent out into the forest with some supplies and would be left to live there on his own. The majority of boys would return after a week or two, or even a month. But it was only the one who remained in the wilderness for six months, the one who needed to be called back to the center that was accepted as an initiate. These boys could endure solitude, and had a strong sense of wonder that allowed them to find companionship in nature.

A good poet can spend long periods of time in solitude; for it is only then that his observations are most successful. He becomes a scientist as he observes the world minutely in order to make specific, carefully phrased analogies. One could even say that all poets are scientists and that all scientists are poets.



Moment of Wonder

I stood still for a moment and studied the ground. It was a clear, crisp summer morning in late June, and I was climbing up the steep, rocky slope of a Dolomite mountain with a photography tour group. Every step I took would set off mini avalanches of rocks down the mountain, making it hard to get a strong grip. I took in a few shallow breaths and tried to focus on finding good footing, aware of my heavy backpack whose weight was pulling me away from the mountainside, aware of the chance that I could fall, and more aware than ever of my mortality.

After climbing up the mountain for a while, we moved along at the same latitude to cross a section of snow; it would be easier to go over the mountain from the other side of it.

Although it was summer, there was plenty of snow on the mountains, and it was as icy and cold as if it was the middle of winter. Sighing in frustration, I dug a ledge into the snow with my foot, thrust my hiking pole deep into the ice beside me, and shifted my weight. Each step was an opportunity to lose my balance and fall down the steep, slippery slope of the mountain. Breathing deeply and leaning on my hiking pole, I took another step, and then another, slowly crossing over the snow to get to the rocks on the other side.

Finally, I made it to the rocky slope where I could sit and wait for the others to catch up. Taking off my backpack, I slid into a sitting position. Then I looked up into the sight before me and gasped.

The dark grey mountain loomed ruggedly on either side of me, forming a V shaped divide through which I could see a breathtaking view. Ahead of me was a row of mountains nestled among the fog of some low-hanging clouds. The clouds were so piercingly white across the glorious, bright blue sky that it hurt my eyes to look at them. The Alps were dark, almost black, and highlighted by hundreds of white, icy fractures of snow. On top of one of the smaller mountains I could see a brilliant turquoise lake. Below the lake was a lush green forest that cascaded into

a richly colored valley covered in yellow, blue, and pink wild flowers. In the distance, I could see a tiny village beside a rippling stream.

Stupefied, I sat there listening to the echoing voices of the rest of the group, which was still crossing the last sheet of snow; tiny figures no bigger than the small rocks that lay at my feet, standing out in their bright colored jackets against the crisp, white snow. I was reminded with a shiver of how dangerous it was for me to sit there, at the edge of a steep mountain with no safety precautions. One false move and I'd find myself plummeting down the mountain... Still, along with my fear I could feel a different emotion: wonder. Wonder at the glorious world around me; wonder at the stunning colors, textures, and shapes that I could make out across the landscape; and wonder at the miracle of life.



Imagination

Another of the five capacities of a poet is imagination. To imagine is to be where you are and to be what you see. Everyone's imagination is unique, and can be trained to be better. Imagination allows poets to find relations and comparisons between different things; to make analogies. There are two types of analogies: metaphors, and similes. A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things using the verb to be. A simile is a comparison of two unlike things using the word "like" or "as". Here is an example of each:

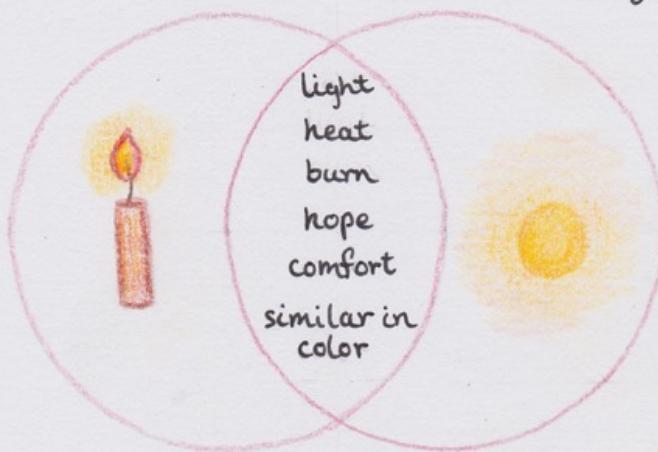
Metaphor: Her eyes are like stars.

Simile: His heart is as big as the ocean.

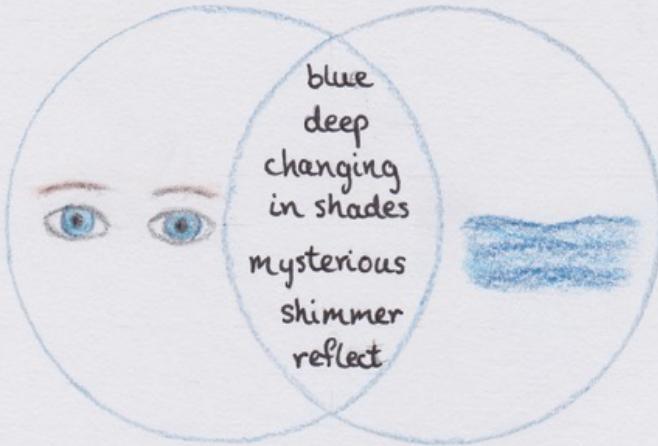
In order to create good analogies a poet must do the following:

- 1.) The poet must observe the physical world closely. He must observe every detail - the smell, the sight, the touch, the taste, and the sound of everything.
- 2.) As the poet observes, the invisible laws which connect things in nature come to him. The poet's imagination then allows him to see the similarity in unlike things.
- 3.) The poet becomes creative and writes a poem filled with analogies.

To test if an analogy is good, one can look for similar attributes in the things that are being compared. If at least four common characteristics can be found, the analogy is worthy of poetry.



The candle is like a small candle in my window.



Her eyes are like the ocean.

"Imagination is a very high sort of seeing which does not come by studying but by the intellect being where and what it is." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Imagination is the eye of the soul." ~ Lamartine

Analogy Description

One afternoon I was walking through Central Park. The crisp, late October air smelled of autumn, and I breathed in slowly as I looked up at the bright, icy sky. Walking off the road a bit I observed a tree in the middle of a small clearing surrounded by fallen leaves. The tree was small, with a thin trunk and smooth, light grey bark. Its bare branches reached out in all directions, each one subdividing into hundreds of others until the last ones were no thicker than needles. Looking up from where I stood beside the trunk, I could see the dark branches clearly against the pale sky.

The silhouettes of the trees bare branches were like dark veins spreading out across the piercing sky.



The Penny.

I am a shining copper penny
Of me there are so very many.
In the factory where I was made
Nickels and dimes are also arrayed.

At the bank, I'm given to a man
Who spends me on a rusty beer can.
A customer requires some change
So for a dollar I am exchanged.

I'm dropped onto the large, crowded street
And shimmer against the cool concrete.
A woman picks me up off the ground
By then, I am not shining, but brown.

The pants I'm left in get stained with squash
So, forgotten, I'm put into the wash.
A child will find me soaped and watery
And feel as if he's won the lottery.

Inspiration

The third capacity that a poet should have is inspiration. Waiting in silence, observing the world, and then becoming inspired is the process by which every poet begins to write poetry. When one is inspired, he/she is overwhelmed by a feeling of energy, vitality, and renewal. They know what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. A poet must be able to be inspired by every little thing he sees.

In Greek, the word "inspire" literally means to breathe in. The ancient Greeks believed that when one was inspired he/she was breathing in the gods, and would therefore pray to them for inspiration. Each artist would pray to one of the nine muses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, depending on what type of art he practiced.

The Nine Muses:

Calliope ~ Epic Poetry

Erato ~ Lyric Poetry

Polyhymnia ~ Religious Poetry

Terpsichore ~ Dance

Euterpe ~ Harmonious Music

Melpomene ~ Tragic Poetry

Thalia ~ Comedy

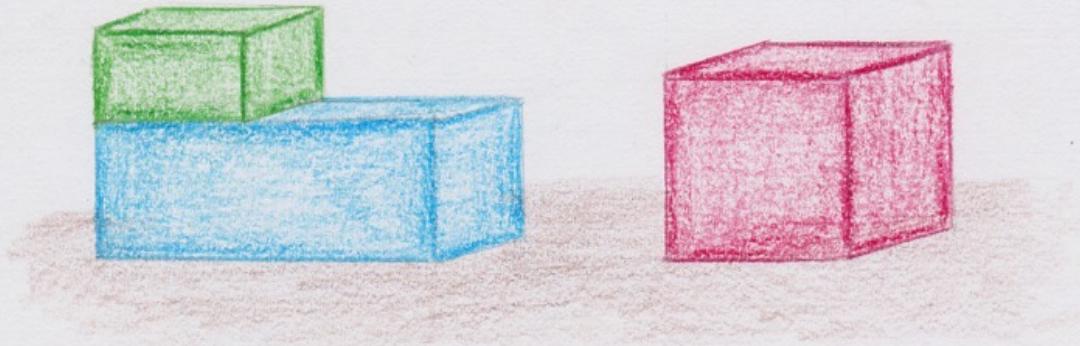
Clio ~ History

Urania ~ Astronomy

Intuition and Love of Language

The final two capacities of a poet are intuition and love of language. Intuition is an immediate knowing of the truth without knowing how you know it. It is a feeling by which you can grasp a truth despite there being no explanation for it. Intuition is a companion to imagination. One must be able to imagine being something or someone else, and then have the intuition to relate to it. That makes intuition an actor's greatest gift, for in order to pretend to be someone else they must be able to relate to that person. People with good intuition often have many friends because they know how to act in different situations. For example, they know when to comfort a friend, and when to let them be.

A poet must love his native language. He must take joy in words and the images and emotions that they can invoke. A poet plays with words like a child plays with blocks; building many different shapes and forms only to knock them down and start anew.



Tabberwocky.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

'Twas afternoon, and the slimy badger-lizards
Did spiral and dig in the grass:
All miserable were the birds,
And the lost pigs bellowed.



The Power of Sound

Human beings are deeply responsive to sound. We are very intuitive with sound, and can often determine another's emotions just by listening to the tone of their voice.

Edgar Allan Poe believed that specific sounds could evoke specific feelings in us. He called this the affective quality of sound, and used it in his poetry to bring out desired moods of mystery.

In the 500's B.C.E. the great Greek scholar Pythagoras discovered the parts of sound. Studying the structure and form of sound, he created the scale. The scale was composed of many sets of eight notes, and each set was called an octave. Pythagoras was even able to find that there are certain intervals between notes: a $\frac{1}{2}$ interval, a $\frac{1}{3}$ interval, etc. He believed that the world was not formed through the word, but through music; that from the chaos of sound, the planets were able to find harmony in their song, and the world was created.

In the 4th century, Aristotle was born. He believed that not only words had creative properties, but also the consonants and vowels from which they are composed. Each consonant had a temperament, and each vowel also evoked a certain feeling. Aristotle believed that there were four basic building blocks, or elements, to the universe: fire, water, earth, and air.

Sound has a powerful effect on language. Northern languages are mostly filled with consonants such as in the words "crack," "crunch," "sizzle," and "slap." These words are also onomatopoeic; they sound like what they mean. On the other hand, southern languages are mostly filled with vowel sounds such as in the words "bella," "gracias," and "Honolulu." In this way, geography and climate have a substantial effect on languages and their sounds.

Northern Languages

Herman
Russian
English
Norwegian
Swedish

Southern Languages

Italian
Spanish
Swahili
Hindu
Thai

Poems of Consonants and Vowels

Consonants ~ Air Sounds

The whispering wind whooshed past my ear
As I looked at the clouds, wispy but clear.
A whistling bird flew through the sky,
Soaring past waves of white fluff on the fly.

Consonants ~ Fire Sounds

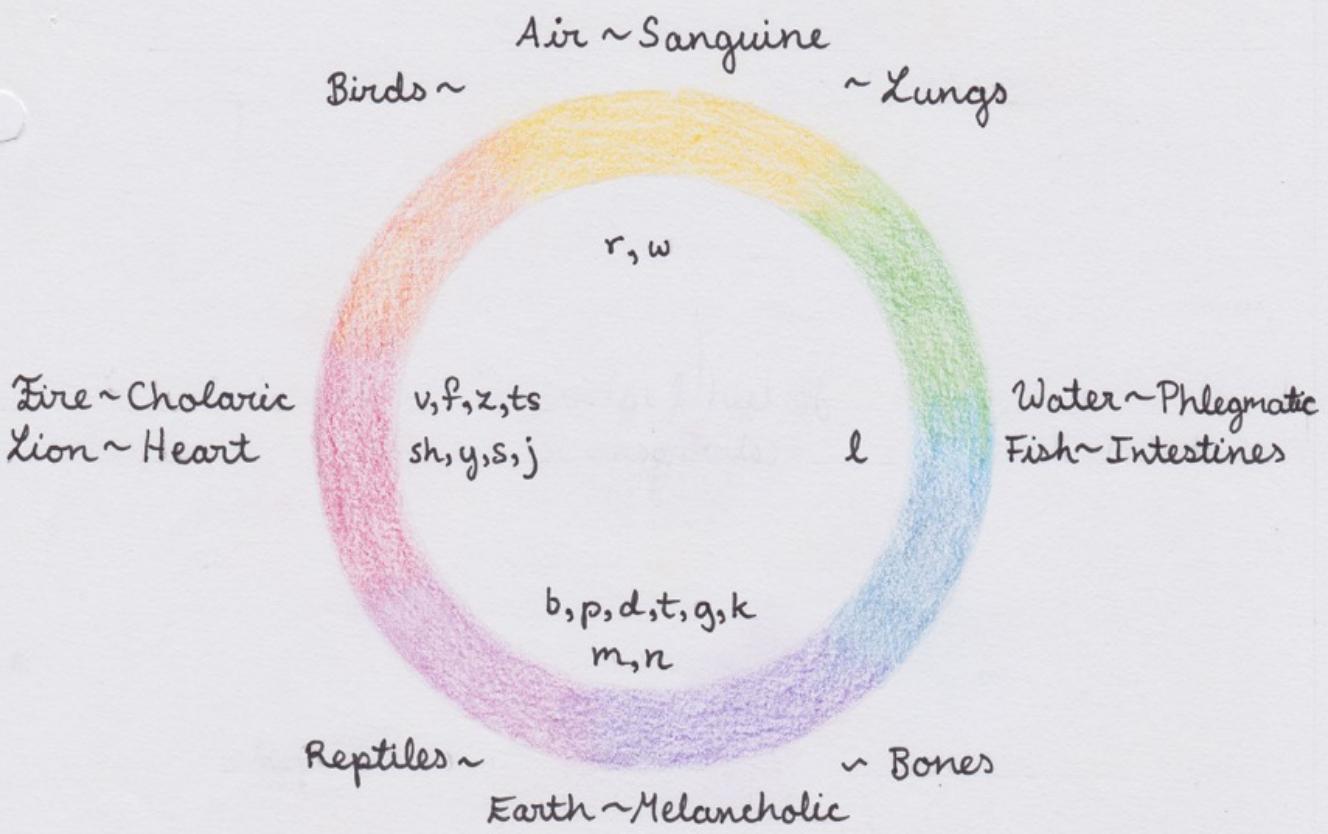
The bright fire burned fast
A dog yelped out in pain
The flame fought to last
But was drowned in the rain

Vowels ~ "Oh" Sounds

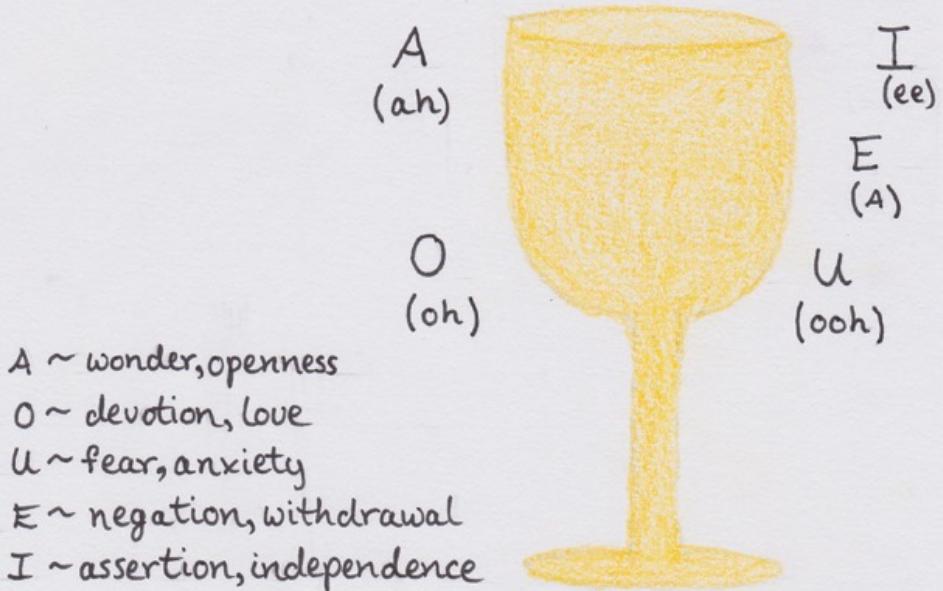
An old oak was loved by a boy
Who's devotion brought it much joy.
The oak was not honored often,
But the child made its heart soften.

Vowels ~ "Ah" Sounds

All the allies were abandoned
But a gaunt and haunting ghost
"Arise, March!" he commanded;
He adored spring season most.



The Color Wheel of Consonants



The Chalice of the Vowels

The Science of Sound

Throughout all of history it has been recognized that sound, music, and language has an incredible influence on us. Even in the Bible, this is expressed in the story of the Tower of Babel. In the story, a king wanted to build a tower that would reach up to the heavens. Offended by the people's arrogance, God split them into groups that spoke different languages so that they were unable to communicate; therefore unable to finish building the tower, and scattered them across the globe. He promised that one day there would be a universal language, but meanwhile he gave them the gift of music; for music is something that everyone can understand and relate to.

Another myth that supports the influence of language and music is the story of Orpheus. Orpheus was a legendary Greek poet and musician. After his wife, Eurydice, died, he went down to the underworld to find her. Using his skills of music and poetry, Orpheus charmed Hades into letting her come back from the dead on one condition: that he must let her follow him, but never look back until they'd reached the upper world. All most back on earth, Orpheus could bear it no longer. He looked back, and Eurydice faded away, back to the land of the dead. Devastated, Orpheus wandered senselessly around the world until he died, and was torn apart by wild dogs. Because he was such an amazing musician, each piece of him became a musical tone.

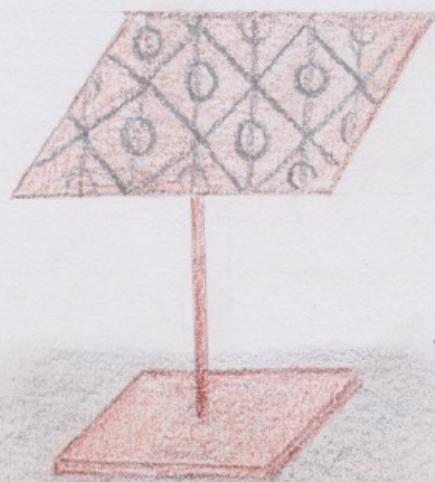
During the 17th century, a German philosopher called Johannes Kepler continued the studies of Pythagoras. By observing the solar system, he created a scientific principle that charted the mean distance of a planet to the sun, and the time it took for that planet to complete an orbit around the sun. He plotted multiple sets of numbers for each planet as it traveled on different points on the elliptical of its orbit. From the ratios of these numbers he continued Pythagoras' discoveries in finding different intervals of notes in the planets' orbits. He believed that each planet had its own music — a set of notes that would play like a short song on repeat as the planet traveled through space.

One hundred years later, another German scientist, called

Ernest Chladni, experimented with sound. He was a physicist specializing in acoustics, and conducted a famous study that noise destroys, but harmonious sound creates. Chladni balanced a copper plate on a stand and spilled some sand onto its surface. When he slammed the door beside the plate, the vibrations from the loud noise caused the sand to jump around chaotically. However, when Chladni ran a violin bow down the edge of the plate creating musical tones, the sand formed into perfectly symmetrical geometric patterns. This confirmed Chladni's theory that harmonious sound has a certain power that noise does not.

"The man that hath no music in his soul,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sound
Is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus
Let no such man be trusted!"

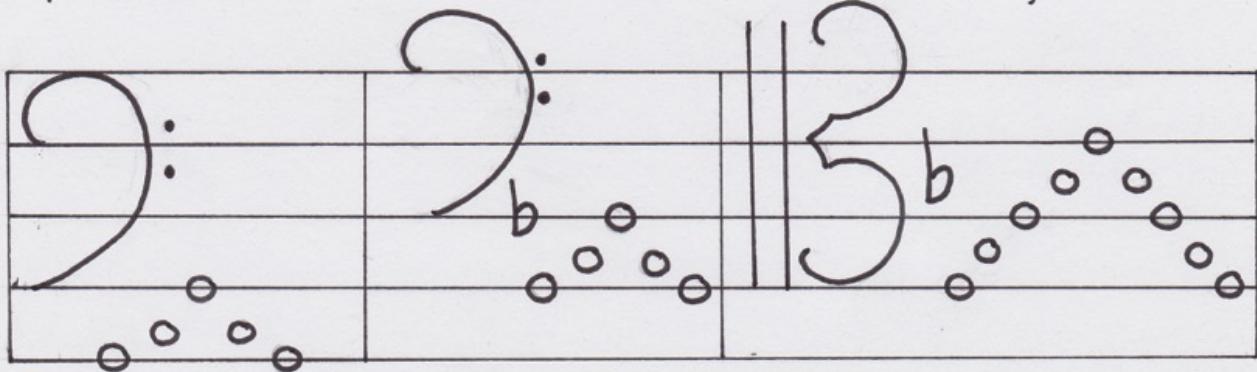
From The Merchant of Venice
by William Shakespeare



Music of the Planets

From Kepler's Harmonices Mundi 1619

$\frac{4}{5}$ the third



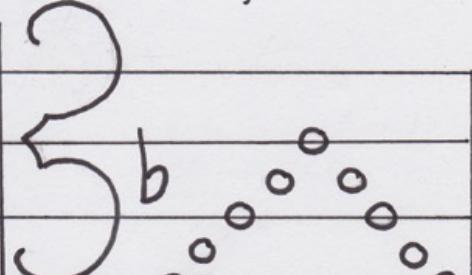
Saturn ♦

$\frac{5}{6}$ little third



Jupiter ♪

$\frac{2}{3}$ (5th)

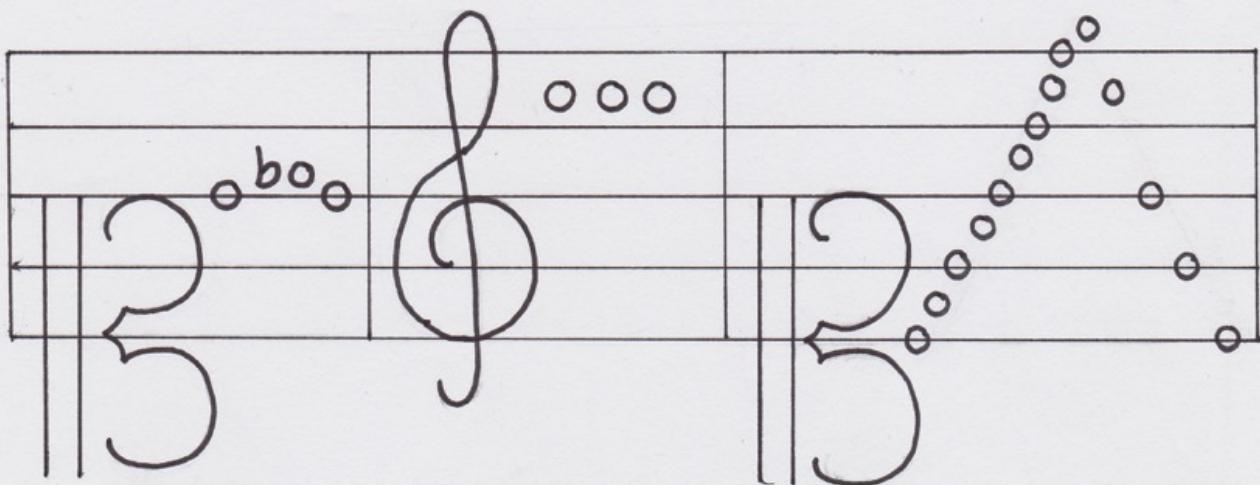


Mars ♂

$\frac{15}{16}$ half tone

$\frac{24}{25}$ ($\frac{1}{4}?$)

$\frac{5}{12}$



Earth

Venus ♀

Mercury ♀

Prosody I ~ Sound

Rhyme: Exact similarity in sound of the ends of two or more words; green, seen

Masculine Rhyme: One-syllable rhyme or rhyme in words in which the accent falls on the last syllable; complete/delete, man/can.

Feminine Rhyme: Two or more syllable rhyme where the word ends on an unaccented syllable; winging/singing, lotion/potion.

Internal Rhyme: Rhyme within a line (or verse) of poetry;

"I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers"

Alliteration: Repetition of the same initial sound or sounds at the beginning of two or more words; furious/fire. All vowels alliterate with one another; the awful, old, ill, and ugly person. As many as the first three initial consonants may be similar; strength/strong.

Examples:

Sea-Weed by D.H. Lawrence

Sea-weed sways and swirls
As if swaying were its form of stillness
And if it flashes against fierce rocks,
It slips over as shadows do.

When we saw Grendal's gruesome footprints
The great man grieved for his retainers.

from Beowulf

Onomatopoeia: Words in which the sound suggests the sense; swish, murmur, buzz, giggle.

Tone Color: Repetition of the same sound anywhere within a word in one or more lines (verses) of poetry.

Consonance: Imperfect rhyme in which the consonants are the same, but they are preceded by different vowel sounds.

Example: Nothing lovelier than that lonely call,

Bare and singular, like a gull

And three notes or four, that was all.

It drew up from the quiet like a well

Waited, sang, and vanishing, was still.

Assonance Imperfect rhyme which has the same vowel sounds but different ending consonants.

Example: Think from how many trees
are brought dead leaves
To earth or wing or seed.



An Example of Tone Color

"Pohontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a
red haw in November or a pawpaw in May,
did she wonder? does she remember?... in the
dust, in the cool tombs?"

~ Carl Sandburg

Prosody II

Rhythm ~ the recurrence of stress at intervals

six of the original 25 rhythms used in Greek times:

Iambic (Iambus)	u/	to throw	despair
Trochaic (Troche)	/u	to run	pretty
Dactylic (Dactyl)	/uu	the finger	beautiful
Anapaestic (Anapest)	uu/	to turn back on itself	over here face
Spondaic (Spondees)	//	to pour a libation	heartbeat
Amphibrachic (Amphibrach)	u/u	the urn	encourage

Meters from the Greek, "to measure." Definite patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.

Feet ~ a single unit of meter

One foot to a line: Monometer

Two feet...	Dimeter
Three feet...	Trimeter
Four feet...	Tetrameter
Five feet...	Pentameter
Six feet...	Hexameter
Seven feet...	Heptameter
Eight feet...	Octameter

Poetry From the Greek, "Poema;" meaning, "to bring forth."

Verse From the Latin, meaning, "To turn a furrow;" hence one line of poetry

stanza A group of verses

Canto From the Italian, "to sing." A group of stanzas

Caesura Pause within a line

Couplet Two verses which rhyme

Heroic Couplet Two rhymed verses of iambic pentameter

Tercet A stanza of three verses

Quatrains A stanza of four verses

The Morning Verse

"I look into the world"

I, as a singular being, look into the world of which I am a part. I imagine myself standing in dark space with the earth before me, and as I watch, it gets closer and closer until myself and the world become one, and I can see it all around me. I take everything in, knowing that I will soon have to go back to the state in which I am outside it, no longer able to observe.

"In which the sun is shining

In which the stars are sparkling

In which the stones repose."

This phrase gives the idea of the world an element of far and near, of vastness. In the daytime, the sun shines brightly from far off in space, and in the nighttime stars scatter across the sky. Both are far away, but we give them the same attention as we give to the stones resting at our feet. In looking into the world, I am taking it in in all of its entirety.

"Where living plants are growing

Where sentient beasts are living

Where man soul-gifted gives the spirit a dwelling place."

This set of lines brings us up the chain of living things. First, the plants which simply live and grow; next the animals who can feel emotions; and finally the human being, the only creature on earth to be gifted with a soul and therefore the only creature that can give the spirit a dwelling place. This gives an image of the different divisions of living things and how each one plays an important role in the world.

"I look into the soul that lives within my being

The world-creator moves in sunlight and in soullight

In wide world space without, in souldepths here within"

In the beginning of the verse, you look into the outside world.

Now, you look into the soul within yourself. The two lines that follow show that the "world-creator", or God, can be found in the physical world, and in the spiritual world. We are equally part of both worlds. In fact, we are the link between them. So, in order to

fully understand ourselves, we must delve into the mysteries of both the world around us, and the soul within us.

"To thee creator-spirit I will now turn my heart

To beg that strength and blessing to learn and work

May grow within my inmost being."

These lines address the creator of the world, whatever or whoever that may be. One begs to receive in his or heart the strength and blessing that they need to learn and work throughout his or her life. She wishes to receive this not in her mind, but in her heart, for that is the very core of one's being, and the part most connected to the creator-spirit. She wishes that the creator will not only give these blessings, but also help nurture them so that they grow into strong passions that inspire her through the course of her life.

