

SS1 LITERATURE NOTE

WEEK 6

GENRES OF LITERATURE III – POETRY

Meaning of Poetry

Poetry is one of the major genres of literature. It is a special form of writing that expresses thoughts, feelings, ideas and experiences in a **beautiful, imaginative and musical way**. Unlike prose, poetry is not written in paragraphs. It is written in **lines and stanzas** and often makes use of **rhythm, rhyme and imagery**.

Poetry concentrates meaning into fewer words. Every word is important and carefully chosen to produce strong emotions and powerful mental pictures. Poetry can talk about love, death, nature, war, happiness, sadness, religion, bravery, beauty or any aspect of human life.

Unique Characteristics of Poetry

1. Written in Lines

Poetry is arranged in lines instead of ordinary sentences. Each line may contain just a few words, but each word carries meaning.

2. Stanzas

A stanza is a group of lines in a poem. It is like a paragraph in prose. Different poems have different numbers of stanzas depending on the poet's intention.

3. Rhythm

Rhythm is the **musical quality** or beat in a poem. It is created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and the pattern of sounds. Rhythm makes a poem pleasant to hear and sometimes makes it sound like a song.

4. Rhyme

Rhyme occurs when words have similar ending sounds, especially at the end of lines.

Examples:

- boy / joy
- light / night
- day / play

Rhyme makes poetry musical and memorable.

5. Imagery

Imagery refers to the use of words that create **pictures in the reader's mind** or appeal to the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch). Through imagery, poetry becomes vivid, emotional and realistic.

Example:

"The sun smiled gently on the quiet river."

This creates a mental picture.

6. Compressed Language

Poetry uses very few words to express deep and powerful meanings. Meaning is "compressed" because poetry avoids unnecessary words. This makes poetry short but rich in meaning.

7. Figures of Speech

Poetry often uses literary devices such as **simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, symbolism**, etc., to beautify language and deepen meaning.

8. Mood and Emotion

Poetry usually expresses strong feelings such as love, joy, sadness, fear, grief, admiration or anger. The general emotional feeling of a poem is called the **mood or tone**.

Types of Poetry

Poetry exists in different forms depending on its purpose, content and structure. Major types include:

1. Epic Poetry

An epic is a **long narrative poem** that tells the story of a great hero and his adventures. It deals with themes such as bravery, war, supernatural events, history, patriotism and national identity. Epics usually involve gods, spirits and powerful warriors.

Features of Epic Poetry

- Very long and detailed
- Narrates heroic deeds
- Has a serious and elevated tone
- Often involves battles and adventures

Examples

- *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer
 - *Paradise Lost* by John Milton
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2. Lyric Poetry

A lyric poem expresses **personal emotions, thoughts and feelings** of the poet. It is usually short and musical. Lyric poems talk about love, nature, joy, sadness and personal experiences.

Features of Lyric Poetry

- Short and emotional
- Musical in quality
- Expresses personal feelings

It is called “lyric” because it was originally sung with a musical instrument called a lyre.

3. Sonnet

A sonnet is a special type of lyric poem. It has:

- **14 lines**
- A fixed rhyme scheme
- A formal structure
- Usually deals with themes like love, time, beauty, faith, life and nature

There are two main forms:

- **Petrarchan (Italian) Sonnet**
- **Shakespearean (English) Sonnet**

Each type has its own pattern of rhyme and arrangement of ideas.

4. Ballad

A ballad is a **story poem** that is often meant to be sung. It narrates simple and dramatic stories about love, death, adventure, tragedy or historical events.

Features of Ballad

- Tells a story
- Uses simple language
- Has strong rhythm and melody
- Often contains repetition and refrains

Ballads were originally passed down through oral tradition.

5. Ode

An ode is a **formal and serious poem written to praise** a person, object, idea or event. It shows deep admiration and respect.

Features of Ode

- Elevated and dignified language
- Serious and reflective tone
- Focuses on admiration or praise

An ode may praise nature, a hero, beauty, wisdom or even abstract ideas like peace or freedom.

6. Elegy

An elegy is a **poem of mourning or sorrow**, usually written in memory of someone who has died. It expresses grief, loss and reflection on death and the meaning of life.

Features of Elegy

- Sad and reflective tone
 - Talks about death or loss
 - Expresses sorrow but may also end with acceptance or consolation
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Summary

Poetry is a powerful literary form that expresses human thoughts, emotions and experiences in a beautiful and musical way. It is unique because it is written in **lines and stanzas**, uses **rhythm, rhyme, imagery and compressed language**, and appeals strongly to emotion. Major types of poetry include **Epic, Lyric, Sonnet, Ballad, Ode and Elegy**, each with its distinct features and purposes.