

POETRY

What is Poetry?

There is no single definition of poetry and there is no secret formula that applies to all poems. Thus, the study of poetry is personal and one's response to a particular poem may not be similar to that of another's. Everyone may get a different meaning out of a single line; hence various definitions of poetry as a literary genre exist in literature.

T.S. Eliot defines poetry as:

"A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all of these meanings may be different from what the author thought he meant. For instance, the author may have been writing some peculiar personal experience, which he saw quite unrelated to anything outside; yet for the reader the poem may become the expression of a general situation, as well as of some private experience of his own. The reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid – it may even be better. There may be much more in a poem than the author was aware of. The different interpretations may all be partial formulations of one thing; the ambiguities may be due to the fact that the poem means more, not less, than ordinary speech can communicate."

Edgar Allan Poe defines poetry as:

"Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty."

John Wain defines poetry as:

"Poetry is the sound of human speech at those times when it comes closest to the speech of angels and the speech of animals."

William Wordsworth defines poetry as:

"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling recollected in tranquillity."

Difference from other genres

The language and style of a poem are not similar to that of *novel* or *short story*. There may not be a grammatical order and the words are put together for artistic creation. Since the language is economic meaning is created by using few words. The poet plays with language deliberately to create an effect. (*This may be the reason why everyone attributes different meanings to a poem.*)

TYPES OF POETRY

Many types of poetry exist since poetry is an ancient form of literature. However some distinct types of poetry are, **Narrative Poetry**, **Dramatic Poetry** and **Lyric Poetry**.

Narrative Poetry

In Lyric Poetry, there may be descriptions of a scene or an incident, but there is not description of a series of events. On the other hand, in narrative poetry there is the description of series of events and its aim is to tell a story. This story is not told in prose form, but through lines in the form of a poem. History of narrative Poetry dates back to ancient times and the epics of Gilgamesh and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey can be considered early examples of narrative poetry. Other than these epics, there are many narrative poems in history.

Narrative poetry is closely linked to fiction. There are characters and a brief reference to setting. However, these are not presented in detail as in the novel or short story. The aim is again to create an effect in the

form and style of a poem. The skill of a poet is also required for the creation of narrative poetry. Here is an example of narrative poetry which tells a story:

“Out, Out”

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard
 And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
 Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
 And from there those that lifted eyes could count
 Five mountain ranges one behind the other
 Under the sunset far into Vermont.
 And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
 As it ran light, or had to bear a load.
 And nothing happened: day was all but done.
 Call it a day, I wish they might have said
 To please the boy by giving him the half hour
 That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
 His sister stood beside him in her apron
 To tell them “Supper.” At the word, the saw,
 As if it meant to prove saws know what supper meant,
 Leaped out at the boy’s hand, or seemed to leap -
 He must have given the hand. However it was,
 Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
 Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
 The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all -
 Since he was old enough to know, big boy
 Doing a man’s work, though a child at heart -
 He saw all was spoiled. “Don’t let him cut my hand off -
 The doctor, when he comes. Don’t let him, sister!”
 So. The hand was gone already.
 The doctor put him in the dark of ether.
 He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
 And then - the watcher at his pulse took a fright.
 No one believed. They listened to his heart.
 Little - less - nothing! - and that ended it.
 No more to build on there. And they, since they
 Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.
Robert Frost-1916

Dramatic Poetry

In Dramatic Poetry, the voice of an imaginary character/s is presented with direct speech and without any intervention by the author. In T.S. Eliot’s terms, a dramatic poem consists of ‘only what the poet can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character.’ Dramatic poetry may also be described as any verse written for the stage. But the term most often refers to as dramatic monologue, a poem written as a speech made by a character at some certain moment. Dramatic monologue is initiated by English poet Robert Browning. A dramatic monologue is mainly addressed by the speaker to another character who is silent. If this character replies to the speaker, the poem becomes a dialogue in which the story is told in the conversation between two speakers. Here is one of the most popular dramatic poems written by Robert Browning:

My Last Duchess

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
 That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf’s hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
 Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said
 “Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ‘twas not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere...
Robert Browning- 1842

Lyric Poetry

In its oldest sense, a lyric was a poem sung to the music of a lyre. This earlier meaning- a poem made for singing- is still valid today, when we use lyrics to mean the words of a popular song. But for over the past five hundred years, the nature of lyric poetry has changed greatly. With the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, poets have written less for singers, more often for readers. This tendency has made lyric poems contain less music and more thought and more complicated feelings.

In recent times, lyric is defined as 'a short poem expressing the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker.' A poet may write a lyric in the first person, but not always. Instead, a lyric may describe an object or recall an experience without the speaker's first person voice.

Here is an example of a lyric poem which involves the speaker's easily recognized feelings:

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.
In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.
So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

D.H. Lawrence- 1918

Traditional Forms of Poetry

Ode

- ❖ a poem expressing the writer's thoughts and feelings about a particular person or subject, usually written to that person or subject
- ❖ *Traditionally*, a poem written to celebrate a public (ceremonies or occasions like funerals, birthdays and state events) or private (written on personal subjective occasions) occasions

Elegy

- ❖ a sad poem or song, especially remembering someone who has died or something in the past
- ❖ *Traditionally*, a poem mourning for an individual or lamenting for some tragic event

Ballad

- ❖ a song or poem that tells a story, or a love song
- ❖ *Traditionally*, a folk song which is usually simple and short and almost always tells a story which is mostly about violent and horrifying accidents

Sonnet

- ❖ a poem that has 14 lines and a particular pattern of rhyme
- ❖ The Sonnet came to English Literature from Italian Literature (has three forms: - Petrarchan, - Spenserian, - Shakespearian)

ELEMENTS OF POETRY

Poetry creates a different world full of images, metaphors and symbols. It also makes use of figurative language to create an effect and invoke emotions. Understanding and interpretation of figures of speech used in poetry is crucial to get the meaning out of poems.

Voice : If a work of literature (either prose or poetry) is an address to the reader then there is a speaker who has certain personal qualities and has a certain attitude to his characters and materials. The speaker is not the poet himself but a personal character created by the poet as a means of persuasion. The speaker is also referred to as *Persona*, *Tone* or *Speaker*.

- **Narrative Voice**: the speaker in a narrative poem¹

- **Dramatic Voice**: the speaker in a dramatic monologue poem²

Tone : (also *tone of voice* or *tone of the speaker's voice*) The speaker's attitude that the poet takes toward a theme or a subject. The tone of voice can be formal or intimate, outspoken or reticent, complicated or simple, angry or loving, serious or ironic etc. Other examples of adjectives used to talk about the tone of a poem are: celebratory, laudatory, expectant, wistful, sad, mournful, dreary, tragic, elegiac, solemn, somber, earnest, disillusioned, straightforward, curt, hostile, sarcastic, cynical, ambivalent, bitter, ironic etc.

Mood : The mood is very closely related to the tone of the poem. However, the mood is not the same as the tone. When we refer to the mood of a poem, we are talking about the 'atmosphere' that the poem creates. Very often tone and mood in a poem are closely linked and a creation tone produces a certain mood. For example, a poet may use ironic tone to create humorous mood or atmosphere.

Theme : Central idea in a literary work – sometimes stated directly sometimes indirectly. Main ideas in a poem.

Imagery : The usage of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thought, ideas, states of mind or any sensory or extra-sensory experience – in other words it is the creation of images (the mental pictures of concepts, a picture made out of words)

- Image is all that appeals to our senses in a poem – literal or figurative sensory content of a work – it may be visual, olfactory (smell), tactile (touch), auditory (hearing), gustatory (taste), thermal (heat and cold), visual (seeing) and kinaesthetic (sensations of movement)

¹ **Narrative poem**: a poem the main purpose of which is to tell a story or relate an incident or draw a scene

² **Dramatic monologue poem**: a poem which is addressed by the speaker to some other character who remains silent

The triumph of Charis

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands touched it?
Ha' you marked but the fall of the snow
Before the soil had smirched it?
Ha' you felt the wool of the beaver?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag o' the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

Ben Jonson

Frog Autumn

Summer grows old, cold-blooded mother.
The insects are scant, skinny.
In these palustral home we only
Croak and wither.
Mornings dissipate in somnolence.
The sun brightens tardily
Among the pithless reeds. Flies fail us.
The fen sickens.
Frost drops even the spider. Clearly
The genius of plenitude houses himself elsewhere. Our folk thin
Lamentably.

Sylvia Plath

LANGUAGE OF POETRY

Denotation

A word's primary significance, dictionary definition

Connotation

Range of secondary or associated significances and feelings which it commonly suggests or implies – a suggestion, an association

- The word **house** denotes the place where one lives but connotes privacy, intimacy and cosiness etc.
- The word **father** denotes a man who has (biologically) caused a child to come to the world, but connotes male sex, experience, confidence etc.

Literal Language

Words can be divided as literal and figurative according to the context in which they are used

- Literal is the usage of a word not for any hidden meaning but for what it suggests

Figurative Language

Any departure from literal or plain usage of language

Example : **Lion** is a wild animal. (literal) / He fought like a **lion** in the battle. (figurative)

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE / FIGURES OF SPEECH

Literary devices are important for understanding and analyzing poetry. The literary devices used in poetry are called *figures of speech*. Figures of speech used in literature can be divided

1) SOUNDS

Some figures of speech are composed through the use of sounds. They are also called *aural literary devices*. These are *alliteration*, *assonance*, *consonance* and *rhyme (rime)*.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same **consonant sounds**.

For instance, in the line "*on scrolls of silver snowy sentences" the consonant sound 's' is repeated at the beginning of each word (initial alliteration) and this repetition creates an aural effect.*

"*candy covered cherries" (initial alliteration)*

"*sweeter surprises as do your whispers" (internal alliteration)*

Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of **vowel sounds**.

"*that olphin orn, that ong-tormented sea" – Assonance is created by the repetition of the 'o' vowel.*

"*strips of infoil winking like people" – Assonance is created by the repetition of the "i" vowel.*

"*Old age should burn and rave at close of day;*

Rage, rage, against the dying of the light"

Consonance

It is the repetition of a **sequence of two or more consonants** but with a change in the intervening vowel.

Live-love / Lean-alone / Pitter-patter

Rhyme

The term rhyme is used to set poetry apart from ordinary conversation and bring it closer to music. Rhyme is defined as *the occurrence of two or more words or phrases containing an identical or similar vowel-sounds and consonant-sounds (if any) that follow the vowel sound identical*. Rhyme depends not on spelling but on sound. The system of rhyme in a poem is called **rhyme scheme**.

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill	a
Appear in writing, or in judging ill ;	a
But of the two, much greater is th'offence	b
To tire the patience, than mislead the sense	b

The rhyme scheme of this poem is **aabb**.

There are different types of rhymes. If same sounds follow the vowel sound, it is called **exact rhyme**.

A Robin Red breast in a **Cage**
Puts all Heaven in a **Rage**
(William Blake)

Upon his head nature a garland **set**
Of Primrose, Daisy and the **Violet**
(Anne Bradstreet)

If final consonant-sounds are the same but the vowel-sounds are different, the result is **slant rhyme**, also called *near rhyme*, *off rhyme* or *imperfect rhyme* as in lap / shape, glorious / nefarious.

When the rhyme is at the end of the lines it is called **end rhyme** and when it is within the lines, it is called **internal rhyme**. Here is an example to internal rhyme from S.T. Coleridge:

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud

Another type of rhyme is **masculine rhyme**. It is a rhyme of one syllable words or in words of more than one syllable but stressing the final syllables.

Stand still, and I will read to **thee**
A lecture, love, in Love's philosophy
These three hours that we have **spent**
Walking here, two shadows **went**
John Donne

Feminine rhyme is a rhyme of two or more syllables, with stress on a syllable other than the last. Here is an example from Shakespeare.

A woman's face with nature's own hand **painted**
Hast thou, the mistress of my **passion**
A woman's gentle heart, but not **acquainted**
With shifting change, as is false women's **fashion**

The last type of rhyme is the **eye rhyme**. It is a similarity in spelling between words that are pronounced differently as in prove/ love, bomb/ comb, sew/ few and stranger/ anger.

Onomatopoeia

It is the formation or use of words that **imitate the natural sounds** associated with the objects or actions they refer to as in the examples of *buzz* or *murmur*. *This also creates an aural effect. Here is an example poem in which onomatopoeic sounds are used.* In these lines, the sounds of horse-hoofs are imitated to create an aural effect.

“Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?
 Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
 The highwayman came riding,
 Riding, riding!
 The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still!”

2) WORDS

Figures of speech composed through play on words. **Allusion, apostrophe, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, (imagery,) metonymy, metaphor, simile, conceit, personification, paradox, oxymoron, pun, symbol.**

Allusion

It is an indirect reference to something generally familiar. Allusion becomes obvious when the reader has familiarity with the reference. There may be indirect reference to a person in history, a political figure, bible, mythology, a place or a work of literature. If the reader has familiarity to this reference, then s/he may get the intended meaning through the use of these references. For instance, describing someone as ‘Romeo’ is an allusion to famous young lover in Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet*. Here is an example of allusion from a poem.

To His Coy Mistress

Had we but world enough, and time,
 This coyness, lady, were no crime.
 We would sit down and think which way
 To walk, and pass our long love’s day;
 Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side
 Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
 Of Humber would complain. I would
 Love you ten years before the Flood;
 And you should, if you please, refuse
 Till the conversion of the Jews.....
Andrew Marvell

In this poem, there is an allusion to the Bible. In the bible, it is assumed that at the end of the world, all Jews will convert to Christianity. Here, the speaker tries to tell to his coy mistress that he will love her until the end of the world. In order to understand this allusion, the reader should have familiarity with the conversion of the Jews stated in the bible.

Apostrophe

It is an addressing of a person or a thing either absent or present. It is a sudden turn from the general audience and it is a direct addressing to a specific dead or absent person as well as to an abstract idea or an imaginary object. Here are some examples of apostrophe. In these lines, there are addressing to the writer *Milton* and an abstract thing *Science*.

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee . . .
William Wordsworth

Science! True daughter of Old Time thou art!
Edgar Allan Poe

Euphemism

It is the substitution of a mild, indirect and inoffensive term instead of an offensive or harsh term. An example is using 'passed away' instead of 'died'. This lessens the harshness of the meaning a word conveys.

Hyperbole

It is an exaggeration or extravagant statement used for creating effect or emphasis. For instance, in the lines "*I could sleep for a year*" or "*This book weighs a ton*" there is exaggeration and hence, hyperbole. Hyperbole is also named *overstatement*.

Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

In these lines, there is exaggeration of the firing of the shot. In order to describe its effect, the poet uses hyperbole and states that the shot is heard round the world. In reality, it is impossible for a shot to be heard all around the world.

Irony

Implying the reverse of the literal meaning OR more than the literal meaning

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.
S.T. Coleridge

In these lines, the speaker is surrounded by water since he was in a ship in the middle of the ocean. However, they do not have any water to drink. Being surrounded by water but being unable to find any water to drink is ironic.

"I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled..."

Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*

Metaphor

A comparison of two things which is done implicitly / one thing is described in terms of another. Thus, it is a brief and vivid expression of an idea rather than long explanations.

Example: The mind is an ocean. / The city is a jungle.

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight, over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding-
Riding-riding-
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

In this poem, there are many metaphors. The wind is likened to a torrent of darkness, the moon is likened to a ghostly galleon and the road is likened to a ribbon of moonlight.

Simile

The use of an expression comparing one thing with another, always including the words 'as' or 'like'

Example: 'She walks in beauty, like the night...'

Conceit

It is an extended metaphor. The comparison is made between apparently dissimilar objects and situations which are at first sight difficult to compare. It is an intellectual device which shows the wit of the poet.

English poet John Donne is famous for his extraordinary conceits.

Here is an example from John Donne's poem *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two,
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe.
And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth rime,
It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home.

In these lines, lovers are likened to a compass who cannot be separated from each other. At first sight, one may have difficulty to compare lovers and a compass, but this is an extended metaphor and John Donne uses conceit successfully in these lines.

Synecdoche

Part of something is used to refer to the whole thing / Sonnets and other forms of love poetry frequently use synecdoche to characterize the beloved in terms of individual body parts rather than a coherent whole. This practice is especially common in the Petrarchan sonnet, where the idealised beloved is often described part by part, from head to toe.

Example: "steel" for a sword / "he drank the cup", to refer to his drinking of the cup's contents / "The White House announced a new policy regarding..." rather than saying "The office of the President of the United States announced..." , or "The president announced...")

Personification

An animate object or abstract idea is given human attributes and thus is made alive.

"not even the rain has such small hands"

Metonymy

“All citizens owe allegiance to the Crown.”

Symbol

white flag → peace

goat → passion

Allegory

A figure of speech through which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas, related to morals, religion or politics

Paradox

An apparently self-contradictory – even absurd statement

“The child is the father of the man”

Oxymoron

It is a figure of speech in which contradictory terms are combined. It is a phrase level paradox and the contradiction is more obvious than a paradox since the contradictory elements are presented within a single phrase. For instance ‘*silent scream*’ is an oxymoron. A scream cannot be silent. Other examples can be ‘*sweet enemy*’, ‘*pleasing pains*’, ‘*loving hate*’ and ‘*the little giant*’. In all these examples, there is a phrase level paradox and contradictory terms are used together to form oxymoron.

Pun

It is a figure of speech in which one word is used to refer to its two different meanings. An example can be seen in Shakespeare’s Richard III in the line ‘your imprisonment shall not be long, I will deliver or else will lie for you’. Here, ‘lie’ mean both going to prison and telling lie.

POETRY ANALYSIS- AN EXAMPLE

This sample analysis will guide you in your own efforts of poetry analysis. Please pay attention to the identification of figures of speech in the poem and the elements of poetry. Only the first stanza of the poem will be analyzed.

O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red!
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.
 O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
 Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
 For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores crowding,
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here, Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck
 You've fallen cold and dead.
 My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
 From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult, O shores! and ring, O bells!
 But I, with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.
Walt Whitman

Background to the Poem

This poem is written by Walt Whitman upon the death of Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was the leader of The Union (the Northern states) who supported the union of the American states and banishing of slavery. On the other hand, some states (the Southern states) were against the banishing of slavery. As a result, the Civil War was between the Northern states and the Southern states. Lincoln ruled the country in the Civil War (1861-1865). The Union with Lincoln's leadership won the Civil War and united the states of America. It also meant an end to slavery. However, when the victory was won Lincoln was assassinated while he was watching a play at a theatre. Hence, he could not celebrate the victory and U.S.A was left without a leader. Upon his death, Whitman writes this poem in the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

Stanza 1

In the first line there is an **apostrophe** as the speaker calls on the captain as 'O Captain! My Captain!' By captain, from the background information we know that he means Abraham Lincoln. 'Our fearful trip' is the Civil War and it is a **symbol** here. That is, fearful trip stands for the Civil War. We understand that the war is over and the trip is done. In line two, the speaker talks about the ship. The ship here is America and again there is the use of **symbol** here. The word 'ship' more than itself and it stands for America. The ship now returns home from a dangerous trip. The war is over and victory is won.

The Captain is the head of the ship as Abraham Lincoln is the leader of U.S.A. In the third line, it is stated that the port is near. There is a **symbol** here. The port again means a lot and it stands for the abstract concept of 'victory'. There is a **pun** in the use of the 'bells'. Bells can be heard both at the end of the victory and at somebody's death. Since Lincoln is dead at the end of the war, the bells toll both for Lincoln's death and for victory. The pun continues in 'people's exulting'. Again, this movement of people can be both for the death of Lincoln and for the winning of victory at the end of a tiring war. In the fifth and the sixth lines of the first stanza we again see **apostrophe**. This time **apostrophe** is for the heart and the bleeding drops. We can again talk about **pun** here.

The heart and bleeding drops may be Lincoln's heart and blood and at the same time may be the feelings of people who now lament for Lincoln. In the last two lines, there is a reference to Lincoln's assassination. The captain (Lincoln) is now dead and he cannot celebrate the victory as the leader of the nation.

Speaker (Voice)

The speaker is a person who laments for the death of his leader. From the background information we can also assume that it is Walt Whitman himself who laments upon the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Addressee

The poem in these lines is addressed to the captain that is Abraham Lincoln. We can understand this through the use of apostrophe to the captain.

Tone

We can talk about two contradictory tones here. The first one is a mourning tone. The speaker laments for the captain and feels sorry for the loss of the captain. The second one is a more cheerful tone which is attributed to the victory of the war. However, the mourning or sad tone is more obvious and the grief of the speaker can be seen in all the lines.

Mini-Test

1. Which one of the following is TRUE for poetry?
 - a. It is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings
 - b. It is the sound of human speech
 - c. It includes the best words in the best order
 - d. It addresses human emotions
 - e. All of the above

2. Which one of the following does NOT contribute to the understanding of a poem?
 - a. Addressee's intent
 - b. Speaker's tone
 - c. Poet's intent
 - d. Language
 - e. Figures of speech

3. gives us who the speaker is
 - a. Mood
 - b. Voice
 - c. Style
 - d. Tone
 - e. Alliteration

4. In what distant deeps or skies
 Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
 On what wings dare he aspire?
 What the hand dare seize the fire?
William Blake

What is the rhyme scheme of the lines above?

 - a. bbcc
 - b. aabb
 - c. abcb
 - d. aabc
 - e. baba

5. is a kind of figure in which an inanimate object or a non-human animal is said to have qualities or emotions of a human being.
 - a. Onomatopoeia
 - b. Conceit
 - c. Personification
 - d. Alliteration
 - e. Rhyme