



Put it in a poem

Writing, reading and appreciating poetry

“POETRY, she thought, wasn't written to be analyzed; it was meant to inspire without reason, to touch without understanding.” Nicholas Sparks, *The Notebook*.

Guidelines for reading poetry

In approaching a poem, you can ask the text some simple questions which should help you to understand it:

- What is the poem about? What event, situation, or experience does the poem describe or record?
- What is the poet's purpose in writing this? What message do they

want to communicate?

- What is the predominant emotion, tone, or mood of the poem? Does the mood change during the poem? What emotions or feelings does the poet seek to evoke in the reader/ hearer? Is the poem designed to appeal to one or more of the five senses – touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight – through description?
- What techniques has the poet used?

How is the poem structured? Does it have conventional structure such as a sonnet or ode?

Does it have stanzas with a regular number of lines, or any other features of

structural design?

- What type of language, words and imagery has the poet used? Have they used similes, metaphors, personifications or symbols in the poem?
- What type of rhythm does the poem have – regular, slow or fast?

Does the poem have any significant sound features? Is it musical? Does the poet use onomatopoeia, alliteration, or assonance? Does the poem rhyme? What are the effects of these features of sound on the effect of the poem?

Profile of an Australian Poet

Dorothea Mackellar (1885-1968)

AT 19 years old Dorothea Mackellar wrote a poem while homesick in England, the second verse of which is perhaps the best known stanza in Australian poetry. First written under the title *Core of My Heart, My Country* is one of many of Mackellar's bush poems, inspired by her experience on her family's farms near Gunnedah, north-west New South Wales where a statue of her on horseback stands in commemoration of this famous Australian poet / writer.

In the New Year's Day Honours of 1968, Dorothea Mackellar was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for her contribu-

tion to Australian literature.

A nationwide poetry competition for Australian school students, the 'Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards', is also named in her honour.

My Country (second verse)

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror –
The wide brown land for me!

*This rhyming poem is divided into six stanzas each having eight lines.

Go to NiE online to read the rest of the poem.

TYPES OF POETRY

Limerick

A LIMERICK is a short, often funny, poem with a strong beat.

Limericks are very light hearted poems and can sometimes be utter nonsense.

Limericks are a great introduction to poetry as they are easy to both read

and write. The structure of a limerick poem consists of five lines.

The first line of a limerick poem usually begins with 'There was a....' and ends with a name, person or place.

A limerick should have a rhyme scheme of aabba where lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyme and lines 3 and 4 rhyme. Lines 1, 2 and 5 should have 7 – 10 syllables and lines 3

and 4 should have 5 – 7 syllables. Limericks were made famous by Edward Lear, a famous author who wrote an entire book of silly limericks called the *Book of Nonsense* in the 1800s. Examples of a limerick poem: There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared! –
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard."
by Edward Lear
There once was a student called Ted
Who had a limerick stuck in his head
He followed the rules
But felt like a fool
When it came out as a sonnet instead
by Robyn Courtney

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