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## Main content

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Poetry excites our senses. We enjoy it by listening to it, reciting it, singing it, viewing it, moving to its rhythm and beat. We can experience it in multiple modalities, and, as new technologies emerge, it can be created and experienced using multimedia formats (e.g., picture books, multimedia poetry, cinepoetry). Because poetry is so multisensory and evocative it often lingers with us, eliciting visual images, remembered lines, and powerful emotional responses. It can encourage a love of language in all of its forms.

"When a grown up reads Mother Goose to children, their response often is 'Sing it again,'" reflected May Hill Arbuthnot, whose own words were poetic as she advised readers to catch the tempo, tone, and cadence when reading this genre aloud (1957, p. 63). Although this recommendation comes from Arbuthnot's classic *Anthology of Children's Literature*, The recommendation is timeless. Arbuthnot cites the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who stated that "Reading a poem silently ... is to miss its music, and perhaps (... its meaning" (p. 194). "Children have a natural affinity for poetry, which is exhibited well before they enter school by their love for nursery rhymes, jingles, and childhood songs" (Jacobs & Tunnell, 2003, p. 194).

The music of poetry, along with its sensory detail and visual imagery, invites us to experience poetry intensely, and thus it stays with us. For example, in *Hello Ocean* (2001), by Pare Munoz Ryan and illustrated by Mark Astrella, we don't just learn about what it is like at the beach, but instead we are there emerging from the sea with salty lips. "Sandy grains in a salty drink/are best for fish and whales I think. I lick the drops/still on my face;/I love the way/the ocean tastes."

In preparation for this issue we queried distinguished poets Brod Bagert, Joseph Bruchac, Rebecca Kai Dotlich, Joan Bransfield Graham, Avis Harley, Paul Janeczko, Pat Mora, Kristine George O'Connell, Janet Wong, and Jane Yolen with the all-encompassing question, "What is poetry?" As we read their responses a range of themes emerged. We found out that the idea of poetry is elusive and indefinable (as it should be) and that it means many things to many people. Some poets spoke about poetry as a way in which to see and present the world. One thought of it in terms of performance. For others, it seemed to be lyrical or photographic. Skills such as word choice; composition; and use of poetic devices such as meter, rhythm and rhyme, and form were addressed. One poet described the musical nature of poetry in terms of a duet between reader and writer, and another likened it to a tuning fork vibrating with energy and song. The visual nature of poetry comes into play as well with Avis Harley's definition--a visual description in words (see Figure).

While various qualities and aspects of poetry were mentioned, at the same time all the poets conveyed the idea that poetry is greater than the sum of its parts. It was described...

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Follow/Fav. A Feast for the Senses. By: mosylu. As the wizarding world descends into war, Tonks and Remus discover an unexpected intimacy. This story has five chapters and is NOW COMPLETE! His teeth seemed sharper than usual--he had to concentrate hard on not biting a hole in his cheek. And every sense he could lay claim to was on overdrive, but worst of all was his sense of smell. Tonight was the full moon, his first at Number 12, Grimmauld Place, and the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix was a haze of smells to him. Besides the usual that anyone could smell--cooking, mold, smog from outside--Remus's nose picked out the particular scents of each person who had walked through the front door in the past few days. Using the five senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing) in poems creates a stronger image in the reader's mind. These senses are also a powerful tool to use when you're writing. They help convey a message to readers by providing a strong image in their heads. Tips to Use Your Five Senses When Writing Poetry. As you prepare to write, think about how your topic could be described using one, two, or all of your senses. You might want to write down each of the five senses and any words that describe your topic using those senses. For example, let's say I'm writing about ice cream. Taste: smooth, cold, melt in your mouth, sweet. Touch: Wet, cold, slimy, frozen. A Feast for the Senses. Collect 5 Fish Cakes. 5. These cookies are necessary for the website to function and cannot be switched off in our systems. They are usually only set in response to actions made by you which amount to a request for services, such as setting your privacy preferences, logging in or filling in forms. You can set your browser to block or alert you about these cookies, but some parts of the site will not then work.