THE ELEMENTS OF POETRY

TYPES OF POEMS:

A. **Narrative:** a recording of events, sometimes brief, sometimes long; is highly objective, told by a speaker detached from the action.

1. **Epic:** a long, dignified narrative poem about the deeds of a traditional or historical hero or heroes of high station.

Conventions of the epic:

a. Poet begins by announcing the theme, invoking the aid of a muse, and asking her an epic question, with the reply to which the story begins.

b. He launches his action *in medias res,* in the middle of things.

c. The action concerns a hero, a man of stature and significance, who performs many notable deeds.

d. There are usually great battles in which the gods themselves take part.

e. The poet adopts a style, dignified, elaborate and exalted, suitable to his theme.

Types of epics:

a. **Classical Epic:** has a dignified style, a background of warfare and good, heroic events.

   *Homer, The Iliad, The Odyssey*

b. **Literary or Artificial Epic:** the epic style is used with later or different materials.

   *John Milton, Paradise Lost*

c. **National or Folk Epic:** expresses the ideals, character, and traditions of a people.

   *Beowulf*

d. **Mock Epic:** a trivial subject is made ridiculous by being treated with the elaborate and dignified devices of the epic.

   *Alexander Pope, "Rape of the Lock"*

2. **Ballad:** a narrative poem, usually simple and fairly short, originally designed to be sung.

   *John Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"*

Characteristics of the ballad:

a. Ballads begin abruptly, imply the previous action, utilize simple language, tell the story tersely through dialogue and described action, and make use of refrains.

b. The ballad stanza is typically a quatrains of alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines rhyming abcb.
B. **Lyric:** a subjective, reflective poem expressing the thoughts and especially the feelings of a single speaker; has a regular rhyme scheme.

Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

1. **Song:** a poem in a regular metrical pattern designed to be sung.

Shakespeare, "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind"

2. **Elegy:** a dignified poem mourning the death of an individual or of all men.

Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

3. **Ode:** a lyric poem of some length, serious in subject and dignified in style; a poem praising someone or something.

John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

4. **Sonnet:** a verse form containing fourteen lines, in English usually iambic pentameter, and a complicated rhyme scheme.

Types of Sonnets:

a. **Petrarchan (Italian) Sonnet:** an octave and sestet, between which a break in thought occurs. The traditional rhyme scheme is abba abba cde cde (or, in the sestet, cd cd cd or any variation of c, d, e). The octave contains the problem, question, or theme, and the sestet presents an answer, a comment, or a proposition. An expression of indignation, desire, or doubt may occur in the opening lines which will be resolved in the sestet.

John Milton, "On His Blindness"

b. **Shakespearean (English) Sonnet:** three quatrains and concluding couplet, rhyming abab cdcd efef gg or abba cddc efef gg. Each quatrain develops a different aspect of the subject, and the couplet makes a final comment.

William Shakespeare, "Shall I Compare Thee?"

C. **Descriptive:** an impersonal word painting. A truly descriptive poem is objective; that is, the poet is more interested in depicting a scene than in his own emotions.

Scott, "A Summer Storm"

D. **Dramatic:** includes comedies, tragedies, farces; narrative but tells a story by means of speech and action.

E. **Special Kinds of Poems:***

1. **Dramatic Monologue:** a poem consisting of the words of a single character, who reveals in his speech his own nature and the dramatic situation. It reveals place, time, and identities of the characters, and discloses the psychology of the speaker at a significant moment. The speaker addresses a listener who does not engage in dialogue but who helps to develop the speech.

Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess"
We are young, honest, and in love
so that we may suffer ourselves that
We lie to ourselves and to each other
and upon youth
because love depends upon trust.
So why don't we both confess?

Therefore I lie with her and she with me
and age in love, not to have years old.
O, love's best trick in seeming kinds,
and wherefore say not I that I am old?

Yet without, says she not she is unfriended
on both sides this is simple truth supposed.

Then vainly thinking that she likes me young,
although she knows my days are past the best,
I persuade her; though I knew she loves,

She means the world is false and valuable.
That she might think me some indifferent youth,
I do persuade her though I know she loves.

When my experience that is made of truth

Hannah Somert

Findings (4 line verses)

Et cetera

Etcetera

The End

Notes of explanation

Secret (6 line)

Resolves tension

Approbation or approbation

Builds tension

Of course, she deceives.

I am young and naive

I can persuade her

I pretend to believe her

I know she lies, but I

Resolves tension

Et cetera

Approbation or approbation

Builds tension

Of course, she deceives.

11 lines, humble penitent
There is a battle for the sea.
A poem written from the point of view of someone involved in a battle.

The poet is one of the soldiers, and he sees the sea from a different perspective.

The poet is not one of the soldiers, and he sees the sea from a different perspective.

The poet is a different person from the soldier's point of view.

The poet tells a different story from the soldier's point of view.

This is the poet's own perspective.

The poet tells a different story from the soldier's point of view.

The poet is not one of the soldiers, and he sees the sea from a different perspective.

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