* COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 165H fulfills the Perspectives (PLAS) requirement in the area of Reading Literature. Students will become familiar with the disciplinary norms associated with literary reading. They will learn to pay close attention to language and be familiar with the reasons for the writer’s particular choice of language. They will learn how the writer uses the techniques and elements of literature and the particular resources of genre to create meaning. They will learn how texts differ from one another and how they interact with the larger society and its historical changes.

Poetry: What is it? Why read it? Why write it? Why study it? Why teach it? Are there “correct” and “incorrect” ways of composing verse? How are poems meant to be read? Can poetry be useful — and, if so, what are its uses? What exactly do we mean when we say that a certain movie is “poetic,” that a politician’s speech is “full of poetry,” or that a novel is written in “lyrical” prose? These are just a few of the questions that we will explore in the nine main units of this course: tropes; schemes; musicality; fixed/closed forms; “open” and “other” forms; persons and pronouns in poetry; objects of poetic attention and description; lyric states of mind; poetic space-time.

Almost all of the readings can be found in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Shorter Fifth Edition (available at the QC Bookstore). Those few texts that are not in the Norton can be found online (I will provide links) or will be posted on Blackboard. While most of your reading assignments will be poems, you will also listen to songs, watch video clips, and analyze political rhetoric. I will update BB regularly with explanations of terms, links to texts and resources, and discussion questions to consider for future sessions.

In preparing for class, please read each poem multiple times (re-reading is crucial — in fact, some assignments will require you to re-read poems covered earlier in the semester) and make a habit of reading each poem aloud at least once. Look up any unfamiliar words. Always read the footnotes for each poem in the Norton. I also encourage you to read the biographical sketches in the Norton.

* LEARNING GOALS:

- To become familiar with the disciplinary norms associated with literary reading.
- To learn how texts differ from one another and how they interact with the larger society and its historical changes.
- To learn how to use (in one’s own writing) and to identify (in others’ writings) a range of poetic and rhetorical devices and figures, including metaphor, simile, metonymy, personification, antimetabole, polyptoton, anaphora, epistrophe,
anastrophe, alliteration, paradox, assonance, onomatopoeia, polysyndeton, and asyndeton.
- To learn how to analyze, with care and precision, verbal artifacts in which language occurs in highly concentrated form.
- To practice, explore, and gain proficiency in the arts of oral and written communication through a variety of assignments: frequent entries (short informal essays) in an online journal kept throughout the semester; active and thoughtful participation in classroom dialogue; two formal essays; a midterm in-class essay exam; a recitation of a poem by memory; a final essay exam.

* REQUIREMENTS:
  - **Class participation** (regular attendance; active, informed, thoughtful contributions to dialogue; respectful engagement with colleagues; in-class writing exercises): 20%.
  - **Online journal:** fourteen short informal writing assignments (topics will be posted in advance, and assignments will range from exercises in explication to experiments in creative writing): 20%.
  - **Two formal essays** (1500-2000 words, i.e., approx. five pages double-spaced; topics will be posted in advance): 30%.
  - **Midterm in-class essay exam:** 10%.
  - **Recitation of poem by memory** (the poem must be at least fifteen lines in length; it cannot be a poem from the syllabus): 10%.
  - **Final in-class essay exam:** 10%.

+ **MY OFFICE HOURS** (Klapper 642): Tuesday/Thursday 5-6 PM; by appointment.
+ **MY OFFICE PHONE NUMBER:** (718) 997-4685
+ **MY EMAIL:** seoyoungjenniechu@yahoo.com

Introduction

Tuesday 1/31. Session 1. Defining “Poetry”
* Introduction to the course: requirements, expectations, grading policy, etc.
* Discussion of handout listing various definitions of and statements about poetry (from *Merriam-Webster* to Audre Lorde).
* In-class writing/discussion exercise: Using the handout and your own sense of what poetry is or ought to be, compose a working definition of poetry. What criteria must a text fulfill in order to qualify as a poem?

**Figures of Speech: Tropes**

**Thursday 2/2. Session 2. Metaphor, Simile, Personification**
* Definitions/explanation of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Poems: "In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound; "Harlem" by Langston Hughes; “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home” by Craig Raine; “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot (and video rendition).
* In-class writing/discussion exercise: Paraphrase one of these poems without using metaphor, simile, or personification.

**Tuesday 2/7. Session 3. Metonymy, Synecdoche**
* Definitions/explanation of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Poems: “The Hand That Signed the Paper” by Dylan Thomas; “Warming Her Pearls” by Carol Ann Duffy; “Persimmons” by Li-Young Lee.
* Short writing assignment #1 due by 11 PM the day before class (post on Blackboard).

**Figures of Speech: Schemes**

**Thursday 2/9. Session 4. What Is a Meaningful Sequence of Words?**
* "Poetic Syntax" (in the Norton Anthology), pages 1277-1289.
* Definitions/explanation of terminology (see BB).
* Poems: Sonnet 106 (“When in the chronicle of wasted time”) by Shakespeare; "In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound; “since feeling is first” by E.E. Cummings.
* Short writing assignment #2 (Wordle) due by 11 PM the day before class (post on BB).
Tuesday 2/14. Session 5. Anaphora, Polyptoton, and Other Deviations from the “Ordinary” Pattern of Words
* Definitions/explanation of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Additional texts: “Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln (online); “I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr. (online).
* Short writing assignment #3 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Musicality

* Definitions/explanation of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Poems: “Full Fathom Five” by Shakespeare; “To Autumn” by Keats; “Jabberwocky” (including Humpty Dumpty’s Explication) by Lewis Carroll; “Pied Beauty” by Gerard Manley Hopkins; “Of Mere Being” by Wallace Stevens.
* Short writing assignment #4 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Tuesday 2/28. Session 7. Rhyme
* “Versification”: section on “Rhyme,” pp. 1260-1263; section on couplets and tercets, 1264-5.
* Poems: “A Fit of Rhyme against Rhyme” by Ben Jonson; “The Verse” and “Invocation” from Book I of Paradise Lost by John Milton; “A Bird, came down the Walk” by Emily Dickinson; “Riddle” by Daryl Hine; “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks; “Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath.
* Short writing assignment #5 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Thursday 3/1. Session 8. Rhythm and Meter
* Poems: “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” “Because I could not stop for Death,” I heard a Fly buzz – when I died,” and “My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun” by Emily Dickinson; “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe.
* Listening assignment: “Amazing Grace”; theme song to Gilligan’s Island; “The Yellow Rose of Texas.”
* In-class scansion and singing exercises.
* Poems: “Hallelujah” by Leonard Cohen (and at least two different cover versions of the many that have been recorded); “A Sort of Song” by William Carlos Williams; a song of your own choosing whose lyrics you consider worthy of inclusion in The Norton Anthology of Poetry.
* Short writing assignment #6 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Fixed/Closed Forms

* “Versification,” 1266-69.

Tuesday 3/13. Session 11. The Villanelle; the Sestina
* “Versification,” 1269-1270.
* Short writing assignment #7 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Thursday 3/15. Session 12. In-class midterm essay exam.  !!!

“Open* and “Other” Forms

Tuesday 3/20. Session 13. Open Forms or Free Verse
* “Versification”*: section titled “Open Forms or Free Verse,” 1272-1274.
* Poems: “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and excerpt from Song of Myself by Walt Whitman; “The Red Wheelbarrow” and “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams; “The Surface” by Jorie Graham.
* “Versification”: section titled “Other Forms of Poetry,” 1274-5.
* Poems: “The Window” by Derek Mahon; “Cardinal Ideograms” by May Swenson; “ABC” by Robert Pinsky; “this poem intentionally left blank” by Charles Bernstein.
* Short writing assignment #8 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Persons and Pronouns in Poetry

* “Versification”: paragraphs on “dramatic” and “lyric” poetry, 1251-2; paragraph on dramatic monologues, 1263-4.
* In-class writing/discussion exercise: Who is/are/am/could be/am not/was/will be the “I” in each of these poems?

Thursday 3/29. The Poetic “I,” continued
* Poems: “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning (and video clip – I will send you the link); “Ulysses” by Tennyson; “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot; “Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath.
* In-class performances.
* Formal essay #1 due by 11 PM the day before class.

* Definitions/explanation of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Poems: “Ode to the West Wind” by Percy Bysshe Shelley; “Death, be not proud” (Holy Sonnet 10) by John Donne; “To Autumn” by Keats; “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by Keats; “The Tyger” by William Blake.
* Short writing assignment #9 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Thursday 4/5. Session 18. The Second-Person “You” in Poetic Apostrophe: Absent or No-Longer-Living Persons
* Definitions/explanation of terminology (see BB).

***** SPRING BREAK *****

Tuesday 4/17. Session 19. Poetic Dialogue between “I” and “You”
* Poems: “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and excerpt from Song of Myself by Walt Whitman; “Whoever You Are” by W.S. Merwin; “A Supermarket in California” by Allen Ginsberg; “A Pact” by Ezra Pound.
* Short writing assignment #10 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Objects of Poetic Attention, Contemplation, and Description

Thursday 4/19. Session 20: The Female Body
* Definitions/explanations of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Poems: “Sonnet 15” from Amoretti by Edmund Spenser; “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” (sonnet 130) by Shakespeare; “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” by Jonathan Swift.
* In-class writing/discussion exercise: the blazon.

Tuesday 4/24. Session 21: Ruins and Ancient Artifacts
* Short writing assignment #11 due by 11 PM the day before class.
Thursday 4/26. Session 22. Creatures of Water and Air
* Please post on BB the name and text of the poem you intend to recite on our last day of class.

Lyric States of Mind

Tuesday 5/1. Session 23. Love Poetry
* Poems: “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” (sonnet 18) by Shakespeare; “To My Dear and Loving Husband” by Anne Bradstreet; “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways” (Sonnet 43 from Sonnets from the Portuguese) by Elizabeth Barrett Browning; “somewhere I have never travelled, gladly beyond” by e.e. cummings.

* Poems: “Stanzas Written in Dejection, Near Naples” by Shelley; “There’s a certain Slant of light” and “After great pain” by Emily Dickinson; ”Tulips” by Sylvia Plath.
* Short writing assignment #12 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Poetic Space–Time

Tuesday 5/8. Session 25. Lyric Timelessness
* Definitions/explanations of poetic terminology (see BB).
* Short writing assignment #13 due by 11 PM the day before class.

Thursday 5/10. Session 26. Dreamscapes, Alternate Realities, and Other Lyric Spaces
* “The Garden” by Andrew Marvell; “Kubla Khan” by Coleridge; “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Byzantium” by Yeats.
* Short writing assignment #14 due by 11 PM the day before class.
Conclusion


WRITING GUIDELINES
(especially relevant for formal essays)

* Develop an argument that
  - is coherent.
  - is proportional to the assignment.
  - has a conceivable counterargument.
  - inspires your reader to think (about a text, a set of issues, etc.) in new ways.

* State your argument and the goals of your essay at the outset.

* Define key terms and/or potentially ambiguous terms (e.g., “nature”) before using them.

* Make sure your argument moves logically from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.

* Avoid vague/sweeping generalizations (e.g., “Since the dawn of time, there has always been conflict between men and women”).

* Provide evidence from the text to support your claims.
  - Set up each piece of evidence by identifying its source and indicating its relevance to the point that you’re making.
  - Analyze your evidence. Demonstrate the ways in which specific features of your evidence (e.g., syntax, diction, figures of speech) illustrate your point.

* Write a conclusion that
  - does NOT simply recapitulate what you’ve already written.
  - DOES take the reader in a new direction in one or more of the following possible ways:
    - by situating your argument within a broader context.
- by addressing an implication of your argument.
- by suggesting an application of your argument.

* Your writing should be
  - lucid.
  - precise.
  - concise.
  - fresh: avoid clichés (e.g., “in a nutshell”).
  - gender-inclusive: avoid words such as “mankind.”
  - free of typos!
  - grammatically correct: avoid
    - misplaced modifiers (example of misplaced modifier: “As my favorite movie, I have watched Blade Runner many times”).
    - faulty pronoun reference (example of faulty pronoun reference: “After the children played with the puppies, they were exhausted and took a nap”).
    - subject-verb disagreement (example of subject-verb disagreement: “The leaves of the tree is green”).
    - the passive voice (example of the passive voice: “Mistakes were made”).
    - comma splices (example of comma splice: “Shakespeare died in 1616, he is a canonical author”).
    - run-on sentences (example of run-on sentence: “A run-on sentence is also known as a fused sentence it is grammatically incorrect at least two independent clauses are joined but without proper conjunctions or without proper punctuation”).
    - sentence fragments (example of sentence fragment: “How the poem flows.”).
    - inconsistent verb tenses (example: “After she laughed, she claps her hands and sang a song”).

* Format your essays according to the guidelines in the MLA Handbook.

* Do not plagiarize. Online resources on plagiarism and academic honesty can be found here: http://writingatqueens.org/for-students/what-is-plagiarism/

* Consult The Writing Center: http://writingatqueens.org/the-writing-center/
GRADING POLICY

Undergraduate Grade Equivalencies:

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The grade of D is the lowest passing grade in the undergraduate division.

* Formal writing assignments:

A+ This is truly outstanding work. The essay fulfills virtually all of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” Moreover, the essay goes far beyond the requirements of the assignment. It successfully pursues a risky line of inquiry; it addresses sophisticated ideas in an inventive manner; it offers close readings that are striking, adventurous, insightful, compelling; it is written in unusually effective prose. Essays of this caliber are extremely rare.

A This is also outstanding work. The essay fulfills virtually all of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” It may lack the flair of an A+ essay, or it may fall slightly short of accomplishing an audacious goal. Overall, however, this is exceptionally fine work that shows evidence of talent, diligence, skillful critical thinking, and a desire to take on intellectual challenges.

A− This is outstanding work that fulfills most of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” The prose is lucid. The argument is clear, persuasive, and well supported. The textual analyses are skillful and cogent. There may be several minor flaws – e.g., a few small factual errors; an instance of inaccurate use of evidence – but overall this is work of extremely high quality.

B+ This is excellent work that fulfills most of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” Its flaws are slightly more numerous and/or more serious than the flaws of an A− paper. For example, the prose may be unnecessarily wordy and marred by a number of distracting typos and mechanical errors. There may be a bit too much summary and not enough analysis. The conceptual framework may be weakened by a few places where the argument needs to be developed more fully. Overall, however, this is high-quality work reflecting effort and ability.
B This is very good work that fulfills many of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” Its flaws are slightly more numerous and/or more serious than the flaws of B+ work. An essay that receives a B may be undermined by structural defects: for instance, a line of reasoning may not move logically from sentence to sentence. Additionally, there may be problems with the way in which the essay uses evidence to support its claims. Close readings may lack specificity, or citations may be missing. Overall, however, this work demonstrates effort and competence. An essay of B quality is much better than satisfactory.

B− This is good work that fulfills some of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” The essay may offer interesting points, but the points may be presented in a disjointed manner indicating the absence of a unifying argument. There may be excessive plot summary and virtually no analysis. The prose may be consistently imprecise. If you receive a B− on a formal essay, I encourage you to consult the Writing Center: http://writingatqueens.org/the-writing-center. Overall, however, this work is more than satisfactory.

C+ This work is somewhere in between satisfactory and more than satisfactory. It fulfills just enough of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines” to qualify as slightly better than merely adequate. While the essay is for the most part intelligible, it has numerous serious problems. For instance, it may consist almost exclusively of generalizations. It may neglect to engage closely with specific texts. Further, the essay may be riddled with typos and mechanical problems reflecting carelessness and lack of effort. Still, the essay shows promise. If you receive a C+ on a formal essay, I strongly urge you to consult the Writing Center and to schedule a meeting with me.

C This is work that meets just enough of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines” to qualify as passable. An essay that receives a C has almost no discernible purpose. There may be glimmers of intelligibility here and there, but typos and mechanical problems are so copious that many sentences are indecipherable. If you receive a C on a formal essay, I strongly urge you to consult the Writing Center and to schedule a meeting with me.

C− This work is barely passable. It violates most of the criteria outlined in “Writing Guidelines.” The essay reflects disregard and disrespect for the course on every page. If you receive a C− on a formal essay, a meeting with me and a visit to the Writing Center are mandatory.
D+, D  An essay in the D range is virtually unreadable. Work of such low caliber is extremely rare. If you receive a grade in the D range on a formal essay, a meeting with me and a visit to the Writing Center are mandatory.

F This grade will be given to work that was not submitted.

NOTE: Formal essays submitted more than three days past the deadline will not be accepted. For each day past the deadline, your grade for the assignment will drop by five points.

* Online journal (fourteen short/informal writing assignments):

100 (A+): This grade will be given to work that consistently arrives on time, demonstrates sincere effort, and engages with the assignment in a thoughtful manner.

85 (B−): This grade will be given to [1] work that is generally A+ in quality but submitted late at least three times; [2] work that consistently arrives on time but demonstrates less-than-solid effort and routinely shows evidence of carelessness (e.g., abundant typos, mechanical errors).

0 (F): This grade will be given to journals that are missing at least two entries.

NOTE: * You are more than welcome – but not expected – to respond to your colleagues’ work.
* Keep in mind that these posts are informal. They are meant to give you a space in which to play and experiment with your ideas on poetry, with your interpretations of the readings, and with your own voice and sense of audience. At the same time, please avoid typos and other instances of careless writing. Above all, I will be looking for sincere effort and thoughtful engagement with the assignment.
* I intend to remain, for the most part, an invisible presence on the Blackboard discussion forums. The only times you’ll “see” me on the BB discussion board will be (a) when I start new threads with posts suggesting possible discussion questions/topics; and (b) in the unlikely event that hate speech and other offensive material require my intervention. Think of my role as that of a silent moderator who follows every discussion with curiosity, enthusiasm, and keen interest. More importantly, think of the BB discussion board as YOUR space – a space where the dialogues are run by you and your peers.
* I will assign a final grade to your journal at the end of the semester, i.e., after all fourteen entries have been posted on Blackboard. You are always welcome (but under no pressure) to request my feedback during the semester.
On Poetry

Poetry is “writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm.” —Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2009)

“Poetry is the most compressed form of language.” —Jon Stallworthy, “Versification,” Norton Anthology (pg. 1252)

“I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry: that is, prose = words in their best order; poetry = the best words in the best order.” —Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Table Talk (1827)

“A poem should be wordless / As the flight of birds.” —Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica” (1926)

“I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty.” —Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle” (1850)

“It is not meters, but a meter-making argument, that makes a poem – a thought so passionate and alive that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet” (1844)

“Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred.” —Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Defense of Poetry” (1821)

“A poem should not mean / But be.” —Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica” (1926)


“...poetry makes nothing happen: it survives / In the valley of its making where executives / Would never want to tamper, flows on south / From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs, / Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives, / A way of happening, a mouth.” —W.H. Auden, “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” (1939)

“Ink runs from the corners of my mouth. / There is no happiness like mine. / I have been eating poetry.” —Mark Strand, “Eating Poetry” (1968)

“A poem should be palpable and mute / As a globed fruit.” —Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica”
“If there were no poetry on any day in the world, poetry would be invented that day. For there would be an intolerable hunger.” —Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry* (1949)

“I speak here of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean – in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight. / For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.” —Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” (1984)

“America is a poem in our eyes.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet” (1844)

“Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” —Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Defense of Poetry” (1821)

“[P]oets, being liars by profession, ought to have good memories.” —Jonathan Swift, “A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet” (1721)

“A poem should be equal to: / Not true.” —Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica” (1926)

“I’m working on a poem that’s so true, I can’t show it to anyone./I could never show it to anyone./Because it says exactly what I think, and what I think scares me.” —Lloyd Schwartz, “A True Poem” (2000)


“Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.” —John Keats, “Letter to John Taylor” (1818)

“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on.” —William Wordsworth, “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

“All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling.” —Oscar Wilde, “The Critic as Artist” (1891)

“I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. / Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine. / Hands that can
grasp, eyes / that can dilate, hair that can rise / if it must, these things are important not because a / high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are / useful.” —Marianne Moore, “Poetry” (1919)

“If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?” —Emily Dickinson, remark to Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1870)

“Poetry Is a Destructive Force.” —Wallace Stevens, “Poetry Is a Destructive Force” (1954)

“Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.” —T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919)

“The lyric turns away, not merely from ordinary space and time, but from the kind of language we use in coping with ordinary experience.” —Northrop Frye, “Approaching the Lyric” (1982)

“The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet’s utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet’s mind. [...] All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy.” —John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” (1833)

“Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal [but] which the reader recognizes as his own.” —Salvatore Quasimodo, New York Times (1960)

Poetry “awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought.” —Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Defense of Poetry”

“Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.” —Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” (1984)

“Poetry is ordinary language raised to the nth power. Poetry is boned with ideas, nerved and blooded with emotions, all held together by the delicate, tough skin of words.” —Paul Engle, New York Times (1957)