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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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a feast for the senses. 22 Reads 2 Votes 5 Part Story. Get notified when a feast for the senses is updated. Sign up with Facebook. Sign up with Google. When reading the different poems in this issue of Poetry, it soon becomes apparent that the “I” speaker can shift quite a bit from poem to poem. The first three poets in this issue offer great examples. In Samuel Menashe’s group of poems—“In Your Face,” “Tempus Fugit,” “Here Now,” and “Psalm”—the first-person speaker is presented quite differently from the speaker in Dan Beachy-Quick’s “Museums” or the speaker in Belle Randall’s “Cast-Off.” A great poet of the senses is David Harsent. The first section of his poem, “Red,” is a feast. Consider the “juices swamping,” “gristle in the gap between her teeth,” “a morsel in your mouth,” and more. As you continue reading, notice how your senses of touch, smell, and hearing are engaged. Harsent isn’t just playing around, though. Music, poetry, dancers, debate and even sexual play were all common forms of entertainment at these events. The dinner entertainment at Greek and Roman banquets often included prostitutes and musicians, both shown in the banquet scene decorating a Greek red figure vase, probably made in southern Italy or Sicily in the fifth or fourth century B.C.E. Scala/Art Resource, NY. The Bible History Daily article “A Feast for the Senses ... and the Soul” was originally published in March 2013. Dorothy Resig Willette was the managing editor of Biblical Archaeology Review. Notes