

# Poetry discussion

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



16 October Poetic Critique Poets use many techniques to convey messages and make the reading enjoyable for their readers. Their choices to use specific sentence structure, words and parts of speech contribute to the readers' understanding of and appreciation for the work. The following examples demonstrate how poets employ inverted word order, imagery, similes and metaphors to build compelling stories for their readers.

In writing “ Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”, Robert Frost uses inverted word order to provide interest as well as make statements where standard word order might ordinarily imply questions (87). The first two lines of the poem reveal that Frost knows who owns the woods, and that it is someone who lives in the village. Line six of the poem tells the reader that no people live in the woods and that the woods are quiet and serene. In addition, the inverted word order adds a lyrical cadence to the poem and makes it enjoyable to read.

Furthermore, the inverted word order allows the reader to infer precisely what Frost is saying. If he had drafted the poem saying, “ though his house is in the village...” one might question whether the owner lived in the woods in a different structure. The way Frost wrote the poem, however, indicates that not only is the owner's house in the village, but that the woods are barren of human inhabitation. One does not know the errands that prompted Frost to travel on a cold, dark, and snowy night. Nonetheless, after reading the poem, one does understand that Frost appreciates nature and tranquility.

In another example, William Carlos Williams uses imagery to paint a picture in his poem, “ The Red Wheelbarrow”. He leaves a great deal to the imagination of the reader regarding the subject and intent of the poem,

while clearly creating a scene of anticipation. One can see the red wheelbarrow. One can envision it being weather-beaten and perhaps a little rusty. One can relate to the wetness of the rain water, and imagine it being cool and slick to the touch. Finally, one can picture chickens freshly washed by the rain, fluffy and white. One can hear the clucking and cooing, pecking and scratching, as the chickens meander in and out of the shadow of the wheelbarrow.

Beyond this imagery, Williams provides no direction to the reader, who may choose the subject and intent of the poem independently. One's background and experiences determine the final interpretation. If one is familiar with farms and manual labor, one might envision impending work and the wheelbarrow's role in that work. Without the wheelbarrow, one might consider the difficulty of hauling materials from one area to another. If one did not have this background, one might infer that what "depends on a red wheel barrow" is simply to provide shelter for the chickens (155). While the imagery does little to explain the message that Williams is trying to convey, it does contribute to the enjoyment of the poem and leads the reader to draw personal conclusions about what happens next.

In the poem, "The Shirt", Robert Pinsky uses similes and metaphors to bring the words to life and provide a frame of reference for the reader. Even if one has not experienced the scenarios and images personally, the vivid descriptions and correlations allow one to imagine the scenes which Pinsky is describing. While innocently discussing the shirt that he wears, Pinsky weaves the history of shirt manufacturing into the poem to challenge the reader to consider sacrifices made by earlier generations to propel society to

its current state (179).

One heart-wrenching simile is the comparison of the actions of the young man helping the working girls to jump out the window of the burning Triangle Factory in 1911 to assisting them into a streetcar. The witness noted a similarity between the horrific and the commonplace, perhaps not only in the motion, but in the idea of honor and respect as well. The description of the young man's clothing highlights how one focuses on details when the situation may be too terrible to face. Pinsky compares the orderliness of the young man's clothing to a strict rhyme or major chord, pointing out the dichotomy between order and chaos that was occurring during the event. Another striking simile is the comparison of the mill worker to slaves. One has seen pictures of slaves working in the cotton fields and, when given this image, can immediately see the similarity to workers in a factory churning out item after item in rows of assembly lines. Yet within the monotony, Pinsky calls attention to poetry in motion when he uses a metaphor to reveal that the mill worker is a descendant of the poet George Herbert (179). Her attention to detail and quality translate into something poetic, though she is not drafting a single word.

All of these poets used different techniques to communicate effectively with their readers. They chose their mediums with care and applied them successfully to deliver thought-provoking and enjoyable poems. The tools demonstrated here, as well as many others, make poems engaging and compelling.