

# Sound in poetry essay

Profession, Poet



Shana Williamson April 7, 2000 English 110B-Frank Essay #2 Sound in Poetry Poems usually begin with words or phrase which appeal more because of their sound than their meaning, and the movement and phrasing of a poem. Every poem has a texture of sound, which is at least as important as the meaning behind the poem. Rhythm, being the regular recurrence of sound, is at the heart of all natural phenomena: the beating of a heart, the lapping of waves against the shore, the croaking of frogs on a summers night, the whisper of wheat swaying in the wind. Rhythm and sound and arrangement the formal properties of words allow the poet to get beyond, or beneath the surface of a poem. Both Gwendolyn Brooks Sadie and Maud (799) and Anne Bradstreets To My Dear and Loving Husband (784) emphasize poetic sound to express their themes.

Used to enhance sound in a poem, alliteration is the repetition of sound in consecutive or neighboring words, usually at the beginning of words. Both Brooks and Bradstreet make use of alliteration in their poems. Sadie stayed at home. / Sadie scraped life (2-3) the repetition of s is evident in these two lines, reflecting the sassiness and independence that Sadie possessed. Then while we live, in love lets persevere (11) the slow musical repetition of the l sounds reflect the romantic emphasis in the poem. Assonance the repetition of the same or similar vowel sound, especially in stressed syllables can also enrich a poem. Assonance can be used to unify a poem as in Bradstreets poem in which it emphasizes the thematic connection among words and unifies the poems ideas of the husband and wife becoming one. Compare with me ye woman if you can (4). In Brooks poem, repeated vowel sounds extend throughout. Brooks indirectly links certain words and by connecting

these words, she calls attention to the imagery that helps communicate the poems theme of how different two people who grew up in the same household can be. Under her maiden name/ Maud and Ma and Papa (10-11). In addition to alliteration and assonance, poets create sound patterns with rhyme. The conventional way to describe a poems rhyme scheme is to chart rhyming words that appear at the ends of lines. In Brooks poem the rhyme scheme is abcb, defe which reinforces the way two things can begin the same, but change as time goes on. Naturally, rhyme does not have to be subtle to enrich a poem. An obvious rhyme scheme like the one in Bradstreets poem is aabb, ccdd can communicate meaning by forcing attention on a relationship between two people that are not normally linked. The poems theme speaks of the husband and wife becoming one, the poems rhyme scheme is of two consecutive lines belonging together and having one sound.

Rhyme can also be classified according to the position of the rhyming syllables in a line of verse. Bradstreets poem contains beginning rhyme, Brooks poem, on the other hand, contains only end rhyme. I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold/ My love is such that rivers cannot quench/ Thy love is such I can in no way repay(5, 7, 9). Her girls struck out from home/ Her fine-tooth comb (14, 16). Poets, too, create rhyme by using repeated words and phrases. Sadie scraped life/ with a fine-toothed comb (3-4) and Sadie had left as heritage/ her fine-tooth comb (15-16). The repeated phrases Sadie and Maud, which shift from one subject to the other and back again Maud went to college/ Sadie stayed at home (1-2). The poem has a singing rhythm that resembles a song that children play to. The

remembrance of carefree childhood ironically contrasts with the adulthood that both Sadie and Maud now face as they grow up: Sadie stays home and has two children out of wedlock; Maud goes to college and ends up a thin brown mouse. Repeated phrases in Bradstreet's poem include if ever and love. If ever two were one then surely we. / If ever man were loved by wife then thee (1-2). My Love is such that rivers cannot quench, / Nor ought but love from the give recompence (9-10). With such recurrence, the poem is like a slow romantic song and the repeated words are its rhythm.

Meter, the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that govern a poem's lines, largely creates poetic rhythm. This gives readers the beat of the poem and approximates the sound of spoken language. The meter of Bradstreet's poem is iambic pentameter and it is evident throughout the poem. It contributes to the overall effect of the poem because all of the words about one, we, thee, are stressed or emphasized; thus reinforcing the theme of the poem. The meter of Brooks' poem is anapestic dimeter, it contributes to the overall theme of the poem like the comparison of the sisters, every other stanza is alike. A way of varying meter is to introduce a pause in the rhythm often created by a caesura—a cutting within a line. Both Brooks and Bradstreet use caesuras to complete individual thought and to add to the beat of the poem.

Although the end of a line may mark the end of a metrical unit, it does not always coincide with the end of a sentence. Poets may choose to indicate a pause at this point, or they may continue, without a break, to the next line. Both Brooks and Bradstreet use end-stopped lines that have distinct

pauses at the end. Thy love is such that I can in no way repay, / The heavens reward thee manifold I pray. (8-9). When Sadie said her last so long/ Her girls struck out from home. (13-14). These lines give the poem a more sharp, abrupt effect like the lines in a song.

With sound and rhythm being at the heart of our everyday lives, we begin not to notice how much of an effect it has on us. It's in the beating of a heart, the movement of rush-hour traffic, and in the way we walk. With this, what often attracts us to poetry is its sound and movement. Poets use sound to express the themes of their poems and it allows them to find a deeper meaning behind the poem. Both Brooks and Bradstreet made rhythm and sound evident in conveying the themes of their poems. Category: English