

Genre Analysis

Poetry Form

Narrative poetry is simply poetry that tells or narrates a story. Hence, this type of poetry contains and follows the same conventions as a story might have. For example, narrative poetry can be told from many points of view and contains the traditional elements of a story: beginning, middle, and end. Narrative poetry also contains plot, developed characters and dialogue. What is most interesting about narrative poetry is that it merges two very distinct ways of writing and combining it into one. That means, besides being a story, a narrative poetry is written using poetic techniques such as metered verse which is not present in story-telling. With regards to poetry, a narrative poetry focuses on the plot of the story instead of feelings or thoughts of the poet which is typical of other forms of poetry.

Narrative poetry can be written in many forms such as epic, ballad or straightforward narrative. I will be writing this experiment in the form of a ballad due to it having shorter lines. From “*The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*,” the authors, Mark Strand and Eavan Boland, define a ballad as such:

- Short narrative, arranged in stanzas that have four-lines
- The first and third line have four stresses , iambic tetrameter, while the second and fourth line have three stresses, iambic trimeter.
- Rhyme scheme is *abab* or *abcb*
- Distinct subject matter
- Includes speech and dialogue

Models

1. “*Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*” by T.S. Eliot

I stumbled upon this poetry book while doing research for the first experiment. I thought this book was very playful and warm. As a model, I intend to look into the figure of speech that T.S. Eliot uses so that I can learn how he describes cats behaviors.

- Personification from “*The Old Gumbie Cat*”
 But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,
 Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.
 And when all the family's in bed and asleep,
 She tucks up her skirts to the basement to creep.
 She is deeply concerned with the ways of the mice--
 Their behaviour's not good and their manners not nice;
 So when she has got them lined up on the matting,
 She teaches them music, crocheting and tatting.
- Simile from “*Old Deuteronomy*”
 That they started to ring up the Fire Brigade.
 When suddenly, up from a small basement flat,
 Why who should stalk out but the Great Rumpuscat.
 His eyes were like fireballs fearfully blazing,
 He gave a great yawn, and his jaws were amazing;

2. [“*The Cat’s Song*” by Marge Piercy](#)

This poem contains a few lines written from the POV of the cat. This is different from the previous model which primarily uses the poet’s voice. In Piercy’s poem, the cat has a dialogue. I intend to use this as a guide to include cat dialogue into my sample.

You feed me, I try to feed you, we are friends,
 says the cat, although I am more equal than you.

3. [“*Another Insane Devotion*” by Gerald Stern](#)

The poem is essentially a lovestruck poem, but I find the poet narrates the story really well. This poem is posted on Poetry Foundation website and includes an audio by the poet himself. What I want to learn from this model is differentiating between narrative and narrative poetry. Even though the poem is essentially a story, the poet doesn’t make it sound

like a short story at all. In fact, it does sound like a poem. So, the audio is really helpful in differentiating what narratives sound like and what narrative poetry sounds like. (hint: meter plays a role in differentiating these two!)