Chapter 1: What is Poetry? (p 3-10)

Poetry is all about experience!!

Poetry is as universal as language and almost as ancient – it is central to our existence.

Poetry is the concern of the educated, the intelligent, and the sensitive, but its simpler forms can appeal to the uneducated and children.


By definition, poetry says more and says it more intensely than ordinary language

**Use of Language**

1. Communicate Information *(practical, scientific)* --- analyzes
   a. Researching information about eagles
2. Experience *(literary)* --- synthesizes
   a. Reading the poem “The Eagle”
3. argumentative --- to persuade

Literature broadens and deepens experience and poetry is the most condensed and concentrated form of literature (higher voltage)

**Two mistaken approaches to poetry**

1. To seek a moral / lesson
2. To expect that poetry will always be beautiful

**Sample Poems:** “Winter” and “Dulce et Decorum Est”

Poetry is concerned with all kinds of experiences

Poor reader = color blind man

Act of communication in reading poetry: transmitting station and receiving set

**Poetry is a multidimensional language --- it has 4 dimensions:**

1. Intelligence
2. Senses
3. Emotions
4. Imagination

Poetry is an organism whose every part serves a useful purpose and cooperates with every other part to preserve and express the life that is within it
Suggestions for reading poetry:

1. Poems must be read more than once. A poem is not a newspaper. It is like a painting or a good piece of music.
2. Use a dictionary, a book on mythology, and the Bible.
3. Read aloud to hear the sounds of words.
4. Always be focused on and conscious of what the poem is saying.
5. Practice reading poems aloud
   a. Read affectionately but not affectedly
   b. Read not too fast or too slow
   c. Read so that the rhythmical pattern is felt but not exaggerated

Paraphrasing a poem is to restate it in plain language – it can be shorter or longer than the poem, but it should capture all the ideas in a way that makes the central idea (theme) more accessible to the reader.

Paraphrase is to a poem as a corpse is to a person

Three important questions that aid in understanding a poem:
1. Who is the speaker?
2. What is the occasion?
3. What is the central purpose of the poem?
   a. To tell a story
   b. To reveal human character
   c. To impart a vivid impression of a scene
   d. To express a mood or an emotion
   e. To convey vividly some idea or attitude
   f. Etc.

Every poem, to some degree, is dramatic – the utterance of a fictional character than the person who wrote the poem.

Sample Poems: “The Man I Killed” and “A Study of Reading Habits”

The ultimate question we should ask to understand a poem: By what means is the central purpose achieved?

Remain mentally alert while reading poetry

Poetry is like playing tennis
Chapter 3: Denotation & Connotation (p 37-42)

A primary distinction between practical use of language and literary use of language is a fuller use of individual words.

**A word has three parts:**
1. Sound – tones, noises
2. Denotation – dictionary meaning
3. Connotation – what the word suggests

Connotation is the means by which a poet can concentrate or enrich meaning --- say more in fewer words.

A word can have more than one connotation and denotation --- a poet takes advantage of the fact that a word has more than one meaning.

**Sample Poem:** “There is no frigate like a book”

Poets seek the most meaningful words – not the most beautiful or noble-sounding.

The ambiguity and multiplicity of words are an obstacle to the scientist but a resource to the poet.

The reader of poetry has to become familiar with the shape, color, and flavor of words.

How? **Use a dictionary and READ a lot.**

Chapter 4: Imagery (p 49-51)

Experience comes to us through the senses --- seeing, hearing, feelings, etc.

The poet’s language has to be more sensuous than ordinary language.

Imagery --- the representation through language of sense experience; a mental picture
1. Auditory Imagery (sound)
2. Olfactory Imagery (smell)
3. Gustatory Imagery (taste)
4. Tactile Imagery (touch) – hardness, softness, wetness, heat, cold, etc.
5. Organic Imagery – an internal sensation such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc.
6. Kinesthetic Imagery – a movement or tension in the muscles or joints

**Sample Poem:** “Meeting at Night” “Parting at Morning”
Figures of speech add an extra dimension to language

A figure of speech is a way of saying something other than the ordinary way --- saying one thing and meaning another

Figurative language cannot be taken literally

Metaphor and simile \((like, as)\) are used to compare two unlike things

**Metaphors may take one of four forms depending on whether the literal and figurative terms are named or implied.**

1. Both the literal and figurative terms are named
2. The literal term is named and the figurative term is implied
3. The literal term is implied and the figurative term is named
4. Both the literal and figurative terms are implied (rare)

**Sample Poem:** “It sifts from leaden sieves”

**Personification** is giving the attributes of human beings to an animal, object, or concept

**Apostrophe** – addressing someone absent or dead or something nonhuman as if that person or thing were present and alive and could reply to what is being said

**Synecdoche** - the use of the part for the whole

**Metonymy** - the use of something closely related for the thing actually meant

**Why is figurative language effective?**

1. Affords us imaginative pleasure
2. Brings additional imagery into the poem – multiplies the sense appeal of poetry
3. Add emotional intensity
4. An effective means of concentration