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| **PROSODY 101**  **By Linda Pastan** |
| When they taught me that what mattered most was not the strict iambic line goose-stepping over the page but the variations in that line and the tension produced on the ear by the surprise of difference, I understood yet didn't understand exactly, until just now, years later in spring, with the trees already lacy and camellias blowsy with middle age, I looked out and saw what a cold front had done to the garden, sweeping in like common language, unexpected in the sensuous extravagance of a Maryland spring. There was a dark edge around each flower as if it had been outlined in ink instead of frost, and the tension I felt between the expected and actual was like that time I came to you, ready to say goodbye for good, for you had been a cold front yourself lately, and as I walked in you laughed and lifted me up in your arms as if I too were lacy with spring instead of middle aged like the camellias, and I thought: so this is Poetry! |  |

# Introduction to Poetry

BY [BILLY COLLINS](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/billy-collins)

I ask them to take a poem

and hold it up to the light

like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem

and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem’s room

and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski

across the surface of a poem

waving at the author’s name on the shore.

But all they want to do

is tie the poem to a chair with rope

and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose

to find out what it really means.

## Sound and Sense

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,   
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.   
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offense,   
The sound must seem an echo to the sense:   
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,   
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;   
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,   
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar;   
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,   
The line too labors, and the words move slow;   
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,   
Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.   
Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,   
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!

Alexander Pope

## Author to her Book, The

Thou ill-form'd offspring of my feeble brain,  
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,  
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise than true,  
Who thee abroad expos'd to public view,  
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,  
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).  
At thy return my blushing was not small,  
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call.  
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,  
Thy Visage was so irksome in my sight,  
Yet being mine own, at length affection would  
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.  
I wash'd thy face, but more defects I saw,  
And rubbing off a spot, still made a flaw.  
I stretcht thy joints to make thee even feet,  
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet.  
In better dress to trim thee was my mind,  
But nought save home-spun Cloth, i' th' house I find.  
In this array, 'mongst Vulgars mayst thou roam.  
In Critics' hands, beware thou dost not come,  
And take thy way where yet thou art not known.  
If for thy Father askt, say, thou hadst none;  
And for thy Mother, she alas is poor,  
Which caus'd her thus to send thee out of door.

Anne Bradstreet

# The Tyger

BY [WILLIAM BLAKE](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/william-blake)

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,

In the forests of the night;

What immortal hand or eye,

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,

Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

And when thy heart began to beat,

What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp,

Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears

And water'd heaven with their tears:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,

In the forests of the night:

What immortal hand or eye,

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

# The Lamb

BY [WILLIAM BLAKE](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/william-blake)

Little Lamb who made thee

         Dost thou know who made thee

Gave thee life & bid thee feed.

By the stream & o'er the mead;

Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing wooly bright;

Gave thee such a tender voice,

Making all the vales rejoice!

         Little Lamb who made thee

         Dost thou know who made thee

         Little Lamb I'll tell thee,

         Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,

For he calls himself a Lamb:

He is meek & he is mild,

He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,

We are called by his name.

         Little Lamb God bless thee.

         Little Lamb God bless thee.

# Lady Lazarus

  by [Sylvia Plath](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/11)

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it--

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin

O my enemy.

Do I terrify?--

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath

Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh

The grave cave ate will be

At home on me

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.

What a trash

To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot--

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands

My knees.

I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

The first time it happened I was ten.

It was an accident.

The second time I meant

To last it out and not come back at all.

I rocked shut

As a seashell.

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.

It's easy enough to do it and stay put.

It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

'A miracle!'

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart--

It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge

For a word or a touch

Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

So, so, Herr Doktor.

So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,

I am your valuable,

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.

I turn and burn.

Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash--

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--

A cake of soap,

A wedding ring,

A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

- See more at:

Walt Whitman (1819–1892).  Leaves of Grass.  1900.   
  
[208](http://www.bartleby.com/142/1020.html#208). **A Noiseless Patient Spider** 

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| --- | --- |
| A NOISELESS, patient spider, |  |
| I mark’d, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated; |  |
| Mark’d how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding, |  |
| It launch’d forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself; |  |
| Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them. | *5* |
|  |  |
| And you, O my Soul, where you stand, |  |
| Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space, |  |
| Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them; |  |
| Till the bridge you will need, be form’d—till the ductile anchor hold; |  |
| Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul. |  |

# Do not go gentle into that good night

  by [Dylan Thomas](http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/150)

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
  
Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
  
Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
  
Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
  
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,   
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.  
  
And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**Spring in the Classroom**

**(by Mary Oliver)**

Elbows on dry books, we dreamed  
Past Miss Willow Bangs, and lessons, and windows,  
To catch all day glimpses and guesses of the greening woodlot,  
Its secrets and increases,  
Its hidden nests and kind.  
And what warmed in us was no book-learning,  
But the old mud blood murmuring,  
Loosening like petals from bone sleep.  
So spring surrounded the classroom, and we suffered to be kept indoors,  
Droned through lessons, carved when we could with jackknives  
Our pulsing initials into the desks, and grew  
Angry to be held so, without pity and beyond reason,  
By Miss Willow Bangs, her eyes two stones behind glass,  
Her legs thick, her heart  
In love with pencils and arithmetic.

So it went — one gorgeous day lost after another  
While we sat like captives and breathed the chalky air  
And the leaves thickened and birds called  
From the edge of the world — till it grew easy to hate,  
To plot mutiny, even murder. Oh, we had her in chains,  
We had her hanged and cold, in our longing to be gone!  
And then one day, Miss Willow Bangs, we saw you  
As we ran wild in our three o’clock escape  
Past the abandoned swings; you were leaning  
All furry and blooming against the old brick wall  
In the Art Teacher’s arms.