

## A COMPARISON OF PROSE AND POETRY

### PROSE

Uses expanded language – more words  
Uses more expository language  
Has no particular rhythm  
Usually written to be read silently

The building blocks of prose writing are:

Word  
Sentence  
Paragraph  
Chapter or Story or Essay  
Book

Prose starts with words which combine to make a sentence, sentences combine to form a paragraph, paragraphs combine to form a chapter, and chapters combine to form a book.

### POETRY

Uses condensed language – fewer words  
Uses more figurative language  
Has definite rhythm  
Usually written to be read aloud

Makes use of rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance

The building blocks of poetry are:

Syllable

Foot

Line (measured in meters)

Stanza

Poem

Collection

While poetry is, of course, made up of words, the smallest building block of a poem is actually the syllable. It's the syllable, not the whole word, that is stressed or unstressed and counted to form the rhythm or meter of the poem. So, syllables combine to make a foot, feet combine to make a line, lines combine to make a stanza, stanzas combine to make a poem. Poems combine to make a collection.

On the following two pages are three pieces of writing about the Erie Canal: essay (prose), free verse, and rhyming poem. Read all three pieces and compare them.

1. What is the tone or attitude of each piece?
2. Which piece gives you the most information about the Erie Canal?
3. Which piece gives you the best idea of what it is like to ride in a canal boat?
4. Notice how the essay is divided into paragraphs, which are constructed using words and sentences
5. Notice how the poems are divided into stanzas, which are constructed using syllables, feet and lines.
6. Do you recognize "Low Bridge, Everybody Down" as being the well-known song?

What is the rhyme scheme for each verse?

What is the rhyme scheme for the chorus?

Can you find the two lines that have a slant rhyme - words that are not perfect rhymes?

Can you hear the rhythm of the meter in “Low Bridge, Everybody Down?”

Each line is made up of trochaic feet – a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Not all of the lines are the same length. They have a different number of feet and therefore a different meter. How does the meter or rhythm contribute to your understanding of the canal?

7. Notice that Thomas Allen uses a lot of repetition in his song. What does the repetition say about the canal? Is there any repetition in the other two pieces?
8. The poem “Erie Canal” is written in free verse. It is a type of poem called a dramatic monologue. Who is speaking in the poem?
9. Can you find any rhyming words in “Erie Canal?”
10. “Erie Canal” uses other poetic devices. Can you find examples of alliteration? Parallel construction? Hyperbole? Metaphor?
11. Which piece of writing leaves the best image of the canal in your head? Which piece of writing do you like best? Why?

#### New York’s Erie Canal

People laughed when New York State Governor DeWitt Clinton proposed building a 362-mile canal between Albany and Buffalo, but he wouldn’t be defeated. The construction project began on July 4, 1817 near Rome, NY. From there, men worked both east and west cutting down trees, blasting through rocks, and battling malaria in swamps. There was not one trained engineer on the project, just hard-working men who learned as they went along.

After eight years, the canal was finished, and on October 26, 1825 Governor Clinton boarded a packet boat called the Seneca Chief, which was pulled by four horses walking the towpath. He was carrying two barrels of water from Lake Erie, which he poured into the Atlantic Ocean when he reached New York City on November 4, 1825. The ceremony was called the Wedding of the Waters and symbolized the new link between the American frontier and Europe and the rest of the world.

The Erie Canal brought great prosperity to New York State. The canal cut the cost of shipping from \$100 a ton to \$10 a ton. It also cut the time to ship from Buffalo to Albany from 28 days to 8 days. All of the towns along the canal grew in population and wealth. The canal spawned additional businesses such as inns and taverns and leather shops. No one laughed at Governor Clinton anymore.

By Sally Valentine

## Erie Canal

Welcome to my waters.  
I am your Erie Canal.  
Don't call me Clinton's Dirty Ditch!  
I am a living legend.  
I am an engineering marvel,  
dug by men who  
mowed through miles of forest,  
stood chest deep in mosquitoed swamp  
making elevators for water.

Helped by horses and handmade tools,  
paid in cheap wages and cheap whiskey,  
they laid a new road in America,  
creating kinship in Albany and Buffalo,  
marrying Lake Erie to Atlantic Ocean.

I was born of their labor, and then  
gave birth myself,  
flour mills, lumber mills, knitting mills,  
breweries, carpet factories, salt mines.

Today I let down my locks to you.  
Take a trip through my territory,  
cast a line in my direction,  
park your pack boat and sit under my spell.  
Lade for yourself cotton and coal, wares and wheat.  
Learn from me.  
I have the wisdom that old age brings.  
I am a living legend.  
I am your Erie Canal

By Sally Valentine

**Low Bridge, Everybody Down**  
(Written by: Thomas Allen in 1905)

I've got a mule, and her name is Sal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
She's a good ol' worker and a good ol' pal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
We've hauled some barges in our day,  
Filled with lumber coal and hay,  
And ev'ry inch of the way we know  
From Albany to Buffalo, Oh

Chorus

Low bridge ev'-rybody down,  
Low bridge for we're comin' to a town,  
And you always know your neighbor,  
You'll always know your pal,  
If you've ever navigated on the Erie canal.

We'd better look round for a job old gal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
You bet your life I wouldn't part with Sal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
Giddap there gal we've passed that lock,  
We'll make Rome fore six o'clock,  
So, it's one more trip and then we'll go,  
Right back home to Buffalo, Oh

Chorus

Oh, where would I be if I lost my pal?  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal.  
Oh, I'd like to see a mule as good as Sal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
A friend of mine once got her sore,  
Now he's got a busted jaw,  
'Cause she let fly with her iron toe,  
And kicked him in to Buffalo, Oh

Chorus

Don't have to call when I want my Sal,

Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
She trots from her stall like a good old gal,  
Fifteen miles on the Erie canal,  
I eat my meals with Sal each day,  
I eat beef and she eats hay,  
And she ain't so slow if you want to know,  
She put the "Buff" in Buffalo, Oh

Chorus

# Couplets

**Couplets** consist of two lines of rhyming poetry. Anyone can write a couplet. For each beginning line below write a second line that rhymes. Try to use the same number of syllables that are in the first line. You will have made a couplet.

Hair grows,

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Cherry pie,

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Hip, hip, hooray!

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Purple pigs are rare,

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Once upon a long lost time,

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A ship sails bravely out to sea,

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Along the path, around the bend,

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Hurry up! Hurry up! lazy snail,

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As I sat looking at the moon so bright,

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# Similes





My father sings like

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This school is like

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The sun is like

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## Metaphors

Metaphors are comparisons that don't use the word "like" or "as."

Examples: The moon is a saucer of milk.  
The sky is an artist's canvas.

Complete these metaphors. Be careful not to use the word "like" or "as."

This school is \_\_\_\_\_

The moon is \_\_\_\_\_

A lighthouse is \_\_\_\_\_

A cow is \_\_\_\_\_

Dancing is \_\_\_\_\_

Reading a book is \_\_\_\_\_

**Alliteration** is the repetition of beginning consonants. Here are some tongue twisters I wrote about places in New York using way too much alliteration.

- A Activist Alma asked an Albany assemblyman to abolish artichokes, acne, and algebra.
- B Bragging Bradford boasted that he bought a bison for a buck at Bargain Barney's in Buffalo.
- C Covering from catamounts, cautious Chester camped close to his cavalier cousins in Catskill Park.

Now you choose a letter of the alphabet and write your own tongue twister using too much alliteration.

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## Acrostics

**Acrostics** are poems in which the first letters of each line spell a word. Here's an acrostic I wrote about my granddog Oliver when he was a puppy. Acrostics may or may not rhyme.

*O nly just six pounds of nothing*  
*L eap year's precious baby boy*  
*I nto our lives licking kisses*  
*V oraciously eating his toys*  
*E nergy enough for six dogs*  
*R obyn's sweet bundle of joy*

Now you write an acrostic. Use your name or someone else's name or some other word entirely. Remember that each line of the acrostic has to relate to the word spelled out by the first letters. The lines don't have to rhyme.

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## Sevenlings

Read the poem “Deposit.” Then write your own sevenling by comparing two things. For example compare:

Winter vs. summer

Mountains vs. oceans

School days vs. weekends

Your life as an infant vs. your life now

You vs. a sibling

Lines 1,2, & 3 will be about the first thing or person

Lines 4,5, & 6 will be about the second thing or person

Line 7 will say something about how they are alike or different

Give your sevenling a title. You may want to wait until you’ve written the poem before titling it.

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Line 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Line 7 \_\_\_\_\_

## Haiku, Tanka, Shadorma

Haiku and tanka are both forms of Japanese poetry. Both are usually untitled. Haiku has three lines while tanka has 5 lines. Neither poem has lines that rhyme. Haiku is usually about something in nature. Tanka may be about other things.

Write a haiku. Make sure to count the number of syllables in each line and not the number of words.

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

7 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

Next write a tanka. You may use the haiku above as the first three lines of your tanka or you may start from scratch.

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

7 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

7 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

7 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

Now read “Quaker Street.” This poem is a shadorma. Write your own shadorma here.

3 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

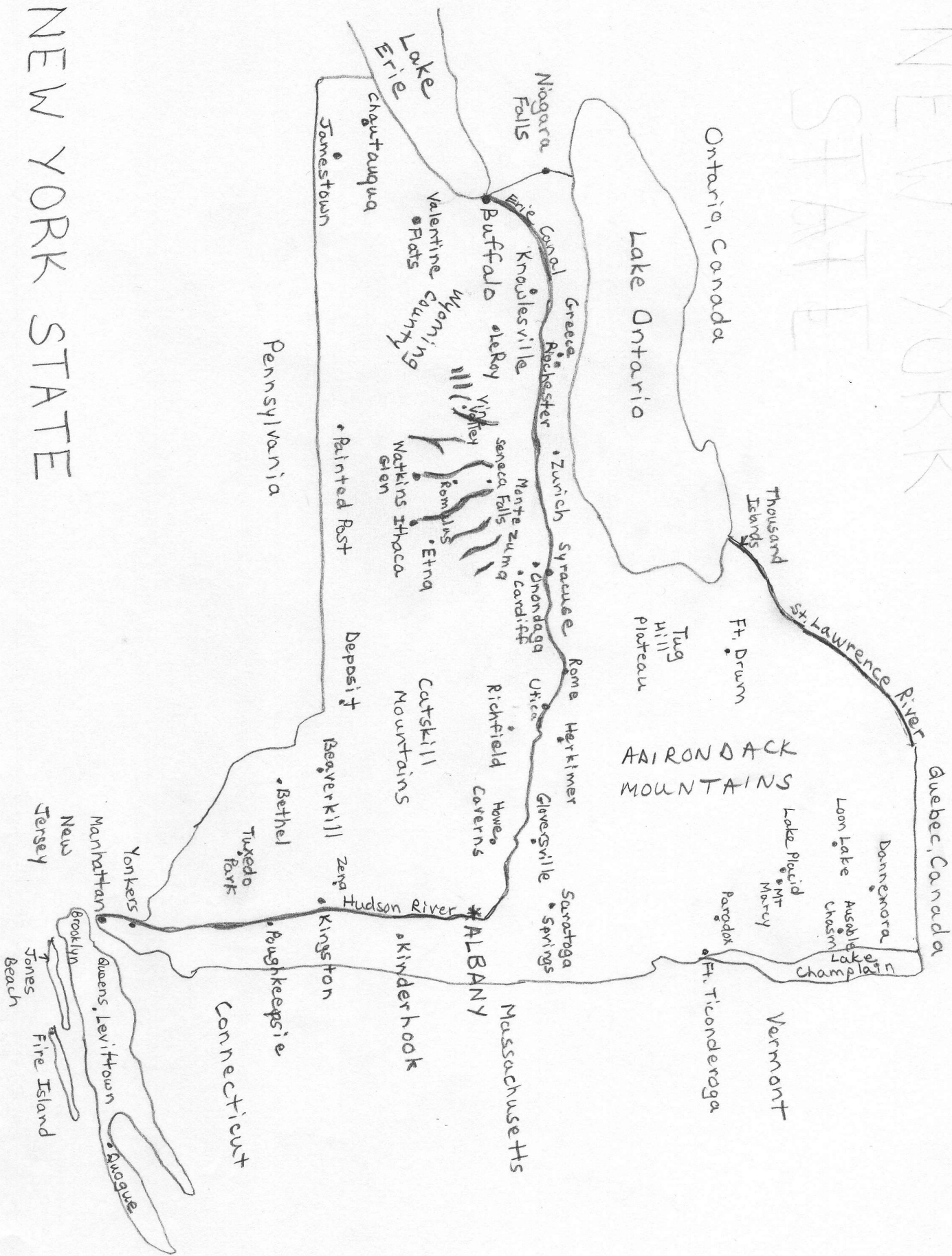
3 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

3 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

7 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

5 Syllables \_\_\_\_\_

# NEW YORK STATE



# NEW YORK STATE

# NEW YORK CITY

