

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

