



Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story, often different character voices or a narrator's voice..

The Highwayman

[Alfred Noyes](#)

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—
 Riding—riding—
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

...

A Crow And A Scarecrow

A crow and a scarecrow fell in love
out in the fields.

The scarecrow's heart was a stuffed leather glove
but his love was real.

The crow perched on the stick of a wrist
and opened her beak:

Scarecrow, I love you madly, deeply.
Speak.

Crow, rasped the Scarecrow, hear these words
from my straw throat.

I love you too
from my boot to my hat
by way of my old tweed coat.
Croak.

The crow crowed back,
Scarecrow, let me take you away
to live in a tall tree.
I'll be a true crow wife to you
if you'll marry me.

The Scarecrow considered.
Crow, tell me how
a groom with a broomstick spine
can take a bride.

I know you believe in the love
in these button eyes
but I'm straw inside
and straw can't fly.

The crow pecked at his heart
with her beak
then flapped away,
and back and forth she flew to him
all day, all day,
until she pulled one last straw
from his tattered vest
and soared across the sun with it
to her new nest.

And there she slept, high in her tree,
winged, in a bed of love.

Night fell.

The slow moon rose
over a meadow,
a heap of clothes,
two boots,
an empty glove.

[CAROL ANN DUFFY](#)

After discussing the poem, and the characteristics of the two lovers, separate into teams of 4 and play a game of poetry consequences, beginning with the words:

'a straw stuffed scarecrow.... met a crafty black crow..... in.....

**He said.....She replied.....They went off to
live**

**in.....where he gave her.....and she gave
him.....'**

Readjust the phrases if necessary, to create a poem entitled 'The Consequence of Love'.

(It is essential for the fun of this exercise, that you turn over the paper twice before passing it on to the next person – and that you don't peep at what has been written above!)

Optional: Make simple stick puppets, and act out the poems together

Cottontail

A couple of kids,
we went hunting for woodchucks
fifty years ago
in a farmer's field.
No woodchucks
but we cornered
a terrified

little cottontail rabbit
in the angle
of two stone fences.
He was sitting up,
Front paws together,
supplicating,
trembling
while we were deciding
whether to shoot him
or spare him.
I shot first
but missed,
thank god.
Then my friend fired
and killed him
and burst into tears.
I did too.
A little cottontail.
A Haunter.

[-George Bogin \(Janeczko 78\)](#)

Student Example:

We Are Moving to India

Emily Mullin

“We are moving to India”

My daddy said as it echoed in my head

as if I was in a tunnel
I sat in my kitchen on that Sunday.

My face went blank as my mind fills with fear
everything happy was suddenly not as
important as it was before.

I shut my eyes the slow tears
run down my face as my cheek
turns a pale shade of rose.

Then I calmly turn around
and see my brother and sister crying too.
Fear has taken over my body I'm all tense
the only thoughts I have are negative.

I have a hope that India isn't as imperfect
as it is now. One and a half years has passed
and I face hundreds of fears a day but
have become stronger.

My hope has come true India isn't
as bad as I thought it would be.
I will never forget the biggest fear
I have yet faced, and all
I needed to have was a hope.

GUIDELINES:

1. **Select objects that have memories attached to them.** What is the story behind it?

II. **Choose a photo about a memory.** Writing about difficult memories can help us understand what happened to us and might comfort others to know they aren't alone in their experiences.

III. "When you write about memories it is important to keep one thing in mind: You do not need to stick to the facts. You are writing poetry, not history, so it is all right to change some details to make your poem more dramatic or more entertaining. When we read "Cottontail" by George Bogin, we have no idea if this memory is factually accurate. That doesn't matter. The important thing is that the poem rings true when we read it " (Jaeczko 76-77).

If you have trouble starting your narrative poem---

1. Draft it first as a prose story.
2. Put in all the specific details and vivid language, honest feelings that make the incident come alive.
3. Once you have all the important details there, read through the draft, draw a circle or highlight the words essential to your story. This will be a word here or a phrase there.
4. When you have all these words, copy just these to a new document page
5. Put each of these important words or phrases on a separate line. It will look a bit like a poem, though it isn't yet.
6. Now you can revise.
7. Read over what you've written. It likely won't make sense completely.
8. Add in connecting words, but only the absolutely essential ones.
9. You'll also need to cut out and change other words.
10. Slowly, as you repeat this process with focus and effort, over time your poem will emerge.

III. Setting might be important in your narrative poem. Be sure to include details that appeal to your senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

1. Bring an object of photo to class. Be prepared to write a poem about the experience related to that object.

Include the photo or a drawing of your object with your poem.

2. Write up a prose story of the incident you want to capture in poetry.

Include specific details, adjectives, adverbs, honest feelings and so on to make the piece come alive

3. Take a look at the subject you have chosen.

A. Think about it. What makes it special? **Gather telling details** that bring out the “tone” of that story. This means gathering a full range of sensory details — trying to report through all five of our senses.

B. Pay attention to little things, the details about the subject that bring to life the personalities and subjects. Use picture words.

4. Circle every word and phrase that is absolutely **essential**.

5. Copy those onto another paper or document

Tell your neighbor about the experience. What was important about this experience? What sounds should be emphasized to get the feeling of this experience across?

6. Write your poem draft.

Be aware of line breaks that help the reader see the meaning

7. Read your draft aloud to yourself.

What is the heart of the poem. The line where the purpose of the poem is most revealed? Did you write about something that matters to you?

8. Revise: read over and edit so it makes sense. Add some connecting words - but only what's absolutely essential. You may need to delete, change and add other words.

9. Revision Checklist.

- ❑ What do you need to put in or take out of the poem in order to enhance what you see as the heart of the poem?
- ❑ Does your poem communicate what you are hoping to say?
- ❑ What vibrant verbs or specific nouns would help the reader see that more clearly?
- ❑ What needs to be taken out in order to reveal that?
- ❑ Circle images, verbs or ideas that could enhance your poem.
- ❑ Where might you cut, add or rearrange your poem to use these? Work until you get the *right* word.
- ❑ Is it too long or too short to say what you mean to say? Is it too floaty or to blah? Use specific, meaty, concrete description to help strengthen the poem.
- ❑ Do your lines and stanza breaks in a meaningful place that emphasizes or strengthens the line's idea?

Poetry Tool Box

I.

Meaning

Expressing feelings and experiences through visual and sensory tools; revision techniques

Image

Metaphor

Simile

Personification

Words

Line-Breaks

Beginnings/Endings

Titles

Observation

II.

Music

Expressing feelings and experiences through auditor, musical and rhythmic tools

Rhyme

Repetition/Patterns

Rhythm

Alliteration

Words
Line-Breaks
Onomatopoeia
Assonance
Consonance

6. Finally share your piece with your class. Include an image.

Work Cited

Janeczko, Paul. [How to Write Poetry](#). New York: Scholastic Inc. 1999.
<http://skyview.vansd.org/bquestad/cw/poetry/narrative.htm>

Be sure to include details that appeal to your senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Every scene doesn't need to include every sense, but be sure to include senses especially important to the scene you're describing.

Don't be satisfied with generalities like "My grandmother's house smells wonderful." That's vague and doesn't create a word picture. Instead, create details that evoke the scene, "The warmth of baking bread and frying chicken greeted me at my grandmother's door."

Use figurative language and make comparisons. Metaphors, similes, and personification are some of the key things a writer can use to make a scene or feeling come alive.