

2016 Holocaust Memorial Service High School Writing Competition

DEFINITIONS OF NARRATIVE POETRY What Are Three Attributes to a Narrative Poem? by Kate Prudchenko

A narrative poem takes the form of a story. Narrative poetry originated in the oral tradition, and its formal meter and rhyme structure made it easier to memorize and deliver orally to a crowd. Thus, it is one of the oldest forms of poetry. Outside of the metered verse, a narrative poem shares many literary attributes with short stories and novels including narrator, characters, setting, plot, conflict and resolution.

Narrator

A narrative poem is told from the point of view of a narrator. This narrator can be a main character in the story, a character who has witnessed the particular events of the story, or a character who is retelling the story he has heard from someone else. Because this form of poetry originated in the oral tradition, the poet is neither a character in the story nor the narrator of the story.

Story

A narrative poem always tells a story. A story is made up of a setting, characters, events, and a conflict, and, like other forms of narrative, such as novels and short stories, narrative poems typically begin with descriptions of characters and setting. Though most narrative poetry is fictional, it can also be nonfictional and tell the story of a war or a biography of a real person. A narrative poem can also be a combination of these two elements such as the early narrative poem, Homer's "The Iliad." This poem is about the 10-year siege of the city of Troy, during the Trojan War. The setting of the poem is considered nonfictional, but story of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon is considered fictional.

Structure

A narrative poem contains a formal meter and rhyme structure. This structure is not predictable, but instead uses different poetic tools and literary devices, such as symbolism, assonance, consonance, alliteration, and repetition, in different combinations throughout the poem.

From www.powerpoetry.org/actions/how-write-narrative-poem

Many older narrative poems have a set rhythm and rhyme structure, but modern narrative poems often have very free rhythms and no rhyme at all, so there is some wiggle room! However, almost all narrative poems contain at least one main character and tell a story that has a beginning, middle, and end.

Excerpt from Formats for Narrative Poems By Joanna Polisena

Free Verse

Traditional forms of poetry rely on a strict form of meter, rhyme scheme and stanza length. Free verse doesn't rely on a consistent pattern, having no meter, no identifiable rhyme scheme and stanzas with varying numbers of lines; however, it can still be an effective presentation for narrative poetry. Although many narrative poems written in free verse lean toward the dramatic or lyric genres, narrative free-verse has some classic and contemporary authors. Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" is one of the more popular examples of narrative free verse poetry.