

The main types of poetry

Poetry may be divided into three types: Lyric, narrative or dramatic. If the poet is expressing in musical language his own feelings, moods or ideas, the poem belongs to lyrical poetry. If the poet is telling a story in an objective manner, the poem belongs to narrative poetry. If the poet combines these two forms, telling the story objectively, but embodying the emotional experiences of the characters and relating the story in their words by means of dialogue, the poem belongs to dramatic poetry.

The Lyric

A lyric (from the Greek word lyrikos) was originally a song sung to the accompaniment of the lyre, the musical instrument much used by the ancients. At present, a lyric has come to mean a short poem which expresses the poet's feelings, moods and ideas in musical language.

The essential features of a lyric are that it should be simple, musical, expressing a single thought, mood or feeling. A lyric has no fixed form and its length varies from very few lines to hundreds of lines. In a lyric the poet's feelings are aroused by something -- usually something in nature: flowers, birds, a cloud, the rainbow ... etc, or they could be aroused by a person or by some memory which explains why so many of the best lyrics are about love or death. Lyrics, however, could have a variety of subjects, not only love and death. They could be about

is not expressing his own personal feelings, but that of a character in the play.

A simple lyric with simple rhyme schemes, treating a single emotion is called a pure lyric. A longer, more elaborate and sophisticated lyric is called an Ode. An ode is a solemn lyric poem, often a long one written in an elevated style, treating a serious subject. When in a lyric the writer aims to teach a lesson or present a view we have a didactic lyric. When he is lamenting the death of a person, or the death of anything, we have an elegy. An elegy is a song of mourning, expressing grief and sorrow for a particular person or a general occasion.

The most specialized form of lyrical poetry is the Sonnet, which is given separate treatment because of its importance. In the meantime, below are various examples of songs and lyrics, treating different subjects and expressing different moods.

The passionate Shepherd to His Love

This olve lyric is written in the pastoral tradition. The pastoral poem deals with the countryside and the life of shepherds, usually in an idealistic manner, The shepherds have no other work than composing verses and songs.

Com e live with me and be my love
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields,

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cup of flowers, and a kittle
Embordered all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;