

Poetry and Vocabulary

Section Objectives:

- Reading skills: Use strategies for reading poems.
- Literary skills: Analyze imagery; analyze characteristics of catalog poems, haikus, sonnets, lyric poems, ballads and free verse; compare two poems; analyze a speaker's persona, tone and voice.
- Vocabulary: Create a word bank for word study and understand multiple meanings of words.

POETRY

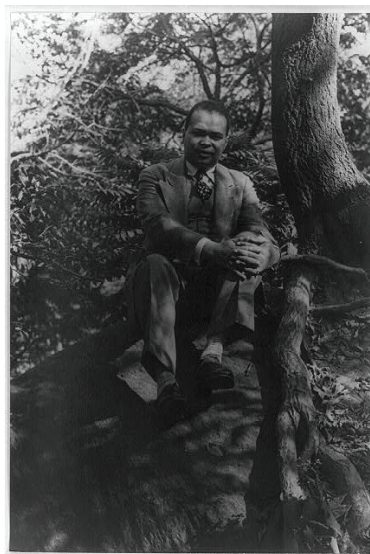
Lyrical Poetry *Poetic Elements*

“Any Human to Another” by Countee Cullen
“Patterns” by Amy Lowell

Lyrical Poetry

Lyrical poetry is usually a short poem about some personal emotions and thoughts of a speaker. It is narrated in the first person, but this first person is not necessarily the author. Some of types of lyrical poetry take the form of haikus, sonnets, elegies, odes, and dramatic monologues.

Both **“Any Human to Another”** and **“Patterns”** could be considered **lyrical poems**.



The Harlem Renaissance was an African American cultural and artistic movement of the 1920s and 1930s. It originated in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City and its influence reached as far as Paris, France. Harlem became the center of African American culture due to the Great Migration, when many African Americans moved north to the cities, and the end of World War I, when many veterans returned to the United States.

Countee Cullen (1903-1946)

Countee Cullen, a poet from the Harlem Renaissance, grew up in New York City as the adopted son of Rev. and Mrs. Frederick Cullen. In high school, he started writing poetry in a very traditional format.

In 1925, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa from New York University where he won the Witter Bynner Poetry Prize. In that same year, his first volume of poetry, *Color*, was published and established him as young upcoming poet. He earned a master's degree from Harvard in 1926. He worked as an assistant editor of an African American magazine, *Opportunity*. During this time, many of his poems were published in various magazines.

Eventually, he in 1927, he published *Copper Sun*, a collection of poetry, and *Caroling Dusk*, an anthology of poems by African Americans. *Caroling Dusk* was an important contribution to the Harlem Renaissance, but the introduction was controversial. In it, he called black poets to write traditional verse and to avoid racial themes.

Cullen married the daughter of a prominent black writer, W.E.B. Du Bois and published his third collection of poetry, *The Ballad Of The Brown Girl*. In 1929, his fourth volume of poetry, *The Black Christ*, appeared.

Through the depression, he could not make a living writing poetry. He took a teaching job in the Harlem public schools until his death.

In his writing, Cullen was influenced by the poetry of the English Romantics, especially John Keats. He primarily thought of himself as first a lyric poet in the Romantic tradition, and a black poet second, writing about racial issues. However, he found himself constantly returning to write about the joys and sorrows of the Negro.



“Any Human to Another” Countee Cullen

Type: Lyrical poem

Structure: Five Stanzas – all different lengths

Lines – all different lengths

Diction: Images: “Your grief and mine
Must intertwine”
“Let no man be so proud
And confident
To think he is allowed
A little tent
Pitched in a meadow
Of sun and shadow
All his little own.”

Sound: End Rhyme: No real pattern

“Be fused and mingle,
Diverse yet single,”

Literal Meaning: The narrator reminds himself that he must take on the suffering of others, and others need to take on his.

Figurative Meaning: No person is entitled to isolate himself from society. Instead, he is required to feel the pain, to suffer with others—in a real sacrifice of his life for others who need him to help. People need to share each other’s sorrows — almost like a martyr.

Deeper: A person cannot run away from another’s suffering. Rather, he needs to be like the good Samaritan.

Figures of Speech:

Metaphor: ll. 4 “Pierce to the marrow”

(Comparison for the narrator to feel the pain in his marrow – in the deepest part of him, the part that produces blood cells, life itself.)

Simile: ll. 29-30. “My sorrow must be laid
On your head like a crown.”

(My grief must be felt and seen by others.)

Personification: ll. 20: “Joy may be shy...”

(Joy is treated like a human being.)

A Little More Practice

“Any Human to Another” Countee Cullen

1. Find more examples of personification, similes, and images.
2. Can you find some examples of alliteration?



Amy Lowell (1874-1925)

In 1874, Amy Lowell was born into a wealthy and distinguished family in Massachusetts. Her grandfather had found the cotton-manufacturing town of Lowell. James Russell Lowell, a poet, was her grandfather's cousin. She had two brothers – Percival Lowell, an astronomer, and Abbott Lawrence Lowell, President of Harvard.

Amy was well educated, especially for her day. Also, she traveled widely to exotic places, again especially for her time, such as Greece, Egypt, and Turkey – all influenced her poetry.

At twenty-eight, she decided to become a poet, and she studied for eight years before she published any of her poems. In 1912, she published her first volume of poetry, *A Dome Of Many-Colored Glass*, a conventional approach to poetry, like many older poets. Soon after this, Miss Lowell decided to join the imagist school of poetry, which encourages free verse forms with exact words to create strong and concrete images. Her second volume of poetry, *Sword Blades And Poppy Seeds* (1914), reflected this new direction in her poetry. Her next volume of poetry, *Men, Women, And Ghosts*, contained “Patterns.” This volume showed how much of a craftsman Miss Lowell was and what a great storyteller she was. During her lifetime, many did not accept this new imagist school of poetry. However, by time she died in 1925, much of her poetry was truly appreciated. She was awarded posthumously the Pulitzer Prize in 1926 for *What's O'clock*.



“Patterns” by Amy Lowell

Type: Free Verse

Structure: “I” Point of View – through the eyes of a woman who just lost her fiancée in a war in Flanders, Belgium – War of Spanish Succession

Diction: Unique images:

“In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.”

Literal Meaning: The woman in the poem is walking up and down in a pattern garden. She has just received a letter explaining that her fiancée has died and she will be walking up and down in this garden for years to come. What are patterns for – her garden, her gown, the letter, refreshments for messenger, no answer, walking up and down, war, lady, and colonel in society, etc.

The War of the Spanish Succession was fought from 1701 to 1714 over the possible unification of Spain and France under one monarch. This unification would have upset the European balance of power. Spain and France fought against Great Britain and the Holy Roman Empire. In the aftermath, the King of Spain kept his title but was not allowed to also be the King of France. The Spanish Empire was also dismantled.

Figurative Meaning: Many question society's conventions. Do they help? Are they needed? Or do they hurt? Lowell seems to be suggesting both sides.

Deeper: Can society's conventions strangle a person or actually support him in times of trouble.

Figures of Speech:

Metaphor: l. 15 "Just a plate of current fashion,"

(Dress is compared to a plate.)

Simile: l. 66 "The letters squirmed like snakes."

(Letters compared to snakes — crying.)

Personification: l. 74 "The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun."

(Flowers do not stand up — people do.)

Sound:

Alliteration: l. 46 "I should see the sun flashing from his sword hilt and the buckles on his shoes."

A Little More Practice

"Patterns" Amy Lowell

Write down more images that were rather graphic.

Vocabulary Bank

"Any Human to Another" Countee Cullen

Directions: Explain how these words could have multiple meanings.

1. ills
2. unique
3. blade
4. wreathed
5. crown

“Patterns” Amy Lowell

Directions: Explain how these words could have multiple meanings.

1. squill
2. patterned
3. rare
4. train
5. passion
6. pillared
7. lace
8. embrace

Growth Activities

1. Try reading more of Cullen and Lowell’s poetry. So many people enjoy reading the poetry of both of these poets.
2. Study the diction of both of these poets to appreciate their use of language.

