

502 History Lessons From Poetry

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History Lessons from Poetry Assessment

Comparative poetry is defined as the evaluation and analysis of two poems for similarities and differences in their perspectives and poetic approaches to a similar topic. You may select one of the following sets of paired poetry:

- "A Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe and "We dream – it is good we are dreaming" by Emily Dickinson
- "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen and "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" by Alan Seeger
- "We Wear the Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar and "Heritage" by Gwendolyn Bennett

	Poem #1	Poem #2
Poem Title	"A Dream" by Edgar Allan Poe	"We dream - it is good we are dreaming" by Emily Dickinson
Poem Topic	Dreams	Dreams
Author's Tone/Perspective (complete sentence)	Edgar Allan Poe expresses a sensation of desiring a dream world, claiming that it is preferable to the real one.	Dreams are an escape from the harshness of actual life, as Emily Dickinson advises, giving one a sense of security and solace in dreaming.
Evidence from the Poem to Support the Author's Tone/Perspective (including figurative language devices, diction, and style)	"In visions of the dark night / I have dreamed of joy departed / But a waking dream of life and light / Hath left me broken-hearted."	"We dream - it is good we are dreaming / it would hurt us - were we awake / But since it is playing - kill us, / And we are playing - shriek."
Theme of Poem (complete sentence)	You can escape reality by using your dreams.	Dreams can provide solace in life.
Comparative Poetry Paragraph	In a well-written paragraph of 7-10 sentences, compare and contrast the poets' tones or perspectives about the topic, issue, or theme. Edgar Allan Poe and Emily Dickinson both discuss how dreams can provide an escape from the hardships of everyday life in their books. Their approaches to and expressions of the theme differ from one another. According to Dickinson, dreams are a secure and reassuring place to escape from the harsh realities of life. Instead of comparing the actual world to the dream world, she views it as a place to escape to. In contrast to the harsh reality of life, Poe believes that the dream world is lovely. Poe uses imagery, stating that the phrase "walking dream" suggests that the dream world is more desirable than reality. Both poets believe that the strength and power found in dreams offer a means of escaping reality and all of life's challenges, despite their differing perspectives on the dream world.	

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502 history lessons from poetry encompass a rich tapestry of human experience, emotions, and cultural narratives that have shaped societies over centuries. Poetry, as a medium, transcends mere words; it conveys the thoughts, struggles, and hopes of individuals and communities alike. Throughout history, poets have served not only as artists but also as historians, chronicling events and sentiments that might otherwise be forgotten. This article explores the profound connection between poetry and historical understanding, highlighting how verses have informed our views on significant events, movements, and figures.

The Role of Poetry in Historical Contexts

Poetry has long been a vehicle for preserving history. It acts as both a reflection and a critique of the times in which it is written. Here, we delve into how poetry has documented historical events and shaped cultural memory.

1. Documenting Events

Poets often respond to the social and political landscapes of their time. Through their works, they capture the essence of pivotal moments. Consider the following examples:

- War Poetry: Poems written during wars provide firsthand accounts and emotional responses to the brutality of conflict. For instance, Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" vividly illustrates the horrors of World War I, challenging the glorification of war.
- Civil Rights Movement: Poems like Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" and Gwendolyn Brooks' "We Real Cool" articulate the struggles and resilience of African Americans during the civil rights movement, capturing the spirit of the era.
- Revolutionary Verses: The poetry of the French Revolution, such as that by André Chénier, reflects the radical changes and the passion of the people fighting for liberty and equality.

2. Shaping Cultural Memory

Beyond documenting events, poetry plays a crucial role in shaping collective memory. It encapsulates cultural experiences and emotions that define a society.

- National Identity: Poets often evoke national pride and identity. For example, Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" immortalizes a moment in British military history, instilling a sense of valor.
- Myth and Legend: Epic poetry, such as Homer's "Iliad," weaves history with myth, influencing how cultures remember their heroes and defining their values.
- Personal Narratives: Poets like Sylvia Plath and Langston Hughes infuse personal experiences with broader societal issues, ensuring that individual stories resonate with collective historical narratives.