

Narrative Poetry Vs. Narrative Prose

- *First and foremost, look at the structure of the text. Is it in stanzas and lines or sentences and paragraphs?
- *Writing is a form of art. Be it prose or narrative, the writer is attempting to communicate; no different than the painter using oil as a medium.
- *The concept of 'painting with words' applies to all writing. The writer needs to move away from the 'structural' restrictions so many adhere to; those external controls (i.e., format, tone) that restrict how 'abstract' our paintings can be.
- *Poetry facilitates the communication of feeling through visual perception to its maximum. In other words, poetry, far better than narrative, allows you to choreograph the reader's eyes across the page by the application of structure (word count per line, meter, verse, indentation, use of punctuation, or the intentional lack of punctuation, syllable count, rhyme, near rhyme, etc.) and word choice.
- *Poetry is offering you a pallet of colors to paint feelings from. By the use of this choreographing you are not just imparting words, but invoking the same cues the recipient would get if he/she listened to you read it – your voice inflection – and watched your body language.

To illustrate my comment, here is a piece of narrative from an unpublished novel:

However, before I could meet Breen at the park I had to make a quick trip to New York City for an early morning meeting. I went up the previous afternoon by train. Taking the train is a great experience, and far more relaxing than flying. The view from the train is an optical exercise in extremes; countryside foliage and harsh urbane blight. The tracks once laid in vibrant manufacturing areas and behind working class neighborhoods, now reside in wastelands of rusted metal and aged bricks. But the view from the train's window affords a truthful look; the naked truth of what our city fathers hide from investors, from the tourist magazines, and from themselves.

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Now the corresponding piece of free verse poetry that was written as a chapter introduction:

View from the train

the rusted metal of bridges now trackless
the steel skeletons seen through un-paned portals of dirty,
 cracked brick abandoned factories
the aged wooden, derelict outbuildings
the unkempt trackside vegetation
 littered with remnants of life's voyage
draws you to the past
giving you reasoning to future history, humanity,
 the life of this country felt with your eyes
your eyes hearing the people who were,
 but now hidden
as we build our beloved suburbia
as we clean up the gentrified city
as we sweep the blood and sweat of their flesh, their tears
under a carpet of what we call progress

MATILDA, WHO TOLD LIES, AND WAS BURNED TO DEATH

Matilda told such Dreadful Lies,
It made one Gasp and Stretch one's Eyes;
Her Aunt, who, from her Earliest Youth,
Had kept a Strict Regard for Truth,
Attempted to Believe Matilda:
The effort very nearly killed her,
And would have done so, had not She
Discovered this Infirmary.

For once, towards the Close of Day,
Matilda, growing tired of play,
And finding she was left alone,
Went tiptoe to the Telephone
And summoned the Immediate Aid
Of London's Noble Fire-Brigade.
Within an hour the Gallant Band
Were pouring in on every hand,
From Putney, Hackney Downs, and Bow.
With Courage high and Hearts a-glow,
They galloped, roaring through the Town,
"Matilda's House is Burning Down!"

Inspired by British Cheers and Loud
Proceeding from the Frenzied Crowd,
They ran their ladders through a score
Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;
And took Peculiar Pains to Souse
The Pictures up and down the House,
Until Matilda's Aunt succeeded
In showing them they were not needed;
And even then she had to pay
To get the Men to go away.

It happened that a few Weeks later
Her Aunt was off to the Theatre
To see that Interesting Play
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.
She had refused to take her Niece
To hear this Entertaining Piece:
A Deprivation Just and Wise
To Punish her for Telling Lies.

That Night a Fire did break out —
You should have heard Matilda Shout!
You should have heard her Scream and Bawl,
And throw the window up and call
To People passing in the Street —
(The rapidly increasing Heat
Encouraging her to obtain
Their confidence) — but all in vain!

For every time she shouted "Fire!"
They only answered "Little Liar!"
And therefore when her Aunt returned,
Matilda, and the House, were Burned.

~Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

"On Turning Ten"

The whole idea of it makes me feel
like I'm coming down with something,
something worse than any stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--
a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,
time to turn the first big number.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
If you cut me I could shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees. I bleed.

~Billy Collins

Choose one Narrative poem from the other side. Compare the Narrative poem of choice to the Narrative Prose piece, *Charles* by Shirley Jackson p. 344-349. Complete the following questions in **COMPLETE** sentences. (Remember CUPS)

1. Identify the story the author of *Charles* is sharing. Support your answer by citing with 3 specific examples from the text.

2. Identify the story the author of *Matilda* **OR** *On Turning Ten* is sharing. Support your answer by citing with 3 specific examples from the text.

3. Explain the common theme between the prose piece and the poetry piece. Support your answer by citing 2 specific examples from **EACH** text.

4. Literacy devices are used by an author to bring a piece to life. Complete the following chart using *Charles* and *Matilda* **OR** *On Turning Ten*.

Type of Literacy Device	Definition	Example from Charles	Example for Matilda or On Turning Ten
Imagery			
Foreshadowing			
Point of View			