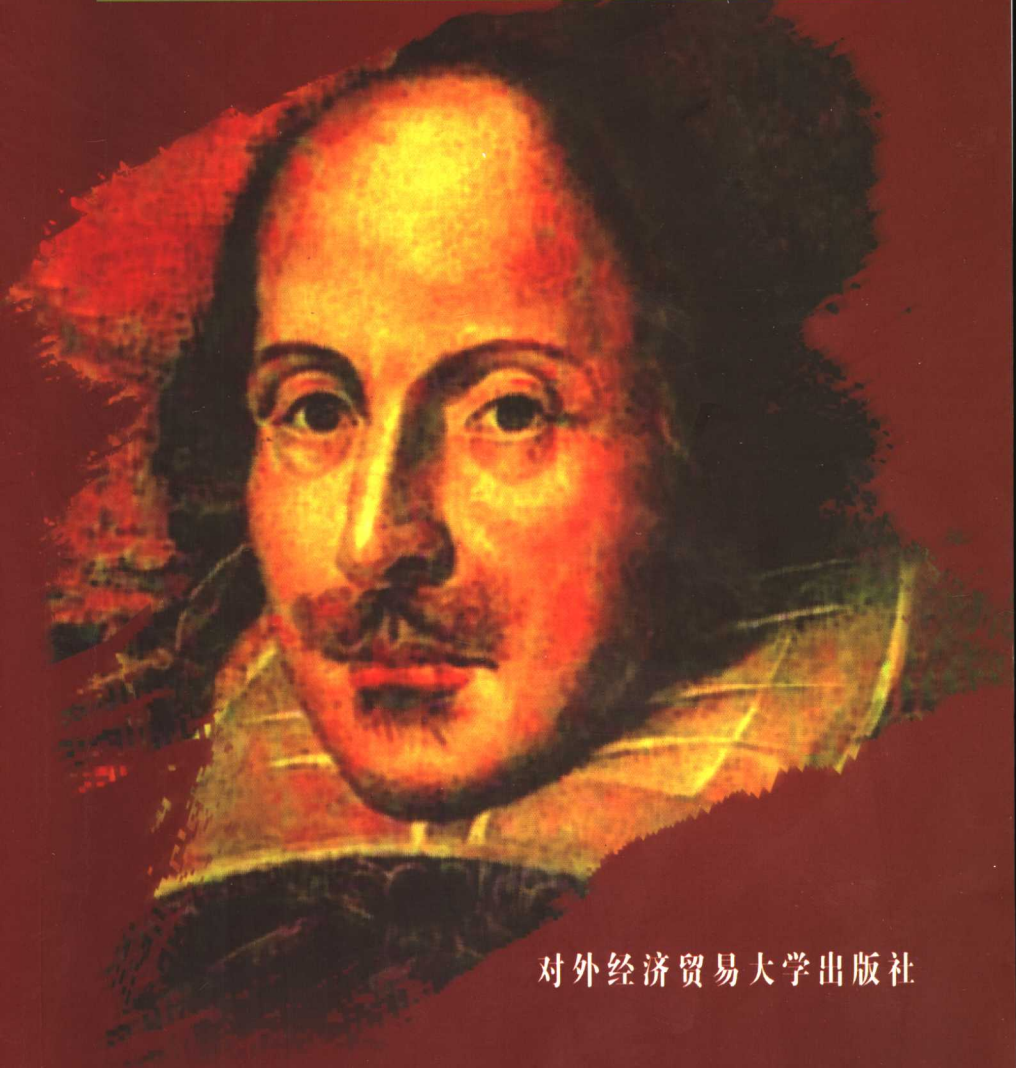


戴继国◎编著

*A course of English poetry*

# 英国诗歌教程



对外经济贸易大学出版社

New CENTURY NEW PERSPECTIVE

新世纪 新视觉

## A COURSE OF ENGLISH POETRY

# 英国诗歌教程

戴继国 编著

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## ***PREFACE***

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It is obvious that China has been undergoing a rapid and radical change. It is by no means hard to grasp the fact that the economic and cultural change would affect the nature of higher education in general and academic study in particular, which poses great challenge for us educators. This collection of English poetry is an attempt to meet the challenge. With the implementation of the country's opening policy our intellectual horizon has been broadened. We have perceived the limitation of the previous literary books which focused too much on contents viewed in just one perspective and often neglected the beauty of literary form. Creative endeavor underlying this compilation lies in the classification of English poems with proper definition of specific forms, a breakthrough of chronological order of poets; in the brief treatment of poet's life experience so that more space can be devoted to literary texts; and in the due attention paid to the value as well as the rudimental knowledge of poetic study presented in the first two units.

This book aims at assisting English learners to approach poetry so that they might not only deepen their language awareness but also enrich their mind in the process of character development through enjoyment in poetic beauty and profound ideas.

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# Unit One

## The Value of Poetry

Why bother to read and learn poetry? As we are demanded to do many urgent things, it seems unwise to devote our precious time and energy to it. However, it is impossible to isolate ourselves from the influence of poetry. In modern society we are surrounded by poetry more than we realize. In unofficial forms there are the nursery rhymes and skipping games learned by children, forgotten, and then often relearned by them later from their own children. Via the mass media such as TV, the Internet and recording pop music pervades the environment; its lyrics are written in lines and rhyme, and so by neutral definition, they are a form of poetry. Unofficial poetry is used in advertising. On toilet walls, in football chants:

Georgie, Georgie, Georgie Best!

Gorgie, ^ Gorgie Best! (^ = miss a beat)

And at political demonstrations:

Black and White

Unite and Fight!

In official forms there is poetry in churches and in the Bible:

A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me;

He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

The main official form of poetry, however, promoted in schools and

colleges, is that of high cultural tradition from the Renaissance to the present day.

Poetry is as universal as language and almost as ancient. The most primitive peoples used it, and the most civilized have cultivated it. In each era and in every country, poetry has been written and eagerly read or listened to by people of all walks of life — soldiers, statesmen, lawyers, farmers, doctors, scientists, clergymen, philosophers, and kings and queens. Through the ages it has been especially the concern of the educated, the intellect, and the sensitive, and it has appealed, in its simpler forms, to the uneducated and the children as well. People have read it or listened to it or recited it because they like it, because it gives them enjoyment. But this is not the complete answer to the significance of poetry. Poetry has always been regarded as important, not simply as one of several alternative forms of amusement. Rather, it has been regarded as something central to men's existence, something having unique value to the fully realized life, something that is better off for having and spiritually impoverished without.

Aristotle, the renowned Greek philosopher, made a remark in his *Poetics*: "Poetry is higher than history, because universal." As it was exceptionally difficult for historians to be entirely objective and free from their own subjectivity and other's influence, recoded history is not completely true to the referred reality. But the ideas, emotions and experiences embodied in good poetry are true to life. They can be applied to different cases of human life in different space and time. That is what Aristotle meant by "universal". The view can be illustrated by Shelley's famous line: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" The line has encouraged generations of

people both abroad and at home to surmount all hardships and realize their ideals. The universal truth in it is probably that one should see hope and persevere in what one is pursuing in time of adversity.

Poetry is a term applied to the many forms in which human beings have given rhythmic expression to their most imaginative and intense perception of the world, and the interrelationship of the two. Poetry is significant. It contributes a lot to the store of human knowledge or experience. This is what Matthew Arnold means when he wrote of it as a "criticism of life, when E. A. Robinson said that poetry tries to tell us "something that can not be said. The existence of an idea, an attitude, or a feeling distinguishes poetry from doggerel. Another key to the content of poetry can be found in **beauty**. All poets will agree to this element although by no means will they agree to what is beautiful. To Shelley beauty means the song of the skylark; Whitman finds it in a leaf of grass; Carl Sandburg in a brickyard. But beauty, to some degree, must be present. The Poet, like the artist and musician, is sensitive to beauty in all its various forms. Poetry is the most condensed and concentrated form of literature, saying most in the fewest number of words. Poetry has at least four dimensions: the intellectual, the sensuous, the imaginative and the emotional. Therefore, Thomas Wyatt says that poetry is the honey of flowers, the marrow of all knowledge, the essence of wisdom and the words of angels.

## QUESTIONS

1. Whose poems do you enjoy most? Why?
2. Why is poetry higher than history?



3. In what way is poetry unique when compared with other forms of writing?
4. What are the most essential elements of beauty in poetry?
5. Why is poetry valuable for us in life?

## Unit Two

# Rhythm, Meter and Rhyme

Rhythm in its broad sense refers to any wavelike recurrence of motion or sound. Rhythm is related to the beat of our hearts, the pulse of our blood, the intake and outflow of air from our lungs. Everything we do naturally and gracefully we do rhythmically. There is rhythm in the way we walk, the way we swim, the way we run in a race, the way we speak or read and the way we live in everyday life. If there is no rhythm in your speech, you are not a good speaker. To put it in another way, rhythm means the passage of regular or approximately equivalent time intervals between definite events or the recurrence of specific sounds or kinds of sounds or the recurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables. Human beings have a seemingly basic need for such regularity of recurrence, or for the effect produced by it, as laboratory experiments in psychology have demonstrated and as one can see for oneself by watching a crew of workers digging a deep ditch or hammering a long stake or by listening to chants and work songs. In both prose and poetry the presence of rhythmic patterns lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response to the listener or reader, for it establishes a pattern of expectations and rewards the listener or reader with the pleasure of a series of fulfillment or gratifications of expectation. In



English poetry, the rhythmic pattern is most often established by a combination of **accent** and number of syllables. This pattern of a fairly regular number of syllables with a relatively fixed sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables lends itself to a certain kinds of basic rhythmic analysis in English versification.

Meter can be defined as the recurrence in poetry of a rhythmic pattern, or the rhythm established by the regular or almost regular occurrence of similar units of sound pattern. When the term meter is used in English, it usually refers to **accentual-syllabic rhythm**. The word "meter" comes from a word meaning "measure". To measure something we must have a unit of measurement. For measuring verse we use the *foot*, the line and sometimes the *stanza*. The basic metrical unit, the foot, consists normally of one accented syllable plus one or two unaccented syllables. The most common metrical types in English are:

**Iamb:**    ~   /   ~   /   ~   /   ~   /   ~   /

The sound/must seem/an Ec/cho to /the Sense

**Troche:**   /   ~   /   ~   /   ~   /   ~

And be/fore the/Summer/ended

Stood the/maize in/all its/beauty

**Anapest:**   ~   ~   /   ~   ~   /   ~   ~   /   ~

Not a sound/hath escaped/to thy ser/vants,

~   /   ~   ~   /

of prayer/nor of praise

**Dactyl:**   /   ~   ~   /   ~   ~   /   ~   ~   /

Lulled by the/coil of his/crystalline/streams

The second unit of measurement, the line, is measured by naming the number of feet in it. The following refers to the names from one

foot line to eight feet line :

**Monometer, Dimeter, Trimeter, Tetrameter, Pentameter, Hexameter, Heptameter, Octameter.** The third unit, the stanza, consists of a group of lines whose metrical pattern is repeated throughout the poem. Since not all verse is written in stanzas, we shall save our space here. We should bear in mind that not all poetry is metrical, nor is all metrical language poetry. Verse and poetry are not synonymous terms, nor is a versifier necessarily a poet. The study of meter is a fascinating but highly complex subject. It is by no means an absolute prerequisite to the enjoyment of poetry. But some knowledge of its fundamentals does have certain values. It can make one more aware of the rhythmical effects of poetry and of how poetry should be read. It can enable one to analyze how certain effects are achieved, see how rhythm is adapted to thought, and explain what makes one poem better than another.

Rhyme can be defined as close similarity or identity of sound between accented syllables occupying corresponding positions in two or more lines of verse. The correspondence of sound is based on the vowels and succeeding consonants of the accented syllables, which must, for a true rhyme, be preceded by different consonants. That is "fan" and "ran" constitute true rhymes because the vowel and succeeding consonant sounds are the same but the preceding consonant sounds are different. Rhyme, in that it is based on this correspondence of sounds, is related to **assonance** and **alliteration**, but it is unlike them in construction and in the fact that it is commonly used at stipulated intervals, whereas assonance and alliteration are likely to range with relative freedom through various positions. Rhyme is more than a mere ornament or device of





versification, for it performs valuable functions. It affords pleasure through the sense impression it makes. The ear of the reader recognizes a sound already echoing in his or her consciousness, and the accord the two similar sounds set up is likely to bring the reader a sensuous gratification. The recurrence of rhyme at regular intervals helps to establish the form of the stanza. Rhyme serves to unify and distinguish divisions of the form since it is likely to treat the rhyme sounds followed in one stanza — the Spenserian for instance — will be changed when the next stanza is started, although the rhyme scheme remains the same. This principle gives unity to one stanza and marks it off as separate from the next, affording a sense of movement to the form as a whole. The fact that these qualities, as well as others, reside in rhyme will be granted when we recall how commonly folklore and the play of children, to take only two of many instances, resort to rhyme to make memorizing easy. The types of rhyme can be classified on the basis of the position of the rhyme. Then we have **end rhyme**, **internal rhyme** and **beginning rhyme**, which occurs in the first syllable (or syllables) of the verse. On the basis of the number of syllables presenting similarity of sound, we have **masculine rhyme**, where the correspondence of sound is restricted to the final accented syllable as in “fan” and “ran”. This type of rhyme is generally more forceful, more vigorous than other types. We have **feminine rhyme**, where the correspondence of sound lies in two consecutive syllables, the second of which is unstressed, as in “lighting” and “fighting” (sometimes called **double rhyme**). **Triple rhyme** demonstrates the correspondence of sound lies in three consecutive syllables, as in “glorious” and “victorious”. This type of rhyme has been used for