



ON THE POETIC LINE

THE POETRY FOUNDATION

SEPARATION OF IDEAS



STORY

- Scene
- Paragraphs
- Sentences



POETRY

- Poem
- Stanza
- Line



“Prose is printed within the confines of a margin, while poetry is written in lines that do not necessarily pay attention to the page”

MARY OLIVER, *A POETRY HANDBOOK*

HOW TO READ POETRY



SUBTEXT

Distinct, underlying theme or message in a piece of writing.

Follow the steps to locate possible subtexts:



1. Narrative / Literal



2. Context



3. Shape



4. Title



POETRY FOUNDATION

The four AM cries
of my son worm
through the double
foam of earplugs

and diazepam.
The smoke alarm's
green eye glows.
Beneath the cries,

the squirm and bristle
of the night's catch
of fiddlebacks
on the glue-traps

guarding our bed.
Necrotic music.
Scored in my head.
And all night columns

of ants have tramped
through the ruins
of my sleep, bearing
the fipronil

I left for them
home to their queen.
Patriot ants.
Out of republics

endlessly perishing.
If I can hold
out long enough,
maybe my wife

will go. If she
waits long enough,
maybe he'll go back
down on his own.

GEOFFREY BROCK

“HOMELAND SECURITY”

- ✓ Enjambment
- ✓ Mystery
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Questions

END-STOPPED LINES

The four AM cries of my son
worm through the double foam
of earplugs and diazepam.

- Mysteries clarified
- The son is not a worm
- Son/foam vowel sounds
- “em” sounds (**consonance**)
foam/diazepam

The four AM cries of my son worm
through the double foam of earplugs
and diazepam.

- Seems ordinary and dull
- Lacks mystery
- Verbs attached to nouns
- Reassurance/ finality



LINEATION AS DEVICE



LINEATION

- ✓ Emphasize or deescalate meaning
- ✓ Orchestrate ambiguities
- ✓ Encourage associations
- ✓ Close off unwanted interpretations
- ✓ Modify the sense or tense
- ✓ Can modify reading speed

RHYME AND LINE BREAKS

- ✓ Inseparable
- ✓ Predictable
- ✓ Drives the attention
- ✓ Balance
- ✓ Speed

I wandered lonely as a cloud...

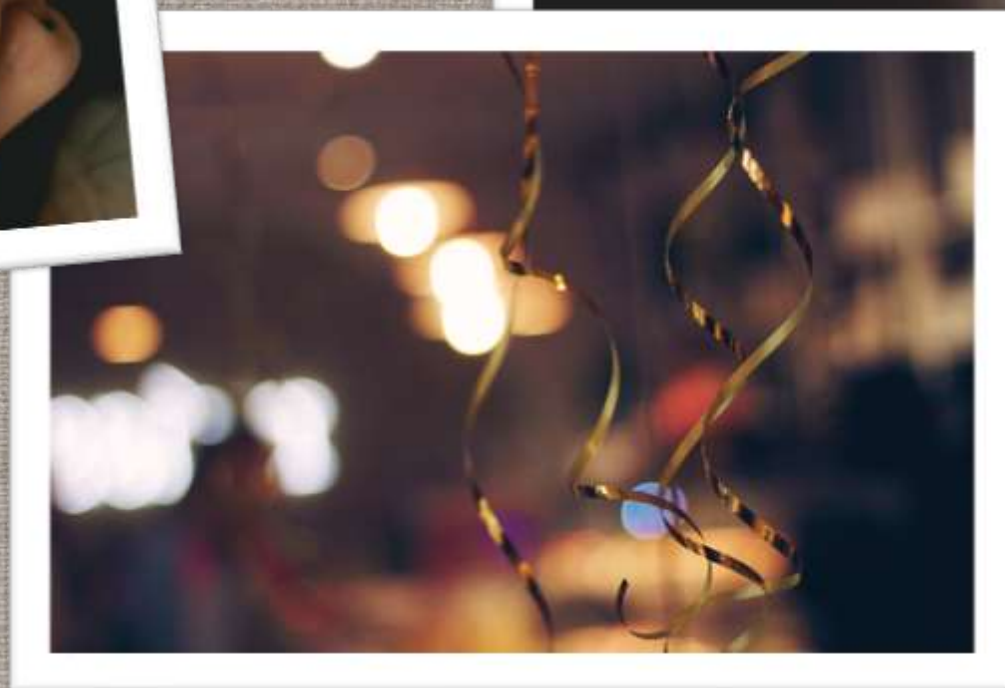
that floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.



“Poetry is the sound of language turned
into lines.”

JAMES LONGENBACH

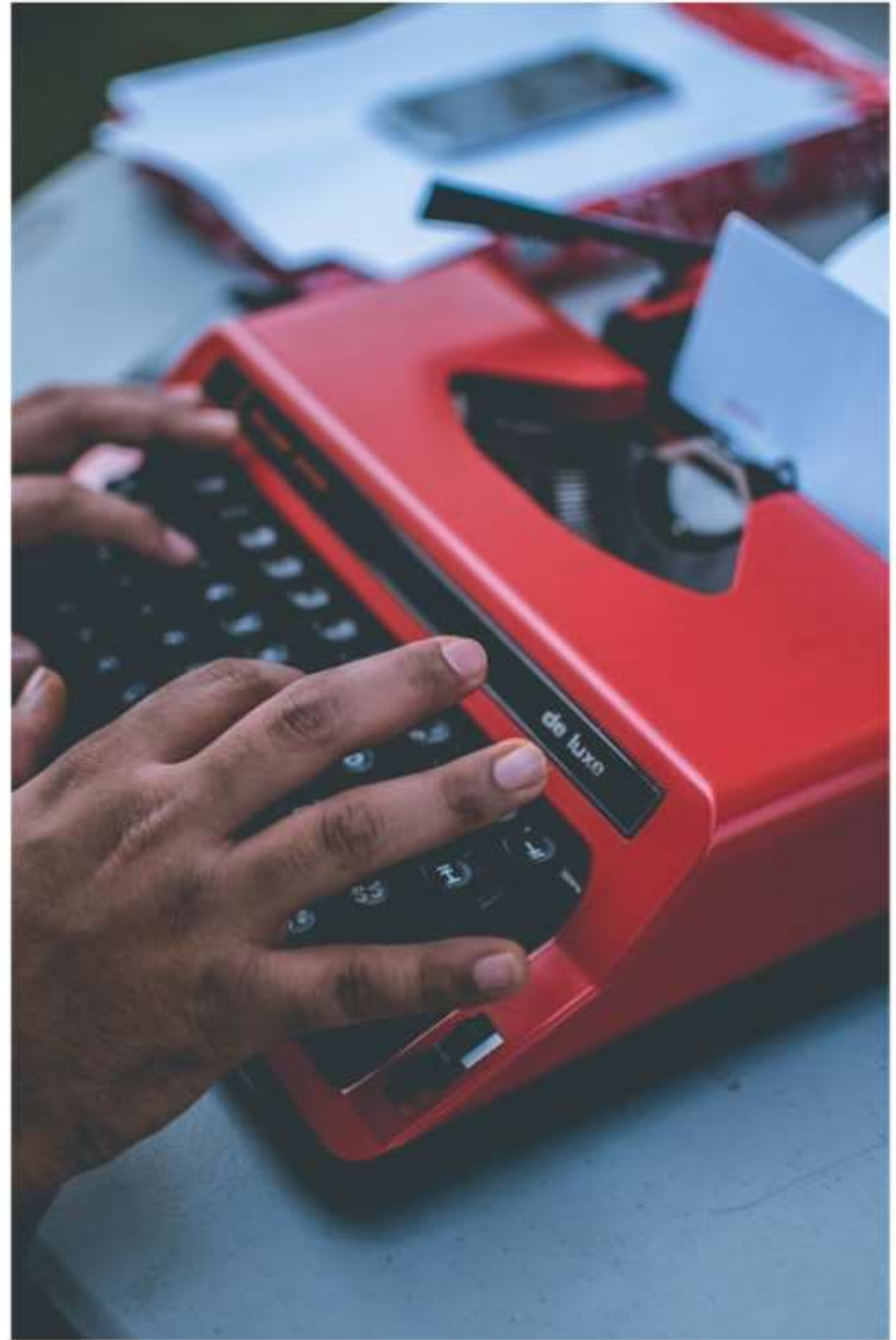
THE ART OF THE POETIC LINE



THE 6 “S”s

EXERCISE 1

- ✓ Use a pencil and slashes (/)
- ✓ “Lying Low” Eamon Grennan
- ✓ Break the poem up
- ✓ Emphasize one of the “S”s
 - ✓ Speed
 - ✓ Sound
 - ✓ Syntax
 - ✓ Surprise
 - ✓ Sense
 - ✓ Space



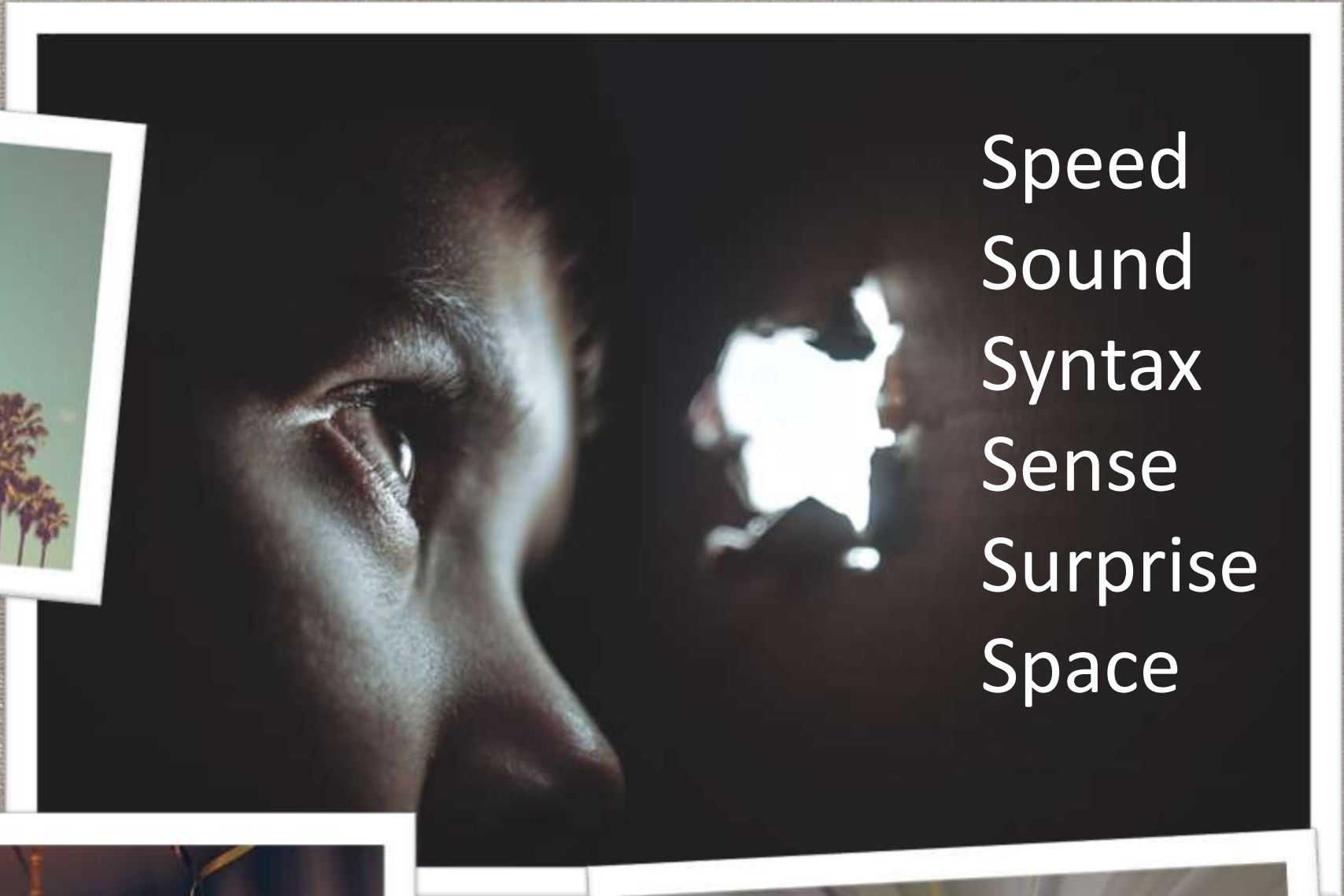


EXERCISE 2

- ✓ Using a standard sonnet
 - ✓ “What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why”
Edna St. Vincent Millay
- ✓ De-escalate the rhyme with line breaks
- ✓ Use enjambment
- ✓ New meanings or tones?



UNSAYABLE SAID



Speed
Sound
Syntax
Sense
Surprise
Space



THE 6 "S"s

EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Concrete
- ✓ Sensory
- ✓ Confronting
- ✓ Social
- ✓ Intimate
- ✓ Fluid

Describe [emotional concept] using only [sense]



BEYOND THE FIVE SENSES



Non-tradition & Organ

- Balance
- Acceleration
- Temperature
- Pain
- Movement
- Body position
- Passage of time
- Familiarity
- Agency / Choice



Interior & Imbalances

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Stretch
- Suffocation
- Drug / Hormones
- Pressure
- Vibration
- Gravity
- Magnetism
- Electricity

LIST & MATCH



Love



Front Seat of your Car

TOPIC SELECTION



Pick a
Place

- Walmart
- A bathroom
- The DMV
- Parents' house
- Work meeting
- Waffle House
- Parking
- Garage
- Animal Shelter
- A gym
- A Zoom Call
- Polling Booth



Pick an
Emotion

- Love
- Anger
- Calm
- Confidence
- Dedication
- Envy
- Fear
- Hope
- Maturity
- Trust
- Despair
- Pain
- Relief
- Pleasure

EXERCISE 3

- ✓ How does an image from the front seat of a car tell us something about love?
- ✓ Image > Abstraction
- ✓ Concrete & Specific
- ✓ Non-visual
- ✓ Don't explain



METAPHOR DICE



“Which is to say...”