## POETRY: FEATURES

To ask ‘What is poetry?’ is very much like asking ‘What is Literature?’ and in fact the answers to both these questions overlap: Poetry is perceived as fictional, it uses specialised language, in many cases it lacks a pragmatic function, it is also ambiguous.

Alexander Pope once explained that he preferred to write poetry even when he wrote about philosophy because it enabled him to express himself more briefly (Pope: Preface to “An Essay on Man,” 1734).

Poetry is often associated with specialized language, brevity, concentrated use of formal elements, it displays a tendency for structural, phonological, morphological and syntactic overstructuring. It uses elements such as sound patterns, verse and metre, rhetorical devices, style, stanza form or imagery.

**Major features of poetic texts:**

• dense expression

• subjective

• musical or songlike quality (rhythm)

• poetic language

**Types of poetry**

1. **Lyric Poetry:**

A lyric poem is a comparatively short, non-narrative poem in which a single speaker presents a state of mind or an emotional state. Lyric poetry retains some of the elements of song which is said to be its origin: For Greek writers the lyric was a song accompanied by the lyre.

Subcategories of the lyric poetry are: **elegy, ode,** **sonnet and dramatic monologue.**

**Elegy:** a formal lament for the death of a particular person. It is also used for solemn meditations, often on questions of death.

**Ode:** a long lyric poem with a serious subject written in an elevated style.

**Sonnet**: originally a love poem consisting of one with 14 lines. It started in Italy and became popular in England in the Renaissance. Later, it was used for religious and meditative topics.

**Dramatic monologue:** a speaker in his speech reveals his secret motivations and thoughts.

1. **Narrative or Epic Poetry:**

A narrative poem gives a verbal representation of a sequence of connected events in verse. It is always told by a narrator.

Subcategories of the epic poetry are: **epic and ballad.**

**Epic:** a long narrative, dealing with founding of a nation or beginnings of the world history. It includes supernatural characters. Examples: Homer´s *Iliad, Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid.*

**Ballad:** a folk song that tells a sad story, originally taken from oral tradition. It has usually a four-line stanza, alternating tetrameter and trimeter.

**Verbal Irony**: words that appear to mean one thing really mean the opposite.