AN ANALYSIS OF RHYME IN POETRY FOR CHILDREN

by

AVIS VALERIE HARLEY

B.Ed., The University of British Columbia, 1965

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

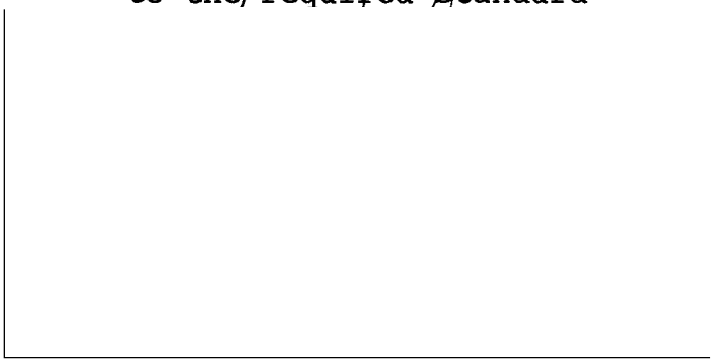
in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Language Education

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1992

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature)

Department of Language Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date March 31st, 1992

DE-6 (2/88)

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to provide an insight into how rhyming devices and rhyme forms have been used in poetry written specifically for children. It looks at words that have been selected by children's poets for their acoustical effect as well as their literary meaning and explores how the placement of each rhyming word affects the poem. In order to illustrate the context from which children's poetry has evolved, an overview of what is known in general about the historical roots of rhyme in the English language is reviewed through the works of the following scholars: Saintsbury, Lanz, Reeves, Fraser, Woods, Hollander, Wimsatt, and Pendlebury.

Such widely differing poets as Isaac Watts (1674-1748), William Blake (1757-1827), Edward Lear (1812-1888), Lewis Carroll (1831-1898), Christina Rossetti (1830-1898), Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), Walter de la Mare (1873-1956), A.A. Milne (1882-1956), David McCord (1897-), John Ciardi (1916-1986), Eve Merriam (1916-), and Valerie Worth (1933-) have contributed significantly to the development and shaping of children's poetry. This paper examines how rhyme has been used by these twelve poets. 164 poems have been analyzed, totalling 2671 lines.

Although basically a descriptive, historical study, some quantitative data are included in the second chapter to illustrate the following:

--frequency of rhyme patterns (couplet, triplet, quatrain, etc.)

--preferred stanzaic forms

--percentage of stressed or unstressed line-endings.

The analysis offers statistical proof that wide experimentation with all forms of children's poetry, especially free verse, has occurred in the twentieth century. Use of near-rhyme appears to have increased in the last few decades. Poets' preferences for rhyme patterns have altered over the past three hundred years, but traditional forms such as the couplet and quatrain continue to be popular choices of contemporary poets.

The main purpose of this thesis is to illustrate the flexibility of rhyme by emphasizing the variety of devices and forms in which rhyme has been successfully employed in children's poetry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Wendy Sutton for her guidance, encouragement, and invaluable assistance throughout the preparation of this thesis.

My sincere gratitude also goes to Dr. Lee Johnson for giving generously of his time. His comments and suggestions were greatly appreciated.

For a detailed critique of this paper in its final stage, I am indebted to Dr. Carl Leggo.

A special thank you also goes to my husband Frank for his support and extraordinary patience.

INTRODUCTION--THE HISTORY OF RHYME

Initially, rhyme in poetry appears to be the most obvious of features involving sound identity. There are, however, other aspects of rhyme less obvious than the regular chime of identical word endings. John Hollander views rhyme as having the power to:

> ...compel notice, to attune and even orchestrate, as it were, the attention of the scanning and listening reader as it moves over the totality of the text, sometimes displaying its inner linguistic workings on its surface, sometimes submerging them, echoing in the memory, or lighting up expectation and hope.[1]

Henry Lanz describes rhyme as:

> ...one of those irrational satellites that revolve around reason...it belongs to the form, to the external appearance--poets call it the 'dress'--of a poem which is at the same time the inherent substance of poetry.[2]

Wimsatt states:

> The words of a rhyme, with their curious harmony of sound and distinction of sense, are an amalgam of the sensory and the logical, or an arrest and precipitation of the logical in sensory form; they are the icon in which the idea is caught.[3]

This paper attempts to describe rhyme and how poets have used this poetic device in verse written specifically for children.

The introductory chapter gives a review of the history of rhyme and includes a summary of the influential debate

over rhyme which took place in the late sixteenth century. The second chapter presents a statistical analysis of a selection of poems by twelve major children's poets. The third and fourth chapters contain definitions of rhyme forms and rhyming devices respectively, illustrated through a series of selected passages by children's poets from the fourteenth century to the present. The fifth chapter closely examines four poets who have influenced the development of children's poetry: Blake, Lear, Rossetti, and Merriam. The final chapter provides a summary with comments on the findings in this thesis. It also looks at research that has been conducted on children's reactions to poetry: Kyte (1947), Avegno (1956), Norvell (1958), Nelson (1966), Terry (1972), Fisher/Natarella (1979), and Anderson (1990). These studies consistently revealed that children identified rhyme as being the most preferred poetic device. There is a need for educators to have a deeper understanding of this dynamic in poetry that arouses such a positive response in children. Judith Saltman states:

> A knowledge of the techniques poets choose, of the connotations and denotations of words, of the naming of parts--these add another dimension for those who already delight in poetry.[4]

Before examining rhyme in children's poetry, it is necessary to look at its historical roots in the English language and thus be able to consider the context from which children's poetry has evolved. Poetry written for the young shares many characteristics of adult poetry.

Rhyme comes from the Latin word *rithmus* and the Greek word *rhythmos* meaning "measured motion."[5] *Rithmus* later referred to end-word identity. In English, this word merged with the Saxon *rime*, meaning "a number" or "counting." Rhyme was established as distinct from rhythm during the English Renaissance period. The modern spelling of *rhyme* was first introduced in the seventeenth century, and now this spelling is used more frequently than *rime*. The main definition of rhyme in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics is: "a metrical rhetorical device based on the sound-identities of words."[6]

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) in his Opera, Rhetoric III, provided the first mention of what today is considered to be true rhyme. Rhyme is discussed under the name "homoeoteleuton." The term "homoeoteleuton" is of Greek derivation, and means "the similarity of endings," referring to the same case-endings in proximity.[7] Rhyme is used more frequently in Latin than in Greek because Latin is heavier in case-endings. Aristotle described rhyme as:

> ...making the extreme words of both members of a period like each other. This must happen either at the beginning or at the end of each member. If at the beginning, the resemblance must always be between whole words; if at the end, between final syllables or inflections of the same word or the same word repeated.[8]

Aristotle was the first to acknowledge the power of word beginnings and endings that contained identical sounds, and he recognized the artistic effect of "two contrasting ideas

under the control of one sound."[9] He recognized rhyme as a way of helping "devise lively and taking sayings," thus presenting the idea of rhyme as a mnemonic device.[10] This idea has been considered by many to be one of rhyme's fundamental functions.

Quintilian (35-100 A.D.) in his Institutio Oratoria-Book IX, described different "forms of play upon verbal resemblances...words selected will be of equal length and will have similar terminations...when clauses conclude alike, the same syllables being placed at the end of each; this correspondence in the ending of two or more sentences is called homoeoteleuton."[11] Words with similar case-endings, tense indicators, etc. employ homoeoteleuton. Neither Aristotle or Quintilian includes personal opinions regarding the effectiveness of this rhetorical device.

Evidence as to when and how rhyme entered the English language is inconclusive, but according to Henry Webb, English rhyming can be divided into four periods: Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, and Late Modern English.[12]

Old English was spoken in the latter part of the first millennium and is barely recognizable as the language we know today. End rhyming was somewhat difficult in this inflectional system, and alliteration was the favoured device. Alliteration was also a strongly developed element in the Welsh language. Intricate rhyming patterns containing end rhyme and initial rhyme were found in Ireland

as early as 433 A.D. Early in the fifth century, a Scottish bishop, Coelius Sedulius, was writing Latin hymns in rhyme. In 1838, Guest published A History of English Rhythms, where he indicated end rhyme could be traced to the Old Celtic. In the History of English Poetry, Courthope suggests that rhyme probably came from Arabic sources. Saintsbury states in his Short History of English Literature that no one knows exactly how rhyme first appeared in English literature.

However, many scholars such as Arthur M. Clark and Henry W. Wells are of the opinion that Ireland seems to have been the centre where full rhyme first appeared in Western Europe. Early hymns and poems being written in both Latin and Greek contained initial inflection as well as end stress. Twenty-eight examples of initial rhyme combined with end rhyme have been discovered by Friedrich Klaeber in the Old English epic of Beowulf.[13]

Rhymed verse occurred in Middle English in the latter part of the twelfth century and is found in a work entitled Owl and the Nightingale. Early lyrics sung by troubadours probably were influenced by the rhymes of travelling scholars.

The inflectional system of Old English gradually changed, and the alliterative line fell out of favour. French disyllabic and polysyllabic words were introduced into Middle English verse, and the stress placed on the final syllable(s) allowed for easy accessibility to end rhyme. The language called Middle English was spoken from

around 1100 to 1500. End rhyme replaced alliteration as the most popular poetic device during this period.

The French influence is strongly felt in Chaucer's poetry. Although Chaucer complained about the "scarcitee of rym" in England, he composed some 16,000 lines using the heroic couplet form (especially open couplets, where the idea is carried over from the sound-rhyme into the succeeding line). He also displayed prodigious talent in the use of the English Rime Royal (a seven-line stanza of iambic pentameter and rhyming a-b-a-b-b-c-c).

Chaucer (c 1343-1400) did not write poetry specifically for children, but the Manciple's passage from Canterbury Tales contained advice intended for the young, and emphasized the virtues of children controlling their tongues:

> My son, thy tongue shouldst thou restrain
> At all time, but when thou dost thy pain
> To speak of God, in honour and prayer.
> The first virtue, son, if thou wilt lere,
> Is to restrain and keep well thy tongue;
> Thus learn children when that they been young.[14]

This excerpt was written in one of the most important English meters--the heroic couplet. The English form of the heroic couplet "is often thought to have developed with Chaucer under the influence from the Old French decasyllable rhymed in couplets."[15]

John Lydgate (1370?-1450) published a popular description in verse form on how a boy should behave when

serving at table. This was widely circulated in the sixteenth century:

> My dear child, first thyself enable
> With all thine heart to virtuous discipline;
> Afore thy sovereign, standing at the table,
> Dispose thou thee after my doctrine
> To all nurture thy courage to incline.
> First, when thou speakest be not reckless,
> Keep feet and fingers still in peace...[16]

Lydgate composed it using the seven-line Rhyme Royal stanza form: a-b-a-b-b-c-c.

Peter Idley (d. 1473?) published a treatise entitled "Instructions to his Son." It was also composed in Rhyme Royal and was 7,500 lines in length. It "stands as a pleasing monument to a father's concern for his child's welfare at the close of the Middle Ages."[17]

According to Harvey Darton, there were no books ostensibly written to give children pleasure during this period. Moral, didactic schoolbooks were plentiful, as were treatises on good conduct (called courtesy books).

Old courtesy books were usually written in rhyme to assist the child in memorizing. In situations where children would not have been able to possess their own copy of a book, rhyme as a mnemonic device was particularly helpful.

A surprising and refreshing diversion from the instructional publications on manners and morals appeared in 1563. Thomas Newbery (who was most likely related to the famous Newbery publishing family) wrote the "Booke in

Englyssh Metre of the great marchaunt man called Dyves Pragmaticus, very pretye for chyldren to rede." Although not written for pleasure or entertainment, it was meant to help children "rede and write Wares and Implements in this worlde contayned." This seventy-four verse poem was composed in the most popular of English lyric forms--the quatrain--with a rhyme scheme of a-a-a-b:

> I have here to sell fine Needells and Thimbels,
> Nayle pearsers, smalle podde Chyselles and Wimbels,
> Blades, and for weavers fine Shuttells and Brembils,
> What do you lacke, friend? come hether to me.[18]

Shortly after Newbery's publication, the famous controversy over rhyme erupted in England. This took place during the Early Modern English period, which had begun approximately 1500 A.D. This period was strongly influenced by The Great Vowel Shift, which facilitated rhyming through the shifting of the seven long, or tense, vowels.

Susanne Woods stated that the controversy over rhyme "is the first debate to enunciate certain assumptions about verse generally and English verse particularly...admiration of the classics and an attempt to 'overgo' foreign models, on the one hand, and patriotism on the other."[19]

This debate was sparked by a publication by Roger Ascham (1515-1568) who was a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and a tutor to Princess Elizabeth. His book, The Scholemaster, was published in 1570, two years after his death. In it, he denounced the use of rhyme and introduced England to the idea that rhyme was "brought first into Italy

by Goths and Huns, when all good learning too was destroyed by them, and after carried into France and Germany, and at last received in England by men of excellent wit indeed, but of small learning and less judgement in that behalf...."[20] In Ascham's opinion, anything that stemmed from such a "barbarous" origin could not possibly contain any artistic merit. He believed that rhymeless quantitative verse based on classical culture was far superior to the popular rhyming system of English poetry.

Ascham's comments sparked the long and influential literary controversy over rhymeless verse (using the classics as models) versus rhymed poetry (English versemaking, using popular, contemporary, continental models).

William Webbe, also a member of St. John's College, Cambridge, published in 1586 his Discourse of English Poetrie. He was an important participant in the debate between the advocates and the non-advocates of rhyme. According to Lanz, Webbe was the first English prosodist who theoretically proclaimed "the union between rime and sense" and recommended in his rules for successful rhyming "not to make violence to grammatical order for the sake of rime."[21] He endorsed the regular forms found in classical metres and, like Ascham, denounced rhyme as a "rude kinde of verse" and "brutish poetry" that had been introduced by the barbarians. Webbe viewed rhyme as being of a rhythmical nature. He defined rhyme as "the falling out of verses together in one

like sound," advocating Aristotle's theory that stressed the acoustics rather than the printed image.

George Puttenham published The Art of English Poesie in 1589. He maintained that:

> We make in th' ends of our verses a certaine tunable sound: which anon after with another verse reasonably distant we accord together in the last fall or cadence: the eare taking pleasure to heare the like tune reported, and to feele his returne. And for this purpose serve the monosillables of our English Saxons excellently well....[22]

Puttenham expressed a distaste for classical versing. He recognized the power of the rhyme scheme and how rhyme could manipulate emotional effects.

Stephen Gosson dedicated his Puritanical diatribe against poetry in The School of Abuse (1579) to Sir Philip Sidney (without his permission), and this work probably prompted Sir Philip Sidney to begin composing his Defence of Poesie. This treatise was published in 1595, seven years after Sidney's death. Sidney was also aware of the power of rhyme and linked it with memory: "Now that verse far exceedeth Prose, in the knitting up of the memorie, the reason is manifest, the words...being so set as one cannot be lost, but the whole woorke failes: which accusing it selfe, calleth the remembrance back to it selfe, and so most strongly confirmeth it....It must be in jest that any man can speak against it."[23]

Thomas Campion (1567-1620), in his Observations in the

Art of English Poesie (1602), strongly objected to rhyme, labelling it a "childish titilation" and denouncing the "Fatness of Rhyme."[24] He noted that it interfered with the reader's attention to the internal aspects of a line of poetry. However, Campion's theories on quantitative verse and his expressed distaste of rhyme do not override the fact that he was a fine writer of rhymed verse.

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) responded to Campion with the publication in 1603 of his Defence of Rhyme: "We could well have allowed of [Campion] his numbers had he not disgraced our Ryme: Which bothe Custome and Nature doth most powerfully defend...."[25] Daniel argued strongly in favour of the virtues of the rhyming device: "Ryme...is likewise number and harmonie of words, consisting of an agreeing sound in the last silables of severall verses, giving both to the Eare an Eccho of a delightful report & to the Memorie a deeper impression of what is delivered therein."[26] However, Daniel objected to the use of couplets, preferring instead stanzas of alternate rhyme.

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) responded to this treatise with A Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme and denounced both Campion and Daniel, especially the latter, as Daniel had condemned Jonson's beloved couplet. Jonson enthusiastically described couplets as being "the bravest sort of verses" and spoke against "cross-rhymes and stanzas."[27] In the concluding section of A Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme, he inserted a sense

of humour into this literary battle when he addressed rhyme's inventor:

> He that first invented thee
> May his joints tormented be,
> Cramped forever;
> Still may syllables jar with time,
> Still may reason war with rhyme,
> Resting never!
> May his sense when it would meet
> The cold tumor of his feet
> Grow unsounder;
> And his title be long Fool,
> That in rearing such a School
> Was the founder.[28]

Milton (1608-1674) referred to rhyme in "The Verse," his opening advertisement to Paradise Lost, as the "invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter and lame metre" and "a troublesome and modern bondage."[29] He felt that rhyme imposed literary chains on the writer. In a sense, Milton rescued blank verse from the poetic turmoil that was raging at the time.

Dryden (1630-1700), in his Essay on Dramatic Poesy (1668), reiterated Jonson's viewpoints on the use of the couplet, and established the heroic couplet as the most important metre in English poetry. Dryden was a major defender of rhyme, and attempted to justify it by suggesting that rhyme controlled the poet's imagination. In the Dedication to The Rival Ladies, he stated that blank verse allowed the poet too much freedom; therefore:

> ...he is tempted to say many things which might better be omitted, or at least shut up in fewer words; but when the difficulty of artful rhyming is interposed, where the poet commonly confines

> his sense to the couplet...rhyme cuts off all unnecessary expenses...and is like to bring forth the richest and clearest thoughts.[30]

Edward Bysshe published The Art of Poetry in 1702. Although he did not fully deal with rhyme in this book, Bysshe claimed that stanzas of "intermixed rhyme...are now wholly laid aside" and that Shakespeare used blank verse to avoid "the tiresome constraint of rhyme." Although Bysshe appears to have been an obscure person, his viewpoints are considered to be representative of the eighteenth-century mind.[31]

However, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was devoted to the rhyming couplet and disapproved of blank verse, preferring lines and rhymes to be regularly patterned.

While this controversy over rhyme was raging, verse was being written for children in the traditional iambic trimeter or tetrameter, and invariably contained predictable end rhymes (in couplets or alternating unrhymed and rhymed lines).

A verse by Abraham Chear appeared in 1672 in his publication A Looking-Glass for Children, in which he used the common meter (4/3/4/3 metric arrangement) with a rhyming pattern of a-b-a-b:

> When by spectators I am told
> What beauty doth adorn me,
> Or in a glass when I behold
> How sweetly God did form me--
> Hath God such comeliness bestowed
> And on me made to dwell.
> What pity such a pretty maid
> As I should go to Hell![32]

This verse reflected the Puritan outlook on children: "young souls to be saved, or, more probably, damned."[33] Poetry written for children before the 1700's always stressed civilized conduct and good morals.

However, in 1686, John Bunyan (1628-1688) published a Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhimes for Children where he wrote about homely objects and familiar activities in a child's life. He used either couplets or the alternating rhyme scheme throughout this book.

Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), according to John Rowe Townsend, can be identified as "the first children's poet." His book of Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children was enormously popular in England and America, where six to seven hundred editions were produced between 1715 and 1915. Copies of his poems were to be found in every 'proper' eighteenth and nineteenth-century nursery. In his preface to the Divine Songs, Watts emphasized the usefulness of learning through rhyme:

> There is a greater Delight in the very Learning of Truths and Duties this way. There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and metre, that will incline Children to make this part of their Business a Diversion....What is learnt in verse is longer retain'd in Memory, and soon recollected. The like Sounds and the like number of Syllables exceedingly assist the remembrance.[34]

Isaac Watts, like Milton, claimed to be sensitive to the monotony of the rhyming couplet (although frequently employed it in his poetry for children). Watts is an

important figure in the history of children's poetry. Up until his time, most verse for the young was exhortation, but Watts recommended that:

> ...authors should write for children, and that their verses should be `flowing with cheerfulness, and without the solemnities of religion, or the sacred names of God and holy things; that children might find delight and profit together.'[35]

Blake, who referred to rhyme as "modern bondage" and "Poetry Fetter'd Fetters the Human Race," would certainly have been familiar with the poems of Isaac Watts.[36] The lyrical joy heard in Blake's Songs of Innocence is not only for children but for the innocence in all humanity.

The death of Blake in 1827 coincided with the approximate beginning of The Late Modern English period. A new sense of freedom entered children's poetry, perhaps as a reaction to the severity of Puritanical restrictions. Lear and Carroll introduced nonsense verse to the Victorian world. Rossetti and Stevenson were strong lyrical voices in the nineteenth century, as were de la Mare, Milne, and McCord for the early twentieth century. Saltman states that "De la Mare's roots go back to Blake's intense lyricism, and a profound identification with children illuminates his work."[37]

An explosion of creative talent has appeared in the last forty years, and names such as Ciardi, Merriam, and Worth leap forward. These innovative contemporary poets display enormous flexibility in their writing.

An historical viewpoint and a clear understanding of the thought behind such ideas as the development of initial inflection in a word, the concept of accented line endings, the introduction of end rhyme, the increasing frequency of structural full rhyme, and the growing popularity of free verse help to explain the poetic experimentation in the twentieth century that has allowed readers to become accustomed to the sound of rhymes which do not follow traditional measures.

The sound of rhymes will be analyzed in the following chapter through a close examination of a selection of poems by twelve of the children's writers mentioned in this overview.

NOTES

[1] John Hollander, Vision and Resonance (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985) 134.

[2] Henry Lanz, Physical Basis of Rime (California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1931) 293.

[3] W.K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon (Kentucky: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1954) 165.

[4] Judith Saltman, The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985) 89.

[5] Joseph Shipley, In Praise of English (New York: Times Books, 1977) 200.

[6] Arthur Melville Clark in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 705.

[7] Preminger 353.

[8] Aristotle in Henry Lanz's The Physical Basis of Rime (California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1931) 152.

[9] Lanz 152.

[10] Lanz 152.

[11] Quintilian, The Institutio Oratoria, trans. H.E. Butler (London: William Heinemann, 1921) III, ix, 491.

[12] Henry Webb in Preminger, 709.

[13] Alexander M. Witherspoon, ed. The College Survey of English Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951) 14.

[14] Geoffrey Chaucer, "Controlling the Tongue," The Oxford Book of Children's Verse, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975) 3.

[15] Preminger 345.

[16] Opie 4.

[17] Opie 368.

[18] Thomas Newbery in John Rowe Townsend's Written for Children (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Kestrel Books, 1974) 132.

[19] Susanne Woods, Natural Emphasis (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1984) 124.

[20] Ascham in Lanz, 308.

[21] Webbe in Lanz, 167.

[22] George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie (1589; Menston, England: Scolar Press, 1968) 63.

[23] Sir Philip Sidney, The Defence of Poesie (1595; Menston, England: Scolar Press Ltd., 1968) 38-39.

[24] Campion in Lanz, 309-10.

[25] Samuel Daniel, A Defence of Ryme, ed. Arthur Colby Sprague (1603; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1930) 131.

[26] Daniel 132.

[27] Ben Jonson in George Saintsbury's Historical Manual of English Prosody (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910) 239.

[28] Jonson in Lanz, 310.

[29] Milton in Witherspoon, 394.

[30] Dryden in Lanz, 182-83.

[31] Saintsbury 245.

[32] Chear in Townsend, 20-21.

[33] Townsend 20.

[34] Townsend 132.

[35] Opie 386.

[36] Blake in Hollander, 208.

[37] Saltman 91.

ANALYSIS OF RHYME PATTERNS AND LINE ENDINGS

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of rhyme in children's poetry from the eighteenth century to the present. In this study, an effort has been made to adapt James Bailey's investigative techniques of ten English poets' use of iambic tetrameter to an examination of twelve children's poets' use of rhyme.[1]

The verse of the twelve selected poets offers a random sampling of rhyme forms used in children's poetry over a span of three centuries. 164 poems were considered in this study, totalling 2671 lines. An average of 223 lines per poet was examined. Poems were taken in the chronological order in which they appeared in single-author collections or anthologies.

Only a few poems of each of the twelve children's poets were analyzed, thus presenting only a sampling of the writings of an individual. There may be other uses of rhyme which an examination of the complete works of one poet would reveal. Since all the poems of one writer are not being examined, there is a chance that some uses of rhyme will not be identified. The final conclusions are based on only the poems being considered in this study. The poems have been identified by numbers.

The following aspects of rhyme will be considered:

--frequency of rhyme patterns (couplet, triplet, quatrain, etc.)

--the preferred stanzaic forms

--frequency of each type of line ending (stressed or unstressed)

The following poets have been selected because of the strong influence they have had on the development of children's poetry and the effect they have had on single authors (Watts on Blake, Blake on de la Mare, Lear on Ciardi, Stevenson on McCord):

The Eighteenth Century

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

William Blake (1757-1827)

The Nineteenth Century (nonsense verse)

Edward Lear (1812-1888)

Lewis Carroll (1831-1898)

The Nineteenth Century (lyric poetry)

Christina Rossetti (1830-1898)

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Early Twentieth Century

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)

A.A. Milne (1882-1956)

David McCord (1897-)

Last Forty Years

John Ciardi (1916-1986)

Eve Merriam (1916-)

Valerie Worth (1933-)

SUMMARY OF RHYME PATTERNS USED BY:

	Couplet	Triplet	Quatrain	Quintet	Sixain	Other
Watts	35.7	--	64.3	--	--	--
Blake	52.1	--	36.9	--	11.0	--
Lear	27.8	10.9	24.8	36.5	--	--
Carroll	28.2	--	25.6	--	46.2	--
Rossetti	22.3	--	54.8	5.1	6.1	11.7
Stevenson	70.7	--	20.2	--	9.1	--
De la Mare	9.8	--	76.5	--	--	13.7
Milne	15.8	1.5	39.4	17.2	--	26.1
McCord	37.3	6.9	21.0	--	--	34.8
Ciardi	12.2	--	80.8	2.3	--	4.7
Merriam	10.2	2.4	15.7	13.8	7.1	50.8
Worth	6.9	16.2	13.8	3.9	4.6	54.6

The quatrain is the major scheme employed by Ciardi (81%), de la Mare (77%), Rossetti (55%), Watts (64%), and Milne (40%). The couplet is the favoured form for the following poets: Stevenson (71%), Blake (52%), and McCord (37%).

Except for Ciardi (5%), free verse shows a significantly steady increase in popularity, beginning with Rossetti (12%) through Worth (55%). Free verse was not employed by Watts, Blake, Lear, and Carroll. Rossetti was the first to experiment with this form. Rossetti also experimented widely with other verse forms, as did Milne. Free verse is the dominant rhyme pattern for Merriam (51%) and Worth (55%). However, their work reflects an interesting distribution throughout all forms, suggesting a desire to experiment with many different patterns.

The random sampling of Worth's poems (19 in total), taken to ascertain her stanzaic preferences, was compared to a close examination of her complete works (99 poems) in

order to make a comparison between the random sampling of one poet's work and the complete writings of that individual. It revealed the following comparisons:

MOST COMMON RHYME FORMS IN THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WORTH

	Couplet	Triplet	Quatrain	Quintet	Sixain	Other
19 poems	6.9	16.2	13.8	3.9	4.6	54.6
99 poems	5.0	15.2	18.2	12.1	5.0	44.5

A strong similarity appeared in the two samplings. Free verse was the dominant pattern in both, although it occurred slightly less frequently in the analysis of her complete works. The five-line scheme appeared infrequently in the random sampling of Worth's poems (4%).

All twelve poets in this study used the couplet and quatrain. The most preferred verse form among these poets was the quatrain (976 lines out of a total of 2671; or 37%), followed by the couplet (27%), followed by the category defined as "other" (18%). "Other" is predominantly free verse, but does include a few isolated examples of the septet (Milne-20), the octet (Rossetti-18, de la Mare-3), and the decima (de la Mare-12).

STANZAIC FORMS IN ORDER OF OCCURRENCE

Quatrain	36.6%
Couplet	26.8
Other	18.3
Quintet	7.2
Sixain	7.2
Triplet	3.8

The quintet score (7%) was inflated by Lear's prolific use of the limerick form.

LINE ENDINGS

Line endings have been divided into two general categories according to the position of the final stress: a stressed ending has the stress on the last (or single) syllable and an unstressed ending has the final stress on the penultimate (or the antepenultimate) syllable. Different degrees of stress are sometimes discriminated: strong, secondary, tertiary, and weak. Only the terms stressed (strong) and unstressed (weak) are used here.

PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE OF LINE ENDING

	Stressed	Unstressed
Watts	78.6	21.4
Blake	84.8	15.2
Lear	89.1	10.9
Carroll	91.0	9.0
Rossetti	79.7	20.3
Stevenson	88.1	11.9
De la Mare	74.5	25.5
Milne	69.5	30.5
McCord	89.8	10.2
Ciardi	87.7	12.3
Merriam	78.7	21.3
Worth	81.2	18.8

Stressed endings are more common (70 to 91%) than unstressed endings. A significant number of unstressed endings are used by Milne (31%), de la Mare (26%), Merriam (21%), Watts (21%), and Rossetti (20%).

There are three pairs of rhymes occurring at the ends of lines which have an uncertain number of syllables:

Watts--------2 "flower" : "hour"
" --------5 "brier" : "higher"
Blake-------10 "flower" : "bower"

It is unclear whether Watts and Blake intended these words to be elided. Poetic contractions occurred most often in verse written between the Restoration period and the end of the eighteenth century. Contractions were

> ...observed by the reader even if the word was printed in full, for the aesthetic of eighteenth century poetry assumes that each line will be syllabically regular....The contemporary reader of eighteenth century poetry derived much of his aesthetic delight from his deliberate and conscious `regularizing,' through contraction, of normally irregular phonetic materials.[2]

Therefore, if the contractions were considered even when the word appeared in full, "flower" : "hour" would be monosyllabic. All other end rhymes in this poem are clearly of one syllable, and the iambic rhyme is used throughout.

It is not evident that "brier" : "higher" would be elided, although this pair of words is contained in a poem (Watts-5) of anapestic tetrameter, which would indicate a monosyllabic ending. However, in this same poem Watts included three other instances of the hypermetrical line (where an extra syllable has been added to the end of a line):

Watts--------5 "slumber" : "number"
" --------5 "drinking" : "thinking"
" --------5 "breeding" : "reading"

Blake was explicit in indicating the number of syllables in the poem containing "flower" : "bower" (#10). In the final verse, he elided "wash'd" and "o'er," suggesting words without a marked contraction were to be read as disyllabic.

Most rhymes have a heavily stressed vowel related to the final ictus, but unstressed rhyme also occurs. In this study, there are many examples of the pairing of one unstressed rhyme with another unstressed rhyme.

EXAMPLES OF UNSTRESSED-UNSTRESSED RHYME:

Within this category, there were a number of cases in which only the final unstressed syllables created rhyme:

Blake--------5	"blossom" : "bosom"
" --------2	"weary" : "merry"
" -------10	"blessing" : "ceasing"
" -------10	"dreadful" : "heedful"
" -------10	"meekness" : "sickness"
" -------10	"spirit" : "inherit"
Rossetti----12	"wither" : "together"
Stevenson---14	"river" : "ever"
De la Mare--10	"whistling" : "knocking"
Merriam------2	"moonday" : "whensday" : "freeday"
" ------4	"living" : "dying"
" -----10	"standing" : "spouting"
" -----17	"hedges" : "plunges"
Worth-------18	"gently" : "happily"

Merriam used one stressed-unstressed-unstressed pair (the only example in this study):

Merriam-----13 "quote-throated" : "footnoted"

Near rhymes appeared in the following instances:

Blake--------2 "weary" : "merry"

```
Blake--------5   "robin" : "sobbing"
Rossetti----14   "violet" : "twilight"
Milne--------1   "nurse's" : "Percy's"
```

Nonsense rhyme also was used:

```
Lear---------2   "Churtsey" : "curtsy"
  " ---------6   "Etna" : "Gretna"
  " --------12   "sniffle-snuffle" : "ruffle"
Milne--------4   "dormouse" : "e-nor-mous"
Ciardi------10   "Yuma" : "puma"
  "   ------11   "jingle-jangle" : "a-dangle"
Merriam------2   "moonday" : "whensday" : "freeday"
```

The placement of function words created rhymes with unstressed-unstressed endings:

```
Lear--------12   "bonnet" : "on it"
  " --------12   "fashion" : "sash on"
Carroll------1   "suet" : "do it"
Rossetti----17   "looked at" : "crooked at"
   "    ----19   "lambkin" : "shelter him"
Ciardi-------4   "popper" : "stop her"
McCord-------2   "out of" : "doubt of"
```

EXAMPLES OF STRESSED-UNSTRESSED RHYME:

There were a number of cases of stressed endings rhyming with unstressed endings with 43% of these instances occurring in poetry by Merriam:

```
Lear--------12   "went" : "monument"
  " ---------5   "size" : "sympathize"
Stevenson----4   "man" : "caravan"
    "    ----7   "star" : "Malabar"
    "    ---10   "set" : "minaret"
    "    ---10   "Nile" : "crocodile"
De la Mare--17   "say" : "caraway"
Merriam-----10   "create" : "annihilate"
    "  ------3   "sea" : "memory"
    "  ------4   "tree" : "seriously"
    "  ------7   "telephone" : "alone"
    "  ------9   "go" : "radio"
    "  -----14   "me" : "hesitancy"
```

Worth-------12 "tree" : "heavy"

Within this category of stressed-unstressed rhymes, the second part of a compound word makes up the unstressed syllable:

Blake--------7 "away" : "noonday"
Stevenson----1 "night" : "candlelight"
" ---16 "plain" : "counterpane"
McCord-------5 "wing" : "wellspring"
Merriam------1 "sing" : "everything"

Stressed-unstressed rhymes appeared in nonsense words:

Carroll------4 "catch" : "Bandersnatch"

and a few near rhymes also occurred:

Stevenson----10 "walls" : "festivals"
Milne--------10 "gun" : "Amazon"
Worth---------2 "stone" : "hipbones".

This chapter has attempted to gain an insight into how rhyme forms and line endings have been used by twelve children's poets. It seems possible to conclude that the preferences of twentieth century children's poets differ from those of the eighteenth century in the following respects:

--wider experimentation with all forms of poetry

--significant increase in free verse (0% to 57%)

--greater usage of line endings containing near rhymes, as opposed to full rhymes

--an increase in the use of polysyllabic "nonsense" words

--fewer colloquial contractions.

However, two similarities appeared throughout:

--stable preference for stressed line endings

(Watts-78.6%; Rossetti-79.7%; Merriam-78.7%)

--use of the couplet and quatrain by all poets.

Although free verse has increased in popularity in the last few decades, the couplet and quatrain continue to be well used by poets. The quatrain was the most common rhyme pattern for Ciardi (81%).

Only a few poets and a limited number of lines have been examined in this study but the analysis offers quantitative evidence leading to the conclusion that poets' uses of rhyme forms have altered appreciably over the past three centuries.

NOTES

[1] James Bailey, Toward a Statistical Analysis of English Verse (Lisse, Netherlands: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975) 66-70.

[2] Alex Preminger, ed., The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (New Jersy: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 628.

POEMS USED IN THE STUDY

Isaac Watts, The Oxford Book of Children's Verse, Iona and Peter Opie, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975): (1) "Against Quarrelling and Fighting", (2) "Against Idleness and Mischief", (3) "For the Lord's Day Evening", (4) "Our Saviour's Golden Rule", (5) "The Sluggard", (6) "Cradle Hymn".

William Blake, Songs of Innocence (London: Faber & Faber, 1958): (1) "Introduction", (2) "The Echoing Green", (3) "Infant Joy", (4) "The Shepherd", (5) "The Blossom", (6) "The Lamb", (7) "The Little Black Boy", (8) "Laughing Song", (9) "Spring", (10) "Night".

Edward Lear, The Oxford Book of Children's Verse: (1) "There was an Old Man with a beard", (2) "There was an Old Lady of Chertsey", (3) "There was an Old Man in a tree", (4) "There was an Old Man who said, `How...", (5) "There was an Old Man who said, `Hush!...", (6) "There was an Old Person of Gretna", (7) "There is a Young Lady, whose nose",(8) "There was an Old Man of Dumbree", (9) "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat", (10) "The Duck and the Kangaroo", (11) "The Jumblies", (12) "Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow".

Lewis Carroll, Oxford Book of Children's Verse: (1) "You are old, Father William", (2) "The Lobster Quadrille", (3) "The

Lobster", (4) "Jabberwocky", (5) "The Walrus and the Carpenter", (6) "Humpty Dumpty's Song".

Christina Rossetti, Oxford Book of Children's Verse: (1) "A Crown of Windflowers", (2) "Comparisons", (3) "Ferry me across the Water", (4) "Flint", (5) "Lady Moon", (6) "The Wind", (7) What are Heavy?", (8) "The Rainbow", (9) "What does the Bee do?", (10) "A Riddle", (11) "Caterpillar", (12) "Hope and Joy", (13) "Last Rites", (14) "What is Pink?", Doves and Pomegranates, David Powell, ed. (London: The Bodley Head, 1969): (15) "Lambs at Play", (16) "The Frog and the Toad", (17) "The City Mouse and the Garden Mouse", (18) "A Motherless Soft Lambkin", (19) "Horses", (20) "Hurt No Living Thing", (21) "The Sound of the Wind", (22) "Coral", (23) "The Moon".

Robert Louis Stevenson, A Child's Garden of Verses (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1985): (1) "Bed in Summer", (2) "A Thought", (3) "At the Seaside", (4) "Young Night Thought", (5) "Whole Duty of Children", (6) "Rain", (7) "Pirate Story", (8) "Foreign Lands", (9) "Windy Nights", (10) "Travel", (11) "Singing", (12) "Looking Forward", (13) "A Good Play", (14) "Where Go the Boats?", (15) "Auntie's Skirts", (16) "The Land of Counterpane".

Walter de la Mare, Peacock Pie (London: Faber and Faber, 1989): (1) "The Horseman", (2) "Alas, Alack!", (3) "Tired

Tim", (4) "Mima", (5) "The Huntsmen", (6) "The Bandog", (7) "I Can't Abear", (8) "The Dunce", (9) "Chicken", (10) "Some One", (11) "Bread and Cherries", (12) "Old Shellover", (13) "Hapless", (14) "The Little Bird", (15) "Mr Alacadacca", (16) "Not I!", (17) "Cake and Sack", (18) "Groat nor Tester".

A.A. Milne, The World of Christopher Robin (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1955): (1) "Corner-of-the-Street", (2) "Buckingham Palace", (3) "Happiness", (4) "The Christening", (5) "Puppy and I", (6) "Twinkletoes", (7) "The Four Friends", (8) "Brownie", (9) "Independence", (10) "Nursery Chairs", (11) "Lines and Squares".

John Ciardi, Mummy Took Cooking Lessons (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990): (1) "Mummy Took Cooking Lessons and...", (2) "In Copenhagen by the Sea", (3) "Hi", (4) "Betty Bopper", (5) "The Milkman Comes at Four in the Morning", (6) "Lemonade for Sale", (7) "Who?", (8) "The Boy Who Knew He Was Good", (9) "Do You Suppose?", (10) "Dirty Dan Ploof", (11) "Jerry", (12) "Mike (or Joe)", (13) "The Flier", (14) "Ode", (15) "The Man with Nothing to Say".

David McCord, One at a Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980): (1) "Joe", (2) "Five Little Bats", (3) "Five Chants", (4) "The Rainbow", (5) "The Star in the Pail", (6) "At the Garden Gate", (7) "The Fisherman", (8) "Something Better",

(9) "The Newt", (10) "Tim", (11) "Father and I in the Woods".

Eve Merriam, Finding a Poem (New York: Atheneum, 1970): (1) "The Wholly Family", (2) "Calendar", (3) "Sandwriting", (4) "Interview", (5) "Umbilical", (6) "Some Little Poems Without the Word Love", (7) "Neuteronomy", (8) "Alarm Clock", (9) "Witness", (10) The Measure of Man", (11) "Fantasia", (12) "Cult", (13) "Word Bird", (14) "Markings: The Period", (15) "Markings: The Exclamation", (16) "Markings: The Comma", (17) "Markings: The Semicolon".

Valerie Worth, all the small poems (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987): (1) "porches", (2) "cow", (3) "zinnias", (4) "chairs", (5) "sun", (6) "coins", (7) "aquarium", (8) "pig", (9) "jewels", (10) "tractor", (11) "grass", (12) "dog", (13) "raw carrots", (14) "marbles", (15) "clock", (16) "duck", (17) "daisies", (18) "pie", (19), "frog".

RHYME FORMS

This chapter explains what the rhyme form is, what it can do, and how it has been used in children's poetry. The form is not what the poem is about, but the way in which it is written. It is the structure of the poem and has a variety of patterns. These patterns are derived from many different literary periods and cultures: "...Greek and Latin, early English, French, Italian, German, and other modern European languages, and from Japanese."[1]

Throughout this study, rhyme form is presumed to include the acrostic, ballad, ballade, blank verse, cinquain, clerihew, couplet, free verse, haiku, limerick, octet, quatrain, quintet, rhyme royal, sixain, septet, sonnet, triolet, triplet, and villanelle.

ACROSTIC

Acrostic comes from the Greek word "akros" (at the end) and "stichos" (line or verse). The initial, middle, and/or final letters of each line are arranged in vertical order to comprise a word, phrase, or successive letters of the alphabet. Ancient Greek and Latin writers frequently used this form, and it probably served as a mnemonic device.

The initial letters are used in most acrostics. A "telestich" is when the final letters are used, and a "mesostich" is when the middle letters appear vertically in the center of the poem.

Acrostics belonging to the alphabetical type are called abecedarians. Abecedarians (alphabet verse) date back to antiquity. This form has been used frequently in children's alphabet books. The letters of the alphabet are arranged in their correct order and form the initial letters of each line (and in the case of the following anonymous seventeenth century example, also the medial letters).

A was an Archer, and shot at a frog,
B was a Blindman, and led by a dog.
C was a Cutpurse, and lived in disgrace,
D was a Drunkard, and had a red face.
E was an Eater, a glutton was he,
F was a Fighter, and fought with a flea.
G was a Giant, and pulled down a house,
H was a Hunter, and hunted a mouse.
I was an Ill man, and hated by all,
K was a Knave, and he robbed great and small.
L was a Liar, and told many lies,
M was a Madman, and beat out his eyes.
N was a Nobleman, nobly born,
O was an Ostler, and stole horses' corn.
P was a Pedlar, and sold many pins,
Q was a Quarreller, and broke both his shins.
R was a Rogue, and ran about town,
S was a Sailor, a man of renown.
T was a Tailor, and knavishly bent,
U was a Usurer, took ten per cent.
W was a Writer, and money he earned,
X was one Xenophon, prudent and learn'd.
Y was a Yoeman, and worked for his bread,
Z was one Zeno the Great, but he's dead.[2]

This verse is the most well-known of children's rhyming alphabets and is written in the traditional couplet form. The letters "I" and "V" are not included, reflecting the early English tradition of using "I"--"J" and "U"--"V" as single letters.

BALLAD

Documented evidence of the origin of the ballad has been in dispute for a long time, but most sources claim that its origins lie in the folk song. Ballads were initially passed down orally through traditions that existed hundreds of years ago.

Ballads focus on a single dramatic event. The narrator's point of view is impersonal, whereas the folk song expresses the author's/composer's emotions.

According to Ethel Eikel Harvey "...the true ballad stanza is a quatrain, a four-line verse. The rhyme scheme is a-b-c-b. The first and third lines are tetrameter--four feet; the second and fourth lines are trimeter--three feet. There are no definite restrictions for the number of quatrains needed for any ballad. For this reason we have ballads of varying lengths."[3]

Parallelism and repetition allow important facts to be clearly understood by the listener. Assonance is frequently employed, as is demonstrated in the opening verse of the traditional ballad "Sir Patrick Spens":

> The king sits in Dumferling town,
> Drinking the blood-red wine:
> "O where will I get a good sailor,
> To sail this ship of mine?"[4]

BALLADE

The ballade has a rigid rhyme scheme and is a complicated and exacting form of poetry. It is composed of three eight-line stanzas with a rhyming scheme of a-b-a-b-b-c-b-C, finishing with a four-line envoy (b-c-b-C). David

McCord explains and illustrates this form in "Ballade: An Easy One":

> Of course I find it fun to write
> Ballades. Some people don't, alas!
> The best ones gallop swift and light
> On anapestic feet. In class
> You'll learn that, like wind over grass,
> An anapest goes ta, ta, *tee;*
> Or you can say it: trout, trout, *bass.*
> It doesn't matter much to me.
>
> In *this* ballade the line is tight
> And short and glitters some, like brass:
> *Iambic*--four feet. Let me bite
> It out / for you. / As clear / as glass,
> We're not deep down in some morass
> Of verse; we're sailing smooth and free.
> If our next rhyme is *sassafras,*
> It doesn't matter much to me.
>
> And yet it *should* because, in spite
> Of all your skill, you must amass
> A lot of rhyme words--*sprite, might, kite*--
> And juicy ones like this--*crevasse;*
> And you can feel now, as I pass
> From *class* to *grass* to *bass,* I see
> The end in sight. But I am crass:
> It doesn't matter much to me.
>
> Envoy
> Prince, am I finished? Lad or lass,
> Ballades may run *you* up a tree.
> If my balloon is filled with gas,
> It doesn't matter much to me.[5]

BLANK VERSE

Blank verse (blank implying that the end of the line is bare of rhyme) appeared in English poetry as early as the sixteenth century. Louis Untermeyer stated:

> Although to most English readers the term has become synonymous with Shakespeare's plays, blank verse is by no means confined to the long unrhymed line of ten syllables and five accents. Any verse which is without end-rhyme and which usually is not divided into stanzas might be called blank

> verse--no matter how short the lines or how long the poem itself may be....The themes generally thought to be appropriate for the form are meditative and dramatic movements.[6]

However, the most common definition of blank verse is by Jaye Giammarino: "Blank verse is a very specific meter: iambic pentameter, unrhymed...with the caesure always appearing within the line...least often of all, at the end of the line."[7]

Next to free verse, blank verse most resembles the English speech stresses. It is not considered to be a popular form with contemporary poets, and is seldom used in poetry for children. But Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his poem on "Snow," employed it most effectively:

> Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
> Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
> Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
> Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,
> And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
> The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
> Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
> Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
> In a tumultuous privacy of storm.[8]

CINQUAIN

The cinquain is a stanza composed of five lines, its origin probably dating back to medieval times. The precise, modern form of the cinquain was invented by an American, Adelaide Crapsey, in the early part of the twentieth century. "It is a product of the Imagist movement whose roots are found in classical Greek poetry, Japanese haiku and 'vers libre' of French Symbolists."[9]

This form is made up of five unrhymed lines and twenty-two syllables, with the following pattern of syllables per line: 2-4-6-8-2. David McCord's cinquain illustrates this pattern:

Who sees
The redwoods for
The first time won't forget
Their tallness ageless look saying
Always[10]

CLERIHEW

The Oxford Dictionary describes a clerihew as a "short, witty, comic, or nonsensical verse, usually in four lines of varying length." It was named after its inventor, Edmund Clerihew Bentley (1875-1956) who wrote his first clerihew at age sixteen.

The clerihew is made up of two couplets of unequal length with outrageous rhymes. It usually contains biographical notes about a famous personality, and the person's name should appear in the first line. "The humour consists in concentrating on the trivial, the fantastic, or the ridiculous and presenting it with dead-pan solemnity as the characteristic, the significant, or the essential."[11]

When a rooster crows
Everybody knows
The dawn made him do it.
That's all there is to it.[12]

COUPLETS

Over the centuries, the rhymed couplet has been a basic form in poetry, one from which many other forms have been

generated. It is two linked lines of verse, usually with the same rhythm and rhyme, although not all couplets employ regular line length.

The classical (heroic) form uses iambic pentameter. The line used most frequently in light and/or romantic verse is iambic tetrameter, as in Harry Behn's "Adventure":

> It's not very far to the edge of town
> Where trees look up and hills look down,
> We go there almost every day
> To climb and swing and paddle and play.
>
> It's not very far to the edge of town,
> Just up one little hill and down,
> And through one gate, and over two stiles--
> But coming home it's miles and miles.[13]

FREE VERSE

Free verse has developed over the last hundred years to such an extent as to be thought of as the characteristic poetry form of the twentieth century. Poets searched for ways to avoid rigid organization and regular rhythms. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) felt that rhyme was an inadequate vehicle for expressing logical and intellectual themes. In fact, he felt that it would be somewhat cynical and improper to use rhyme to attempt to "comprehend the size of the whole people...the modern, the busy nineteenth century...with steamships, railroads, factories, electric telegraphs, cylinder press...."[14]

Whitman's attack on rhyme is taken from The Notes--Complete Works:

> If rhyme and those measurements continue to

> furnish the medium for inferior writers and themes (as there seems...something inevitably comic in rhyme), the truest and greatest poetry...can never again, in the English language, be expressed in arbitrary and rhyming meter...[15]

Free verse has no mechanical syllable count, but uses a unit called "the variable foot." Its rhythm relies on cadence. Jean R. Jenkins states that "Free verse is not lacking in form and discipline...free verse is really only freed verse."[16] It treats the rhyming device and metrical patterning with a sense of freedom and irregularity, as seen in Valerie Worth's poem "Magnet":

> This small
> Flat horseshoe
> Is sold for
> A toy: we are
> Told that it
> Will pick up pins
> And it does, time
> After time; later
> It lies about,
> Getting chipped, being
> Offered pins less
> Often, until at
> Last we leave it
> Alone: then
> It leads its own
> Life, trading
> Secrets with
> The North Pole,
> Reading
> Invisible messages
> From the sun.[17]

HAIKU

Haiku is a poem of Japanese ancestry that in the Japanese language consists of three lines with a total of seventeen syllables. The syllables are divided into a 5-7-5

pattern although translations from Japanese to English frequently do not retain this syllable pattern. The content of haiku is very closely linked to nature. It is delicate, tranquil, and perceptive poetry that describes the miracles of the natural world. Always written in the present tense, haiku does not have to be grammatically perfect, nor does it rhyme. It is untitled, as a title is felt to impose the poet's interpretation upon the reader:

Wind ripples the grass,
Waves rock the boat, but clouds have
To drag their shadows.[18]

LIMERICK

No one is certain where or how the limerick began, but there are many theories as to its origin. A few examples are:

-the war veterans in 1700 brought it back to Ireland from France

-it was popular with Mother Goose's Melodies for Children, published in 1719

-it began with an old Irish habit of pub-crawling and shouting out lines in turn. After four lines were finished, everyone would yell, "Will you all come up to Limerick!"

The limerick is a nonsense poem. It contains five anapestic lines with a rhyme scheme of a-a-b-b-a. The first, second, and fifth lines have three stresses, and the third and fourth have two. Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense

was published in 1846 and contained many limericks--including the following--although he was anxious not to be known as the originator of this form:

> There was an Old Man with a beard,
> Who said, "It is just as I feared!--
> Two Owls and a Hen,
> Four Larks and a Wren,
> Have all built their nests in my beard!"[19]

OCTET

The octet is an eight-line grouping of words. It can be a complete stanza, or a portion of a longer scheme, such as a sonnet. It appears as a complete stanza in Rossetti's poem "A Motherless Soft Lambkin":

> A motherless soft lambkin
> Alone upon a hill;
> No mother's fleece to shelter him
> And wrap him from the cold:--
> I'll run to him and comfort him,
> I'll fetch him, that I will;
> I'll care for him and feed him
> Until he's strong and bold.[20]

QUATRAIN

The quatrain is thought to be the oldest (and still the most widely used) form of verse in the English language. There are four lines in each stanza. The metric foot is the poet's choice but, once chosen, is usually strictly followed and consistent throughout. Quatrains may stand on their own, or they may be put together to create a longer poem. A variety of rhyming patterns may be used:

1. a-b-c-b (the most popular pattern, and used by Rossetti in her poem "Flint"):

An emerald is as green as grass,
A ruby red as blood;
A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
A flint lies in the mud.

A diamond is a brilliant stone,
To catch the world's desire;
An opal holds a fiery spark;
But a flint holds fire.[21]

2. a-b-a-b (used by Blake in his introductory poem to Songs of Innocence):

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me...[22]

3. a-a-a-b (used by Newbery in "The Great Merchant, Dives Pragmaticus, Cries his Wares"):

I have ornaments, implements, fit for the church,
Fine rods for children, of willow and birch;
If I have not quick sale, I shall have a lurch,
What do you lack, sir? Come hither to me.[23]

QUINTET

A quintet is composed of five lines. Poets may devise any rhyme scheme (a-b-a-b-b is the most common pattern) or have no rhyme scheme at all. The meter and line length are not fixed. Poets often combine short and long lines to create the desired effect. Valerie Worth employed this form in "toad":

When the flowers
Turned clever, and
Earned wide
Tender red petals
For themselves,

When the birds
Learned about feathers,
Spread green tails,
Grew cockades
On their heads,

The toad said:
Someone has got
To remember
The mud, and
I'm not proud.[24]

RHYME ROYAL

Rhyme Royal is a seven-line stanza of iambic pentameter. Its rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b-b-c-c. Chaucer used Rhyme Royal extensively and this form continued to flourish in the century after his death. John Lydgate (1370-1450) used two stanzas of Rhyme Royal in his poem "The Boy Serving at Table":

My dear child, first thyself enable
With all thine heart to virtuous discipline;
Afore thy sovereign, standing at the table,
Dispose thou thee after my doctrine
To all nurture thy courage to incline.
First, when thou speakest be not reckless,
Keep feet and finger still in peace.
Be simple of cheer, cast not thine eye aside,
Gaze not about, turning thy sight over all.
Against the post let not thy back abide,
Neither make thy mirror of the wall.
Pick not thy nose, and, most especial,
Be well ware, and set hereon thy thought,
Before thy sovereign scratch nor rub thee nought.[25]

SEPTET

The septet is a stanza composed of seven lines. Its meter and rhyme pattern may vary. It was used in A.A. Milne's poem "Independence":

I never did, I never did, I never *did* like
"Now take care, dear!"
I never did, I never did, I never *did* want
"Hold-my-hand";
I never did, I never did, I never *did* think much of
"Not up there, dear!"
It's no good saying it. They don't understand.[26]

SIXAIN

The six-line stanza is called a sixain, or sestet, although sestet usually refers to the final six lines of certain sonnet forms. Blake's poem "Infant Joy" is composed of two sixains:

"I have no name:
I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee![27]

SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET

A Shakespearean sonnet has three quatrains and a couplet, or one octave and a sestet. Its rhyme scheme is:

a-b-a-b c-d-c-d e-f-e-f g-g

It is written in iambic pentameter. Slight variations are permitted:

-near rhyme ("come" : "home")

-opening a line with a trochee and balancing it with an iamb

-using a run-on line if needed

-using unaccented syllables as end rhymes ("garden" : "harden").

TRIOLET

A triolet is a popular French form that has been adopted by the English. It has eight lines and can be written in dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, or pentameter. It is founded on a very strict rhyme scheme:

-lines 1, 4, 7--identical (but a slight variation in words may occur)

-lines 2 and 8--identical

-lines 3 and 5--must rhyme with 1, 4, and 7

-line 6---------must rhyme with 2 and 8.

Phyllis McGinley used this form in "Triolet Against Sisters":

> Sisters are always drying their hair.
> Locked into rooms, alone,
> They pose at the mirror, shoulders bare,
> Trying this way and that with their hair,
> Or fly importunate down the stair
> To answer a telephone.
> Sisters are always drying their hair,
> Locked into rooms, alone.[28]

TRIPLET

The triplet developed as an extension and a variation of the couplet. It is composed of three successive lines, usually containing rhyme, and nearly always has the same rhythm throughout. Langston Hughes's "Winter Moon" illustrates the triplet:

How thin and sharp is the moon tonight!
How thin and sharp and ghostly white
Is the slim curved crook of the moon tonight![29]

VILLANELLE:

A villanelle is a French verse form consisting of five tercets with a rhyming a-b-a pattern, rounded off by a quatrain (rhyming a-b-a-a). "The first line of the initial tercet serves as the last line of the second and fourth tercets and the third line of the initial tercet serves as the last line of the third and fifth tercets, these two refrain-lines follow each other to constitute the last two lines of the closing quatrain."[30] David McCord demonstrates the villanelle form in "Turtle":

This turtle moved his house across the street.
I met him here about an hour ago.
It is *so* hot, I guess he feels the heat.

Outside, at least, his house looks very neat;
But what goes on inside I do not know.
This turtle moved his house across the street.

No windows, just the four doors for his feet,
Two more for head and tail. Now they don't show.
It *is* so hot, I guess he feels the heat.

He must be tired. I don't know what he'll eat.
Does *he* grow big? Or does his *house* just grow?
This turtle moved his house across the street.

I'll put him near the pond. The grass is sweet.
The dragonflies are fast, but he is slow.
It is so *hot*! I guess he feels the heat.

It's nice to have a house like that, complete
To walk in, float in, sink in mud below.
This turtle moved his house across the street.
It is so hot! I guess he feels the heat.[31]

The examples included in this chapter show that poetic form is the manner in which the poem is written. Any writer may create an original stanzaic form. Form is the way a poem is composed as distinct from the poetic devices used within a poem. Rhyming devices and how they have been employed in poetry for children are examined closely in the following chapter.

NOTES

[1] Frances Stillman, The Poet's Manual and Rhyming Dictionary (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966) 41.

[2] Anonymous, "A Was an Archer," The Oxford Book of Children's Verse, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 43-44.

[3] Wauneta Hackleman, ed., The Study and Writing of Poetry: American Women Poets Discuss Their Craft (New York: Whitson Pub. Co., 1983) 9.

[4] Anonymous, "Sir Patrick Spens," Time for Poetry, ed. May Hill Arbuthnot and Shelton L Root, Jr. (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968) 19.

[5] David McCord, "Ballade: An Easy One," One At A Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980) 472-73.

[6] Louis Untermeyer, The Forms of Poetry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926) 50.

[7] Hackleman 19.

[8] Arbuthnot 191.

[9] Hackleman 31.

[10] McCord 480.

[11] Alex Preminger, ed., The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (New Jersy: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 141.

[12] McCord 476.

[13] Arbuthnot 95

[14] Whitman in Henry Lanz's The Physical Basis of Rime (California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1931) 321-22.

[15] Whitman in Lanz 322.

[16] Hackleman 73.

[17] Valerie Worth, "magnet," all the small poems (U.S.A.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987) 54-55.

[18] McCord 484.

[19] Edward Lear, The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear (New York: Harmony Books, 1984) 27.

[20] Christina Rossetti, Doves and Pomegranates (London: Bodley Head, 1969) 30.

[21] Opie 277.

[22] William Blake, "Introduction," Blakes's Innocence and Experience, ed. Joseph H. Wicksteed (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928) 82-83.

[23] Opie 15.

[24] Worth 78.

[25] Opie 4.

[26] A.A. Milne, The World of Christopher Robin (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958) 20.

[27] Blake 122-23.

[28] Phyllis McGinley, "Triolet Against Sisters," The Oxford Book of Children's Verse in America, ed. Donald Hall (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985) 255.

[29] Langston Hughes, "Winter Moon," Knock at a Star, ed. X.J. Kennedy (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982) 47.

[30] Preminger 893.

[31] McCord 469.

THE RHYMING DEVICE

The rhyming device, illustrated in this section through a series of selected passages by children's poets from the fourteenth century to the present, includes the following terms: alliteration (initial-consonantal, initial-vocalic, medial, final, parallel, suspended, submerged), anaphora, ascending rhyme, assonance, consonance, descending rhyme, end rhyme, eye rhyme, full rhyme, homoeoteleuton, internal rhyme, identical rhyme, medial rhyme, mosaic rhyme, near rhyme, ploce, and tame rhyme.

ALLITERATION

Achieving a musical effect through alliteration is an ancient and persuasive technique. Alliteration is the repetition of the same letters or sounds in two or more words. There are many different forms, the most common being initial-consonantal. It was used very persuasively by John Lydgate, a friend of Geoffrey Chaucer's son. Lydgate's "Stans Puer ad Mensam" was published by Caxton and was widely read in the fifteenth century. An example of initial-consonantal alliteration is found in his poem "The Boy Serving at Table," containing advice for a young boy on how to conduct himself appropriately:

> Neither make thy mirror of the wall,
> Pick not thy nose, and, most especial,
> Be well ware, and set hereon thy thought,
> Before thy sovereign scratch nor rub thee nought.[1]

The following table indicates how frequently these initial-consonantal sounds were repeated within the four lines:

LINE:	1	2	3	4
"b"			1	1
"m"	2	1		
"n"	1	2		2
"s"			1	2
"th"	2	1	2	2
"w"	1		2	

Alliteration using single consonants, consonantal blends, and consonants with succeeding vowel repetition have all been included in the final three lines of Valerie Worth's "Fireworks":

> Breaks and billows into bloom,
> Spilling down clear green sparks, gold spears,
> Silent sliding silver waterfalls and stars.[2]

Twelve of the eighteen words in this excerpt contain alliterative initial consonants, seven involving the fricative "s" and three involving the plosive "b." These are carefully chosen consonants that combine to evoke the sounds made by a rocket hissing and exploding in a fireworks display, just as the air in the mouth "explodes" when the "b" sound is released. Effective use of the plosive "d" occurs in the opening lines of Worth's poem "Dinosaurs":

> Dinosaurs
> Do not count,
> Because
> They are all
> Dead.[3]

The "d" is also echoed in the last sound of "dead," giving a heavy finality to the whole verse.

A less common type of alliteration is initial-vocalic. Hilaire Belloc combined it with initial-consonantal in the closing couplet of "Jim, Who ran away from his Nurse, and was eaten by a lion":

> And always keep a-hold of Nurse
> For fear of finding something worse.[4]

The acoustical effect is somewhat different with initial vowels, and this form is used less frequently. Lewis Carroll employed it in "You are old, Father William":

> "In my youth," Father William replied to his son,
> "I feared it might injure the brain..."[5]

Initial alliteration has coursed through innumerable children's alphabet books to the extent of being almost a vice, although some alphabet books have survived and endured, two well-known examples being Edward Lear's An Alphabet (1871) and Kate Greenaway's A-Apple Pie (1886).

Alliteration may occur in an internal position and is then referred to as medial-alliteration, as seen in Christina Rossetti's "Comparisons":

> Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth.[6]

and also in Thomas Newbery's "The Great Merchant, Dives Pragmaticus, Cries His Wares":

> I have fine gowns, cloaks, jackets and coats

Fine jerkins, doublets, and hose without motes.[7]

The following example of final alliteration is from a poem by Isaac Watts entitled "The Sluggard":

As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed
Turns his sides and his shoulder and his heavy head[8]

Alliteration in the medial and final position is also a form of consonance. Consonant rhyme is especially effective in disyllabic end-rhyming, as found in Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz":

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.[9]

Parallel or crossed alliteration is produced when alliterative sounds are intricately arranged throughout either a section or a whole poem creating a sound pattern. In the following example, Geoffrey Chaucer created a delicate interplay between the voiced nasal consonants m and n in the first two lines, then formed a new design in the third line by alternating the w and t:

My son, from a fiend men may them bless.
My son, God of his endless goodness
Walled a tongue with teeth and lips eke...[10]

An unusual form of alliteration called suspended alliteration is where the consonant and the succeeding vowel are placed in reverse order, as in Lewis Carroll's "The White Queen's Riddle":

For it holds it like glue--
Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle:
Which is easiest to do,
Un-dish-cover the fish, or dishcover the riddle?[11]

Alliteration is not necessarily restricted to the stressed syllables. When it appears on the unstressed syllables, it is referred to as submerged alliteration. A.A. Milne used it in "Us Two":

"I'm never afraid with you."
So wherever I am, there's always Pooh...[12]

ANAPHORA

When successive sentences or sentence parts begin with the same word or words, it is called anaphora. "Demetrius and virtually all post classical authorities treat anaphora as its exact synonym."[13] John Ciardi's poem "Wouldn't You?" contains an example of anaphora in the repetition of the "w" glide, where no obstruction of the airstream is produced and thus a "wind" effect is created:

If I
Could go
As high
And low
As the wind
As the wind
As the wind
Can blow--
I'd go![14]

ASCENDING RHYME

Ciardi's "Wouldn't You?" is said to be written in ascending rhyme, which occurs when the lines are composed

predominantly in iambic (unstressed/stressed) or anapestic (unstressed/unstressed/stressed). Ascending rhyme is not thought to have any uplifting, symbolic meaning suggesting happiness, hope, or levity. Consider the exquisite sadness of "Poem" by Langston Hughes, also written in ascending rhyme:

> I loved my friend,
> He went away from me.
> There's nothing more to say.
> The poem ends,
> Soft as it began--
> I loved my friend.[15]

Ascending rhyme also appears in the iambic rhythm of R.L. Stevenson's "My Shadow":

> I have a little shadow
> that goes in and out with me,
> And what can be the use of him
> is more than I can see.[16]

and in the anapestic rhythm of "The Sluggard" by Isaac Watts:

> 'Tis the voice of the Sluggard:
> I heard him complain,
> "You have waked me too soon,
> I must slumber again."[17]

ASSONANCE

Assonance is also referred to as vowel or vocalic rhyme. It is usually echoed in the same line, but can appear in a different section of a poem. It occurs when vowels (usually stressed syllables) are repeated in words

whose consonants are not the same, as in "The Lamb" by William Blake:

> Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
> By the stream and o'er the mead.[18]

or, in a lighter vein, where Eve Merriam plays with the spelling of the first word in the English dictionary in her poem "AA Couple of Doublles":

> If the aardvark
> haad aa caar
> aand went out aafter daark,
> he might find it haard
> to paark.[19]

Edward Lear created parallel assonance when he wove an intricate "e" and "i" pattern throughout the opening lines of "The Jumblies":

> They went to sea in a Sieve, they did,
> In a Sieve they went to sea;[20]

Internal assonance occurs when the echoing vowels appear in the opening and the final words of a line, or are placed in close proximity. The long "o" is repeated in the last three lines of Valerie Worth's "hose", and this sound also reflects back on the poem's title:

> A silk
> Rainbow
> Halo
> Over soft fog.[21]

Worth created a pleasing double assonance in the "Rainbow" : "Halo" combination, with both words suggesting

curved, circular shapes. The final short "o" repetition enhances the quiet mood of the closing lines.

Another type of assonance serves as a link between lines or line parts. It is found at the end of lines (either successive of alternating) that do not contain a pure rhyme. This form sometimes acts in place of rhyme. Three verses in Valerie Worth's poem "duck" end in words that are not pure rhymes, yet "feet" : "beak" : "keep" are linked together through the "ee" sound:

> When the neat white
> Duck walks like a toy
> Out of the water
> On yellow rubber-skinned feet,
>
> And speaks wet sounds,
> Hardly opening
> His round-tipped wooden
> Yellow-painted beak,
>
> ...
> Then we would like
> To pick him up, take
> Him home with us, put him
> Away, on a shelf, to keep.[22]

The opening line of each verse also contains this "ee" sound. "Neat" : "speaks" : "we" creates an effective acoustical connection with the last word of each verse. Another interesting link is found between "neat" : "feet" and "speaks" : "beak," as each rhyming vowel-pair has an identical succeeding consonant.

CONSONANCE

Consonance or pararhyme is the similarity of partial or total consonants in syllables or words whose stressed vowels

are not the same. An example of this form is found in "Mother to Son," a poem written by Langston Hughes:

> I's been a-climbin' on,
> And reachin' landin's
> And turnin' corners
> And sometimes goin' in the dark.[23]

Rich consonance is total consonantal sound repetition between words where the corresponding vowels are different. Thomas Newbery used it in "The Great Merchant":

> I have ladles, skimmers, and irons and spits,
> Dripping pans, pot hooks, old cats and kits.[24]

William Blake also used rich consonance in "Piping Down the Valleys Wild":

> Sing thy songs of happy cheer
> So I sung the same again...[25]

Sometimes consonance takes the place of end rhyme, creating an impure rhyme, as in Walter de la Mare's "Some One":

> Some one came knocking
> At my wee, small door;
> Some one came knocking,
> I'm sure - sure - sure.[26]

DESCENDING RHYME

Descending rhyme, like ascending rhyme, carries no symbolic meaning. It is referred to as the falling rhyme when the trochaic and dactylic rhythms are used:

(Trochaic--stressed/unstressed)

Garden darkened, daisy shut,
Child in bed, they slumber--
Glow-worm in the highway rut,
Mice among the lumber.[27]
(R.L. Stevenson)

(Dactylic--stressed/unstressed/unstressed)
What are you able to build with your blocks?
Castles and palaces, temples and docks.
Rain may keep raining, and others go roam,
but I can be happy and building at home.[28]
(R.L. Stevenson)

END RHYME

End rhyme is the most common position of rhymed words:

Ages and ages have fallen on me--
On the wood and the pool and the elder tree.[29]
(Walter de la Mare)

End rhyme that matches with a word in the middle of the next line (or vice versa) is called cross rhyme, an example being found in David McCord's "How to Draw a Monkey":

To draw a monkey, don't begin
With him, but what he's on or in,
He's in a tree, he's on a limb...[30]

EYE RHYME

Eye rhyme, also referred to as visual or sight rhyme, depends on spelling rather than pronunciation. The words look alike but are pronounced differently:

"A little too well done? Oh well,
I'll have to start all over."
That time what landed on my plate
Looked like a manhole cover.[31]

This excerpt was taken from John Ciardi's "Mommy Slept Late and Daddy Cooked Breakfast," the poem rated as most popular by students in Ann Terry's National Survey of Children's Poetry Preferences.[32]

Many of today's eye rhymes are classed as historical rhymes. Alterations in the pronunciation of vowels resulted in pairs of words that once rhymed perfectly in the eighteenth century appearing as near rhymes, as found in "For the Lord's Day Evening" by Isaac Watts:

> O write upon my memory, Lord,
> The text and doctrines of thy Word.[33]

FULL RHYME

Full rhyme is the same as perfect, exact, or true rhyme. It is the correspondence of vowel sounds in the accented syllables, which are followed by similar consonant sounds. The consonant sounds preceding the vowel are different. Eve Merriam employed full rhyme in "Portmanteaux":

> ...so coin new words
> and spend and lend
> as syllables wander, waft and wend
> and blend and bend and never end.[34]

Full rhyme can be monosyllabic (single), disyllabic (double), or trisyllabic (triple). When the rhyming syllables are monosyllabic, it is called single, male, or masculine rhyme. David McCord used it in "Frog in a Bog":

> Give him a hot bright sun--

A June one, an August one,
Or any of July's.
Flies are his prize:
Any kind, any size.
He is all eyes for flies.[35]

When the rhyming sound-identities are disyllabic and the stress is not on the last syllable, it is referred to as double, unstressed, female, or feminine rhyme. The disyllabic rhyme has been used imaginatively in A.A. Milne's "Sneezles":

They said, "If you teazle
A sneezle
Or wheezle,
A measle
May easily grow.
But humour or pleazle
The wheezle
or sneezle,
The measle
Will certainly go."[36]

Trisyllabic rhyming involves three syllables and is called triple, treble, or sdrucciolo rhyme with the accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables. An excellent example of this type of rhyming is David McCord's "Mr. Bidery's Spidery Garden" where this feeling of three is enhanced by having the poem written in triplets and having each line end in a trisyllabic rhyme:

With cabbages so odory,
Snapdragon soon explodery,
At twilight all is toadary.[37]

Rhymes involving four syllables are extremely uncommon in English and have not been given special names. They mostly appear in nonsense verse.

HOMOEOTELEUTON

Homoeoteleuton first appeared in Aristotle's Rhetoric--Book 3.9.9. It means "similarity of endings" and usually involves suffix repetition, where the same or similar case-endings are close together, as in Geoffrey Chaucer's "Controlling the Tongue":

> Wost thou whereof a rakel tongue serveth?
> Right as a sword forcutteth and forcarveth.[38]

IDENTICAL RHYME

Identical rhyme, also called right rhyme, appears when two words have the same sound but are spelled differently:

> "Piper, sit thee down and write
> In a book that all may read."
> So he vanished from my sight,
> And I plucked a hollow reed.[40]
> (William Blake)

INTERNAL RHYME

Rhyme is not restricted to just the final word of a line or half-line of poetry. A word echoing another anywhere in close proximity is called internal or inner rhyme. Eve Merriam created internal rhyme in her poem "Serendipity":

> Or if you are Adam adamantly out to do your duty,
> and along your macadam route you encounter a
> beauty...[39]

MEDIAL RHYME

Medial or middle rhyme occurs when the word preceding the caesura rhymes with the end word. This device is called leonine rhyme when used in a pentameter or hexameter line. Middle-and-end rhyme indicates the two halves of a line of poetry:

> A simple chime, that served to time,
> The rhythm of our rowing...[41]
> (Lewis Carroll)

MOSAIC RHYME

When two or more words in the rhyming pair are used, it is referred to as mosaic rhyme. Both of the lines may contain the mosaic rhyme, or only one, as in Edward Lear's "Eclogue":

> What boots it that we orange trees or lemons see,
> If we must suffer from such vile inclemency?[42]

NEAR RHYME

Near rhyme is a form of consonance. It is also called partial, half, off, oblique, slant, or imperfect rhyme. The final consonant-sound is repeated without a similar correspondence between preceding vowels or consonants. Stephen L. Mooney describes near rhyme:

> Once considered an oddity in the work of such poets as Emerson and Emily Dickinson, near rhyme is now accepted and used by nearly all 20th century poets, not to supplant perfect rhyme but to supplement it, so as to provide a greater range and freedom for the poet.[43]

In the poem entitled "bell," Valerie Worth has used the phonetic properties of the voiced nasal "ng" to recreate the sound of a bell ringing, and this near rhyme has echoed three times in each verse.

> By flat tink
> Of tin, or thin
> Copper tong,
> Brass clang,
> Bronze bong,
>
> The bell gives
> Metal a tongue--
> To sing
> In one sound
> Its whole song.[44]

PLOCE

Most postclassical authorities apply the term anadiplosis to "only the word repetition that serves to link two units of discourse such as consecutive stanzas or sentences."[45] Ploce or anadiplosis is verbatim word repetition that links sections of poetry together:

> The Dong!--The Dong!
> The Wandering Dong through the forest goes!
> The Dong! the Dong!
> The Dong with a luminous Nose![46]
>
> (Edward Lear)

TAME RHYME

Tame rhyme uses similar parts of speech in corresponding functions:

> "Well, dogtooth violet, and how's that tooth?"
> "It aches a bit, to tell the truth."
> Now you heard that: he says it aches,
> Let's ask wake-robin when robin wakes.[47]

In this poem "Spring Talk" by David McCord, the same parts of speech appear in the end rhymes: "tooth" : "truth" are both singular nouns and "aches" : "wakes" are both verbs (third person singular) in the present tense.

The examples above reveal the complex variety of rhyming devices found in children's poetry. It is important to understand the technical resources of the poet's art. These linkages of rhyme help to "form a positive structure for the poetic act."[48]

NOTES

[1] John Lydgate, "The Boy Serving at Table," The Oxford Book of Children's Verse, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 4.

[2] Valerie Worth, all the small poems (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987) 63.

[3] Worth 83.

[4] Opie 312.

[5] Opie 239.

[6] Opie 176.

[7] Opie 15.

[8] Opie 51.

[9] Theodore Roethke, The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature, ed. Saltman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985) 124.

[10] Opie 3.

[11] Lewis Carroll, "The White Queen's Riddle," Jabberwocky and Other Poems (London: Macmillan, 1980) 45.

[12] A.A. Milne, "Us Two," The World of Christopher Robin: Now We Are Six (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958) 140.

[13] Harold Bloom, "Anaphora," The Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (New Jersy: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 37.

[14] John Ciardi, "Wouldn't You?" You read to me, I'll read to you (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1962) 14.

[15] Saltman 151.

[16] R.L. Stevenson, "My Shadow," A Child's Garden of Verses (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1985) 34.

[17] Opie 51.

[18] William Blake, "The Lamb," Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience, ed. Joseph H. Wicksteed (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928) 90.

[19] Eve Merriam, "AA Couple of Doublles," Chortles (New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1989) 5.

[20] Edward Lear, "The Jumblies," The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear (New York: Harmony Books, 1984) 100.

[21] Worth 67.

[22] Worth 27.

[23] Langston Hughes, "Mother to Son," The Oxford Book of

Children's Verse in America, ed. Donald Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 247.

[24] Opie 15.

[25] Blake 82-83.

[26] Walter de la Mare, "Some One," Peacock Pie (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) 17.

[27] Stevenson 93.

[28] Stevenson 81.

[29] de la Mare 106.

[30] David McCord, "How to Draw a Monkey," One at a Time (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980) 393.

[31] Ciardi 18.

[32] Ann Terry, Children's Poetry Preferences (Illinois: NCTE, 1972).

[33] Opie 50.

[34] Merriam 53.

[35] McCord 275.

[36] Milne 15.

[37] McCord 381.

[38] Opie 3.

[39] Merriam 23.

[40] Blake 82-83.

[41] Carroll 26.

[42] Lear 126.

[43] Mooney in Preminger, 556.

[44] Worth 95.

[45] Preminger 33.

[46] Lear 12.

[47] McCord 247.

[48] John Hollander, Vision and Resonance (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985) 118.

A STUDY OF POEMS BY BLAKE, LEAR, ROSSETTI, AND MERRIAM

In the Introduction to How Does a Poem Mean? John Ciardi states that "To look technically at a poem, they [appreciators] argue, is like picking the wings off a butterfly. But what poem ever ceased to be good because someone had analyzed it...."[1]

This chapter analyzes how four poets managed a particular aspect of their art--specifically, how Blake, Lear, Rossetti, and Merriam managed the technique of rhyme.

The available wealth of children's poets made it somewhat difficult to narrow the selection down to only Blake, Lear, Rossetti, and Merriam. However, in the numerous anthologies and scholarly criticisms reviewed (Opie, Darton, Hall, Sutherland, Saltman, and Huck) these four poets consistently appeared as writers who have made, or are making, significant contributions to the world of children's poetry. The eighteenth century's emerging awareness of humanity appears in the work of Blake; the early nineteenth century's reaction to didactic poetry surfaces in Lear's nonsense verse; the Victorian's sensitivity to the day-to-day interests of the child influences the lyrical poetry of Rossetti; and the late twentieth century's desire to experiment with language emerges in the innovative poetry of Merriam.

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

Very little imaginative poetry was written for children between the time of Isaac Watts's Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children (1715) and William Blake's Songs of Innocence (1789). Blake, the great imaginative writer and solitary genius, had "...broken into this narrow library that others were toiling so laboriously to fill for children."[2]

Blake was well acquainted with the world of juvenile literature and lived in an environment which took this genre seriously. He did not agree with the theories upon which most of the children's books of his time were based, and so he produced his own "epoch-making" children's book:

> The deceptively simple and reassuring rhythms of nursery rhyme, folk-song, jingle, lullaby, ballad, and hymn, when combined with an equally child-like pictorial style (the primitiveness of which may have appealed to Blake for other reasons as well), would lull the reader into expecting conventional themes--laziness, for instance, or disobedience--to be conventionally treated. When expectations were then subtly undermined, the larger implications of the themes and conventions of traditional children's books would be thrown into relief.[3]

Blake built his poetry on vision: The Songs of Innocence describe Blake's vision of what is naturally good, and the Songs of Experience show how this innocence can be destroyed. Blake was concerned over the loss of the "child-like vision of existence...which may still exist in maturity."[4]

The symbols in Innocence offer a special meaning and represent a state of security found in the watched-over lamb and child. The link between the Innocence and Experience portions of the book is the need for humans to be tested in order to reach another necessary state of development.

The image of children (imagination) allowed to run free, unfettered by conventional restrictions, reveals Blake's passion for the "highest state of the active imagination which he calls Eden."[5] This passion is most evident in the poem "Nurses's Song":

> When the voices of children are heard on the green
> And laughing is heard on the hill,
> My heart is at rest within my breast
> And everything else is still
>
> Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
> And the dews of night arise
> Come come leave off play, and let us away
> Till the morning appears in the skies
>
> No no let us play, for it is yet day
> And we cannot go to sleep
> Besides in the sky, the little birds fly
> And the hills are all coverd with sheep
>
> Well well go & play till the light fades away
> And then go home to bed
> The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd
> And all the hills ecchoed

[This punctuation has been copied from Blake's 1794 engraved edition, and it differs from most editions produced today.] Blake's original Manuscript version used the word "tongues" instead of "voices" in the first stanza.[6]

The plate for "Nurses's Song" reveals seven children dancing in a circle. They are moving in a clockwise motion,

"always significant for Blake of the passage through life-experience to beautitude."[7] Groupings of seven appear elsewhere in Songs of Innocence. Seven cherubs (five winged, two without) are depicted in "The Blossom", and Wicksteed referred to these as the seven angels on the title-page of the "Job."[8] Wicksteed also suggested that in the poem immediately preceding "The Blossom" ("Infant Joy"), the mother holds in her lap the second of the seven cherubs and that the seven spirits trace "the current of creation...the six days culminating in the Sabbath or seventh day would then be represented by the cherubs."[9]

Many of Blake's principal symbols of Innocence, according to F.W. Bateson, appear in the "Nurse's Song":

children (lines 1, 5, 15)
sheep (line 12)
wild birds (line 11)
green fields (line 1)
dew (line 6)
hills (line 2, 12, 16)

Blake omitted any jarring voices throughout Songs of Innocence, but the "Nurse's Song" in Experience offers a counterpart:

When the voices of children, are heard on the green,
And whisperings are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring & your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

This is in contrast to the symbols introduced in the first "Nurses's Song." Here, "laughing" becomes "whispering" (suggesting secrecy and deceit); "hill" becomes "dale" (suggesting shadow and darkness); "morning" becomes "winter and night" (suggesting oppression and loss of innocence). Thus, experience darkens the second "Nurse's Song", and a contrasting situation is presented. Anger and bitter resentment have entered the speaker, who now warns the children of the folly of play and the dangers of night.

The vocabulary in these poems is purposely simple. Blake's "childlikeness was partly self-imposed," resulting in poetry of childlike innocence.[10] 86% of the words used in these two poems are monosyllabic. "Ed" endings would have been sounded in Blake's time unless they were elided. Thus, "laugh'd" has been counted as monosyllabic, "leaped" and "shouted" as disyllabic, and "ecchoed" as trisyllabic--(all examples of homoeoteleuton). The consonantal rhymes found in "bed" : "laugh'd" : "ecchoed" altered the rhyme scheme from a-b-c-b to a-b-b-b in the final stanza.

"Ecchoed" is an historical rhyme and provides a full rhyme for "bed." The three syllables of this word have a strange effect on the poem and suggest that the joyful sounds of the children will recede. Echoes fade and die out as will the laughter and voices heard on the hill. These sounds echo in the Nurse's thoughts, reminding her of her own lost youth and innocence. "Ecchoed" hints at the voices

to be heard in the later "Nurse's Song" where the tone of the poem has altered completely.

Blake frequently used ploce in his poems. Words are repeated throughout the "Nurse's Song" and provide links between the lines and the stanzas:

heard on the green	stanza	1
heard on the hill	"	"
Then come	"	2
Come, come	"	"
leave off play	"	"
let us play	"	3
go and play	"	4
come home	"	2
go home	"	4
and laughing	"	1
and laugh'd	"	4

This repetition highlights the fact that these images are closely related.

These four Innocence and two Experience stanzas are written in quatrain form. The rhyme scheme is a-b-c-b (with one previously mentioned exception), and includes an end rhyme linking consecutive stanzas: the first two with "green" : "down" and the last two with "day" : "away." In five out of the six stanzas, medial rhyme occurs in the third line :

rest: breast (full rhyme)
play: away (full)
sky: fly (full)
leaped: laugh'd (consonantal)
day: play (full).

The exception is found in the opening stanza (3rd line) of Experience:

> The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind.

This lack of an anticipated rhyme startles the ear and warns the reader that the tone has shifted and darkened and the nurses's voice is no longer that of a loving guardian, but of a bitter and jealous person.

The use of anaphora in the opening word ("And") on the alternate lines (but one) gives the poem the regulated movement of a time-piece. Each image passes by anew and yet swings back to connect with the poem as a whole.

Although the tone in the "Nurse's Song" is different from the tone in "Spring," the former contains a reference to birds ("Besides in the sky, the little birds fly") similar to references in the following poem "Spring":

> Sound the Flute!
> Now it's mute.
> Birds delight
> Day and Night.
> Nightingale
> In the dale
> Lark in Sky
> Merrily
> Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year
>
> Little Boy
> Full of joy.
> Little Girl
> Sweet and small.
> Cock does crow
> So do you.
> Merry voice
> Infant noise
> Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year
>
> Little Lamb

Here I am,
Come and lick
My white neck.
Let me pull
Your soft Wool.
Let me kiss
Your soft face.
Merrily Merrily we welcome in the Year

These references act as links between the poems. Other frequently recurring images in the Songs of Innocence are the child and lamb. The poems revolve around the initial stage of innocent love found in the lines from "Spring":

Little Lamb
Here I am...

"Spring" is the most high-spirited of all the poems. A lyrical quality echoes throughout, and many critics feel that Blake especially intended this poem to be sung. The authentic child-like ring to the lines is partly a result of the unusual rhymes Blake used. Blake shared Milton's views on rhyme as "a modern bondage." He was a verbal experimenter who broke away from the restrictions of the traditional rhymes of the purist. There are many examples of near rhyme in his poetry, especially in the poem "Spring." Two examples occur when an accented monosyllabic word is rhymed with an unaccented syllable of a trisyllabic word. It is not unusual to find a final consonant blend rhyming with a different consonant blend (or a single consonant). An analysis of the variety of end rhymes in these three verses reveals that a number of the rhymes are barely shadows of their original sound ("sky" : "merrily";

"kiss" : "face"; "crow" : "you") and yet a song-like quality still echoes throughout the poem:

(monosyllabic--FULL)
Flute: mute
Boy: joy
Lamb: am
pull: Wool

(disyllabic: monosyllabic--FULL)
delight: Night

(trisyllabic: monosyllabic--FULL)
Nightingale: dale

(monosyllabic: trisyllabic--NEAR; VOCALIC)
Sky: Merrily

(monosyllabic--NEAR; CONSONANTAL)
Girl: small
lick: neck
kiss: face

Blake often used auxiliaries such as "do" when they were not needed grammatically ("Cock does crow"), and he also omitted articles ("Lark in Sky"). However, most readers "...will feel that he has a nearly infallible ear for the music of his verse."[11] His punctuation, especially the insertion of capitals, is unusual and indicates a desired emphasis. According to Wicksteed, the fully written "and," if it appears in the middle of a line, suggests a slight pause on the preceding word:

day and Night
Sweet and small
Come and lick

Blake altered his texts many times before he approved of each final version. He completely omitted a fifth verse

to "A Cradle Song" in Songs of Innocence, thus eliminating all suggestions that this state of innocence could be tainted or marred in any way:

> Sweet dreams, form a shade
> O'er my lovely infant's head;
> Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
> By happy, silent, moony beams.
>
> Sweet sleep, with soft down
> Weave thy brows an infant crown.
> Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
> Hover o'er my happy child.
>
> Sweet smiles, in the night
> Hover over my delight;
> Sweet smiles, Mother's smiles,
> All the livelong night beguiles.
>
> Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
> Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
> Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
> All the dovelike moans beguiles.
>
> (O, the cunning wiles that creep
> In thy little heart asleep.
> When thy little heart does wake,
> Then the dreadful lightnings break.)

There is a passion beyond analysis in the Songs of Innocence and Experience, and, although Blake was an obscure writer in his lifetime, he was also a visionary artist who knew that "poetry alone could make others share his central experience."[12] His poetry reflected the emerging concern in the eighteenth century for the condition of the child.

Songs is a unique creation--written, illustrated, engraved, and hand-coloured by Blake. In this poetry Blake turned to the metres and rhymes of traditional hymns to give him the form needed for song. His words were deliberately simple and yet exquisitely lyrical. Despite the intense

emotion underlying the poems, particularly in Experience, Blake kept this form melodious.

His influence on the shaping of children's poetry should not be underestimated. Blake's voice is the precursor of lyrical poets such as Rossetti, Stevenson, de la Mare and Worth.

NOTES

[1] John Ciardi, How Does a Poem Mean? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) xx.

[2] F.J. Harvey Darton, Children's Books in England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982) 179.

[3] Zachary Leader, Reading Blake's Songs (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981) 33.

[4] C.M. Bowra in Bottrall, William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience--a Casebook (London: MacMillan, 1970) 140.

[5] Bowra in Bottrall, 146.

[6] Joseph H. Wicksteed, Blake's Innocence and Experience (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928) 208.

[7] Wicksteed 127.

[8] Wicksteed 127.

[9] Wicksteed 124.

[10] Wicksteed 63.

[11] Wicksteed 66.

[12] Bowra in Bottrall, 158.

EDWARD LEAR (1812-1888)

Walter de la Mare referred to nonsense verse as "this laughing heartsease."[1] Nonsense verse emerged as an antidote to the predominantly didactic (and often morbid) poetry that had been written for children up until the 1800's. Children delighted in the absurdities and lively rhymes found in nonsense poetry. "Mischief...smashes the 'great folk' and the 'big folk' who are always sure of their responsibilities."[2]

Edward Lear was a true nonsense writer. He excelled in the invention of nonsense words. "This is no mean achievement, for the word must appear, to both the ear and the eye, to come of a long and legitimate lineage; it must seem authentic."[3]

Lear began his professional career as an artist, not a writer, and, like William Blake, illustrated books for other people. He earned the patronage of the Derby family, and it was to the Derby grandchildren, nieces and nephews, his first Book of Nonsense was dedicated.

Logical absurdity coursed through his writing. He produced word-inversions (later labelled spoonerisms) such as "Mary Squeen of Cots"; portmanteau words-- "splendidoph-oropherostiphongious"; the joining of one letter with another word--"a noppertunity"; phonetic spellings-- "pollygise" (apologize); puns--a reference to the city of Nice: "Nice is so wonderfully dry....Dryden is the only book

read"; regional accent mispronunciations--"chimbly" (chimney); and nonsense spelling--"I gnoo how bizzy u were."[4]

Lear laced his lines with alliteration, and the neologisms contained in his poetry created worlds where anything might happen, as in "The Scroobious Pip":

> The Scroobious Pip can sit under a tree
> By the silent shores of Jellybolee

or in "Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow," where Mrs. Sparrow will be made to feel "galloobious" when Mr. Sparrow buys her a "satin sash of Cloxam blue."

"Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow" is the only one of Lear's longer poems where he created a loving domestic scene with father, mother, and children all living happily together (a situation unfamiliar to Lear). Critics have mixed views on this poem with its variations on the "ikky" refrain:

> Twikky wikky wikky wee,
> Wikky bikky twikky tee,
> Spikky bikky bee!

Thomas Byrom stated that it is "a bright, flinty poem, made of tough, trochaic, tetrameter couplets."[5] Ina Rae Hark noted that it is the only "Lear poem that is cloying in the same way as much inferior Victorian children's literature... The tetrameter couplets are technically uninspired."[6] Myra Cohn Livingston referred to the "marvellous choruses sung by Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow."[7]

This poem touches on a favourite topic of Lear's--a disapproval of what "they" consider to be socially proper. Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow must buy new clothes, not just to keep out the cold, but to dress according to fashion's conforming rules. Their children are ecstatic over the change in their parents when they return "completely drest" (quite unlike Lear's flamboyant characters found in other poems).

> Said they, "We trust that cold or pain
> We shall never feel again!
> While, perched on tree, or house, or steeple,
> We now shall look like other people."

There is an interesting shift in emphasis on the three "we" words so that each one will conform to the tetrameter. An effective vocalic echo sounds through these lines. Lear made wonderful use of mosaic rhyme in the fourth and fifth stanzas of this poem:

> There they bought a hat and bonnet,
> And a gown with spots upon it.
>
> Which, completely in the fashion,
> You shall tie a sky-blue sash on.

"Bonnet" : "upon it" is an example of rich-consonance, where there is consonantal repetition but the corresponding vowels are not the same. His use of the plosives "b" and "p" are an added bonus to the "bonnet" : "upon it" pair. "Tie" : "sky-blue" creates an internal rhyme. The "sh" blend is repeated three times in this couplet.

The type of nonsense bird-talk Lear utilized in the chorus of "Mr. and Mrs. Spikky Sparrow" also appeared in an alphabet poem. Lear played with sound and meaning, thus creating imaginative rhymes. He used rhyming adjectives (adding the suffix-y to the chosen item) then completed each verse with a rhyming two-word phrase and a final apostrophe. This alphabet poem used chiming patterns common to nursery rhymes:

A was once an apple-pie,
Pidy
Widy
Tidy
Pidy
Nice insidy
Apple-Pie.

Like most nonsense writers, Lear coined new words and employed the full potential of alliteration, as seen in his poem "The Pelican Chorus":

Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!
Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

Lear's interest in the limerick began when he discovered a volume entitled Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen (published in the early 1820's) which, among others, contained the following verse:

As a little fat man of Bombay
Was smoking one very hot day,
A bird called a snipe flew away with his pipe,
Which vexed the fat man of Bombay.

The exact origins of this verse form are unclear but it came to be known as the limerick. Lear described this verse as having "a form lending itself to limitless variety for Rhymes and Pictures."[8] Over his lifetime, Lear produced hundreds of limericks and was the first poet to earn fame in the limerick field.

A criticism of Lear's limericks is that they "are thought by some to be feeble, on the grounds that the rhyming word in the last line repeats the rhyme in the first or second line."[9] Only a few of his limericks (5 out of a total of 236 in the book Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear) used a different rhyme in the final word. It is quite unusual for the a-a-b-b-a rhyme pattern to contain three different rhyming "a" words, as in the following:

> There was an Old Man who made bold,
> To affirm that the weather was cold:
> So he ran up and down, in his grandmother's gown
> Which was woollen, and not very old.

"The inevitability of Lear's final rhymes fittingly complements the whole tendency of his versification in these poems."[10] This characteristic of word repetition may have been due to the fact that Lear wrote the limerick with the intention that children would join in with a final rhyming word that was familiar to them. "The echoing effect of Lear's repeated rhyme-words often maintains and enhances the feeling of non-sense, leaving the limerick subjects in a perpetual state of suspended animation."[11]

Lear apparently wrote many of his limericks in two or three lines, although published editions usually present these verses in stanzas of four lines (thus creating a medial rhyme in the third line). Predictable forms are part of Lear's limerick world. The nonsense element is contained in a tight rhyme pattern which seems to highlight the fantasy or comic absurdities of the verses.

However, in spite of Lear's brilliant success and acquired fame as the author of the "fantastic collection of rhymes-without-reason," he was seen as a wandering eccentric and considered by many to be a lonely man.[12] He suffered from frequent depressions which he termed "the Morbids" or "knownothingatallaboutwhatoneisgoingtodo-ness."[13] This melancholy side of his personality appeared in his longer poems along with two recurrent themes--"wandering" and "loss."

The underlying symbolism in "The Courtship of the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo" reveals this sense of personal isolation:

> `Lady Jingly! Lady Jingly!
> Sitting where the pumpkins blow,
> Will you come and be my wife?'
> Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
> `I am tired of living singly,--
> On this coast so wild and shingly,--
> I'm a-weary of my life:
> If you'll come and be my wife,
> Quite serene would be my life!'--
> Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
> Said the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

Lady Jingly's refusal leaves the jilted author to wander, ever in search of his Jumbly girl:

Lady Jingly answered sadly,
And her tears began to flow,--
'Your proposal comes too late,
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo!
I would be your wife most gladly!'
(Here she twirled her fingers madly)
'But in England I've a mate!
Yes! you've asked me far too late,
For in England I've a mate,
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo!
Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo!'

The name of her mate, "Handel Jones," is an alliterative pun on the possessions owned by Mr. Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo, namely his "old jug without a handle." The eleven lines in each of the ten verses of this poem are written in descending rhyme and follow an identical rhyme pattern (a-b-c-b-a-a-c-c-c-b-b) with three exceptions: in the sixth verse, Lear used the abbreviation "Co." to create an eye rhyme for "Bo," in the seventh verse he divided the trisyllabic word "modify" to create the disyllabic "modi-" to rhyme with "body" and "Doddy" (moving the last syllable ahead to the next line), and in the final verse he used a consonantal blend to create a near rhyme in "mourns-moans":

From the Coast of Coromandel,
Did that Lady never go;
On the heap of stones she mourns
For the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.
On that Coast of Coromandel,
In his jug without a handle
Still she weeps, and daily moans;
On that little heap of stones
To her Dorkling Hens she moans,
For the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo,
For the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo.

"Mourns" is a significant example of near rhyme, as it is the only rhyme in the 110-line poem that is not a full one, and it is this word "mourns" that carries the mood of the poem. It is a word set apart from the others, just as the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo is set apart from his beloved Lady Jingly.

There is also another aspect to be considered over Lear's use of the near rhyme "mourns." Near rhymes are sometimes associated with themes of sadness and mystery. Susan Miles believes near rhymes to be a way of suggesting "defeat, incongruity, suspense, failure, struggle, frustration, disillusion, thwarting, disruption, or escape."[14] Henry Wells stated (in reference to Emily Dickinson's use of near rhyme) that "full rhyme may be compared to the musician's major mode, half rhyme to the minor mode. The latter connotes indecision, pensiveness, quiet grief, or spiritual numbness."[15] Although these statements can be readily disproved by poems containing near rhyme that express feelings of elevation or aspiration, the concept of major and minor modes is nevertheless an intriguing one, and is perhaps applicable to Lear's single, lonely "mourns."

To Lear, moonlight "may suggest magic or melancholy."[16] It seems to suggest the former in "The Owl and the Pussy-cat." This poem appears to be free of trouble and sadness. The owl and the pussy-cat go on a magical journey, find a turkey to marry them and a pig to supply the ring:

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."

As the underlined examples illustrate, assonance and consonance are frequently employed. Nine instances of medial rhyme occur in this three-verse narrative:

honey: money
owl: fowl
married: tarried
away: day (2)
wood: stood
willing: shilling
mince: quince
hand: sand

"Since the sharing of food always cements loving relationships in Lear..."[17]

They dined on mince, and slices of quince
Which they ate with a runcible spoon.

("Runcible" is one of Lear's most famous neologisms.)

Much has been published on the subject of the underlying meanings in the limericks and narrative poems of this English "Laureate of Nonsense," but quite apart from the interpretive aspects of his writing, Lear's poetry continues to serve as an example of true nonsense. His Book of Nonsense was "one of the few children's books to start a tradition rather than follow one. Like a towering old oak tree in a grove of saplings, it remains a most impressive landmark."[18]

NOTES

[1] Walter de la Mare, Lewis Carroll (London: Faber and Faber, 1932) 8.

[2] Myra Cohn Livingston, Climb Into the Bell Tower (Boston: Harper and Row, 1990) 50.

[3] Judith Saltman, ed., The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985) 66.

[4] Holbrook Jackson, The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear (New York: Dover Pub., 1951) xxv-xxvi.

[5] Thomas Byrom, Nonsense and Wonder: The Poems and Cartoons of Edward Lear (New York: Dutton, 1977) 194.

[6] Ina Rae Hark, Edward Lear (Boston: Twayne Pub., 1982) 69.

[7] Livingston 52.

[8] John Vernon Lord, The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear (New York: Harmony Books, 1984) xii.

[9] Lord xv.

[10] Hark 29.

[11] Lord xvi.

[12] Jackson ix.

[13] Lord xii.

[14] Susan Miles in Judy Jo Small's Full as Opera: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme (University of N. Carolina, 1986) 3.

[15] Henry M. Wells, Introduction to Emily Dickinson (Chicago: Packard, 1947) 267.

[16] Hark 57.

[17] Hark 56.

[18] Mark I. West in Touchstones: Reflections on the Best in Children's Literature, ed. Perry Nodelman (West Lafayette: Children's Literature Assoc., 1986) 156.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830-1898)

Comparisons have been made between William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song:

> Rossetti, in the Blake tradition, shows her love and veneration for innocence--children, lambs, birds, dogs, cats, rabbits, caterpillars, flowers, and sea beasts.[1]

When Christina Rossetti's Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book was published in 1872, it was received favourably by critics and reviewers, although most felt the poems were intended for children above nursery age.

Sing-Song is considered to be historically significant. It reflected the new approach to children's poetry, as it included many nondidactic poems as well as the traditional, instructive verses. Among the instructional rhymes aimed at teaching children such things as measurement, seasons, and colours, the poem "What is Pink?" stands out:

> What is pink? A rose is pink
> By the fountain's brink.
> What is red? A poppy's red
> In its barley bed.
> What is blue? The sky is blue
> Where the clouds float through.
> What is white? A swan is white
> Sailing in the light.
> What is yellow? Pears are yellow,
> Rich and ripe and mellow.
> What is green? The grass is green,
> With small flowers between.
> What is violet? Clouds are violet
> In the summer twilight.
> What is orange? Why, an orange,
> Just an orange!

A certain cohesiveness is achieved in this poem by Rossetti's use of anaphora. Every other line begins with the question "What is...?" and this repetition effectively imitates the endless flow of questions a curious child might ask.

Rossetti is noted for her simple diction and brief statements, as seen in the above poem where 81% of the words are monosyllabic. One-syllable rhyming couplets are used throughout, with the exception of "yellow" : "mellow," "violet" : "twilight," and "orange." "Violet" : "twilight" is a rhyme that matches a trisyllabic with a disyllabic ending. It is also an example of rich-consonance, where the consonantal repetition between words has different corresponding vowels ("violet" : "twilight"). Perhaps this unusual rhyming couplet was placed near the end of the poem to prepare the ear for the musical irregularity of the final "Just an orange!" Orange is a word that cannot be rhymed at all in the English language, and the sudden insertion of this exclamatory couplet breaks the predicted rhythm and surprises the reader. Though poets vary greatly in the number and kinds of easements they discover from rhyming rigor, they all "allow themselves more merely approximate rhymes than is generally realized."[2]

In contrast to "What is Pink?" the poem "Lullaby, oh lullaby!" does not have such a high proportion of clipped, one-syllable words. Soft consonants and long, soothing

vowels slow down the pace of the poem. The lines move easily with smooth, liquid "l" sounds:

> Lullaby, oh lullaby!
> Flowers are closed and lambs are sleeping;
> Lullaby, oh lullaby!
> Stars are up, the moon is peeping;
> Lullaby, oh lullaby!
> While the birds are silence keeping,
> (Lullaby, oh lullaby!)
> Sleep, my baby, fall a-sleeping,
> Lullaby, oh lullaby!

Excluding the refrain, each line closes with an unstressed ending, which flows into the accented syllable of the following line. It is a carefully regulated tempo, composed to compliment the internal echoes within the poem and to create a soporific feeling.

Specific themes continued to capture Rossetti's attention: "a preoccupation with death, a yearning for rest, a regret for the transience of beauty, and a sometimes consoling hope of salvation."[3] These themes are exquisitely woven into the five short lines of her poem "Last Rites":

> Dead in the cold, a song-singing thrush,
> Dead at the foot of a snowberry bush--
> Weave him a coffin of rush,
> Dig him a grave where the soft mosses grow,
> Raise him a tombstone of snow.

All but five words in the above poem are monosyllabic. Arthur Symons wrote in the London Quarterly Review (1887) that Christina Rossetti's "most haunting rhyme-effects are in words of one syllable."[4] E.K. Charles notes in Christina Rossetti--Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982 that "the more

serious she is, the less she decorates her verse, the fewer and more traditional her images, the more unpretentious her words."[5]

Perhaps she was filled with her own sense of vulnerability and mortality when she penned "Last Rites." The year before this poem was published in Sing-Song, Rossetti suffered a severe attack of Graves' disease. The illness left her health permanently impaired, and it was undoubtedly a difficult time in her life.

Rossetti's sensitivity to the finality of the "d" sound in line 1 with the initial and final consonants in "dead" is effectively repeated in line 2. The intensity of the poem is heightened by this repetition.

Rossetti played with the sounds of the language. Of special note is her abundant use of initial, medial, and final alliteration in this five-line poem:

Initial consonance	song-singing dead
Medial alliteration	snowberry bush coffin of him a tombstone
Final consonance	song-singing thrush, bush, rush
Assonance	dig him soft-mosses

Assonance with suspended alliteration (where the alliterating consonant and the succeeding vowel are reversed) is also used:

soft-mosses
tombstone of snow

These internal vocalic echoes give the poem a deep feeling of sadness.

The functions of the last two rhymes "grow" : "snow" are not the same grammatically and are also different in the context of the poem. The hint of life and renewal in the verb "grow" is killed by the cold image in the noun "snow." Living, vibrant images appear in the last words of the first four lines:

song-sing thrush
snowberry bush
rush
soft mosses grow

and change suddenly to the cold silence of "a tombstone of snow" in the final line.

Although this poem is written in falling, dactylic rhyme, each line ends on an accented syllable. Rossetti jolts the reader in the third line with her skilful use of rhyme counterpoint. The first two lines have been written in tetrameter and the reader is expecting a similar length in line 3. But this line is written in trimeter and is not the anticipated pattern.

There is a parallelism in the first two lines:

Dead in the cold...
Dead at the foot...

and also in the last three lines:

Weave him...
Dig him...
Raise him...

reflecting perhaps on the burial rites of Rossetti's own religious persuasions, and the Christian "risen from the dead" belief.

"Thrush" and "rush" are full rhymes, and the insertion of the near rhyme "bush" comes as an acoustical surprise. It brings out a feeling of tension in the poem. It is unclear whether "bush" is an eye rhyme or an historical rhyme. Many of today's consonantal rhymes were once considered to be full rhymes, but the vowel pronunciation has altered, and they now appear as near rhymes. Shifting pronunciation is a very complex issue, especially in the matter of vowel analysis. Consonant sounds have remained relatively stable over time, but such has not been the case with vowel sounds. Henry Lanz stated that "in the history of languages consonants reveal considerably more constancy than vowels; they form the solid skeleton of words which identically persists throughout the ages of evolution, while the vowels change from generation to generation, from one dialect to another."[6]

It is difficult to ascertain how the word "bush" would have been pronounced in Rossetti's London area in 1872. This word also occurred in the following poems by Rossetti ("Spring Quiet"); Blake ("The Echoing Green"); and Lear ("There was an Old Man who said, `Hush!'"). In each of

these examples it would appear that "bush" was intended as a full rhyme:

> Where in the white-thorn
> Singeth a thrush
> And a robin sings
> In the holly-bush.
> (Rossetti)

> The skylark and thrush
> The birds of the bush
> Sing louder around
> To the bells' cheerful sound.
> (Blake)

> There was an Old Man who said, "Hush!
> I perceive a young bird in the bush!"
> When they said, "Is it small?"
> He replied, "Not at all!
> It is four times as big as the bush!"
> (Lear)

Rossetti pushed back poetical boundaries. John Ruskin commented in 1861 that her poems were full of "quaintness and offences...irregular measure is the calamity of modern poetry." He suggested that she should "exercise herself in the severest commonplace of metre until she can write as the public like. Then if she puts in her observation and passion all will become precious. But she must have the Form first."[7]

The poem "A Crown of Windflowers" parallels her own situation where "she continued to grieve over the emptiness in her life....There is always the melancholy note that cannot be suppressed of the unlikelihood of ever truly loving."[8]

"Twist me a crown of windflowers
  That I may fly away
To hear the singers at their song,
  And players at their play."

"Put on your crown of windflowers;
  But whither would you go?"
"Beyond the surging sea
  And the storms that blow."

"Alas! your crown of windflowers
  Can never make you fly;
I twist them in a crown today,
  And tonight they die."

The sadness in the poem is heightened by her skilful use of ploce in the repetition of the phrase "a crown of windflowers." The windflower (lily-of-the-field) flourishes in shady areas, and its colourful bloom is very short-lived. This brief-bloom idea is subtly hinted at in her choice of the word "whither." "Fly" : "die" are tame rhymes in that they both use similar parts of speech in corresponding functions.

Critics over the past century have not always agreed on their responses to Rossetti's use of rhyme. Green-Armytage remarked in Maids of Honour (1906) that the reader will often find "`rhymes which can only be regarded as impossible--poetic freedom in the use of word-sounds which exceeds...poetic licence.' Rossetti's lines he says, are not only `imperfect,' but beyond all bounds of `allowable-ness,' actually `unscannable.'"[9]

In the regulated verse structure so predominant in the poetry of that period, perhaps Rossetti's "Caterpillar" would have seemed `unscannable' to Green-Armytage:

Brown and furry
Caterpillar in a hurry,
Take your walk
To the shady leaf, or stalk,
Or what not,
Which may be the chosen spot.
No toad spy you,
Hovering bird of prey pass by you;
Spin and die,
To live again a butterfly.

A variety of end rhyme appears in these five couplets:

furry : hurry (disyllabic)
walk : stalk (monosyllabic)
not : spot (monosyllabic)
spy you : by you (mosaic)
die : butterfly (monosyllabic--trisyllabic)

This poem also contains a variety of rhythmic feet:

line 1--trochee (strong-weak)
line 2--trochee
line 3--amphimacer (strong-weak-strong)
line 4--trochee
line 5--amphibrach (weak-strong-weak)
line 6--trochee
line 7--spondee (strong-strong)
line 8--trochee (although it opens with a dactyl [strong-weak-weak] if "hovering" is not elided)
line 9--amphimacer
line 10-iamb (weak-strong)

There is a clever, subtle switch in rhythm in the last line. This is the only line written in iambic (or ascending) rhythm, and it leaves the reader with the final image of a butterfly--delicately rising and breaking free.

There are deeper connotations within this poem. The final two lines perhaps also reflect Rossetti's religious belief that the soul rises to live again in heaven.

C.M. Bowra's description of her poetic use of words and phrases seems especially applicable to this poem: "But each

word expresses exactly what she feels, and her sense of rhythm is so subtle that even in her darkest moments she can break into pure song."[10]

Rossetti's name is secure in the historical survey of children's poetry. Sing-Song was an extremely important contribution, for it looked back to traditional styles and ahead to progressive ones. Her moralistic verse that was so attractive to nineteenth century readers is not appealing to modern tastes, but her experimental poems (where she moved away from the didactic) are "a link with the artistic masterpieces in Songs of Innocence by William Blake and of those by Walter de la Mare and other modern authors whose poetry displays childlike qualities."[11]

NOTES

[1] Fredegond Shove in E.K. Charles's Christina Rossetti: Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982 (London: Associated Univ. Press, 1985) 103.

[2] Arthur Melville Clark in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (New Jersy: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 707.

[3] Ralph A. Bellas, Christina Rossetti (Boston: Twayne Pub., 1977) 25.

[4] Arthur Symons in Charles, 56.

[5] Charles 154.

[6] Henry Lanz, The Physical Basis of Rime (California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1931) 197.

[7] Ruskin in Bellas, 32.

[8] Bellas 68.

[9] A.J. Green-Armytage in Charles, 92.

[10] C.M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961) 264.

[11] Bellas 118.

EVE MERRIAM (1916-)

Poems by contemporary writers such as Eve Merriam explode with rich varieties of rhyme and form. She is one of the "practitioners of stylistic change whose work involves spontaneous improvisation of forms...she recognizes that children are not bound rigidly to neat, regular meter and rhyme...."[1] The concept of shaped verse is demonstrated in her poem "The Serpent's Hiss" where the curves of a snake are recreated:

sliding over stones
a silent spill

sleek as silk
iridescent

appearing and
disappearing

slipping soundless out of sunlight
to seek dark-wooded sanctuary

sequestered
surreptitious

slithering round
underground secretive roots

Narcissus

spun in upon
its sinuous self

ancient synonym for
sibylline

mystery

Merriam's use of onomatopoeia is obvious. The "s" sound appears thirty-five times. Less noticeable is her use

of the "i" vowel. It subtly works its way through the lines, creating an internal echo within the poem. Although end rhymes do not occur, there are internal rhymes:

> sliding: appearing: disappearing: slipping
> sound: round: underground
> sleek: seek
> in: sinuous: synonym

Parallel alliteration creates a sound pattern by the intricate weaving of the "s" with "l," "e," or "i"

> sliding: stones: silent: sleek: silk:
> iridescent: disappearing: slipping: soundless:
> seek: sequestered: slithering: secretive:
> narcissus: sinuous: self: sibylline

Merriam also uses suspended alliteration, reversing the consonant and vowel:

> sliding: silent: silk: slipping
> spun: upon
> synonym
> sequestered

Submerged alliteration occurs in "silent" :"iridescent" where the unaccented syllables rhyme. Consonance also is used:

> spun in upon
> sleek as silk
> dark-wooded: sequestered: round

In much of her poetry, Merriam makes frequent use of word repetition, but "The Serpent's Hiss" is unusual in that each word (even the articles and prepositions) appears only once.

However, in the following poem, anaphora is employed throughout, as most lines begin with either "from" or "to." This verse demonstrates Merriam's skill in using the stanzaic form to describe itself:

DESCENT

come down from the moon
from mountains
from towers
from treetops
from crags
from cliffs
from slopes
from hillocks
from hummocks
from mesas
from knolls
from plateaus
from cobbles
from rises
from ridges
from bushes
from hedges
to plains
to valleys
to trenches
to ditches
to marshes
to swamps
to fens
to ponds
to seaweed
to plankton
to coral
to sponge exuding breathing
breathing out bubbles
round as the moon

The closing line echoes the opening line:

come down from the moon...
round as the moon

Only one full rhyme occurs: "hillocks" : "hummocks," but a few near rhymes appear:

treetops: slopes
cobbles: knolls
ridges: hedges
trenches: ditches

Merriam again uses anaphora in her poem "The Wholly Family":

Baby's got a plastic bottle,
plastic pacifier to chew;
plastic pillows on the sofa,
plastic curtains frame the view;
plastic curlers do up Mama,
Mama's hairdo plastic, too.

Junior plays with plastic modules,
Sister pins on plastic bows;
plastic wallet made for Papa,
plastic credit cards in rows;
plastic ivy in the planter
greener than the real thing grows.

Plastic pumpkin for Thanksgiving,
plastic beach ball by the sea;
plastic snow at Christmastime,
plastic manger, star and tree;
plastic used so totally
keeps us germproof and dirt-free.

Praise of plastic thus we sing,
plastic over everything
keeps us cool and safe and dry;
it may not pain us much to die.

The word "plastic" appears eighteen times in this poem (twelve of the twenty-two lines begin with it), and this repetition hammers home the fact that the readers themselves are almost "wholly" buried in plastic.

In contrast to her free verse, Merriam wrote this poem within a deliberately controlled stanzaic pattern. "The Wholly Family" is a tight, rigid form that reflects the tight, plastic forms surrounding the subjects in their daily

lives. Each line is regulated by the tetrameter, and each verse is contained in six lines--until the last one. The poem abruptly stops with the thought of death and the consistent rhyme scheme changes from alternating-rhyme to couplets.

Merriam employs anaphora for a different reason in the following poem. She repeats the phrase "Is it..." to suggest the endless flow of questions an imaginative child might ask:

Is it robin o'clock?
Is it five after wing?
Is it quarter to leaf?
Is it nearly time for spring?

Is it grass to eleven?
Is it flower to eight?
Is it half-past snowflake?
Do we still have to wait?

Along with the basically anapestic rhythm, the echoing of the initial alliterative vowels creates a hurried, breathless effect throughout the poem. She also uses anaphora in the poem "Windshield Wiper," this time to demonstrate the actual rhythm of the wiper:

fog smog fog smog
tissue paper tissue paper
clear the blear clear the smear

fog more fog more
splat splat downpour

rubber scraper rubber scraper
overshoes macintosh
bumbershoot muddle on
slosh through slosh through

drying up drying up

sky lighter sky lighter
nearly clear nearly clear
clearing clearing veer
clear here clear

Although she has varied her choice of rhythmic foot from trochee (strong--weak; "fog more fog more") to dactyl (strong--weak--weak; "overshoes macintosh") to paean (strong--weak--weak--weak; "tissue paper tissue paper"), each phrase retains a built-in beat that matches the sound of a wiper. The stanzaic form itself illustrates the shape of the subject.

Merriam plays with words and symbols in her poetry. She shares with children "delight in the playful visual, aural, and intellectual concepts of shaped verse, concrete poetry, found poetry, and a host of collage and typographical verse forms."[2] "Showers, Clearing Later in the Day" is composed entirely of exclamation marks and asterisks. In the following verse entitled "Markings: The Question" Merriam matches up the shape of an object with the shape of a symbol:

?

A scythe
flailing away
at the wandering field
of why.

Who can cut down
the mysterious grain
that rises high again
with secrets unrevealed?

The physical appearance of a scythe resembles the question mark, and acoustically it contains an internal rhyme for the word "why."

The lines are subtly linked together by Merriam's full use of assonance, alliteration, and homoeoteleuton:

Initial vocalic alliteration

A scythe
flailing away
at the wandering field

Consonantal alliteration

can cut
wandering: why
mysterious: rises: secrets

Assonance

scythe: why
flailing away
rises high
grain: again (full rhyme)
field: unrevealed (full rhyme)

Homoeoteleuton

flailing: wandering

As a child, Merriam stated that she was "captivated by their [words] musicality, and by the fact that you could have alliteration...that you could hear a whole orchestra in your voice."[3] Like Edward Lear, Merriam excels in the invention of nonsense words. She created nonsense words, through a combination of alliteration and assonance, to simulate the sounds heard in a ping-pong game:

PING-PONG

Chitchat
wigwag

rickrack
zigzag

knickknack
gewgaw
riffraff
seesaw

crisscross
flip-flop
ding-dong
tiptop

singsong
mishmash
King Kong
bong.

"Landscape" is one of Merriam's best known poems:

What will you find at the edge of the world?
A footprint,
a feather,
desert sand swirled?
A tree of ice,
a rain of stars,
or a junkyard of cars?

What will there be at the rim of the earth?
A mollusc,
a mammal,
a new creature's birth?
Eternal sunrise,
immortal sleep,
or cars piled up in a rusty heap?

This is a particularly interesting poem to study because Merriam has documented her writing process. When she began composing it, she stated: "I felt I wanted a rhyme, a formal pattern to enclose the thought." Later, she sensed some of the words were strained and were only there "for the rhyme's sake." Her mind worked with "images and rhymes simultaneously." She had difficulty with "world" (trying "twirled, swirled, skirled") and even resorted to using the

identical rhyme "whirled."[4] She eventually chose "swirled" and discarded the lines:

a crater
a canyon
a new creature's birth

as being too alliterative--replacing them with:

a mollusc
a mammal
a new creature's birth.

In the conclusion of her article she stated that she was "still not altogether pleased; as 'desert sand swirled' is a little too sibilant to read aloud easily."

Eve Merriam's concerns about today's issues are reflected in her themes and subjects. "A keen observer of contemporary life, she brings to her poetry a fresh outlook on all phases of the modern world, its delights as well as absurdities."[5] She is extremely versatile and uses an astounding variety of rhymes and verse forms.

Merriam, like Blake, Lear, and Rossetti, is a creative experimenter who has "managed the technique of rhyme." The question of how children respond to rhyme will be addressed in the following chapter.

NOTES

[1] Judith Saltman, ed., The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985) 93.

[2] Saltman 93.

[3] Eve Merriam in The Place My Words Are Looking For: What Poets Say About and Through Their Work, ed. Paul B. Janeczko (New York: Bradbury Press, 1990) 65.

[4] Eve Merriam, Find a Poem (New York: Atheneum, 1970) 59-67.

[5] Myra Cohn Livingston, Climb Into the Bell Tower: Essays on Poetry (New York: Harper and Row, 1990) 89.

CONCLUSIONS

What are children's reasons for liking a poem? How do children react to rhyme?

Judith Saltman states that "A child's response to poetry is immediate; young children take delight in repetition, rhythm, and rhyme, and they seemingly respond with their very nerves, in confirmation of the widely held belief that poetry is the natural language of childhood."[1]

The poet, John Ciardi, commented that "The school system annually receives into its beginning classes an audience that overflows with the joy and immediacy of poetry. The same system annually graduates from its high schools a horde of adolescents who, with rare exceptions, are either wary of poetry or hostile to it."[2] David Booth supported this observation with the comment "For certain, something happens to many children, and the love of poetry as part of their life experience begins to wane. In adulthood, very, very, few people choose to read poems."[3] Earle Birney made the statement that "Virtually all human beings are born with the abilities needed to delight in and to make poetry, but unimaginative concepts of education can muffle and destroy these abilities."[4]

Children's "ability to delight in poetry" is reflected in their response to rhyme. Key studies in poetry preferences indicate that rhyme has been, and continues to be, identified by children as the most popular poetic

device. However, rhyme is a topic given relatively little attention in most critical studies on prosody. It is rarely discussed in any detail in the context of children's literature.

Sylvia Avegno conducted a study in 1956 with intermediate students and concluded that rhyme was a major factor for children liking a poem.[5] Her research also indicated there was only a slight difference in favour of modern poems. Louise Hofer researched the preferences of Sixth Graders, also in 1956, and discovered that her pupils preferred humorous, rhyming poems that contained a beat.[6]

An extensive study was undertaken by George Norvell and covered a span of twenty-five years. His findings were published in 1958, and indicated, among other points, that nonsense poems and limericks were extremely popular with children in grades four to six.[7]

Ann Terry's 1972 survey entitled Children's Poetry Preferences indicated that the three poetic elements most preferred by children were rhyme, rhythm, and sound. An interesting conclusion from this study was that the students showed an overwhelming preference for contemporary poetry, rather than traditional poetry.[8] This finding perhaps reflected the increased variety in poems available since Avegno's 1956 study.

Carol J. Fisher and Margaret A. Natarella conducted a study in 1979 where children indicated a strong preference for rhymed, metered poetry.[9]

Michael P. Ford published a study in 1987 that revealed most young children had a very limited knowledge of poetry concepts. The most common concept identified was that poetry had to have some degree of rhyming.[10]

A recent study was published by Philip M. Anderson in 1990. He examined the poetic conventions of diction, meter, and rhyme to find out if there were any discernible differences in students' responses to these conventions. Response levels at all grades (5, 7, 9, 11) showed a dislike for poetry that was lacking in rhyme or regular meter.[11] Anderson's research supports a pervasive finding in the studies of Avegno, Norvell, Terry, Fisher/Natarella, and Ford. These studies indicate that certain conventions of poetry such as rhyme and meter appear to positively influence preferences, and that these preferences have remained relatively unaltered over the years.

The choice of poem is a crucial factor in determining children's appreciation in poetry and, therefore, it is vital that their initial experiences with poetry be enjoyable. This is not to suggest that children should be introduced to verse containing only traditional rhyme. It is important to increase their repertoire of well-liked poetry and to extend their tastes. Children need to have as rich and wide an experience as possible. Robert MacNeil notes that "Unless we hear the language [of poetry] we will have no ear for it...a habit of listening to words has to be cultivated and it is best cultivated young."[12] Children's

ability to respond to good poetry, rhymed or unrhymed, should not be underestimated.

A poem is a shared event involving imagination, intellect, emotion, and memory.[13]

> "I," says the poem matter-of-factly,
> "I am a cloud,
> I am a tree.
>
> I am a city,
> I am the sea,
>
> I am a golden
> Mystery."
>
> *But,* adds the poem silently,
> *I cannot speak until you come.*
> *Reader, come, come with me.*[14]

Poetry occurs when the child and the words connect, as this poem by Eve Merriam suggests. But the poem cannot "speak" without the child's willingness to participate. It is important for those involved in the selection and sharing of children's poetry to be aware of the delight children have in the taste and sound of words.

Poetry offers the reader new insights that may illuminate an everyday event and initiate intense response. Ciardi states that children's sense of life is deepened by the experience of poetry--they become surer of their own emotions and wiser than they would have been without the experience. He also mentions that "No one need assume that technique defines a poem. Something in every good work of art defies definition. Yet close, specific discussion of the artist's technique is useful."[15]

This thesis, through "close, specific discussion of the artist's technique," makes evident the extraordinary flexibility and diversity of rhyme in children's poetry. The study also illustrates how observant and scrupulous a good poet is when successfully employing the rhyming device. A detailed analysis of the words selected by these writers reveals that each word has been chosen purposefully for its acoustical effect as well as for its meaning.

Analysis of the rhyme patterns of selected poems for children used in this research demonstrates that a number of changes have taken place over the past three centuries. Poetic boundaries have expanded considerably since "the first children's poet," Isaac Watts, wrote his Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children in 1715. Free verse and experimentation with all forms of poetry have gained in popularity with poets during the latter part of this century. Yet, in spite of the growth of free verse, the couplet and quatrain continue to be popular choices. Although the preferences for stressed line endings over unstressed line endings have remained remarkably consistent through the centuries, greater use of endings containing near rhymes has increased appreciably over endings with full rhymes.

The poets mentioned in this study have been important figures in the evolution of children's poetry. A close examination of their use of rhyme reveals the strong influence individual poets have had on subsequent writers.

Lear's profound impact on the world of nonsense verse influenced many poets, from Carroll to Merriam. Writers such as Blake and Rossetti have been prophetic voices in the development of children's poetry. Their experimentations with rhyme and meter helped shape the changes that have taken place in the twentieth century. Contemporary writers such as Merriam and Worth have produced poems that are as lyrical and full of music as any of the past. Creative experimentation in poetry that has taken place in the twentieth century has indeed "unfetter'd" rhyme. Present-day readers are accustomed to the sound of innovative rhymes.

Children's poetry offers variety, richness, and experimentation. This wealth of diversity deserves to be explored. Today's educator has the opportunity to select and share the finest from contemporary and traditional poetry. Ciardi encourages those involved with children and poetry to develop a deeper understanding of how poets manage this art. He states that "The purpose of analysis is not to destroy beauty but to identify its sources...if one cares about the nature of the beautiful object...study necessarily demands a look at the artists' management of their art."[16]

Rhyme is a dynamic in poetry that has great attraction for the child and is an integral part of poetry's appeal and pleasure. Fine shadings or dramatic turns in sound are clearer when the reader listens closely to the music of rhyme. Such reverberations can echo through a lifetime.

NOTES

[1] Judith Saltman, ed., The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985) 15.

[2] John Ciardi, Ciardi Himself (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1989) 125.

[3] David Booth and Bill Moore, Poems Please! (Ontario: Pembroke Pub. Ltd., 1988) 23.

[4] Earle Birney, The Cow Jumped Over the Moon: the Writing and Reading of Poetry (Minneapolis: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971) 3.

[5] Sylvia T. Avegno, "Intermediate-Grade Choices of Poetry," Elementary English Nov. 1956: XXXIII, 428-32.

[6] Louise B. Hofer, "What Do Sixth Graders Really Like in Poetry?" Elementary English Nov. 1956: XXXIII, 433-38.

[7] George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read (New York: Silver Burdett Co., 1958) 65.

[8] Ann Terry, Children's Poetry Preferences: A National Survey of Upper Elementary Grades (Illinois: University of Nebraska, 1972) 48, 51.

[9] Carol J. Fisher and Margaret A. Natarella, Poetry Preferences of Primary Graders (Georgia: University of Georgia, 1979) 6.

[10] Michael P. Ford, Young Children's Concepts and Attitudes About Poetry (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin, 1987) 37.

[11] Philip M. Anderson, Evaluative Response to Poetic Convention at Four Grade Levels (New York: Queens College of the City University, 1990) 16.

[12] Robert MacNeil, Wordstruck (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989) 187.

[13] John Ciardi, How Does a Poem Mean? (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) 6.

[14] Eve Merriam in Children's Literature in the Elementary School, ed. Charlotte Huck (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1987) 394.

[15] Ciardi xx.

[16] Ciardi xx.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Philip M. Evaluative Response to Poetic Convention at Four Grade Levels. Diss. New York: Queens College of the City University, 1990.

Avegno, T. Sylvia. "Intermediate-Grade Choices of Poetry." Elementary English XXXIII (Nov. 1956): 428-32.

Bailey, James. Toward a Statistical Analysis of English Verse. Lisse, Netherlands: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975.

Bellas, Ralph A. Christina Rossetti. Boston: Twayne Pub., 1977.

Birney, Earle. The Cow Jumped Over the Moon: the Writing and Reading of Poetry. Minneapolis: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971.

Booth, David and Bill Moore. Poems Please! Ontario: Pembroke Pub. Ltd., 1988.

Bottrall, Margaret, ed. William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience--a Casebook. London: MacMillan, 1970.

Bowra, C.M. The Romantic Imagination. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961.

Byrom, Thomas. Nonsense and Wonder: The Poems and Cartoons of Edward Lear. New York: Dutton, 1977.

Carroll Lewis. The Annotated Alice. Ed. Martin Gardner. New York: Bramhall House, 1960.

Charles, E.K. Christina Rossetti: Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982. London: Associated Univ. Press, 1985.

Ciardi, John. Ciardi Himself. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1989.

Ciardi, John. How Does a Poem Mean? Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

Daniel, Samuel. A Defence of Ryme. Ed. Arthur Colby Sprague. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1930.

Darton, F.J. Harvey. Children's Books in England. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982.

De la Mare, Walter. Lewis Carroll. London: Faber and Faber, 1932.

Fisher, Carol J. and Margaret A. Natarella. Poetry Preferences of Primary Graders. Diss. Georgia: University of Georgia, May, 1979.

Ford, Michael P. Young Children's Concepts and Attitudes About Poetry. Diss. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin, May, 1987.

Fraser, G.S. Metre, Rhyme and Free Verse. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1970.

Fraser, G.S. A Short History of English Poetry. Somerset: Open Books Ltd., 1981.

Hackleman, Wauneta, ed. The Study and Writing of Poetry: American Women Poets Discuss Their Craft. New York: Whitson Pub. Co., 1983.

Hall, Donald. The Oxford Book of Children's Verse in America. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985.

Hark, Ina Rae. Edward Lear. Boston: Twayne Pub., 1982.

Hollander, John. Vision and Resonance. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985.

Huck, Charlotte, et al., eds. Children's Literature in the Elementary School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1987.

Jackson, Holbrook. The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear. New York: Dover Pub., 1951.

Janeczko, Paul B. The Place My Words Are Looking For: What Poets Say About Their Work. New York: Bradbury Press, 1990.

Keynes, Geoffrey. Blake Studies. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Lanz, Henry. The Physical Basis of Rime. California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1931.

Larrick, Nancy, ed. Somebody Turned on a Tap in These Kids. New York: Delacorte Press, 1971.

Leader, Zachary. Reading Blake's Poems. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981.

Livingston, Myra Cohn. Climb Into the Bell Tower. Boston: Harper and Row, 1990.

MacNeil, Robert. Wordstruck. New York: Viking Penguin, 1989.

Nodelman, Perry, ed. Touchstones: Reflections on the Best in Children's Literature. West Lafayette: ChLA Pub., 1986.

Opie, Iona and Peter. The Oxford Book of Children's Verse. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975.

Pendlebury, B.J. The Art of the Rhyme. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.

Pickering, Samuel. John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth Century England. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1981.

Preminger, Alex, ed. The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics. New Jersy: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990.

Puttenham, George. The Arte of English Poesie--1589. Menston, England: Scolar Press Ltd., 1968.

Quintilian. The Institutio Oratoria. Trans. H.E. Butler. London: William Heinemann, 1921. Vol. III.

Reeves, James. Understanding Poetry. London: Heinemann, 1965.

Rosenfeld, Alvin, ed. William Blake. Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1969.

Saintsbury, George. Historical Manual of English Prosody. London: MacMillan and Co., 1910.

Saintsbury, George. Short History of English Literature. London: Macmillan and Co., 1913.

Saltman, Judith, ed. The Riverside Anthology of Children's Literature. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

Shipley, Joseph. In Praise of English. New York: Times Books, 1977.

Sidney, Sir Philip. The Defence of Poesie--1595. Menston, England: Scolar Press Ltd., 1968.

Small, Judy Jo. Full as Opera: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme. North Carolina: Univ. of North Carolina, 1986.

Smith, Lilian H. The Unreluctant Years. Chicago: American Library Association, 1953.

Stillman, Frances. The Poet's Manual and Rhyming Dictionary. London: Thames and Hudson, 1966.

Sutherland, Zena, et al., eds. Children and Books. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1981.

Terry, Ann. Children's Poetry Preferences. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974.

Townsend, John Rowe. Written for Children. Middlesex: Kestrel Books, 1974.

Untermeyer, Louis. The Forms of Poetry. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926.

Wells, Henry M. Introduction to Emily Dickinson. Chicago: Packard, 1947.

Wicksteed, Joseph H. Blake's Innocence and Experience. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1928.

Wimsatt, W.K. The Verbal Icon. Kentucky: Kentucky Univ. Press, 1954.

Witherspoon, Alexander M., ed. The College Survey of English Literature. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951.

Woods, Susanne. Natural Emphasis. San Marino: The Hungington Library, 1984.

POETRY BOOKS:

Arbuthnot, May Hill, ed. Time for Poetry. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968.

Blake, William. Songs of Innocence and Experience. Norwood Editions, 1977.

Blake, William. Songs of Innocence. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958.

Carroll, Lewis. Jabberwocky and Other Poems. London: Macmillan, 1980.

Ciardi, John. Mummy Took Cooking Lessons. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Ciardi, John. You read to me, I'll read to you. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1962.

De la Mare, Walter. Peacock Pie. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

Kennedy, X.J., ed. Knock at a Star. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982.

Lear, Edward. Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear. Ed. Holbrook Jackson. New York: Dover Pub., 1951.

Lear, Edward. The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear. Ed. John Vernon Lord. New York: Harmony Books, 1984.

McCord, David. One at a Time. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980.

Merriam, Eve. Blackberry Ink. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1985.

Merriam, Eve. Chortles. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1989.

Merriam, Eve. Find a Poem. New York: Atheneum, 1970.

Merriam, Eve. Fresh Paint. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1986.

Merriam, Eve. Out Loud. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Merriam, Eve. A Poem for a Pickle. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1989.

Milne, A.A. The World of Christopher Robin: Now We Are Six. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958.

Rossetti, Christina. Doves and Pomegranates. London: Bodley Head, 1969.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. A Child's Garden of Verses. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1985.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. Collected Poems. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971.

Worth, Valerie. all the small poems. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987.

APPENDIX: CHILDREN'S POETS

Arnold Adoff (1935-)
- Make a Circle, Keep Us In: Poems for a Good Day
- Big Sister Tells Me That I'm Black
- OUTside INside Poems
- All the Colors of the Race
- Eats: Poems
- I Am the Running Girl
- Black Is Brown Is Tan
- Tornado!
- Under the Early Morning Trees
- Friend Dog
- Birds
- The Cabbages Are Chasing Rabbits
- Sports Pages
- Flamboyan
- Greens

Conrad Aiken (1889-1973)
- Tom, Sue, and the Clock
- A Little Who's Zoo of Mild Animals
- Cats and Bats and Things with Wings

Joan Aiken (1924-)
- The Skin Spinners: Poems

Lucy Aiken (1781-1864)
- Poetry for Children: Consisting of Short Pieces to be Committed to Memory

Dorothy Aldis (1896-1966)
- All Together: A Child's Treasury of Verse
- Quick as a Wink
- Hello Day
- Is Anybody Hungry?

Richard Armour (1906-1989)
- All Sizes and Shapes of Monkeys and Apes
- A Dozen Dinosaurs
- Odd Old Mammals: Animals After the Dinosaurs

Harry Behn (1898-1973)
- The Golden Hive
- The Little Hill
- All Kinds of Time
- Windy Morning
- Crickets and Bullfrogs and Whispers of Thunder
- The Wizard in the Well
- What a Beautiful Noise
- The House Beyond the Meadows

Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

The Bad Child's Book of Beasts
More Beasts for Worse Children
Cautionary Tales for Children
New Cautionary Tales
A Moral Alphabet
Cautionary Verses
Selected Cautionary Verses

Rosemary Carr Benet (1898-1962) and Stephen Vincent Benet (1898-1943)
A Book of Americans

William Blake (1757-1827)
Songs of Innocence

N.M. Bodecker (1922-1988)
Let's Marry Said the Cherry and Other Nonsense Poems
Hurry, Hurry, Mary Dear! and Other Nonsense Poems
Snowman Sniffles, and Other Verse
A Person from Britain and Other Limericks
Pigeon Cubes and Other Verse

Leslie L. Brooke (1862-1940)
Crow's Garden
Johnny Crow's New Garden
Johnny Crow's Party
Ring o' Roses

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-)
Bronzeville Boys and Girls

Margaret Wise Brown (1910-1952)
Big Dog, Little Dog
The Little Island
Wait till the Moon Is Full
Nibble Nibble
The Dark Wood of the Golden Birds
A Child's Good Morning
Where Have You Been?

Robert Browning (1812-1889)
Pied Piper of Hamelin

John Bunyan (1628-1688)
A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhimes for Children

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) Poems from:
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Through the Looking Glass

Charles Causley (1917-)
Figgie Hobbin
Hill of the Fairy Calf

The Tail of the Trinosaur
Bring in the Holly
Early in the Morning: A Collection of New Poems
Here We Go Round the Round House
Jack the Treacle Eater and Other Poems
As I Went Down Zig Zag

Abraham Chear (died 1668)
A Looking-Glass for Children

John Ciardi (1916-1986)
The Man Who Sang the Sillies
You Read to Me, I'll Read to You
Fast and Slow
I Met a Man
The Reason for the Pelican
Monster Den or Look What Happened at My House and to It
Scrappy the Pup
Doodle Soup
The Hopeful Trout and Other Limericks
John J. Plenty and The Fiddler Dan
You Know Who
The King Who Saved Himself From Being Saved
Mommy Took Cooking Lessons

Lucille Clifton (1936-)
The Black BC's
Some of the Days of Everett Anderson
Good, Says Jerome
Everett Anderson's Year
Everett Anderson's Goodbye
Everett Anderson's Friend

Elizabeth Coatsworth (1893-1986)
The Sparrow Bush
Down Half the World
Night and the Cat
Mouse Chorus
The Peaceable Kingdom and Other Poems
The Children Come Running

Sara Coleridge (1802-1852)
Pretty Lessons in Verse for Good Children

Nathaniel Cotton (1705-1788)
Visions in Verse, for the Entertainment and Instruction of Younger Minds

Roald Dahl (1916-1990)
Revolting Rhymes
Dirty Beasts

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)
Songs of Childhood

Peacock Pie
Come Hither
Rhymes and Verses
A Child's Day
Stuff and Nonsense and So On
Down-Adown-Derry
Bells and Grass
Poems for Children
This Year, Next Year
The Voice

Beatrice Schenk de Regniers (1914-)
A Bunch of Poems and Verses
May I Bring a Friend?
Something Special
So Many Cats!
Circus
Was It a Good Trade?
Cats Cats Cats Cats Cats
It Does Not Say Meow, and Other Animal Riddle Rhymes
A Week in the Life of Best Friends
The Way I Feel, Sometimes

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
Letter to the World
Poems
Poems for Youth

Catherine Ann Dorset (1750-1817)
The Peacock 'At Home'

Barbara Juster Esbensen (1925-)
Words With Wrinkled Knees
Cold Stars and Fireflies: Poems of the Four Seasons

Norma Farber (1909-1984)
Small Wonders
Never Say Ugh to a Bug
As I Was Crossing Boston Common
How Does It Feel to be Old?
Did You Know It Was the Narwhale?
Where's Gomer?
A Ship in a Storm on the Way to Tarshish
How to Ride a Tiger

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)--numerous publications, including:
Nursery Rhymes of London Town
Tunes of a Penny Piper
The New Books of Days
Cherrystones
Then There Were Three
The Mulberry Bush
The Starry Floor

The Children's Bells
Kings and Queens
Poems for Children
Heroes and Heroines
Over the Garden Wall
Mrs. Malone
Silver-Sand and Snow
Morning Has Broken
Invitation to a Mouse
Something I Remember

Eugene Field (1850-1895)
Wynken, Blynken and Nod, and Other Child Verses

Rachel Field (1894-1942)
Poems
The Pointed People
Taxis and Toadstools
An Alphabet for Boys and Girls
Poems for Children
A Little Book of Days
A Circus Garland

Aileen Fisher (1906-)
Feathered Ones and Furry
Out in the Dark and Daylight
Cricket in a Thicket
I Like Weather
In One Door and Out the Other
In the Middle of the Night
In the Woods, in the Meadow, in the Sky
Like Nothing at All
Listen, Rabbit
Where Does Everyone Go?
Do Bears Have Mothers, Too?
Up the Windy Hill
We Went Looking
The Coffee-Pot Face
Sing Little Mouse
The House of a Mouse
Best Little House
Anybody Home?
Rabbits, Rabbits
In Summer

Paul Fleishman (1952-)
I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices
Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices

Siv Cedering Fox (1939-)
Blue Horse and Other Night Poems

Robert Froman (1917-)
Seeing Things: A Book of Poems

Street Poems

Robert Frost (1874-1963)
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening
You Come Too
Complete Poems
In the Clearing
A Swinger of Birches

Rose Amy Fyleman (1877-1957)
Fairies and Chimneys
The Fairy Green
The Fairy Flute
The Sunny Book
Joy Street Poems
Runabout Rhymes
Rhyme Book for Adam

Nikki Giovanni (1943-)
Spin a Soft Black Song: Poems for Children
Ego-Tripping and Other Poems for Young People
Vacation Time: Poems for Children

Robert Graves (1895-1985)
The Penny Fiddle: Poems for Children
Ann at Highwood Hall: Poems for Children

Kate Greenaway (1846-1901)
Marigold Garden
Under the Window

Eloise Greenfield (1929-)
Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems
Under the Honey Tree

Robert Heidbreder (1947-)
Don't Eat Spiders

Margaret Hillert (1920-)
Farther Than Far
I Like to Live in the City
Who Comes to Your House?
The Sleeptime Book
What Is It?
I'm Special...So Are You!
Doing Things
Fun Days
Rabbits and Rainbows

Russel Hoban (1925-)
Goodnight
The Pedaling Man, and Other Poems
Egg Thoughts and Other Frances Songs

Mary Ann Hoberman (1930-)
Bugs
A House Is a House for Me
Yellow Butter Purple Jelly Red Jam Black Bread
Hello and Good-By
Not Enough Beds for the Babies
All My Shoes Come in Two's

Heinrich Hoffman (1809-1894)
The English Struwwelpeter

Felice Holman (1919-)
At the Top of My Voice: and Other Poems
I Hear You Smiling and Other Poems
The Song in My Head and Other Poems

Lee Bennett Hopkins (1938-)
The Street's for Me
Faces and Places: Poems for You
When I Am All Alone: A Book of Poems
Charlie's World: A Book of Poems
Kim's Place and Other Poems

Mary Howitt (1799-1888)
Sketches of Natural History

Patricia Hubbell (1928-)
Catch Me a Wind

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)
Don't You Turn Back
Black Misery
Fields of Wonder
Selected Poems of Langston Hughes

Ted Hughes (1930-)
Season Songs
Moon-Bells and Other Poems
Under the North Star
Moon-Whales and Other Moon Poems
Meet My Folks!
Nessie, the Mannerless Monster
What Is Truth?: A Farmyard Fable for the Young

Peter Idley (died 1473?)
Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son

Randall Jarrell (1914-1965)
The Bat Poet

Bobbi Katz (1933-)
Bedtime Bear's Book of Bedtime Poems
Birthday Bear's Book of Birthday Poems

X.J. Kennedy (1929-)
One Winter Night in August and Other Nonsense Jingles
The Forgetful Wishing Well: Poems for Young People
The Phanton Ice Cream Man
Brats
Did Adam Name the Vinegarroon?
Ghastlies, Goops, and Pincushions: Nonsense Verse

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)
Rewards and Fairies
Kipling Stories and Poems Every Child Should Know
Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition

Karla Kuskin (1932-)
Dogs & Dragons Trees & Dreams: A Collection of Poems
Near the Window Tree: Poems and Notes
Alexander Soames, His Poems
Any Me I Want to Be
In the Middle of the Trees
The Rose on My Cake
Something Sleeping in the Hall
The Bear Who Saw the Spring
Night Again
Herbert Hated Being Small
Roar and More
James and the Rain
Square as a House
All Sizes of Noises
How Do You Get From Here to There?
Sand and Snow
In the Flaky Frosty Morning
A Boy Had a Mother Who Bought Him a Hat

Mary (1764-1847) and Charles (1775-1834) Lamb
Poetry for Children, entirely original

Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Book of Nonsense
More Nonsense
Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets
Laughable Lyrics

Dennis Lee (1939-)
Alligator Pie
Nicholas Knock and Other People: Poems
Garbage Delight
Jelly Belly
Wiggle to the Laundromat
Lizzy's Lion

Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931)
Johnny Appleseed, and Other Poems
Going-to-the-Stars
Collected Poems

Jean Little (1932-)
It's a Wonderful World (printed privately, 1947)
When the Pie Was Opened
Hey World, Here I Am!

Myra Cohn Livingston (1926-)
Whispers and Other Poems
Wide Awake and Other Poems
I'm Hiding
Happy Birthday!
The Moon and a Star and Other Poems
Celebrations
A Circle of Seasons
4-Way Stop and Other Poems
Lollygag of Limericks
The Malibu and Other Poems
Monkey Puzzle and Other Poems
A Sliver of Liver
A Song I Sang to You: A Selection of Poems
Sky Songs
The Way Things Are and Other Poems
A Crazy Flight and Other Poems
See What I Found
I'm Not Me
I'm Waiting!
Worlds I Know and Other Poems
Earth Songs
Sea Songs
Poems for Mother
Space Songs
Up in the Air
There Was a Place and Other Poems
Remembering and Other Poems
My Head Is Red and Other Riddle Rhymes

Arnold Lobel (1933-1987)
The Book of Pigericks: Pig Limericks
Martha, the Movie Mouse
The Ice-Cream Cone Coot and Other Rare Birds
The Man Who Took the Indoors Out
The Rose in My Garden
Whiskers and Rhymes
The Turnaround Wind

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)
Hiawatha
Evangeline
Paul Revere's Ride

John Lydgate (1370-1450)
Stans Puer ad Mensam

John Marchant (fl. 1751)

Puerilia; or, Amusements for the Young
Lusus Juveniles; or, Youth's Recreation

David McCord (1897-)
Far and Few, Rhymes of Never Was and Always Is
Take Sky
All Day Long
Every Time I Climb a Tree
For Me to Say
Pen, Paper, and Poem
Mr. Bidery's Spidery Garden
Away and Ago
The Star in the Pail
One at a Time

Eve Merriam (1916-)
It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme
There Is No Rhyme for Silver
Catch a Little Rhyme
Out Loud
Rainbow Writing
A Word or Two with You
Blackberry Ink
Finding a Poem
Fresh Paint
I Am a Man: Ode to Martin Luther King, Jr.
Independent Voices
Jamboree: Rhymes for All Times
A Poem for a Pickle
Funny Town
If Only I Could Tell You
Don't Think About a White Bear
A Sky Full of Poems
A Book of Wishes for You
Chortles: New and Selected Wordplay Poems

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)
Collected Poems

Thomas Miller (1807-1874)
Original Poems for My Children

Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956)
When We Were Very Young
Now We Are Six

Clarke Clement Moore (1779-1863)
A Visit from St. Nicholas (The Night Before Christmas)

Lilian Moore (1909-)
See My Lovely Poison Ivy
I Feel the Same Way
I Thought I Heard the City
Sam's Place: Poems from the Country

Go With the Poem
Something New Begins

Lillian Morrison (1917-)
Sprints and Distances
The Sidewalk Racer and Other Poems of Sports and Motion
Who Would Marry a Mineral?
Overheard in a Bubble Chamber
The Break Dance Kids
Rhythm Road: An Anthology of Poems to Move To

Ogden Nash (1902-1971)
The New Nutcracker Suite and Other Innocent Verses
Custard & Company

Thomas Newbery (fl. 1563)
A Booke in Englysh metre, of the great Marchaunt man called Dives Pragmataicus, very preaty for children

Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)
The Highwayman

Sean O'Huigin (1942-)
Atmosfear
The Ghost Horse of the Mounties
Scary Poems for Rotten Kids
Poe-Tree: A Simple Introduction to Experimental Poetry
Pickles, Street Dog of Windsor
Pickles and the Dog Napper

Mary O'Neill (1908-1990)
Hailstones and Halibut Bones: Adventures in Color
What Is That Sound!
Take a Number
Fingers Are Always Bringing Me News
Words Words Words

Jack Prelutsky (1940-)
The Queen of Eeene
Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep
The Baby Uggs Are Hatching
The Headless Horseman Rides Tonight
It's Halloween
It's Snowing! It's Snowing!
The New Kid on the Block
Rainy, Rainy Saturday
The Snopp on the Sidewalk and Other Poems
What I Did Last Summer
The Sheriff of Rottenshot
A Gopher in the Garden: And Other Animal Poems
Ride a Purple Pelican
Tyrannosaurus Was a Beast
The Mean Old Mean Hyena
Rolling Harvey Down the Hill

My Parents Think I'm Sleeping

James Reeves (1909-1978)
- The Blackbird in the Lilac: Verses
- The Wandering Moon
- The Story of Jackie Thimble
- Complete Poems for Children
- Prefabulous Animiles
- More Prefabulous Animiles
- Ragged Robin

Laura Richards (1850-1943)
- Tirra Lirra: Rhymes Old and New
- Jolly Jingles
- Sketches and Scraps
- Tell-Tale from Hill and Dale
- In My Nursery
- Sundown Songs
- The Hurdy-Gurdy
- The Piccolo
- I Have a Song to Sing to You
- Merry-Go-Round: New Rhymes and Old

James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916)
- Joyful Poems for Children
- Selected Poems
- The Best Loved Poems of James Whitcomb Riley
- The Complete Poetical Works of James Whitcomb Riley

Elizabeth Madox Roberts (1886-1941)
- Under the Tree

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)
- I Am! Says the Lamb
- Dirty Dinky and Other Creatures: Poems for Children
- The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke

William Roscoe (1753-1831)
- The Butterfly's Ball

Michael Rosen (1946-)
- You Can't Catch Me!
- Quick, Let's Get Out of Here
- Mind Your Own Business
- Wouldn't You Like to Know
- You Tell Me
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt
- A Spider Bought a Bicycle and Other Poems
- The Hypnotiser

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)
- Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book

Susan Russo (1947-)

The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky: Night Poems

Cynthia Rylant (1954-)
Waiting to Waltz: A Childhood

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)
Wind Song
Early Moon
The Sandburg Treasury
Rainbows Are Made
The People, Yes

Dr. Seuss (Theodore Seuss Geisel) (1904-1991)--numerous publications illustrated by the author, including:
And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street
The Cat in the Hat
Yertle the Turtle
Green Eggs and Ham
If I Ran the Zoo
Fox in Socks
The Sneetches and Other Stories

Frank Dempster Sherman (1860-1916)
Little-Folk Lyrics

Shel Silverstein (1932-)
Where the Sidewalk Ends
A Light in the Attic
Uncle Shelby's Zoo: Don't Bump the Glump!
Uncle Shelby's A Giraffe and a Half

Lois Simmie (1932-)
Auntie's Knitting a Baby
An Armadillo Is Not a Pillow
What Holds Up the Moon?

Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)
Conversations Introducing Poetry, for the Use of Children

William Jay Smith (1918-)
Mr. Smith and Other Nonsense
Laughing Time: Nonsense Poems
Ho For a Hat!
If I Had a Boat
Boy Blue's Book of Beasts
Puptents and Pebbles: A Nonsense ABC
Typewriter Town
What Did I See?
Around My Room and Other Poems

Kaye Starbird (1916-)
A Snail's a Failure Socially and Other Poems
Speaking of Cows and Other Poems

Don't Ever Cross a Crocodile
The Pheasant on Route Seven
The Covered Bridge House

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)
A Child's Garden of Verses

George Swede (1940-)
Tick Bird
Holes in my Cage

May Swenson (1927-)
Poems to Solve
More Poems to Solve
New and Selected Things Taking Place

Ann Taylor (1782-1866) and Jane Taylor (1783-1824)
Original Poems for Infant Minds
Rhymes for the Nursery

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)
Stars To-Night: Verses New and Old for Boys and Girls
Collected Poems

Celia Thaxter (1835-1894)
Poems
Poems for Children

Ernest Lawrence Thayer (1863-1940)
Casey at the Bat

Judith Thurman (1946-)
Flashlight and Other Poems
Putting My Coat On

Elizabeth Turner (1775?-1846)
The Daisy; or, Cautionary Stories in Verse
The Cowslip
The Pink
The Blue-Bell
The Crocus

John Updike (1932-)
A Child's Calendar

Judith Viorst (1931-)
If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Hymns for Children

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)
Leaves of Grass

Valerie Worth (1933-)
Small Poems
More Small Poems
Still More Small Poems
Small Poems Again
all the small poems

Jane Yolen (1939-)
Dinosaur Dance
Bird Watch
Best Witches
All in the Woodland Early: An ABC Book
How Beastly! A Menagerie of Nonsense Poems
Dragon Night and Other Lullabies
Ring of Earth: A Child's Book of Seasons
See This Little Line?
It All Depends
An Invitation to the Butterfly Ball: A Counting Rhyme

Charlotte Zolotow (1915-)
All That Sunlight
Some Things Go Together
River Winding
Wake Up and Goodnight
Everything Glistens and Everything Sings