***Lost in Lexicon* Chapters 9 – 11: Metered Poetry, Free Verse Poetry, and Prose**

While Ivan and Daphne are in the village of Measure, they discover a few interesting things:

1. Measure doesn’t seem to be missing any of its children;
2. There is “something funny about the way they talk” (97);
3. Mr. Prosaic, who speaks without using meter and rhyme helps outsiders interpret the poetry that most residents of Measure speak in;
4. Residents of Measure are unaffected by the strange weather that plagues many other villages in Lexicon (107).

In explaining his role in the village, Mr. Prosaic mentions that, like many other places in Lexicon, Measure is cut off from other parts of Lexicon. He observes that “people don’t want to leave their home villages nowadays” and that “prose and poetry [villages]…avoid one another as much as they can” (106). As we begin to study poetry and write in both metered and free verse forms, we’ll debate whether prose and poetry can ever truly mix. We may even use prose to draft some poems and use poetic techniques in our prose.

First things first – some definitions:

1. Prose: ordinary writing or speech, not in any particular meter or rhythm
2. Meter: the rhythmic elements of poetry; could refer to the number of lines in a particular form, number of syllables per line, and the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables per line
3. Iamb: a poetic foot consisting of two syllables per foot where the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed. Accept is a natural iamb. What other words are natural iambs?
4. Trimeter: a line of poetry consisting of three iambs = \_\_\_\_ syllables; first syllable unstressed and second syllable is stressed

**Example from "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke**

...We romped until the pans

Slid from the kitchen shelf;

My mother's countenance

Could not unfrown itself.

1. Tetrameter: a line of poetry consisting of four iambs = \_\_\_\_ syllables; first syllable unstressed and second syllable is stressed

**Example from “We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar**

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes;  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

1. Pentameter: a line of poetry consisting of \_\_\_\_ iambs = \_\_\_\_ syllables; first syllable unstressed and second syllable is stressed

Example from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your example:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. As for poetry, there’s no simple definition. The dictionary would have us believe that it is lines written in metrical and rhythmic form. Okay, this sounds good, except not all poems have a strict meter or rhythm. So, poetry is a bit harder to define. Here are some more “poetic” definitions of poetry. What’s yours?

**POETRY IS…**

**“…the best words in their best order.” – Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

**“…the shape of sound.” – Dylan Thomas**

**“…things that are true and are expressed in words that are beautiful.” -Dante**

**“…prose bewitched.” –Mina Loy**

**“…musical thought.” -Thomas Carlyle**

**“…life distilled.” –Gwendolyn Brooks**

**“…emotion put into measure.” –Thomas Hardy**

**“…a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget.” –Robert Frost**

**“…the clear expression of mixed feelings.” –W.H. Auden**

**“If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.” –Emily Dickinson**

**Now, write out your “poetic” definition of poetry:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On the following page, you will find Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky.” Read it aloud with your group at least three times. Then, using “Jabberwocky” as your model, answer the following in note form on your poem.

1. The meter and rhyme scheme of a ballad. Mark the syllables (unstressed and stressed) and rhyme scheme as we did with lines on the board.
2. The typical subject matter of a ballad.
3. The type of person a ballad features.

**JABBERWOCKY**

**Lewis Carroll**

(from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, 1872)

`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
  And the mome raths outgrabe.

  
"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
  The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
  The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
  Long time the manxome foe he sought --  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
  And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
  The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
  And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
  The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
  He went galumphing back.

"And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?  
  Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!'  
  He chortled in his joy.  
  
`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
  And the mome raths outgrabe.