



Introduction to the Art of Poetry

Mrs. Alison Grace Johansen
Fall Semester 2023–2024
M/Th 2 p.m. EST



ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

GRADES 8-12, including advanced 7th graders. This course is designed for students who want to delve deeper into poetry by learning to read closely, interpreting poems in a group setting, writing, looking at historical perspectives and poet case studies, and doing hands-on activities that will help students capture the beauty of this art form and hopefully draw from its well throughout their whole lives. The textbook's explications of each chapter's poems lay a strong foundation that will guide classes and promote understanding while fostering students' own creativity. Students should be able to read at or above an eighth-grade level, and should feel comfortable composing paragraphs and basic essays with confidence. Students should be able to listen, take notes, engage in group discussions, and possess basic computer skills that include browsing, accessing assignments, scanning, emailing, and managing files without significant help from parents. Please note: Students completing this course will earn a one-half elective high-school course credit.

COURSE SCHEDULE

ORIENTATION & CLASS SESSION DATES: Our student/parent orientation will be held on Thursday, August 29, 2023, at 2 p.m. EST. Our classes will be held on Mondays and Thursdays at 2 - 3:15 p.m. EST.

OFFICE HOURS: I am always available to meet with you upon request. Please email me to request a Zoom meeting in EST (ajohansen.scholéacademy@gmail.com).

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- *Introduction to the Art of Poetry*, which is available through Classical Academic Press (www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com)
- Two writing notebooks that include one writing journal and one poetry notebook
- Highlighters and pencils that will be used to annotate poems and take class notes



COURSE MAP

QUARTER 1

Chapter 1: Images

Students will begin their study of the eight poetic elements by learning how poetry begins with images. Images are concrete details that ignite the senses and are used to great effect in poetry. Students will see how the best poems lodge images deep in our minds, and how to use imagery in their own poems. The seven beloved poems explicated include Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Panther*, Robert Frost's *Dust of Snow*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Swing*.

Chapter 2: Metaphor

Students will study how metaphors are the basis of poetic thinking. Metaphors say one thing in terms of another, helping readers make leaps in imagination. Students will learn how to interpret and use these "word pictures" to make a connection between two different concrete images, or by using one concrete object to act as a vehicle to carry across abstract meaning like hope. Students will develop a key skill in interpreting poetry: how far to carry a metaphor and where it ends. Nine poems will be studied, including the poem *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* by William Butler Yeats, and Emily Dickinson's *Hope is the thing with feathers*.

Chapter 3: Symbols

Students will explore how symbols evoke a range of meaning beyond themselves, and how they're different from metaphor. They will witness how symbols hold history in them; they're images that many people over many areas and time periods agree represent certain ideas. The power of a symbol lies in its multiple suggestions. The poems in this anthology contain extended symbols, in which a poem's subject expands beyond its literal meaning. Students will learn how to sift through and interpret six poems that include Michael Collier's *Brave Sparrow* and Robert Frost's *Acquainted with the Night*.

Chapter 4: Words

Christine Perrin includes a "Learning to Read Closely" section in every chapter. Poets choose words for their meaning as well as their ability to create meaning through sound. Students will learn to pay close attention to every word and word combination when explicating the meaning of a poem, focusing on their denotation and connotation, word sounds, formal and informal diction, and word placement. Students will see how the meanings of four notable poems hinge on this naming, including *Pied Beauty* by Gerard Manley Hopkins and *The Dance* by William Carlos Williams.

QUARTER 2

Chapter 5: Sound and More Sound

Along with rhythm, sound creates the music of poetry. Poets choose words not only for their meaning, but also for the sounds and rhymes they make. Students will learn how to understand poems through their sounds; by saying them aloud, hearing them in the ear, and memorizing them. They also will practice creating their own poems by finding the right combination of words in light of their sound, shape, and pattern. The nine poems studied will include *God's Grandeur* by Gerard Manley Hopkins and *The Tiger* by William Blake.

Chapter 6: Rhythm

In this chapter, students will explicate six poems while considering how rhythm joins movement and sound in the way words work together. They will look at syllabic stresses in language, exploring how rhythm is the movement of speech. Students will explicate how and why rhythm is organized in meter, for example, for very specific purposes in these poems. Students will see, for example, that a brief deviation in the consistent meter of Emily Dickinson's poem, *A bird came down the walk*, reflects on the bird's movements in the poem — and, in effect, the reading of the poem.

Chapter 7: Shape

Poetry, as with all art, can't exist without shape or form. This shape represents the overall composition and organization of a poem. Students will look closely at six poems in light of the two fundamental elements of form — the line (or verse) and the stanza. Classes will explore how a poem's form, such as line length, can change the feeling and meaning of a poem. Students also will delve into how different stanza lengths can be used to great effect. For example, they will learn to understand how an unexpected, unnatural pause in a poem can convert a distinct feeling, such as suspense, that a poet wants to convey to a reader.

Chapter 8: Tone — Putting It All Together

This final chapter explores the attitude of a poem, or the way a poet says things. This unique texture and feeling becomes the tone of a poem, which projects a poet's feelings on a subject. Students will learn how to interpret the tone and emotion of six poems by evaluating all of their poetic elements as a whole. These interpretive skills of reading content closely and imaginatively, saying a poem aloud many times, and putting all the pieces together will help students become better readers with regard to all literature. Christine Perrin also provides a comprehensive checklist of key questions and suggestions that will help students synthesize a poem's elements to attain greater understanding, or poetic knowledge.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *Introduction to the Art of Poetry* course is the equivalent of a one-half elective high school credit. This fall semester course will study the first eight chapters of Christine Perrin's curriculum, covering over half of the 39 poems therein. (The remaining chapters will be studied in the *Formal History of Poetry* spring semester course.) The class will complete two chapters per month, supplemented by poet biographies, a glossary, and a detailed timeline in the back of the book. This curriculum dovetails nicely with rhetoric and writing units as well as literature classes as students learn how to interpret language and write both analytically and figuratively.

Students will study the elements of poetry throughout these first eight chapters, as they explore how to read a poem closely and absorb its beauty. Classes will begin with one of the chapter poems and then gravitate naturally to more poems in the chapter that help students understand the elements of poetry: images, metaphors, symbols, words, sounds, rhythms, shapes, and tones.

Students will learn how metaphors, for example, express something abstract in terms of something concrete, also known as word pictures. This is the way we understand God's world. In fact, if you look at science, you can see that we've been doing this all along to help us understand things that we can't see — like the atom. Moreover, metaphors are vivid and often can explain things better than a simple definition. They also can surprise us and help us view God's world in a fresh way.

In every chapter of the book, there is a "Learning to Read Closely" section that homes in on how to read and interpret language, the study of which can serve as a guide for students in all future studies. As we study each poem, we will reference the poet biographies and historical narrative in the back of the book. Students will grow in their consideration of imaginative comparisons while studying the poetic elements; focusing on *how* a piece of writing achieves its meaning, rather than simply looking at *what* it means.

Students will use the practical, hands-on activities outlined throughout the textbook to supplement class studies and assist in developing and writing their own poetry. Students will interact with the textbook and each other in several ways to experience the full reach of poetry. Throughout these activities, students will learn to interpret others' poems and write their own poems through a natural progression of steps:

1. **Read Aloud.** Poetry needs to be read aloud so, as Perrin says, you can feel it in your mouth and hear it in your ears. We will begin every class by reading poems aloud, at least twice. The sound, rhythm, and tone of a poem becomes interlaced with its meaning. Students also will be asked to record themselves saying poems. When speaking and then listening to ourselves speak, we can pick up subtle meanings that we may not have heard or understood otherwise.
2. **Memorization.** Memorizing poems helps students internalize and understand the work from the inside out, learning about and feeling the specific lines and joints of a poem. Reciting poems creates sounds and rhythm, internalizing the music of a poem. Students

will learn how to memorize with the aid of hand motions, songs, images, sounds, lines, and sentences. Students will be asked to memorize at least one poem from every chapter.

3. **Socratic Discussion.** People often interpret poems differently. Classes will revolve around the good, hearty discussion that leads to greater understanding. Students will be encouraged to share their interpretations with support from the poem and the history surrounding it. There will be healthy debate as students agree and disagree. The class will review how concrete images can inspire abstract interpretation — along with how to know where comparisons should begin and end. We will explore how to know when an interpretation is unsupported and therefore taken too far.
4. **Free-writing.** During some classes, students will be invited to “free write” for a short period of time. Free-writing involves writing down whatever comes to mind without pausing to mull it over. This practice can inspire great inspiration and creativity. Topics might include writing about a favorite image or symbol, or writing thoughts inspired by one of the poems in the textbook.
5. **Journal Work.** Students will keep a writer’s journal of their own poems and favorite poems. They also will have a poetry notebook that will include ideas for poems and the poetic elements; studies of different poets, images, and time periods; and a timeline of the poems and poets studied.
6. **Poetry Open House.** At the end of our semester together, students will be invited to share their favorite poems (both their own and/or another poet’s work) as a group. Families will be invited!
7. **Chapter and Vocabulary Quizzes.** Quizzes will be given at the end of every chapter. These quizzes will incorporate the vocabulary words listed in every chapter as well.
8. **Hands-On Activities.** Each chapter shares several in-class activities and homework assignments to help students work through and understand the poetic elements, along with the history surrounding the poems and their creators. Here are some of these activities:
 - Take five minutes to free write about images from one of the four seasons; then write a poem using this as an inspirational guide.
 - Describe an image that is meaningful in your life and use it in a poem.
 - Play a word association game as a class to inspire your writing on a certain theme.
 - Study an image (such as a bird) in a poem by learning about it from textbooks as well as in nature. Use your study as the foundation for a poem.
 - Memorize one of the chapter poems by incorporating hand motions or singing.
 - Look at a painting and make a poem to describe it by the sounds of words and their arrangement in lines.
 - Take one of your favorite poems and set it to music.
 - Draw the poem *I dwell in Possibility*. According to Emily Dickinson’s words, what would the house of poetry look like as a sketch?

Christine Perrin’s explications of the chapter poems lay a strong foundation that will guide classes and promote understanding while fostering students’ own creativity. Her invitations to delve deeper into poetry through historical perspectives, poet case studies, and hands-on activities will help students capture the beauty of this art form and hopefully draw from its well throughout their whole lives.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Students enrolling in Scholé Academy's Poetry Program will be expected to show development of Executive Function Skills throughout the semester. Executive Function Skills speak to a set of qualities and skill sets students can develop and hone to better approach the courses, lectures, readings and teachers they will face in their future academic coursework.

Scholé Academy commends several important skills that should be observed by students.

1. An Engaged Student: One who is willing to participate in class discussion, ask questions, supply answers, generate the internal dialogue necessary to determine if what's being discussed is important and necessary.

2. Note Taking: A student who, during and after being engaged with the class, has been trained to note important and relevant content in an organized fashion. Her notes would then be consulted, independently, for application in assignments and assessments.

3. Attention to Detail & Preparedness: These students are ones who consistently adhere to deadlines and submission requirements, adhere to style guides and codes, confirm technology is working prior to the start of class, are responsible for determining how to proceed after an absence, and are responsible for consulting the course syllabus and adjusting as the class proceeds, etc.

4. Apply Critiques: These students are ones who receive feedback to one of their submissions, and then are sure to apply that feedback to future assignments rather than repeating mistakes. These students also glean information from the live class critiques of fellow students and note mistakes to avoid by learning from others.

5. Initiative/Maturity: This student would hear the teacher comments and be able to assess whether or not the teacher was describing her work, and then take the initiative to schedule office hours with her teacher if necessary.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS IN ACTION

Students will follow the sequence of study contained in the first eight chapters of Christine Perrin's *The Art of Poetry*. The ultimate goal for the student will be to gain the poetic knowledge that is achieved with a comprehensive understanding of the elements of poetry studied in these eight chapters. As Perrin says, poems can become like old friends that we turn to during hard times, giving us comfort in their use of concrete and relatable images and comparisons to help us express abstract concepts like love and hope. Upper-level students are at a wonderful point in their lives to take on this more in-depth exploration and interpretation — and carry it with them once our study is done.

Students will study half of the 39 poems shared in the full text, memorizing at least one poem from every chapter. They will complete assignments and a quiz at the end of each chapter, and participate in regular classroom discussion of the chapter poems. Students will be asked to keep a writer's journal of their own poems and their favorite poems, along with

a poetry notebook that will include ideas for poems and the poetic elements; studies of different poets, images, and time periods; and a timeline of the poems and poets studied.

In this class, students will be expected to listen attentively, and participate actively in class discussions and practices. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and with all assigned material completed. The instructor will facilitate learning for the student, but the responsibility for staying up-to-date with classwork and assignments ultimately falls to the student.

STUDENT EVALUATION: ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend class regularly and on time, following the Scholé Academy standard, which allows a maximum of 3 absences for a one-semester class. Written work is due on the assigned deadline. Should a student be absent, work is still due on the assigned deadline, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. All assignments will be due in the appropriate Canvas assignment folder on their assigned due date. Students turning in late work will earn a late penalty. Students will submit their work by scanning their homework pages as a right-side up, single-file PDF and uploading it into the Schoology assignment window. *Photographs of completed assignments will not be accepted as they are incredibly difficult to read.*

STUDENT EVALUATION: GRADING

While pursuing the *Introduction to the Art of Poetry* through Scholé Academy will be “restful” (and a lot of fun), we also recognize the need to provide grades for students. It’s a delicate balance to achieve both restful learning and excellent academic performance. Earning a specific grade should not overshadow achievement goals for mastery of this discipline. The following grades will be assigned to your student’s level of achievement: *magna cum laude* (with great praise); *cum laude* (with praise); *satis* (sufficient, satisfactory) and *non satis* (not sufficient). Ideally, every average student working diligently should do praiseworthy work (*cum laude*). Those who excel beyond this expectation will be the *magna cum laude* students. Students who do adequate but not praiseworthy work will be designated *satis*. *Non satis* means lacking sufficiency or adequacy. Students and their parents will receive regular feedback in the form of a quarterly update. If students need to complete a high school transcript with a numeric grade, please notify me at the beginning of our course so I can provide that grade accordingly upon request at the end of the course.

STUDENT EVALUATION: MASTERY PORTRAIT

Students who are prepared to take this class are typically mid- to late teens, high-schoolers approaching young-adulthood. This developmental stage is an inspirational one, brimming with lots of new characteristics. It’s imperative, then, that this course not only will provide the academic components necessary to achieve mastery of the content of the class and skills associated with poetic knowledge, but also will help engage the student in development of their moral virtues. These three aspects of the course would comprise the learning target.

- At the completion of this course *cum laude* students will be able to explicate the 19 poems studied in the first eight chapters of *The Art of Poetry*, laying a strong foundation that will guide them and promote understanding while fostering their own poetic knowledge and creativity.
- Additionally, they will have attained the knowledge necessary to identify and interpret the poetic elements in those poems. Similarly, this study will lay the foundation for students to craft their own poems.
- Students will also be guided in the development of virtues. Poems may be the perfect way to read about and express what is true, good, and beautiful in the world our God has created. After all, poetry is the art of naming our inner and outer experiences by using figurative language in a way that hopefully connects with and uplifts others. Students will learn not only how poetry offers a meaningful way to praise God’s creations, but also how to interpret language, the study of which can serve as a guide for students in all future studies.

STUDENT EVALUATION: ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students will take quizzes privately at home. Students are on their honor to abide by [Scholé Academy’s Learning Philosophy](#) which assumes the personal cultivation of Student-Virtues described in the Student-Parent Handbook. Additionally, plagiarism is a serious offense. Proper citation of all sources is essential to the academic endeavor. Remember to cite any source if the information is not common knowledge or is an opinion obtained through any source. A plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade. Students should consult their chosen style manual for specific direction on obtaining, quoting, and paraphrasing sources.

THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM:

We will use the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom. The live, interactive nature of our courses is foundational; ***we require cameras to be on during all class sessions. If you are sick, I always recommend resting and asking for the recording; cameras must remain on during our classes.*** (Please see our Student Parent Handbook to review this rule and others.) Our virtual classroom will provide students with interactive audio and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video, and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide students with a link (via email) that will enable students to join the virtual classroom. Courses will be managed through our learning management system, Canvas. Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#) section of the Student Parent Handbook. Students will submit documents by scanning and uploading them to their personal computer or device, then attaching right-side up, single-file .PDFs. They will submit their work to the *Introduction to the Art of Poetry* Canvas assignment page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Alison Grace Johansen is teaching *Introduction to the Art of Poetry*, *Formal History of Poetry*, *Writing & Rhetoric Level 4*, and *Well-Ordered Language Level 1*. She earned her Juris Doctor from the Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle, Pa., and her Bachelor of Arts in political

science from the University of Richmond in Virginia. She worked as a journalist in Washington, D.C., for over 13 years before pursuing writing and editing in all forms of media. She hopes to help inspire her students to discover the many ways they can use their own words to express themselves with truth, goodness, and beauty. Alison lives in Virginia with her husband and two children. Her dedication to her faith and children influences every part of her life, from teaching Sunday school and writing a children's picture book, to exploring the beauty of God's world with her family. If they aren't birdwatching and enjoying a walk outside, you might find them reading together or playing their favorite instruments: the piano, flute, guitar, ukulele, and drums!

Please note: While this syllabus addresses details specific to this course, it is not extensive. Parents should also read the Student Parent Handbook located on scholacademy.com and be familiar with the ideas, policies, and procedures outlined therein.