

Narrative Poetry

Famous stories, such as the legend of Robin Hood and tales of King Arthur, began as narrative poems that spread by word of mouth before literacy became widespread. Some scholars suggest that the rhythm and rhyme of these poems served as memory aids and allowed them to be passed down with little change through many generations.

Narrative poetry:

1. Tells a story (character, setting, conflict) and remains focused on one theme
2. Can be about anything!
3. Is told from the point of view of the narrator.
4. Is dramatic.

How to write your own narrative poem:

1. Choose a topic

Pick a story that you really want to tell, even if you can't explain why. It could be something that happened to you (or a friend or loved one) or it could be something that's completely fictional. Maybe it's a memory that haunts you, a family legend, a startling dream, or a fantasy that you'd give anything to fulfill. Remember, the narrator of the poem doesn't have to be *you*; the narrator can be a character of your choice.

2. Make your voice heard

If the narrator in your poem is experiencing a particular emotion, make sure that comes through in the words and the tone that you choose. A poem can be a snarl, a shout, a whisper or a cry, so pack it with feeling.

3. Skip the build-up

Narrative poems don't waste words introducing characters or explaining the scene—most dive right in. Try starting your poem in the middle of the action scene to bring readers immediately into the heart of your story.

4. Sweat the small stuff

The best narrative poems use precise, descriptive words that bring out a story's details and paint a rich picture. Think of the five senses and use adjectives that help describe what the world looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels like as the story unfolds so readers will experience it just like you do. For instance, reading about "breakfast" or "a fall day" doesn't light the imagination, but reading about "soggy cornflakes and last night's cold coffee" or "dead leaves that crunch underfoot" does.

5. Repeat yourself

This is an especially good strategy if your narrative poem is long. Try repeating key words or phrases that are emotional or musical a few times throughout the poem.

Narrative Poem Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Ideas	Narrative poem tells a clear story with a beginning, middle and an end. The setting and conflict are clear.	The poem's story is a bit vague, missing one of the elements of a story (setting, conflict, characters)	The poem is missing more than one element of a story.	The poem is not a narrative.
Organization	Poem contains at least 4 stanzas, with at least 4 lines each. There is a clear rhyme scheme.	There is no clear rhyme scheme, but the length is appropriate.	Poem contains 3 stanzas with at least 4 lines each but does not have a rhyme scheme.	Poem is too short and does not contain a rhyme scheme.
Theme/Tone	The theme and tone of the poem is clear.	The theme and the tone of the poem are somewhat clear.	Either the theme or the tone is unclear.	Both the theme and the tone are unclear.
Use of Poetic Devices	The poem contains three or more poetic devices. All are used properly to add another level of meaning to the poem.	The poem contains two examples poetic devices. Most are used properly and add another level of meaning to the poem.	The poem contains just one example of poetic devices. It may not be properly used to add another level of meaning to the poem.	The poem does not contain any examples of poetic devices.
Use of Imagery	The poem contains three or more examples of imagery. These lines appeal to the 5 senses and successfully recreate the event for the reader, transporting him or her to the moment.	The poem contains two examples of imagery. Most work to recreate the event for the reader, transporting him or her to the moment.	The poem contains just one example of imagery. It may not successfully recreate the event for the reader. As a result, the poem fails to transport him or her to the moment.	The poem does not contain any imagery. Consequently, the poem does not recreate the event or transport the reader to the moment.
Conventions	There are no spelling or grammar mistakes.	There are 2-5 spelling or grammar mistakes.	There are 4-10 spelling or grammar mistakes.	There are more than 10 spelling or grammar mistakes.