**What is Poetry?**

What poets say about poetry

In a good poem the poet disappears. That's what the struggle with language is all about. The point is that in the finished poem you don't lay yourself bare. You create a strongbox of words. - Vicki Feaver

“Poetry never has any kindness at all. ” – Stevie Smith

“A poem is a construction of language that uses, tries to use everything that language can do to conjure to summon up something thats not quite knowable in any other way. ” – Adrienne Rich

“A great Poet must have … the ear of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desert; the eye of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the leaves that strew the forest; the Touch of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child. ” – Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“The art in which one being calls out to, whispers to, sings to, one other being, in the most intimate way. Our species needs it, perhaps, to survive ” – Sharon Olds

**What critics/journalists say about poetry**

*Poetry takes as its purview what is deeply felt and is essentially unsayable.*

Professor Meena Alexander, *World Literature Today* 2013

*A poem cannot be paraphrased.*

Mark Yakich, *The Atlantic* 2014

*Good poets reinvent the language, taking the given of ordinary speech and pushing it beyond itself.*

Jay Parini, *Some Necessary Angels* 1997

*The poem discovers a form that is beyond description or reduction. It is a unique play of symmetry and asymmetry, energy and balance. The poetic line is a means of performing energy and balance in writing. As in other kinds of performance or in editing a movie, the relation between pause and movement is essential to writing in lines.*

Robert Pinsky, *The Singing School*

*The word verse derives from the Latin and carries the meaning ‘to turn’ (as in versus). Poets need to understand what effects are created by the turning of the line at any of the various possible point […] I cannot say too many times how powerful the techniques of line length and line breaks are.*

Mary Oliver, *The Poetry Handbook* 1994