
Running head: THE GENRE OF POETRY

The genre of poetry: High school students’ expectations and interpretive operations
Abstract

This study examined high school students’ knowledge of the conventions and operations that theorists hypothesize are associated with the poetic genre. In the first step, eight 16- to 18-year-olds thought aloud as they read three prose texts and the identical wording presented visually as "pseudo-poems." In the second step, 26 students aged 16 to 18 read genuine poems in their original shape and also as prose. Poem-shaped texts triggered significantly more references to the conventions of polyvalence, metaphoric content, and a significant point; as well as more interpretive operations and longer reading times. Students also rated the poem-shaped texts as more enjoyable, challenging, emotionally engaging, and as eliciting more imagery. The expectations and textual features that influence readers’ aesthetic responses may be valuable guides when teaching poetry.
The genre of poetry: High school students’ expectations and interpretive operations

Very little is known about what high school students do when they read a poem. While poetic texts make up more than an eighth of the materials used in the average high school English classroom (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003), in the latest 1,110-page Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts (Flood, Lapp, Squire & Jensen, 2003), research on poetry received but one small reference. Yet poetry can be seen as the heart of the literary experience, for it is the form which most distinctly represents the specific character of literature.

Scholars writing in various fields have commented that when reading poetry, routine reading seems to be replaced by a more effortful interpretive experience. For instance, Jakobson (1987) wrote of poetry as a system not belonging to ordinary communication because the language of poetry calls attention to itself and makes the text "strange." Bruner (1986) describes how literary texts rescue the world from obviousness, and "fill it with gaps that call upon the reader, in Barthes’ sense to become a writer, a composer of virtual text in response to the actual" (p. 24). In the same vein, Miall and Kuiken’s (1999) notion of literariness is that stylistic variations defamiliarize conventional concepts, and this triggers reinterpretive transformations of the conventional referents.

For high school students, what is this interpretive experience? The few studies that have examined various readers’ interpretive processes as they read poetry, (e.g., Eva-Wood, 2004a; Kintgen, 1983; 1989; Peskin, 1998; Shimron, 1980; Silkey & Purves, 1973; Viehoff, 1986) have been directed mostly at university-age students. At the high school level, Harker (1994) examined the thinking of above-average Grade 10 students as they read two poems. He found that most of the students provided essentially prose translations of the literal meanings of the two poems, with few readers going beyond the “plain sense” to imaginative evocations of possible meanings.

The primary aims of this study are to examine the expectations that older high school students have developed when presented with a poem, and the kinds of textual features that influence their aesthetic responses to poetry. Using “think aloud” methodology, it is hoped that this research will provide teachers with insight into the usually hidden anticipations of students as they identify a text as a poem, as well as a clearer understanding of those aspects of the text which engender students’ close attention in their search for meaning.

To begin with a Conventionalist theoretical stance, literary theorists have proposed that this interpretive experience is animated by a special set of expectations or conventions which the reader has assimilated and which form the foundation of literary education (Cueller, 1994; Fish, 1980; Schmidt, 1989). The reading of each poem facilitates the study of the following one, and students must, therefore, have substantial experience in these conventions. The most basic convention or expectation hypothesized is that of “polyvalence” (Groeben & Schreier, 1998; Schmidt, 1989). Poetry often tends to compress ideas and pushes the reader to look for more meaning than may be apparent in the mere lexical definitions of the words (Groeben & Schreier, 1998). This convention allows for different representations of a literary text by different readers, or even the same reader at different times, and is distinct from the monovalence convention in non-literary reading where the author attempts to write with such clarity that the text is represented in the same way by different readers. A second important convention, somewhat related to the polyvalence convention but more specific, is the expectation of “metaphoric content.” The reader, expecting the poem to be resistant to the immediately obvious, examines
whether parts should be taken as metaphorical. As Northrop Fry (1978) pointed out, metaphor is the basis of poetic expression. A third convention is the rule of “significance” according to which poems are expected to express a significant attitude to some issue or problem that is of concern to people and/or their relation to the universe (Culler, 1976; 1994). This expectation is that even a brief or seemingly banal poem must have a point, so the reader searches for ways to grant the poem significance and importance. Finally, Culler (1976) proposed a convention that he called “thematic unity”: An explanation that succeeds in relating all the parts of the poem to each other to create a unified, coherent whole is preferable to separate unrelated explanations.

The special conventions or expectations for reading poetry guide us to see the language in new ways and to subject the text to a different set of interpretive operations. Interpretive operations or strategies can be described in terms of the reader attending not only to what is being said, but how the author is saying it. What the text says is "its plain, overt meaning, as in a set of ordinary intelligible English sentences" (Richards, 1929, p. 12); how it says it involves stylistic devices that contribute to the meaning of the text by integrating style with subject matter (Cupchik, Leonard, Axelrad & Kalin, 1998). As Langer (1995) points out, students must be guided towards objectifying their literary reading experience and the text itself, attending to the poet’s craft, the structure of the text, the literary elements and stylistic devices. An example of an interpretive operation is the reader examining the text for binary opposition or contrasts, that is, words or sentences that are semantically or thematically opposed to each other (Peskin, 1998; Steinley, 1982). Meaning is often at the locus of these juxtapositions. One of the questions asked in the current research is whether students in their final years of high school have, indeed, assimilated these conventional expectations and interpretive operations? Culler hypothesized that if one provided readers with even a simple prose sentence shaped as a poem, the reader will apply general literary conventions as well as a set of interpretive operations that would not be applied if the text was identified as a non literary prose passage. The study will test this hypothesis with high school students by providing them with pairs of texts with identical wording, but one in the form of prose, and the other presented visually in the shape of a poem.

Conventions are tacit agreements which regulate social behaviour (Zwaan, 1993). From a socio-cultural theoretical stance we perceive our world and texts in terms of our representational systems which are shaped by our social, cultural or political traditions (Bruner, 1996; Olson, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky the social interlocutor is the mediator between the student and the cultural sign systems developed as part of our social history. In the teaching of poetry the English teacher will most often be students’ primary guide in developing poetic literacy through the school years. This is usually not by directly teaching the expectations and operations involved in poetry but by means of a mediated learning experience (Feuerstein, 1980) whereby the situation is structured so that students are making connections and developing patterns of expectations themselves.

While a socio-cultural perspective emphasizes interpretation as grounded in social interaction, a new theoretical approach to literary study, Cognitive Poetics or Cognitive Stylistics (Gavins & Steen, 2003; Semino & Culpeper, 2002; Stockwell, 2002), takes models from cognitive science as theoretical frameworks. Cognitive science combines conceptual tools from psychology, linguistics, computer science, philosophy, and neurobiology to explain the workings of the human mind. While many literary theorists believe that literature is a special, albeit subjective and unguided venture (Adler & Gross, 2002), cognitive theorists propose that literature and interpretation are part of the human experience, grounded in our general cognitive capacities (Turner 1996; 2001; Turner & Fauconnier, 2002). Of relevance to the current study, cognitive poetics draws on theories about schema (Rumelhart, 1980), prototypes and basic level
categories (Rosch, 1978); the metaphoric structuring of everyday thought (Lakoff & Turner, 1989); as well as cognitive research on attention in relation to figures and grounds (Stockwell, 2002). Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Schema theory was one of the first applications of cognitive science to literature. A schema is a structured piece of background knowledge, which, once activated, directs further processing by generating expectations. For instance, through literary education, students acquire a schema related to the genre of poetry as a whole. The conventions, such as the “rule of significance,” become assimilated to the poetry schema, and thereby, provide operating instructions and a powerful directive impact (Tsur, 2002).

Categorization, both perceptual and conceptual, is a basic human process and certain principles of categorization are common across all the varied and numerous types of categories that humans construct. Rosch (1978) provided evidence that in all taxonomies (e.g. sonnets and haiku are specialized parts of the category of poetry which is part of the more general category of textual genres) there is one level of abstraction, the cognitively basic level towards the middle of the taxonomy around which most information is organized. In the taxonomy of textual genres, the basic level categories would be poetry, prose, plays etc. (Stockwell, 2002). Basic level categories are the first level understood by children and their overall shape is quickly identified as a single mental image (Lakoff, 1987). Furthermore, Rosch showed that categories have best examples or “prototypes,” for instance, the prototypical image of a poem is more likely to be a short lyric with short lines than a multi-page narrative poem.

Important work in the cognitive sciences suggests that “most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). Metaphor is a fundamental mental capacity enabling humans to understand the world and themselves by mapping conceptual knowledge from one domain onto another (Gibbs, 1994). Examples of such conceptual metaphors are LIFE AS A JOURNEY (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) or IDEAS ARE OBJECTS as in “the ideas were hard to grasp” or “slipped through my fingers.” In the latter example the abstract domain of understanding ideas is mapped onto a concrete and tactile domain for easier comprehension. Based on theories about how we integrate information in the brain (Edelman 1987; Tononi, Edelman and Sporns, 1998), evidence in support of such cross-domain mapping is being provided by recent research on the neurocognitive mechanisms by means of which meaning comes to exist (e.g. Rohrer, 2005). While the focus of research on metaphors has been on conceptual metaphors in everyday usage, Lakoff and Turner (1989) propose that understanding these conventional metaphors is the basis for understanding poetic metaphor. Poets appeal to the ordinary metaphors that “we live by” in order to then take us beyond them when reading literature.

Finally, cognitive theories on attention, figure and ground underpin the literary notion of foregrounding by which certain aspects of a literary text are perceived as more salient, thereby claiming conscious attention. A creative literary expression, such as “drowning in the moan of the oxen” (Tsur, 2002) is experienced as foregrounded against a background of less extraordinary language which is processed more automatically. When encountering a creative literary expression the reader experiences a moment of defamiliarization (Miall, 2006) which may result in a distinctive feeling, and may then guide a search for meaning. There is evidence that a minute or two later a new understanding may emerge (Miall and Kuiken, 2001) and the psychological evidence for this defamiliarization-reconceptualization cycle seems to have growing support from neurocognitive studies (Miall, 2006).

While the primary aim of the present study is to draw on various theoretical perspectives in examining how older high school students experience poetic versus prose texts, a secondary aim
is that it may throw some light on the bitter theoretical debate ignited by Fish's (1980) 
impromptu exercise in which he told his students that a short list of scholars’ names left on the 
blackboard was a religious poem. On the basis of the ensuing class discussion (for instance, the 
name "Jacobs" was explicature as a reference to Jacob's ladder) he concluded that “(i)t is not that 
the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention, but that the paying of a 
certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities” (Fish, 1980, p. 26). While 
Culler (1976) would agree with Fish that it is "interpretive communities" with their shared 
conventions that produce meanings, that is, the reader creatively adds meaning and is responsible 
for the materialization of poetic characteristics, Scholes (1985) argued for the Russian formalist 
thetical perspective that poetic interpretation is driven by the intrinsic features of the text 
itself, a viewpoint which highlights the notion of foregrounding. Previous studies which 
attempted to provide empirical support for one side or another (Fishelov, 1998; Hoffstaedter, 
1987; 1988; Hanauer, 1998a; 1998b; 2001) relied on indirect processes such as recall measures 
to make inferences about reading operations. The present research will address the controversy 
by examining readers’ actual processing of texts using think-aloud methodology (Ericsson & 
Simon, 1993; Eriksson & Charness, 1994; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Zwaan, 1993). This 
methodology will allow a more fine-grained analysis of the interpretive processes involved. 

Finally, the present research will investigate students’ personal response to poetry. There is 
often a concern that high school students do not like poetry, and the study will examine students’ 
ratings of the identically worded texts in the shape of either prose or a poem. 

To summarize, the four major research questions are as follows: By the time students 
approach the end of their high school years,

1. Will they have assimilated the four major literary conventions described above: 
Polyvalence, or the possibility of multiple meanings; the expectation that poetry has Metaphoric 
content; Significance, the expectation that a point is being made; and Thematic unity, the 
expectation that all parts of the poem should relate to the point in some way?

2. Will they make use of interpretive operations, such as binary oppositions, and structural 
and linguistic devices as cues to meaning? In other words, will high school students add a layer 
of meaning through attention to literary form that would not happen if the text was shaped as 
prose?

3. Will even an ordinary sentence visually shaped as a poem trigger evidence of 
conventions and interpretive operations as hypothesized by Culler (1994)? This would also 
provide support for Fish’s claim that a particular kind of attention to the text, results in “the 
emergence of poetic qualities.”

4. Will their personal response to the texts be different when the text is in the visual shape 
of a poem or prose?

Two steps to the study will be reported below: In the first step there were 8 subjects and 
made-up texts. The second included poems by well respected poets, and with 26 subjects, 
enabled statistical analysis.

Step 1
Method

Participants

Based on Harker’s (1994) results, where even above-average high school students mostly 
paraphrased when thinking aloud about poetry, it was initially decided to test students who 
attended a school in a middle- to upper-middle class neighborhood. The school was publicly 
funded and in a large Canadian city. There were 8 participants (6 males and 2 females) aged 
between 16 and 18 years. The high male to female ratio was because a male student at the school
helped with recruitment. He was asked to approach students who were in the middle range in English, that is, students who were neither “struggling” nor “high flyers” (as he put it). Testing was carried out individually. Participants were not remunerated for their involvement.

Materials and procedure

The materials consisted of three pairs of texts composed by the researchers. For example "Drug Addict" was a short text presented in its prose form as a sentence:

Yesterday a drug addict was found in the dark shadows behind the beach homes.

In its poetic form it was presented in the form of a prototypical poem:

* Yesterday a drug addict
  was found in the
  dark shadows
  behind the beach homes.

The remaining two sets of matching texts can be seen in Appendix A. Participants were instructed to think aloud as in Ericsson and Simon (1993). When the participants appeared to have completed each reading, the researcher used the following probes, “What is your overall sense of this text?” and "What does the text mean to you?"

As poetry reading is personal and idiosyncratic, to rule out the confound of content, subjects read both the prose and poetic version of the same text. To control for order effects the texts were presented in counterbalanced order so that half of the subjects thought aloud as they read all three prose versions of the matching texts first, and half read all the poetic versions first. Passages were presented individually, one to a page and referred to only as “texts.”

Student readings of each text were timed. As a measure of their personal response to the passages, after they had completed their interpretations of all six texts they were told, "Glance through each text again and rate your enjoyment of the reading on a scale from 10, the highest, down to 1 and tell me why you gave it that rating."

Analysis

As the aim of this study was to examine evidence of the conventions or expectations stated above, as well as any interpretive operations, participants’ think-aloud protocols as well as their justifications of their ratings were examined for comments clearly demonstrating that the student was thinking about a particular convention or operation. The interpretive operations, based on Peskin (1998), were broadly defined as contrast (binary oppositions), structure, language, and rhythm as cues to meaning. Coding involved imposing these predetermined categories on the protocols and observing the fit (Chi, 1997). Interrater reliabilities were established on a 37.5 % subset of protocols with an 82% agreement rating. All disagreements were resolved by mutual discussion and the remaining protocols were examined and, when necessary, recoded according to these agreed upon guidelines.

Results and Discussion

Conventions

In operationalizing the conventions for coding purposes, we required that the references needed to be explicit. Such explicit references were evident for the first three hypothesized conventions, but there were no such comments for the fourth one, that is, on the need for thematic unity. This may have been because the requirement that the matching texts were credible as both poetry and prose, necessitated the choice of simple, straightforward language; and, therefore, creating some degree of coherence may have been too automatic for conscious articulation. Because students may have had this expectation but did not allude to it either in
prose or poetic form, only the results relating to the first three conventions will be discussed below. Most illustrative extracts will be chosen from the “Drug Addict” text in order to facilitate ease of comprehension. Actual lines from the texts are in italics.

**Polyvalence**

One of the prescriptive implications of the prose writer, with the exception of some literary prose, is the monovalence convention (Groeben & Schreier, 1998): As in oral communication the reader should not look for multi-faceted explanations unless straightforward ones will not do (Grice, 1975). On the other hand, one of the prescriptive implications of “literary” texts, particularly poetry, is that the text is polyinterpretable and that the poetry reader may look for more complex explanations even when the poem appears to be simple. Poetry often tends to compress ideas, thus pushing the reader to look for more meaning than may be apparent in the mere lexical definitions of the words (Groeben & Schreier, 1998). On the same theme, Langer (1995) describes acts of literary understanding as “exploring horizons of possibilities.” Protocols were therefore examined for evidence of subjects acknowledging and/or exploring that poetry may support more than one meaning.

Comments were coded as showing a general awareness of multiple possibilities of meaning when they referred to the text as meaning more than what is simply written. For instance, subjects often spoke about words having “more” meanings than the words had in the prose form, and there were frequent references to “deeper” or “greater” meaning. One subject commented, “In poetic form each word they chose has to have a lot of meaning.” Another said, “This may mean more than what it’s saying” and a third said, “I’m assuming that I am supposed to interpret for myself who the drug addict was.” These verbalizations illustrate a conscious search for multiple interpretive possibilities. Subjects were demonstrating their awareness that the poetic genre demands reinterpretable transformations: Poetry requires that the reader creatively add meaning to the text, for what is meant is likely to be more than what is said. As can be seen in Table 1, across all three poetic versions there was a total of 7 comments showing an awareness of polyvalence, but not a single one when reading the prose versions.

**Metaphoric content**

The polyvalence convention was operationalized as a general awareness that more than one interpretation is possible, but a number of subjects reported a more specific interpretive activity of identifying symbolic language and translating the meaning of symbols (Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995). For instance, one subject thought aloud while reading the poetic version of "Drug Addict": “So the other day a drug addict was found in the dark shadows, dark shadows possibly meaning darkness, which could be symbolic of evil, evil or madness.” And another subject explicitly juxtaposed the concrete “literal” meaning with a more abstract “analogical” interpretation:

* A drug addict was found in the dark shadows behind the beach homes. Simply speaking in a literal sense, (it's) about drug addicts...Or you could take it in a more analogical sense as in...any suffering person, any person going through tribulations found in dark shadows...bad times, suffering, bad situations.

Bruner comments specifically on how poetry “substitutes metaphors for both given and new, leaving it somewhat ambiguous what they are substitutes for” (1986, p. 24). And Table 1 shows that there was a total of 9 instances of subjects referring to metaphorical content when reading the three poetic texts versus only 5 instances when reading the matching prose forms.

**Significance**

As described in the introduction, one of the primary conventions when reading poetry is the expectation that the poem, even if seemingly banal, is attempting to make a “point” or say
something significant about man’s relation to the universe (Culler, 1976; 1994). For instance, one subject explicitly used the word “significance” as she read: “Yesterday a drug addict, I’m also trying to think what kind of significance this has to...any matter that is unrelated to drug addicts.” This demonstrates a clear understanding that a poem often refers to something beyond itself. Another participant (reading the poetic version after the prose version) explicitly refers to a “point”: “I almost like when it’s put this way, in different lines...more of a poem...kinda makes the point bolder.” For an elaboration to be counted in this category it did not need to state what the "point" or "significance" actually was, but merely reflect an expectation that a point was being made. As can be seen in Table 1, across all three poetic versions there was a total of 11 comments showing an awareness that the text was meant to say something significant, but only 2 such comments when subjects read the prose versions.

**Interpretive operations**

When reading the poem-shaped versions of the texts, subjects' comments often demonstrated an appreciation of how the textual form or stylistic devices add a layer of meaning to the content. Participants' references to these stylistic elements were examined and comments were divided into three broad categories: Contrast, structure and language as cues to meaning. There were no comments about rhythm.

**Contrast**

Peskin (1998) found that English Ph.D. students often look for the meaning of a poem at the locus of the binary oppositions, the juxtapositions or dialectic. Some of the high school students in the current study demonstrated an awareness of such contrasts, explicitly commenting on, for instance, “…the choice of…nice big beach homes and then the contrast of dark shadows to beach homes.” One subject observed the juxtaposition and then further developed this observation to try and explicate the point that the author was trying to make:

*Dark shadows behind the beach homes*, it seems like on the appearance it’s okay, but underneath the appearance it’s more, there’s some hidden things, like it’s dark, and evil I guess, or mysterious, and there is always two sides to one thing.”

Another student noted:

It’s maybe a commentary on the rich versus the poor. The beach homes would be sort of, you know, related to the wealthy. It seems like these rich people with their beach homes sort of indirectly caused the addiction of this drug addict.

There were 5 such comments on using contrast as a cue to meaning when reading the poetic versions but none when reading the same words in prose format (see Table 1).

**Structure**

The physical shape of the poem appeared to play a role in subjects’ meaning making. Their comments on structure were coded as either general comments on how the physical shape of the poem influenced their engagement, or specific comments about a particular structural element. Examples of general comments were remarks about how the shape of the poems made the texts seem more “intriguing,” “interesting,” “important,” “effective” or “cool.” Or comments about how the short lines of a poem influence one’s reading process, in that it makes one “pause more” and “helps you imagine it.”

Comments were coded as specific if they stated how an effect was achieved through a particular structural element. For instance, when reading "Drug Addict," one subject commented on the stylistic device of "dark shadows" on its own line, “It really emphasizes that it is in the dark and it’s...hiding from the rest of the world.” And another participant, also commenting on how the line “dark shadows” is separated from the line about the beach homes, elaborated on
how “ugliness” and drug addicts are physically “separated” from people in luxurious beach homes.

As can be seen in Table 1, when reading or talking about the three poems, there was a total of 7 general comments about structure and 11 comments about specific structural effects.

**Language**

Some of the subjects commented on the effectiveness of the language used, for instance alliteration in the "Soldier" text (albeit unintended by the writer/researchers): "Words seem to flow very nicely. It’s very subtle in alliteration – soldier, soaked, and fled from field." And later he commented further on the effectiveness of the language, "I like the subtlety of the soaked field as opposed to saying the bloody field, kinda allows the imagination to run free." This extract exemplifies Miall’s (2006) defamiliarization-reconceptualization theory described in the introduction. The more creative and, therefore, foregrounded language, “soaked field,” is attended to and enjoyed, and the student verbalizes that he can think about it in novel ways (with his imagination running free), although he then leaves it hanging, not taking the minute or two that Miall argues is necessary to reconceptualize it to enrich meaning-making.

As Table 1 shows, there were 9 comments about the textual language across the three poetic versions and only 3 such comments when reading the prose versions.

If one examines the totals of all three categories of interpretive operations, that is, contrast, structure and language, across all three texts, there were 32 instances of such operations when reading the poetic versions and only 3 while reading the prose version. For Umberto Eco (1990), poetic texts “aim at producing two model readers, a first level, or a naïve one, supposed to understand semantically what the text says, and a second level, or critical one, supposed to appreciate the way in which the text says so” (p. 55). When students in the present study were reading the prose versions, only the naïve reading was evident. However, when presented with the poems, as the above results demonstrate, the high school students focused not only on meaning but searched for how aesthetic form adds a layer to meaning.

Finally, although this was not one of the predetermined categories, it was observed that there were three explicit references to the writer or poet when students were reading the poetic versions and no such comments when reading the prose versions. For instance, when reading the "Soldier" poem, a participant thought aloud, "Why did the author decide to choose to make it morning?" Although these numbers were few, the same trend had appeared in pilot testing and will be discussed again in step 2. Post-modern literary theorists have “striven long and hard to free ‘meaning,’ or at least interpretation, from the bonds of author intentions” (Shanahan, 1992, p. 131). However, cognitive research has shown that readers who are aware that the text is a set of choices made by an author, are more likely to think critically about what the author is wanting to communicate and about the literary devices and textual craft (McKeown & Beck, 1998; Gibbs, 1999).

**Quantitative data**

**Time taken**

In addition to the qualitative analysis, a gauge of the participants’ engagement with the texts came from the length of time they spent on each passage. As can be seen in Table 2, students spent longer reading the texts in poetic form than reading the prose counterparts. With regard to order effects, no matter whether the participants received the prose or poetic versions first, all students spent more time reading the poems.

**Enjoyment Ratings**

A second quantitative measure was their response when asked to rate their enjoyment of the readings on a scale from 1-10. While Table 2 shows only a slight preference for each of the
poetic versions, across the three texts there were 12 occasions when the poetic text received a higher rating than the prose form, 10 occasions when participants gave the same rating, and only 2 occasions when the prose text received a higher rating. When subjects were asked to give a reason for their rating, one subject commented on her higher rating for the poetic version:

I like when writing is structured this way because it makes me, well, I'm a fast reader, you know, I do miss a lot of things... and that’s why when things are written in this way I’m forced to look at it differently.

The picture that emerges from the above is that the textual shape of the poetic versions slowed down the reading process and triggered the hypothesized conventions, expectations, and aesthetic operations. The students’ minds became active and exploratory, reflecting on the writer's craft and how it adds to the meaning, and they also expressed greater enjoyment.

**Step 2**

The aim of step 2 was not only a duplication for the purposes of reliability, but to address some weakness of the first set of findings. First, all three poetic versions in step 1 could be seen not as poems at all but as prose masquerading in the form of poetry. Therefore, in step 2 two genuine poems by respected poets were included and presented both in their original poetic form as well as in prose form. Second, the participants in step 1 may not have been representative of high school students as they came from a middle- to upper middle-class neighborhood. In step 2 an attempt was made to include diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Thirdly, there were too few participants to carry out a meaningful statistical analysis. In step 2 more participants were tested which allowed for both qualitative and quantitative analysis as in "Mixed methods Research" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Finally, while the rating scale in step 1 addressed enjoyment, more questions were asked to gauge the readers’ personal responses to the texts shaped as prose or poetry.

**Method**

**Participants**

There were 26 participants (14 females and 12 males) aged between 16 and 18 years. Teachers at five schools were asked to approach their students to volunteer for a study on text reading. Subjects were told they were to come to the University and would be paid $25 for one hour of testing. Eight of the participants came from two schools in working class neighborhoods, with five of the eight from a neighborhood considered the poorest in the city. The remaining subjects came from mostly middle class backgrounds. Fourteen of the students were visible minorities. In an attempt to determine their English ability, they were asked, “What was your English grade on your last report card?” and then, “What was the average grade in that class?” To try and foster honest reporting, prior to being asked about their English grade, they had an opportunity to report their very best grade in any subject and the class average in that subject. According to their self-reports (which might have been somewhat inflated) their average grade in English was 79 as compared to a class average of 73. Their best grade for any subject on their previous report card was 91, as compared to a class average of 77 for that course. Not one subject reported English as their best grade, although four participants reported Drama and four reported a course called Writer’s Craft. When asked to rate how much they enjoyed reading poetry in and out of school, on a scale from 1-10, the average was 6.2 for poetry in school and 8.3 for poetry out of school. Eighty percent of participants reported reading poetry out of school, although when asked to describe these poems they often included their “friends’ poetry” or poems by Shel Silverstein. Students were also asked to estimate how many classes they had spent on poetry, and to describe these poetry classes, for each of their high school years.

**Materials and procedure**
The Genre of Poetry

The materials consisted of four sets of matching texts. Two were genuine poems, by William Carlos Williams and Robert Creeley. Two were the two short pseudo-poems, "Drug Addict" and "Soldier" from the first step presented without asterisks so they matched the genuine poems. "Drug Addict" and "Soldier" were chosen as they were the same length but differed from each other in that, in their prose form, "Drug Addict" is more expository prose and "Soldier" is more literary prose. Subjects in step 1 had described the "Drug Addict" prose as resembling a sentence from the newspaper, whereas "Soldier" prose was, as one subject put it, "relatively poetic" even in its prose form. All 7 graduate students in a research group agreed with these categorizations. Similarly, one of the genuine poems, referred to here as "Plums" by William Carlos Williams, resembles a note of apology and was considered less literary than the poem, referred to here as "Underneath," by Robert Creeley (See Appendix B).

The procedure was the same as step 1 except that the open-ended probes, “What is your overall sense of this text/What does the text mean to you?” were excluded. Subjects were just asked to "Take as long as you want and tell me when you are totally finished," and the timing ended at that stage, as it was felt this was more natural. Again, to avoid the confound of content, all subjects received both versions of each text, with half the subjects receiving the four poetic versions before the four prose versions, and the other half reading the prose versions first. At the end of the eight readings, participants were told to glance at each passage again and then asked four question related to text enjoyment, difficulty experienced, emotions felt while reading, and imagery (See Appendix C). These items are contained in the Poetry Reception Questionnaire (Hilscher & Cupchik, 2005) and are frequently used in studies on literary reading (Cupchik, Leonard, Axelrad and Kalin, 1998; Levorato & Nemesio, 2005; Nemesio, Levorato & Ronconi, 2006).

Results

Coding was carried out in the same way as step 1. The results from each of the four text pairs can be seen in Table 3, and clearly resemble the pattern of results obtained in step 1.

The number of subjects in step 2 allowed for statistical analysis which will be presented below. Although order of presentation of the prose versus the poetic versions had been counterbalanced, order effects were also examined statistically. No order effects were found on any measure.

ANOVA and t-tests were carried out, and whenever the assumptions were not met, non-parametric procedures were also conducted. In all such cases, the results of the non-parametric procedures were the same; therefore only the parametric results will be reported. A measure of effect size, d, is reported with all analyses. Results are categorized according to Cohen’s (1988) guidelines: 0.2 small, 0.5 moderate and 0.8 large.

Results will first be reported for the total of the four texts. Means and standard deviations can be seen in Table 4.

Conventions

Polyvalence

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether students made more references to polyvalence when reading the four poetic versions of the matching texts than the prose counterparts. The results indicated that the mean number of such references when reading the poetic versions (M = 1.65, SD = 1.52) was significantly greater than the mean number when reading the prose equivalents (M = .23, SD = .51), t (25) = 4.76, p = .001. The standardized effect size index, d, was .93, a large value.

Metaphoric content

...
A paired-samples t test indicated that the mean number of specific allusions to analogies or symbolism when reading the poetic versions \((M = .62, SD = .94)\) was significantly greater than the mean when reading the prose equivalents \((M = .12, SD = .43)\), \(t\) \((25) = 3.35, p = .003\). The standardized effect size index, \(d\), was .66, a moderate value.

**Significance**

The number of references to a significant point was \((M = 1.04, SD = 1.40)\) when reading the poetic versions and \((M = .38, SD = .85)\) for the prose versions, \(t\) \((25) = 2.05, p = .05\). The standardized effect size index, \(d\), was .41, a moderate value.

**Interpretive operations**

In Table 3 the various references demonstrating an aesthetic appreciation of form are displayed for each poem. In addition to the categories identified in step 1 there were also a few references to rhythm in the poetic versions. The interpretive operations were analyzed together and a paired sample t test showed that the mean number of these operations when reading the poems \((M = 4.7, SD = 3.65)\) was significantly greater than the mean when reading the prose equivalents \((M = .5, SD = .76)\), \(t\) \((25) = 6.60, p = .001\). The standardized effect size index, \(d\), was 1.29, a very large value.

**Quantitative data**

Measures of the participants’ engagement with the texts came from quantitative data: first, the length of time they spent on each text; secondly the text ratings (see Table 4).

**Time taken**

Paired-samples t tests indicated that the mean time taken to read and think aloud about the four poems (not including time taken when later justifying the ratings), \((M = 393.23, SD = 217.52)\) was significantly greater than the mean time taken to read the prose equivalents \((M = 262.08, SD = 146.89)\), \(t\) \((25) = 5.12, p = .001\). The standardized effect size index, \(d\), was 1.0, a large value.

**Ratings**

The second quantitative measure consisted of four 10-point Likert ratings of enjoyment, difficulty, emotions, and imagery. Paired-samples t tests were conducted (see Table 4). On the total of all four texts the mean ratings of enjoyment \((M = 26.0, SD = 6.41)\); difficulty \((M = 12.64, SD = 5.54)\); emotion \((M = 22.79, SD = 7.96)\); and imagery \((M = 29.1, SD = 6.27)\) when reading the poetic texts were significantly higher than the mean ratings of enjoyment \((M = 21.77, SD = 5.60)\), \(t\) \((25) = 3.56, p = .002\); difficulty \((M = 9.37, SD = 4.71)\), \(t\) \((25) = 3.70, p = .001\); emotion \((M = 20.33, SD = 7.04)\), \(t\) \((25) = 2.57, p = .02\); and imagery \((M = 26.69, SD = 6.66)\), \(t\) \((25) = 2.06, p = .05\) when reading the prose counterparts. The standardized effect size index, \(d\), was .70 for enjoyment and .73 for difficulty (moderate to large values); and .50 for emotion and .40 for imagery (moderate values).

**Literary versus Non literary texts**

Differences between the more literary poems, "Soldier" and "Underneath," and the less literary poems, "Drug Addict" and "Plums," in terms of both qualitative and quantitative measures, were examined using two-way within subjects analyses of variance with literary quality (literary and non literary) as one factor and form (prose and poetry) as the other factor. The only analysis where the main effect for literary quality was significant was in students’ rating of difficulty. The two literary texts were rated more difficult than the non literary ones, \(F\) \((1,25) = 12.66, p = .002\). There were no significant interactions on any of the measures.

**Genuine versus made-up texts**

Differences between the genuine poems by well respected authors, “Plums” and “Underneath,” and the one-sentence pseudo-poems “Drug Addict” and “Soldier,” which were
made up for the study, were also analyzed by means of two-way within subjects analyses of variance with source (genuine and made-up) as one factor, and form (prose and poetry) as the other. Results showed that students enjoyed the genuine poems significantly more than the pseudo-poems, $F(1,25) = 18.79, p = .001$. There were no significant interactions and the other three ratings were not significantly different for the genuine versus made-up texts. While students also spent more time on the genuine poems, this measure, as well as performance on qualitative measures, will not be discussed further as the genuine poems were so much longer and therefore differences would be expected.

**Gender differences**

Independent-sample $t$ tests were conducted to determine if there were any gender differences on the qualitative and quantitative measures. The only significant finding was that, when reading the four poetic versions, female participants’ ratings of emotion ($M = 25.60$, $SD = 7.75$) were significantly higher than those of male students ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 7.15$), $t(25) = -2.09$, $p = .05$. However, there were no gender differences in terms of ratings of enjoyment, difficulty and imagery; nor on any of the other measures. The eta square index indicated that 21% of the variance of the emotion variable was accounted for by gender.

**Author**

Finally, as in the first step, although not a predetermined category, the protocols were examined for comments explicitly referring to an author. There were 21 such comments from 18 different participants across the four poems but only 5 comments when reading the prose counterparts. A paired-samples $t$ test indicated that the mean number of references to an author or poet when reading the poetic versions ($M = .81$, $SD = 1.06$) was significantly greater than the mean when reading the prose equivalents ($M = .23$, $SD = .51$), $t(25) = 2.76$, $p = .011$. The standardized effect size index, $d$, was .54, a moderate value.

**General Discussion**

This study has demonstrated that when older high school students think aloud as they read texts in the physical form of poetry, they make significantly more references to literary expectations, conventions and interpretive operations than when reading the identical wording in the form of prose. The visual image of short, broken lines down the centre of the page seems to trigger an immediate categorization of the text as a prototypical poem, and an activation of the expectations and operations associated with the poetry schema. The text is then read according to the poetic conventions of polyvalence, metaphoric content and significance. There are also more references to literary operations such as the use of binary oppositions, and structural and linguistic stylistic devices as cues to meaning.

Measures of the readers’ personal responses to the passages showed that, when reading the words as poems, participants enjoyed the texts more, found them more challenging, felt greater emotion and experienced more imagery. Poem-shaped texts also triggered more effortful engagement as demonstrated by length of reading time and an attempt to think about the author’s intentions.

When reading the Drug Addict poem a number of students interpreted “dark shadows” metaphorically, for instance as “suffering” or “bad times.” Lakoff and Turner (1989) describe the LIFE IS LIGHT and concomitant DEATH OR SUFFERING IS DARKNESS conceptual metaphors as part of the “common conceptual apparatus” of our culture. People have little difficulty understanding phrases such as “dark moods,” a “dark character” or a “dark story.” Darkness, which is concrete and easily perceptible, is used to understand a more abstract concept such as depression. Such understandings involve preexisting conceptual mappings and are largely automatic. So why did the prose version rarely generate such meaning? It seems that
The literary metaphor involves more of a conscious and effortful process than our everyday conceptual metaphors (Gibbs, 1994). The drug addict found in the dark shadows could be understood in a literal sense, unless overridden by the expectation that poetry involves metaphor. The high school students’ identification of the text as a poem generated a close reading which directed them to creatively examine concrete details, for instance, the dark shadows. Drawing on their everyday conceptual metaphors, they generated a more abstract metaphoric interpretation of suffering, evil or death. However, identifying the text as prose resulted only in a quick and literal reading.

When reading the poetic versions a number of students also observed that dark “hidden things” were contrasted with bright beach homes, “always two sides to one thing.” In Peskin’s study on reading very difficult poetry (1998), while English Ph.D. students invested much time examining the contrasts or juxtapositions, novices sometimes brushed them aside: As one novice stated, contrasting concepts “seem to negate each other somehow, and it just jumbles everything for me. I don't like lines like these” (Peskin, 1998, p. 248). In the current study, however, with much easier poetry, observing these contrasts was fruitful in some of these older high school students’ meaning-making. Theorists have described understanding literature as grounded in our embodied interaction with the world (Gavins & Steen, 2003; Lakoff, 1987) for instance the left-right symmetry of our bodies (Edelman, 1992). Turner describes how "simplicity and power can be achieved when we connect experiences such as bright, sharp, hard…and set them against their correlated polar opposites dark, blunt, soft…We think of up, forward, and right as good, and down, back, and left as bad…. (I)t is an extremely basic tool of understanding” noticed long ago by Aristotle (Turner, 1991, p. 80).

As mentioned earlier, Jakobson (1987) wrote of poetry as not belonging to ordinary communication because the language of poetry calls attention to itself. However, the wording of each pseudo-poem was identical to its matching prose text, which elicited only shallow processing. Rather, it was the altered physical structure which called attention to the language as a language of poetry, so that ‘drug’ and ‘dark’ were suddenly recognized as harshly alliterative, and the line, ‘dark shadows’ was thought to be hiding from the other lines of the poem and producing an atmosphere of melancholy. Making the text “strange” through structural changes rendered the ordinary extraordinary. As Groeben and Schreier (1998) note, “Suspension of the monovalence convention is desirable because it allows for taking different points of view and ‘trying out’ various standpoints not accessible to the individual in everyday life” (p. 61).

While two of the passages in step 2 were considered more “literary” than the other two, the only significant difference between the more and less literary texts was that the literary passages were rated as more “difficult.” There was no difference on any of the qualitative measures between these two sets of texts. Hence, texts with more literary textual features did not generate more interpretive operations than non-literary texts, but poem-shaped texts triggered more operations than prose-shaped texts. To some extent this study can be taken as support for Fish’s theoretical stance that conventions assimilated by the reader, rather than actual textual features, play a crucial role, that is, "interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing” (1980, p. 327).

It also provides some support for Culler’s hypothesis that if a single prose sentence is presented in the shape of a poem, readers will apply poetic conventions and a set of interpretive strategies that they would not apply if the text was identified as a non literary prose passage. However, it must be noted that the one-line sentence poems made up for the study were reasonably credible poems. Indeed, in comparing the students’ ratings of the made-up poems and the two poems by well respected authors in the second step, although the made-up poems were
rated as less enjoyable, they were rated no differently in terms of emotion engendered, difficulty and imagery. On the other hand, Beaugrande (1987) found that when students were told that a passage from a Biology textbook was a poem, even though the text was divided into short lines to look like poetry, students did not accept that this passage was a credible poem. So it seems that not just any text in poetic form will engender a literary reading.

In the present study it was difficult to assess the instructional contexts that may have shaped the participants’ understanding of the nature of poetry. Questioning the students regarding their previous poetry experience confirmed Applebee et al.’s. (2003) finding that there is enormous variability in the poetry instruction received by any given student, from teacher to teacher and year to year. Yet by the time they reached the latter high school years, most of them had assimilated the major conventions and some of the interpretive processes. They knew what to do with a poem that they would not do with a non-literary prose text.

Northrop Frye suggested that when studying literature, there is a building up of processes through training just as there is in the study of science. However the processes which are so explicit in the teaching of science often remain implicit in the teaching of poetry. Knowledge of these processes is held in common by the poet and the readers of the poem, for while readers perform the interpretive operations based on their expectations, these expectations are also assumed by authors when writing the poems. Developing this structure of knowledge is at the heart of cultural literacy (Olson, 1994) and the English teacher has an important role to play. Ironically, however, (and possibly because of the aesthetic, as well as the intensely personal, nature of poems) knowledge of poetry is frequently seen to be acquired tacitly through naive perception. Pirie (1997; 2002) describes “Voodoo pedagogy” where students perceive doing well in English as requiring mysterious, unnamed powers. He argues that rather than the invisible practices of reading, teachers must make explicit both to themselves and their students “how these things happen.” As there is little research to direct educators in teaching poetry, the major conventions and interpretive processes uncovered in this study may be useful to English teachers both in examining the way their own understandings have been constructed, and as guides in their teaching.

As described above, contrasts seem to play an important role in some students’ meaning making. Binary oppositions, therefore, could become the focus of pedagogy in the English classroom, not by adding it to a “list” of literary devices with students being sent off to find and label examples in a text, but, by providing students with repeated exposures to texts rich in contrast and juxtaposition, starting with simple texts and leading to more subtle and longer examples (Pirie, 1997; 2002; Wilhelm, 1997). In this way the importance of perusing literary texts for oppositions, and then drawing thematic conclusions from the tension between the contrasting concepts, may be internalized. Furthermore, it is helpful for educators to know, and possibly even to convey to students, that metaphorical thinking is a basic tool of everyday thought; that what is often seen by students as artificial literary “analysis” draws from our most natural understandings. At least one literary critic has even argued that symmetry of the oppositional kind, so natural in conceptual metaphors for instance, GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN (“things are looking up”; “we hit a peak, but it’s been downhill ever since”) is the very basis of aesthetics in literature (Turner, 1991). We know that students’ everyday conceptual understanding of metaphor is in place, and it may just require gentle encouragement for this intuitive, unconscious understanding to be applied consciously to literary texts.

It may also be helpful for educators to think in terms of Miall’s defamiliarization-reconceptualization theory (2006) and the empirical evidence showing that after a creative literary feature has resulted in defamiliarization, students may look for meaning guided by the
feeling that the foregrounded expression produced. While feelings can be invoked within milliseconds (Damasio, 2003), students need at least a minute or two to linger over the literary feature as this often provides the germination point for alternative interpretations (Miall, 2006). To generate images where defamiliarization may have taken place, one might ask students to suggest strong images evoked from the reading. In the example in the present study, where a male student verbalized that the expression “soaked field” allows his imagination to run free but he then cuts off his creative process, teachers may provide a useful role in providing the time required to draw out the reconceptualizations, or perhaps modeling the process for the students.

Defamiliarization-reconceptualization theory, structuralist/conventionalist theories, and the many perspectives deriving from the cognitive domain and reinforced by growing evidence from neurocognitive studies can provide teachers with new ways of looking at poetic texts and at their students (and themselves) as learners. Few high school teachers report any familiarity with literary theory (Appleman, 2000) and one imagines even fewer with cognitive-literary theories. The conventional expectations that students build up about poetry and the various aesthetic operations performed when reading a poem may be implicitly understood by teachers and many students, but by making these distinctions more explicit and connecting seemingly isolated events, one has frames so that one can see - and one can teach - more clearly.

Results from the analysis of the gender differences in these adolescents’ response to poetry were most interesting: When reading the four poems boys reported feeling significantly less emotion than girls, but their ratings of text enjoyment, imagery and difficulty as well as their performance on all other quantitative and qualitative variables were no different from the female students. According to social-constructivists (Pollack, 1998) there is a “boy code,” an internalized model of socio-culturally embedded behaviour which directs males towards gender-stereotyped attitudes such as that men are to be seen as less “emotional.” In the present study boys’ lower ratings of their emotions may have been influenced by such a code. Pirie (2002) has suggested that teachers (and, in particular, male teachers) model emotional talk about literature using “think alouds,” and Eva-Woods (2004b) has shown that modeling affective reading processes in the classroom has positive outcomes for poetry interpretation.

If research has shown that boys express less enthusiasm for reading in general and poetry in particular (see Smith and Wilhelm, 2002), why were there no gender differences in ratings of enjoyment in the current study? Newkirk (2002) has argued that accepting boys’ interest in combat and action and “stylized” writing about “blood” might help in engaging boys, and some of the poems in the current study dealt with just such topics, for instance, “blood soaked” fields and drug addicts in dark shadows. Hence the study may provide some evidence for teachers that engaging “boy” interests when reading poetry lowers the traditional discrepancy between males and females in their enthusiasm for reading poetry.

Various reasons have been given for the study of poetry: Poetry is a vehicle for enriching life by engendering wisdom; a vehicle for social and moral development; a body of cultural knowledge to be acquired; and it gives students a chance to appreciate man-made beauty (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1998; Gardner, 1999; Purves, 1991). But an additional reason is that reading poetry may be an excellent vehicle for high-level cognition and thinking-centered practice. In the present study the genre of poetry caused the students to experience close and creative textual analysis, to attend deliberately to language and expressive device, and to become intellectually active and adventurous. They spent significantly longer on the poetic texts, and made more references to the poet or author. If poetry does indeed resist automatic processing, and requires rather, active and deliberate reinterpretive transformations, it may be a valuable
method of engaging students in meaningful, higher-order thinking. This may be an additional reason to include poetry in the high school English curriculum.

In conclusion, this study has found that when older high school students read words in the shape of a poem, it triggered the expectations and conventions that theorists hypothesize are associated with the poetic genre, as well as an aesthetic appreciation of how literary elements and stylistic devices amplify meaning. Furthermore, despite the popularly held view that many students do not like poetry, the present study found that reading words in poetic form resulted in greater intellectual pleasure. Educators want students to attend closely to the text, to intellectually explore and elaborate, to think self consciously, and to feel enthusiastic about making meaning. This is what older high school students appear to do when they identify a text as a poem.
References


The Genre of Poetry


Appendix A

Additional two sets of texts used in Step 1

Text 1a: "Soldier" prose
This morning the injured soldier fled from the soaked field.

Text 1b: "Soldier" poem

This morning
the injured soldier
fled
from the
soaked field.

Text 2a: "Hunter" prose
When the hunter hunts, the animals screech a warning, scurry together into the forest, and hide. Still and silent, they blend into the green grass and brown bark. When the hunter leaves empty handed, the animals begin to look hungrily at each other.

Text 2b: "Hunter" poem

When the hunter,
hunts,
the animals screech a warning,
scurry together
into the forest, and hide.
Still and silent,
yield blend into the green grass and brown bark.
When the hunter leaves empty handed,
the animals begin to look hungrily
at each
other.
Appendix B

Two Genuine Poems used in Step 2

Text 1: "Plums" poem by William Carlos Williams

This is just to say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold
Text 2: "Underneath" poem by Robert Creeley

Underneath the tree on some
soft grass I sat, I

watched two happy
woodpeckers be dis-
turbed by my presence. And
why not, I thought to

myself, why
not.
Appendix C

Step 2: Rating Scales

1. Rate your enjoyment of this reading on a scale from 1-10, 10 being 'I greatly enjoyed reading this' and 1 being 'I did not enjoy this' and tell me why you gave it that rating.

2. Rate how easy or difficult you found the passage, with 10 being 'I found this very challenging' and 1 being 'I found this very easy.' And tell me why.

3. Rate whether you felt any emotion when reading the passage with 10 being 'I felt a lot of emotion' and 1 being 'I felt no emotions.' And tell me why.

4. Rate whether reading the passage made you create images or pictures in your mind, with 10 being, 'I experienced lots of pictures in my mind, and 1 being 'I experienced no pictures.' And tell me why.
Table 1

Step 1

Total Number of References to Conventions and Interpretive operations when Students Read Three Prose Texts and the Matching Poems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Drug Addict</th>
<th>Soldier</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions/Expectations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyvalence</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphoric content</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Conventions/Expectations</td>
<td>13(6)</td>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive operations:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>5(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interpretive operations</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>9(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number of participants who made at least one reference appears in parentheses; (N = 8).
### Table 2

**Step 1**

*Quantitative data: Means of Time taken and Enjoyment Ratings for each Text.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of variable</th>
<th>Drug Addict</th>
<th>Soldier</th>
<th>Hunter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken (in seconds)</td>
<td>192.2</td>
<td>105.0</td>
<td>174.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment ratings (range 1 – 10)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>258.6</td>
<td>138.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3  
**Step 2**  
*Total Number of References to Conventions and Interpretive Operations when Students Read four Poems and the Matching Prose Texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less Literary</th>
<th></th>
<th>More Literary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions/Expectations:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyvalence</td>
<td>10(9)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>10(10)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>10(9)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>13(11)</td>
<td>5(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphoric content</td>
<td>5(5)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>7(6)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>7(7)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>9(8)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretive operations:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>9(8)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>6(3)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>11(11)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>11(9)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>13(10)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>13(11)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>6(5)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>5(5)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>6(6)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13(10)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>10(7)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The number of participants who made at least one reference appears in parentheses; *(N = 26).*
Table 4
*Step 2: Means and Standard Deviations of References to Conventions and Interpretive Operation; Time taken; and Ratings when Students Read Four Poems and the Matching Prose Texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poems</th>
<th></th>
<th>Prose</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions/Expectations</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>(1.52)</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyvalence</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>(.94)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphoric content</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>(1.40)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Conventions/Expectations</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>(2.69)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interpretive operations</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>(3.65)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken (in seconds)</td>
<td>393.23</td>
<td>(217.52)</td>
<td>262.08</td>
<td>(146.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratings (range 1 to 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>(6.41)</td>
<td>21.77</td>
<td>(5.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>12.64</td>
<td>(5.54)</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>(4.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>(7.96)</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>(7.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>(6.27)</td>
<td>26.69</td>
<td>(6.66)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>