POETRY
What is a poem?

Poetry is a fireplace in summer or a fan in winter.
The Function of Poetry

Once it seemed the function of poetry was to redeem our lives. But it was not. It was to become indistinguishable from them.

-Brenda Hillman
Poetry is characterized by, among other things,

- Image
- Metaphor (and simile)
- Line breaks
- Meter, rhyme, and form
Images haunt. There is a whole mythology built on this fact: Cezanne painting till his eyes bled, Wordsworth wandering the Lake Country hills in an impassioned daze. Blake describes it very well, and so did a colleague of Tu Fu who said to him, ‘It is like being alive twice’... Images are not always metaphors; they do not say this is that, they say this is.

-Robert Hass
Twentieth Century Pleasures
Using Images

• Sensory infused images
  • help readers enter the world of the poet
  • activate your limbic system – creating physical responses
• Abstractions do not convey the specificity of the situation
• Passive verbs, linking verbs, all forms of the verb to be do little to illuminate language; thus, poets avoid them.
In-Class Activity

• Choose an abstract word. Without saying the words, describe a specific image (using all five senses) that conveys your understanding of the meanings of the word.

• Examples—love, hate, liberty, happiness, friendship, enemy
Show, Don’t Tell

Concrete
Sensory image

Detail specific and focused

Significant has greater meaning
Getting Specific

Specificity builds power in writing. Now it’s your turn ... Begin with a person, place or thing. Then, narrow the category step by step as seen above until you are describing something so specific that it could only be represented by one thing. Try to convey how you feel about this thing without saying it.
Metaphor/ Simile – Power in the tension of differences

Metaphor
- Assumes states of comparison between two things, without acknowledging the comparison
- My electric muscles shook crowd. (Adjective)
- Her hair is seaweed and she is the sea.
- They have a piggy and a fishy air
- The bees shouldering the grass. (Verb)

Simile
- Makes a comparison between two things using like or as
- His teeth rattled like dice in a box.
- My head is light as a balloon.
- I will fall like an ocean on that court!
“All the World is a Stage”
What does this metaphor say about the world?
Object Exercise

• Use your five senses to examine and describe one object. What does the object look like? Sound like? Smell like? Feel like? What does the object remind you of? Where could the object take you? If the object could teach you a lesson what would it be? Be as specific as possible as you write.

• Express at least one emotion that you feel about this object without directly stating it.