**Poetry and Prose: What’s the Difference?**

\*\*\* The line between poetry and prose isn’t a solid, clear line. This table is just some of the general differences between poetry and prose.

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| **Poetry** | **Prose** |
| Usually used to communicate in a special or artistic way | Most everyday writing |
| Expressive or very descriptive language that has a specific sound to it (sometimes, it is almost musical) | Straight forward language |
| Ideas are not always in sentences  Lines are grouped into “stanzas” (poetry word for paragraph) | Ideas are put into sentences and grouped into paragraphs |
| May look different: there may be a lot of empty white space; lines can be VERY long or VERY short (one word) | Writing goes right from margin to margin |
| Some poems follow capitalization rules, some poems do not. | First words of sentences are capitalized. There are many grammar rules to follow. |
| Shape and length of the poem can vary. For example, a poem about a cat, could even be written in the shape of a cat. | Writing looks like large blocks of text. |

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| **Example of Poetry** | **Example of Prose** |
| “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost  “The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  But I have promises to keep,  And miles to go before I sleep,  And miles to go before I sleep.” | “The woods look lovely against the setting darkness and as I gaze into the mysterious depths of the forest, I feel like lingering here longer. However, I have pending appointments to keep and much distance to cover before I settle in for the night or else I will be late for all of them.” |

Source: Adapted from Read-Write-Think (2008)