

The Art of Repetition

How could patterns in a work of art become a repeating line (refrain) in a song or poem?

1. PERCEIVE

Work through the PERCEIVE card to carefully investigate your artwork.

2. CONSIDER

In all the above paintings certain shapes, tones, and colors are repeated. Each of these artworks also expresses a mood or feeling. What do the shapes remind you of? Do you see curves, angles, overlapping? Do the repeated shapes and colors create a rhythm? Slow? Fast? Smooth? Loud? What is the “mood” of the painting you have chosen? Is it sad, curious, restful, lively?

3. CREATE

Write at least four sentences that describe the mood of your artwork. Use descriptive language (similes and metaphors). For example, you might decide that your picture feels fierce and wild, so think of fierce and wild things, places, people or events to compare it to. Then choose your favorite sentence to use as a repeating line (a refrain).

Use all of your ideas and descriptive phrases to create a poem about your image. Use lines to describe the mood, how it makes you feel, and what it reminds you of. Use your refrain at regular intervals, such as every third or sixth line, to create a pattern and rhythm.

The individual lines in a poem do not have to be a complete thought or sentence. You can break the sentence in any place you choose and continue it on the next line. This adds rhythm to the lines and helps your reader want to read on to your completed thought.

Based on an artwork, *The Boy* by Thomas Hart Benton, here are some poetic lines written by Jude Nutter:

Even the woods on the hill's top stretch
out like a body in mourning: the whole
landscape is rushing toward grief; in the field
a sad horse mixes with its shadow,
its name, an endless wash of storm. The distance
between raised hands; the road like a river
with its cargo, and, in the field, a sad horse
mixing with its shadow: all these
things, the small details of home. I wish
we could say: look, the sky is painted over
with gems and an expensive royal blue dress,
but there are black clouds building themselves
into a wall, and a woman and a man and a boy
-- each heart a dark chamber -- and, in the field,
a sad horse mixing with its shadow.

Listen to the rhythm of the lines and notice how the line breaks create anticipation and force us to read on. These are two essential craft issues that you should keep in mind when writing your poem.

4. REFLECT

REFLECT Read your poem aloud. How would you describe the rhythm or beat? How do your words and the ways you have patterned them connect to the elements and patterns in your chosen artwork? Do you create a similar mood? Try increasing and then decreasing your refrain. What effect does that have? Try breaking your sentences into different lines. Which is best?

CHOOSE ANY ARTWORK