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ОСВІТА, НАУКА ТА ВИРОБНИЦТВО: РОЗВИТОК І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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UNDERSTANDING POETRY

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If to paraphrase Shakespeare: to read, or not to read: that is the question. Nowadays far fewer people read printed books. But on the other hand there appeared e-books. This allows people to download any book they want and read it whenever they want. And here appears the question: what to read? Some people prefer prose others poetry. I'd like to draw your attention to poetry, especially classical poetry.

Poetry is often considered to be the most difficult part of an English Literature. It is felt by many people to be strange and alien. Poetry is not part of our everyday experience nowadays, though it used to be.

First, a reader should be able to give an adequate account of the surface meaning of a poem. You should understand that you can't grasp the meaning of a poem on first reading. Poetry is the most intense and concentrated language there is. It yields up its meanings, its many meanings slowly. We have to read and re-read.

Secondly, reading poetry is a different skill from ordinary reading. We have to learn to do it. Once you did it, the skill stays with you for life.

The words which poets use are frequently called the diction. The choice of the diction gives a poem its character. Poets have about half a million words to call on. They may resurrect a long dead word or even invent one, if it suits them. Poets choose their words with extreme care. Growing up of the poet's diction is the tone of a poem. It's helpful to think of it as tone of voice or to imagine the poet speaking. Words with more or less the same literal meanings carry senses which make us react differently. Some words seem naturally attractive because of their associations, some unattractive. Poets make use of this ability of words to prompt particular reactions: they choose words very deliberately for their associations and connotations. Double meanings, or ambiguities, also abound in poetry because the poet tries to concentrate a great deal into a few words. You must always be on the look out for words which mean more than at first appears. Sometimes poet try to create the experience in our imagination. Visual imaginary is very frequent in poetry. But poets are concerned with all kinds of imaginary: oral, smell, taste, tactile and others. All these things help you to make your own opinion about the poem you've read.

In conclusion I must say that understanding poetry can be divided into six key sections: diction, tone, associations, ambiguity, imagery and response. Understanding each section will help you read and understand the poetry. It will help you enjoy reading and read more and more. Who knows, maybe reading and understanding poetry will help find a poet inside you.