

Reading Poetry Aloud By Serena Greenslade

There are a few different rules for poetry reading than for prose reading and these rules help us to keep the shape of the poem.

First you have to be heard. The sound has to get out of your mouth and for this to happen you have to open your mouth.

If you have written the poem yourself or if you've had it written for you, you will know the emotion the poem is trying to convey. You will know what is coming next but remember your listeners don't know. They've never heard it before so they have to get in the right mood and then they have to listen to the words and they will need time to take in what you've read.

It might come as a surprise to know that there are different kinds of pauses. Some of these pauses are used when reading prose and poetry and some are used in poetry only.

Pauses used in prose and poetry

Grammatical pauses - used when punctuation dictates such as a comma or fullstop.

Sense pauses - used when our common sense says we need a pause.

Rhetorical - this is a longer pause that comes at the end of paragraphs and some verses.

Emphatic - this is used before an important word or after an important word or before and after an important word.

Emotional pause - this is used to give an emotional effect such as when a person is crying.

Dramatic pause - a pause used to give a dramatic effect.

Pauses used only in poetry reading

The main pause is the suspensory pause. This occurs at the end of an enjambment line where the sense carries on into the next line of the poem. There must be a slight pause on the last word of the line but no breath must be taken. An example is taken from Sea Fairies by Eileen Mathias

They're hiding by the pebbles,

They're running round the rocks

Each of them, and all of them

In dazzling sea green frocks.

There is a pause at the end of the first line and the next place for a breath is halfway through the third line. However at the end of the second line you must hold on to the word 'rocks' so that the shape of the poem is kept.

Caesura pause - This can come anywhere in the line of poetry but it always coincides with sense.

Metrical pause - Lines of poetry are made up of metrical feet. These feet are very similar to bars of music. Each foot is made up of 2, 3 or 4 syllables. A metrical pause occurs when part of a foot or a whole foot is missing.

Why pausing is important

Pausing allows the listener to take in what you've just said.

It shows you have confidence in your ability to read the poem aloud.

Gives you a chance to breathe.

Keeps the shape of the poem.

Pace and Power

Try to alter the speed at which you read the poem. If you want to sound angry or excited speed up a little and raise the pitch of your voice. When you want to sound more serious lower the pitch and slow down.

A higher pitched voice can also be used when talking about things which are high up - the sky, angels, tall buildings and a lower pitch for things lower such as the soil, graves, underwater etc.

Facial Expressions

Your facial expressions and gestures are important. If you are reading a serious poem try not to smile! Any movements you make must look natural and not rehearsed, you want the whole experience to look and sound natural and relaxed.

If the poem wasn't written by you, you'll need to read through the poem a few times to try and gauge the feeling of the poem and also try to pick out the important words and phrases. These important words and phrases can then be emphasised using the methods outlined above.

Serena Greenslade has been showing people how to get the best out of their voice for the last 12 years. For more information see <http://www.afraid-of-speaking-a-speech.com>

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Serena_Greenslade/27685