

A Rhyme Primer

Why do so many editors ask us not to send rhyme?

Here's a link to a sticky thread already on these boards which explains the many ways rhyme is done poorly.

<http://www.scbwi.org/boards/index.php?topic=14603.0>

Rhyme is harder to edit than prose. If a word in a prose passage is a little off, the editor suggests another word. If a word is off in a metered passage, often the whole line or stanza needs to be replaced.

Consider the near rhyme in the thread above. To fix it, the editor would need to suggest another phrase, like this:

The rain comes gently falling down

Misting o'er the lonely town.

But if the poem isn't about a town, another complete line or verse could be necessary. The whole story may have to be revised so the action in the offending stanza still belongs within the larger story. After all, in picture books, story comes first.

How can we learn to write perfect meter and rhymes?

Here are some links that may help.

Tutorials:

www.dorichaconas.com

<http://www.writingrhymeandmeter.com/>

Recognizing Rhythm:

<http://prosody.lib.virginia.edu/> - this site also contains a glossary of poetry terms.

Rhyming Dictionary:

<http://www.rhymezone.com/>

There are many other such dictionaries online. Try them to see which you like best.

Why are slant or imperfect rhymes and unnatural phrasing acceptable in work for adults?

Adults understand poetic license. They know the conventions of language well enough to recognize when and why an author may have chosen to break them. A young child is still learning what it means to rhyme and how the language works. Therefore, breaking with convention is more likely to confuse the reader and pull him or her out of your story. Some may also see these as setting a poor example for the young reader.

To summarize, poetry for children needs to use natural language with perfect rhythm and rhymes while maintaining all the elements of good writing found in prose for children. It's a tall order, but when done well it will sell.