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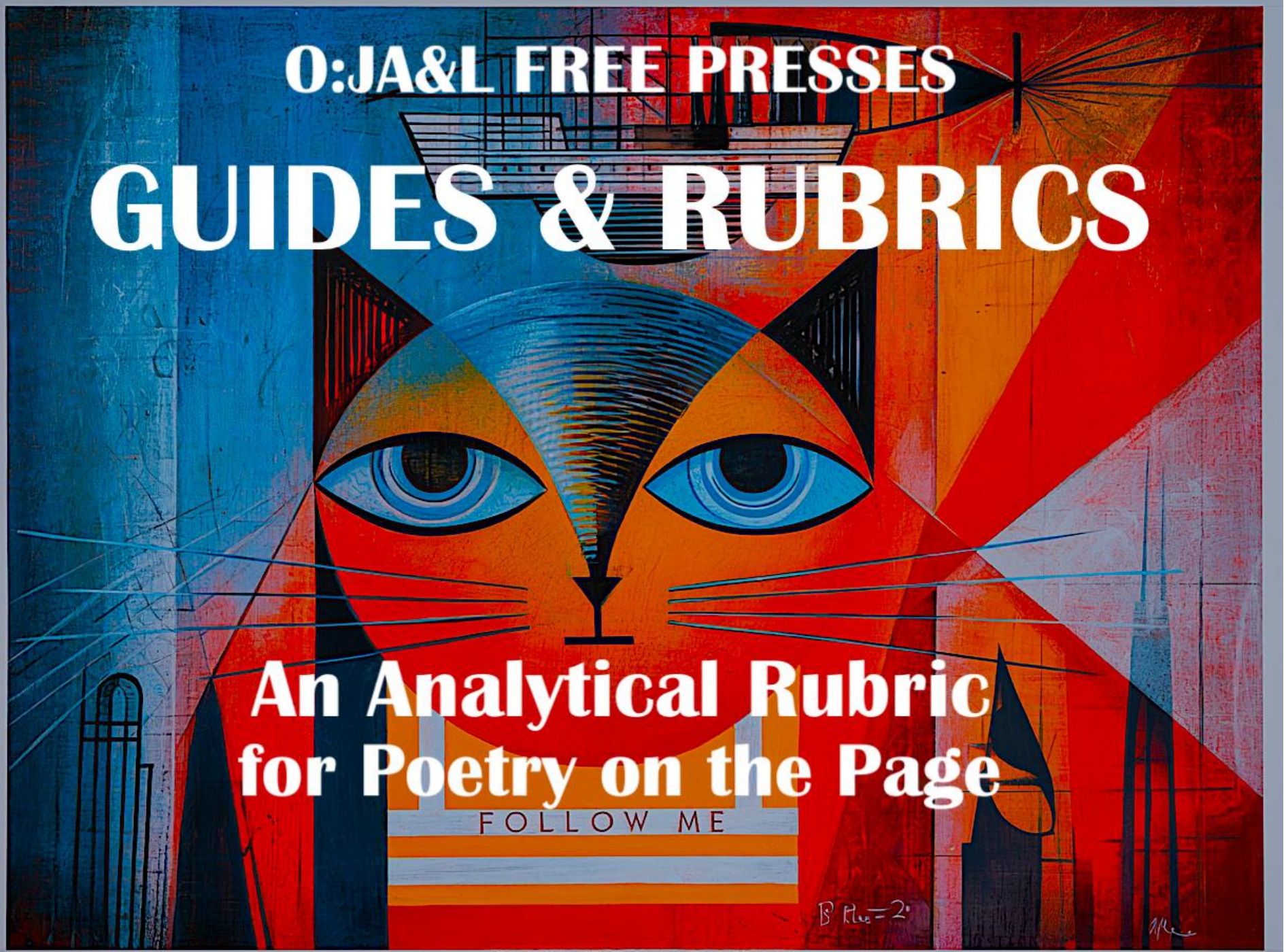
# GUIDES & RUBRICS




## An Analytical Rubric for Poetry on the Page

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# Written Poetry Analysis and Evaluation Rubric

This rubric supports consistent, evidence-based evaluation of written poetry across form, diction, theme, imagery, and unity of impression. Evaluators should consider each category independently, then judge how the poem's choices interact. Descriptors identify threshold, proficient, and masterful achievement while leaving room for varied traditions, aesthetics, audiences, and artistic intentions.

**Scoring note:** Evaluate language conventions in relation to the work's purpose, audience, genre, and aesthetic choices. Do not penalize nonstandard grammar, punctuation, spelling, dialect, code-switching, fragmentation, or syntactic disruption when these choices are purposeful, controlled, and effective.

**Scoring note:** This rubric uses a threshold scale rather than a continuous five-point scale. A score of **3** represents the minimum acceptable performance for a category. A score of **1** indicates performance below minimum expectations, while scores of **4** and **5** indicate increasing levels of proficiency and mastery. Because **3** is the threshold for acceptable performance, no score of **2** is used. To calculate weighted points, divide the category score by 5 and multiply by that category's maximum value. The six weighted values total **100 points**.

| Category | Weight | Score 1 / 3 / 4 / 5 | Weighted score | Quick note |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Language conventions | 10 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 10 | _____ |
| Form | 20 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 20 | _____ |
| Sound | 15 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 15 | _____ |
| Diction | 20 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 20 | _____ |
| Theme / Imagery | 20 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 20 | _____ |
| Unity of Impression | 15 | ____ / 5 | ____ / 15 | _____ |
| **Total weighted score** | | | **____ / 100** | **Percentage: ____ %** |

| **Language conventions and intentional usage** | **1 Point**<br>Patterns of grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, or usage frequently interfere with meaning and do not appear purposeful or controlled. Errors distract from the poem's intended effect. | **3 Points**<br>Conventions are generally controlled enough to support meaning. Any nonstandard usage is sometimes purposeful, though control may be uneven. | **4 Points**<br>Language choices show consistent control. Standard and nonstandard conventions are used intentionally to support tone, rhythm, voice, and meaning. | **5 Points**<br>Conventions and departures from convention are precise, deliberate, and integral to the poem's aesthetic force, voice, and interpretation. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evaluator remarks for Language conventions**:** _____ | | | | |

| **FORM** | **1 Point**<br>The poem's structure appears arbitrary, incomplete, or difficult to follow. Line breaks, stanza pattern, spacing, or visual arrangement may not support meaning or reader experience. | **3 Points**<br>The poem uses an identifiable form or structural pattern that generally supports meaning. Line breaks and organization are mostly purposeful, though control may be uneven. | **4 Points**<br>Form is deliberate and effective. Structure, lineation, stanza movement, and visual arrangement reinforce pacing, emphasis, tone, and meaning. | **5 Points**<br>Form is highly controlled and integral to interpretation. Structural choices create complexity, surprise, momentum, and a distinctive artistic effect. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evaluator remarks for Form: _____ | | | | |

| SOUND | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sound choices are minimal, accidental, or distracting. Rhythm, repetition, rhyme, alliteration, or other sonic features do not clearly contribute to meaning or effect. | The poem uses some purposeful sound devices or rhythm. Sonic choices generally support tone and pacing, though effects may be inconsistent or underdeveloped. | Sound is controlled and expressive. Rhythm, pattern, repetition, musicality, or silence reinforce voice, emotion, emphasis, and movement. | Sonic design is subtle, memorable, and integral to the poem. Sound patterns intensify meaning, deepen resonance, and create a strong oral or musical presence. |
| Evaluator remarks for Sound: _____ | | | | |

| DICTION | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Word choices are vague, predictable, or imprecise. Diction may weaken tone, obscure meaning, or rely heavily on cliché without clear purpose. | Diction is generally appropriate and supports the poem's subject and tone. Some words are vivid or purposeful, though choices may be uneven. | Word choice is specific, controlled, and engaging. Diction strengthens voice, tone, imagery, and emotional or intellectual impact. | Diction is striking, economical, and memorable. Each word feels necessary and contributes to layered meaning, resonance, and artistic authority. |
| Evaluator remarks for Diction: _____ | | | | |

| THEME / IMAGERY | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Theme is unclear, overly general, or unsupported. Imagery may be minimal, confusing, or disconnected from the poem's central meaning. | Theme is identifiable and supported by some concrete images or details. Imagery contributes to meaning, though development may be uneven. | Theme is thoughtfully developed through vivid, purposeful imagery. Details work together to deepen interpretation and emotional effect. | Theme and imagery are richly integrated. Images create complexity, surprise, and layered significance beyond literal statement. |
| Evaluator remarks for Theme / Imagery: _____ | | | | |

| UNITY OF IMPRESSION | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | The poem lacks a clear overall effect. Form, sound, diction, imagery, and theme may feel disconnected or unintentionally inconsistent. | The poem creates a generally coherent impression. Most elements support a shared purpose, though some choices may feel underdeveloped. | The poem demonstrates a strong unified effect. Structural, sonic, and imagistic choices work together to reinforce meaning and tone. | The poem achieves a compelling, cohesive total impression. Every major choice contributes to a distinctive, memorable artistic experience. |
| Evaluator remarks for Unity of Impression: _____ | | | | |

This rubric is intended as a guiding instrument rather than a substitute for informed critical judgment. Evaluators should apply it consistently and transparently while recognizing that effective poems may succeed through varied traditions, forms, dialects, cultural contexts, experimental choices, and aesthetic purposes. Final scores and remarks should be based on observable evidence in the work, the writer's apparent intentions, and the degree to which the poem's choices create a coherent and meaningful artistic effect.