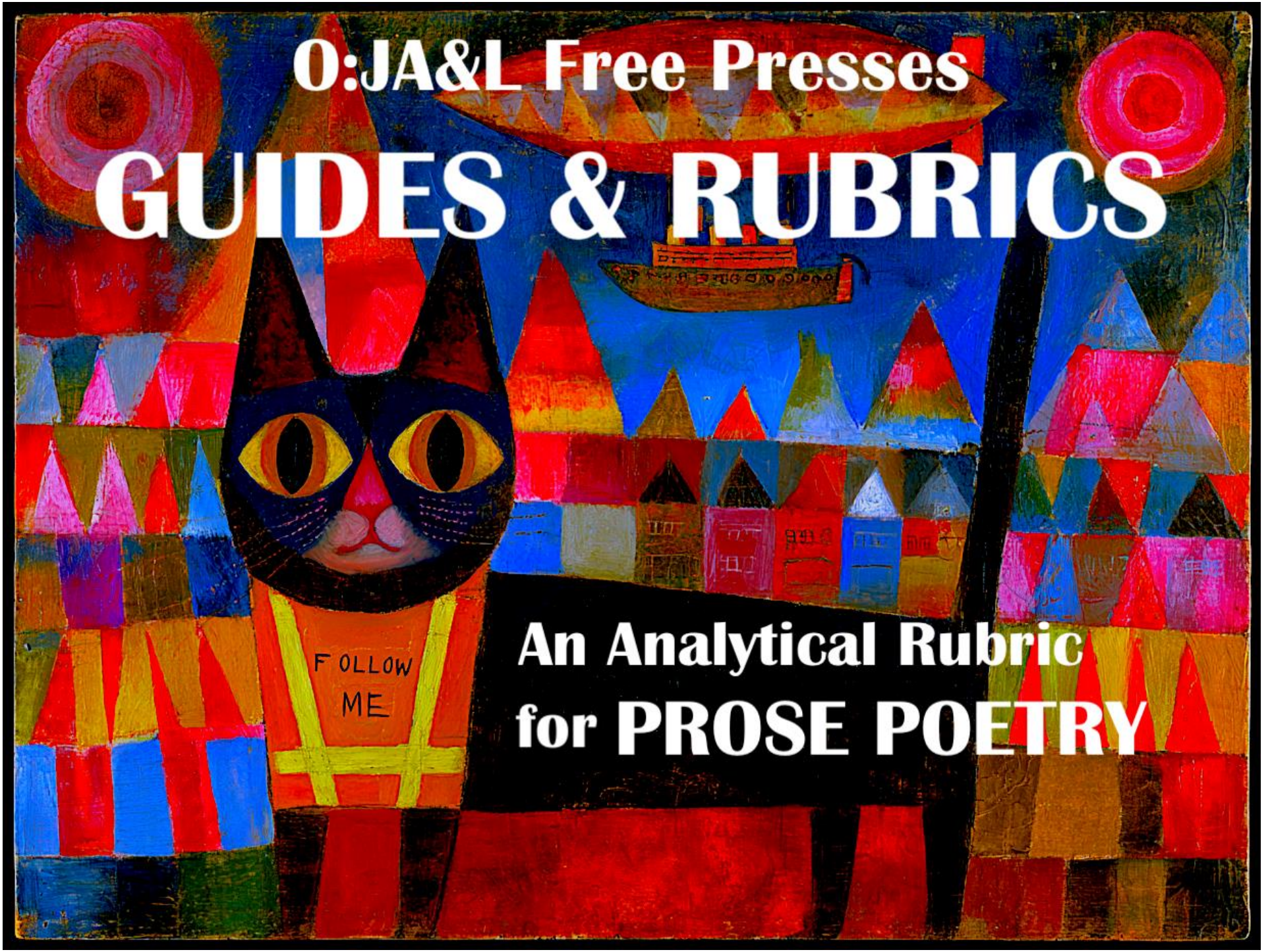
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An Analytical Rubric
for PROSE POETRY

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# Prose Poetry Evaluation Rubric

This rubric evaluates prose poetry as a hybrid form whose paragraphs, sentences, and visual blocks generate poetic intensity without relying on verse lineation. Evaluators should examine formal necessity, syntax, rhythm, imagery, figuration, compression, theme, and unity, attending especially to how prose appearance and poetic operation combine into a distinctive reading experience.

Scoring note: This prose-poetry rubric uses the same threshold scale as the written-poetry and spoken-word rubrics. 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.

Language conventions and intentional usage 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.

Form note: Prose poetry appears as prose but reads as poetry. It generally does not depend on verse line breaks, yet it should demonstrate poetic qualities such as compression, rhythm, imagery, metaphor, repetition, fragmentation, tonal intensity, or other figures and structures associated with poetry.

| PROSE-POETIC FORM | 1 Point<br>Does not meet minimum expectations | 3 Points<br>Meets minimum expectations | 4 Points<br>Displays proficiency | 5 Points<br>Displays mastery |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PROSE-POETIC FORM Single paragraph ☐ Sequence ☐ Hybrid form ☐ | | | | |
| The work uses prose presentation while creating poetic pressure, compression, and intensity. | The piece reads primarily as ordinary prose, summary, anecdote, or explanation, with little evidence of poetic compression or heightened language. | The piece appears as prose and includes some poetic qualities, but the relationship between prose structure and poetic effect is uneven or underdeveloped. | The piece uses prose form purposefully, creating poetic intensity through compression, patterning, image, rhythm, or tonal pressure. | The piece makes its prose form feel necessary, transforming paragraph, sentence, and block structure into sources of poetic tension, surprise, and resonance. |
| PROSE-POETIC FORM: Category total | | | | /5 × 25% = /25 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

| SENTENCE, PARAGRAPH & RHYTHM | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SENTENCE, PARAGRAPH & RHYTHM | | | | |
| Sentences, syntax, punctuation, and paragraph movement create momentum and musical force without relying on verse lineation. | Sentences are flat, confusing, bloated, or monotonous; paragraph movement does not create rhythm, momentum, or poetic pressure. | Sentences are generally clear, but rhythm, pacing, punctuation, or paragraph movement may be predictable, loose, or only partly controlled. | Sentences and paragraph movement are controlled and purposeful, creating rhythm, tension, emphasis, and momentum appropriate to the poem's purpose. | Syntax, punctuation, rhythm, and paragraph movement are artfully shaped; each sentence contributes to the poem's pressure, music, surprise, and cumulative effect. |
| SENTENCE, PARAGRAPH & RHYTHM: Category total | | | | /5 × 25% = /25 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

| IMAGERY, FIGURATION & COMPRESSION | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMAGERY, FIGURATION & COMPRESSION | | | | |
| The poem uses concentrated image, metaphor, symbol, repetition, or other poetic devices to create density and resonance. | The piece relies mostly on explanation or generalization and offers few memorable images, figures, patterns, or compressed moments. | The piece includes some images, figures, or compressed phrases, but they may be conventional, isolated, or insufficiently connected to the whole. | The poem uses vivid images, purposeful figuration, repetition, or compression to support tone, theme, and unity of impression. | The poem's images, figures, repetitions, and compressions feel original and necessary, creating layered meaning and a charged, memorable reading experience. |
| IMAGERY, FIGURATION & COMPRESSION: Category total | | | | /5 × 25% = /25 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

| HYBRID EFFECT, THEME & UNITY | 1 Point | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HYBRID EFFECT, THEME & UNITY Lyric ☐ Narrative ☐ Surreal ☐ Meditative ☐ | | | | |
| The prose poem creates a coherent poetic effect that could not be achieved as ordinary prose or lineated verse in the same way. | The piece lacks a clear organizing pressure, thematic movement, or cumulative effect; its hybrid form appears accidental or unresolved. | The piece has an identifiable subject or effect, but its prose and poetic elements do not yet feel fully integrated. | The prose and poetic elements work together to create a clear theme, mood, movement, or unity of impression. | The hybrid form is fully realized, producing a distinctive, unified, and memorable poetic effect that depends on the tension between prose appearance and poetic operation. |
| HYBRID EFFECT, THEME & UNITY: Category total | | | | /5 × 25% = /25 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

| Scoring Category | Weight | Raw Score | Weighted Score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prose-Poetic Form | 25% | /5 | /25 |
| Sentence, Paragraph & Rhythm | 25% | /5 | /25 |
| Imagery, Figuration & Compression | 25% | /5 | /25 |
| Hybrid Effect, Theme & Unity | 25% | /5 | /25 |
| Final score | | | /100 |

**Final Scoring Note:** This rubric is intended as a structured but flexible evaluative guide for assessing prose poems as hybrid literary works. The final score should reflect not only the presence of individual craft features, but also the degree to which prose presentation, poetic intensity, thematic development, and unity of effect work together as an integrated whole. Weighted scores are meant to help evaluators recognize the relative importance of each category while still allowing room for professional judgment, genre awareness, and attention to the writer's purpose. Evaluators should not treat the rubric as a purely mechanical checklist or as an absolute judgment of artistic worth, cultural value, personal experience, or creative identity. Intentional uses of dialect, code-switching, nonstandard grammar, fragmentation, repetition, ambiguity, silence, rupture, compression, or syntactic disruption should be considered in relation to the poem's aims and effects rather than penalized automatically. Comments should be specific, constructive, and revision-oriented, identifying strengths as well as opportunities for greater clarity, resonance, compression, coherence, or formal necessity. When assigning a final score, evaluators should consider the poem's cumulative impact, its sustained hybrid effect, and the fairness of the assessment across different styles, voices, subjects, and aesthetic traditions.