


METER AND BEAUTY

What have we learned?

 Spend time discussing the question at the bottom. Give students time to think what their answers would be.

POETRY

We have learned that as the different sounds of language are spoken, they rise and fall in rhythms because some syllables are stressed, while others are not. Poets arrange these rhythms to fit the meanings of their poems. This arrangement is called *meter*. In some poems, the meter is as exact as the beat in a bar of classical music, with every syllable fitting perfectly into the stress pattern. In other poems, there is a looser form.

PLATO

We have learned that Plato was concerned about the essence of poetry because he feared that poetry was more like an uncontrollable possession of the Muse than like an effort of reason to understand the truth. Percy Shelley, in his “Defense of Poetry,” agreed that poetry is “not like reasoning.” As we reflect on these ideas, we have to include our awareness of the things that poets intentionally do, such as controlling vowel and consonant sounds and organizing the meter of their poems; this aspect of poetry does seem to be like reasoning. If a poem is planned, is that not reasonable? We also learned that Plato was concerned about the static nature of art, that it does not respond to us, leaving us in a one-way situation.

BEAUTY

We have learned that unlike Plato, John Keats identified beauty with truth and felt that beauty is one of life’s most important experiences, that it was “all ye need to know.” We have seen that Plato probed into the nature of beauty, asking if it was part of ourselves, rather than part of the world; in this view, beauty is the enjoyment we feel in response to our own senses of hearing and sight. This raises questions about the beauty of abstractions and intellectual experiences such as mathematics; are they sensory?

What would we still like to learn?