



Accent on Meter: A Handbook for Readers of Poetry

Joseph Powell, Mark Halperin

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Accent on Meter: A Handbook for Readers of Poetry offers practical ways of teaching students about the close connections between the meaning, rhythm, and meter in poetry. The major assumption of the book is that a close reading of a poem--one that explores the nuances of structure--can increase one's appreciation and enjoyment of poetry. In the words of the authors, "What the poem is about and how it explores that material is more important than the technical means it uses. Yet by focusing on those means, we can perhaps get closer to finding out why we felt what we felt. That process can deepen our reading, enhance it, complicate it."

Joseph Powell and Mark Halperin begin by describing strategies for understanding what "accent" is and move to a step-by-step analysis of examples. Once students feel confident about the basics, they can find additional sections that go deeper into topics like the meter around us every day, varieties of metrical lines, stanza forms, and the sometimes-confusing issues of variant pronunciations and sentimentality in poetry. A student essay on a contemporary poem demonstrates how meter and meaning can be brought together in an effective analysis.

The useful reference materials at the end include three glossaries, a bibliography, and an index, along with a special appendix of poems that lets students try their hands at scanning and then check their scansions.

While more detailed than introductory texts, *Accent on Meter* does not assume prior knowledge; it is designed to supplement anthologies and texts used in introduction to poetry and creative writing classes. Teachers will find this introduction to meter user-friendly because the book offers a sequence of cases, examples, and strategies for teaching scansion in easy-to-read prose that acknowledges the ambiguity and difficulty of many poetic concepts and the fact that some lines can be scanned in more than one way. Written by two experienced teachers who are themselves widely published poets, *Accent on Meter* will be an invaluable asset in any poetry classroom.

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