

# Poetic Methods that Move Prospects

By: Frankie Frontis

**P**oets have developed and sharpened some of the finest tools a copywriter will ever need to produce lively, resounding and memorable ad copy. Some tools, namely rhyme and alliteration, are used regularly by most copywriters. However, only a comparative few of them have mastered poetic devices sufficiently to understand how they work to influence readers.

Thanks for the few! Joy Blair, a copywriter for *Good Advertising* in Memphis, Tennessee is one of them. In addition to writing advertising copy, she also writes poetry. Blair has put her pen to the severest of tests, writing Haiku, a very compact, precise and powerful Japanese form of poetry. Some of her work has been published in *Modern Haiku*.

Blair describes both poetry and ad copy as very disciplined uses of the language, having concise forms and much precision in choice of words. "Poetry," however, says Blair, "is a lot more challenging than ad copy." It is more precise and, unlike advertising copy, places a stronger emphasis on the interpretation of facts over the mere reporting of them. "Writing poetry is more involved and a lot more fun," says Blair. "You have to put more of yourself and your emotions into it."

If so much goes into the language of poetry, it would seem only reasonable that quite a bit would come out of it as well. Blair agrees with this notion. "Poetry," she says, "has given me an awareness and appreciation of the subtleties of the language."

This feel for the "subtleties of the language," suggests Blair, works to enhance her advertising copy in a number of interesting ways:

**A) Rhythm.** As a key element in most poetry, rhythm is naturally appreciated by nearly all poets as well as many copywriters, Blair, among them. Rhythm in advertising copy, she contends, catches the reader's eyes and ears and complements the message of the copy. Notice how these two examples of advertising copy use rhythm to accomplish these goals:

1. Magically slim. Small, sleek and very beautiful. Quartz, in 14 Karat gold. The 5.5 Ligne, by Movado (Movado-elegant watches).

2. Roughing. High Sticking. Tripping. Slashing.... The perfect skills for a *Sporting News* sales rep. (Sporting News)

Another poet, Janet Burroway, author of *Writing Poems*, speaks of how rhythm can be used to enforce what's being said. "This is especially true," she says, "when the rhythm of a sentence itself imitates the action of what's being described." The following piece of copy illustrates Burroway's point.

Running with the wind to great ports o'call  
in the exotic Caribbean. For old salts' and  
landlubbers; join intimate fun loving ship-  
mates for 'barefoot' adventure under white sails.

(Windjammer Barefoot Cruises)

The copy is about ocean line cruising and its movement sails smoothly from beginning to end.


As a message enforcer, rhythm then can be of much benefit to ad copy, a form strives to communicate its point rather quickly. Blair, however, suggests that we not give undo attention to rhythm. "It comes naturally," she says. "All good writing has rhythm."



reveals how the sound of product names suggests certain qualities about the products themselves.

- I. Allara (feminine cosmetics)
- Almay (feminine cosmetics)
- Amolin (deodorant, woman's)
- Eve (woman's fragrance)
- Inning (woman's perfume)
- II. Brut (men's cologne)
- Gambler (men's cologne)
- Gunk (engine cleaner)
- Gook (strong adhesive)
- Thor (car tires)

List one consists of products with gentle qualities, whose names are composed mostly of high pitched frontal vowels and soft consonants. List two contains products with tough, rugged qualities whose names are constructed from a large percentage of low-pitched, back vowels and harsh sounding consonants (plosives).

Poetry aims to enforce meaning and message through special use of the language. As a writer of poetry, familiar with the "subtleties of the language," Blair is in an excellent position to enforce the meaning and message of her ad copy. By now, she has become a real pro at doing this. "These things come naturally," she says. "I don't have to sit down and stop to think about doing them." 

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