

# *Line and Length*

by Harry Dunn

received 20 October 2021

This could very well be the worst poem ever written by anyone, anywhere, but it must score at least 9 out of 10 for neatness, shape and presentation. Please read on.....

**A friend of mine – a retired English teacher, recently complained  
About the wayward length of lines in my attempts at verse  
If they're too long they spoil the song, too short is even worse  
And the high standard he expects has not been maintained  
Uneven line and length, he said, was the versifier's curse**

**If you want to write good verse, he said with firm conviction  
Your lines should all be balanced, with equality of length  
Yours resemble Fido's breakfast, but lack its dogged strength  
The man had made his point and I didn't offer contradiction  
For I doubted not the wisdom of his words nor their intent**

**But I just can't equalise line lengths, although I've really tried  
Without the risk of losing sense, or rhyme, or time or meter  
I can line up all the endings but then it reads like dog- excreta  
And I ask myself – Is this because I've cross'd the great divide  
Perhaps I should retire to a daily snooze before the heater**

**The great divide that we all face, sooner, now, or maybe later  
Come to terms with all that's passed and evaluate what's left  
While we're still compos – mentis, not bewildered and bereft  
And should I waste my precious time on a line-length calculator  
Scribbling lines of standard length, but no subtlety or depth**

**So I put this very question to my new rhyming-word advisor  
To illustrate the way real poets achieve that neat and tidy end  
Then asked him if he'd show me verses he himself had penned  
But he quickly changed the subject, so I am none the wiser  
And I'm starting to have doubts about this learned friend**

**So I won't be writing any doggerel with lines of tidy length  
Because, I tell you, it's a style that's these days seldom done  
And it's a near-impossible for me, as for many another mother's son  
I just can't quite get it right, which shows my lack of poet-sense  
So I'm reverting to untidy lines and rhyming on the run**