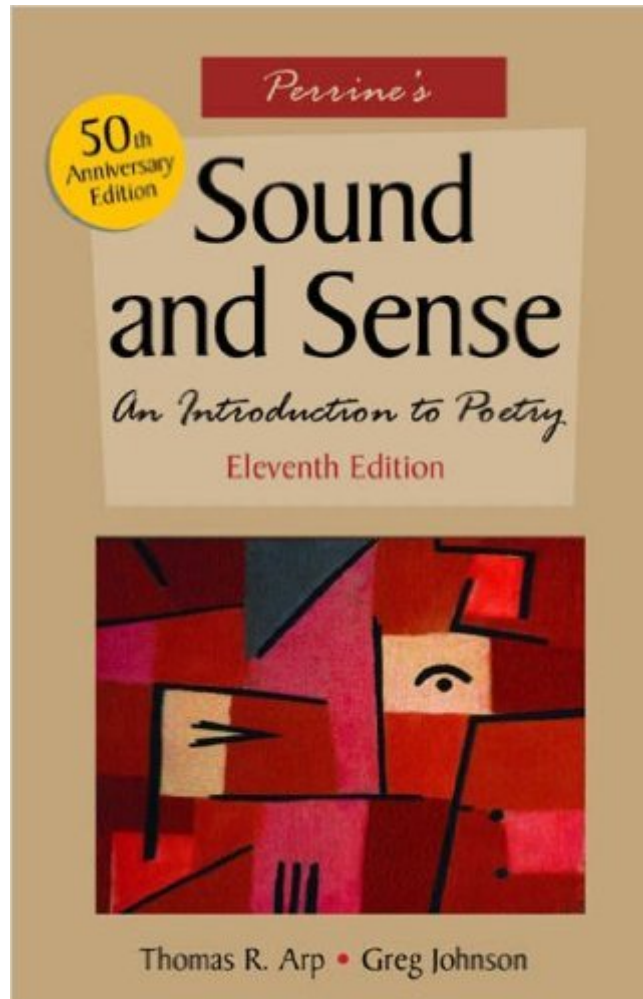


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# Perrine's Sound And Sense: An Introduction To Poetry



## Synopsis

An introduction to poetry presented in a compact and concise anthology, **SOUND AND SENSE** continues the tradition of offering clear, precise writing and practical organization initiated by Laurence Perrine years ago.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I came across an early edition of *Sound and Sense* a few years ago. At first glance the slightly yellowed text appeared foreboding with chapters like denotation and connotation, imagery, figurative language, allusion, tone, rhythm and meter, sound and meaning, and so forth. I found it hard to imagine a less lifeless approach to poetry. However, the text did seem to contain a sizeable anthology as an appendix and poetry was abundant in every chapter. I reasoned that I could skip the poetic structure discussions and simply read the poetry. But from the beginning I found Perrine's style and approach to be stimulating, rather than analytical. Throughout we are immersed in poetry, great poetry, familiar poetry, unfamiliar poetry. Perrine argues that poetry needs to be read and reread carefully for full understanding and appreciation. We need to learn to think about poetry with some seriousness, but not in a cold, calculating manner. We approach new poetry with our eyes and ears open, our senses alive. Yes, as other reviewers point out, *Sound and Sense* is structured and does methodically explore poetic forms in some detail. But this is not a drawback. It is actually an aid to understanding. Perrine manages to achieve his instructional objective without diluting his central message: poetry is to be enjoyed. He never forgets that his subject is poetry, and not poetic

form and structure. I have since learned that Perrine's text is still in use today, nearly fifty years after publication of the first edition. (See recent 10th edition 0155073966, June 8, 2000.) How can that be? Few textbooks achieve ten printings, much less ten editions. Even the title change signifies respect; it is no longer simply Sound and Sense, it is "Perrine's Sound and Sense". I highly recommend Perrine's text to anyone willing to invest a little time and study to poetry. The return will be worthwhile. I give Sound and Sense five stars.

I am currently using this book with 11th grade English students, and they have been truly caught up in it. We are actually having arguments in class over poetry!! I do find, however, that it is helpful to do the chapter on rhythm and meter much earlier than I would if I were following the chapters in order. My experience is that students have a difficult time hearing the rhythm of poetry and are generally unable to read aloud with any success. Jumping ahead early to the chapter on rhythm and meter and having the students tap out the meters and then mark the scansion produces a wonderful improvement in their ability to hear the poems and read them aloud. I would heartily recommend this book for use in grades 11 and 12, and for college freshman. It makes the study of poetry hugely enjoyable, as it should be but rarely is, for both student and teacher.

Bottom-Line: I highly recommend "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" not only to aspiring and seasoned poets, but for readers of poetry as well. I am a writer. I am a Poet; there I've said it (deep breath); I weaver of words, a spinner of tales, and to hear my wife tell it, a wordsmith. It took me a long time after I started writing poetry for me to finally claim the title as my own. I wrote poetry but I did not feel like a poet; I was not and am not classically trained in the arcane art of poetry. My degrees are in Leadership and Business Administration not Fine Arts. When I first started writing poetry I had no idea what an iambic meter, iambic Pentameter, or even a meter were when speaking of poetic creation. I wrote my poetry from the heart and soul not caring about the "rules" of writing poetry. But then my wife suggested that I might want to actually study the mechanics of poetry in order to better understand the art-form. She suggested that I might want to pick up a copy of what is widely regarded as the definitive guide to writing and understanding poetry: "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" by Thomas R. Arp. I picked up the ninth edition of this seminal book. "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" is a relatively thin volume considering the subject matter, checking in at 412 pages, and is divided into two sections: Part 1 The Elements of Poetry, and; Part 2 Poems for Further Reading. "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" is not casual reading, it is at its core and test book

meant to teach, to mentor the reader in the foundations of writing poetry. The author not only lays out the case for poetic creation, but also give examples of what he is trying to relate; poetry is sprinkled like marker posts throughout the book pointing you in the right poetic direction. Another was "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" is like a test book is that it asks question of the reader about a poem given as an example in the book; for example after Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem The Eagle, the book asks the following questions: 1. What is peculiarly effective about the expression "crooked hands," "Close to the sun," "Ringed with the azure world," "wrinkled," "crawls," and "like a thunderbolt"? 2. Notice the formal pattern of the poem, particularly the contrast of "the stands" in the first stanza and "he falls" in the second. Is there any other contrast between the two stanzas? For anyone unfamiliar with The Eagle, by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809 - 1892) here it is: He clasps the crag with crooked hands; Close to the sun in lonely lands, Ringed with the azure worlds, he stands. The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls; He watches from the mountain walls, And like a thunderbolt he falls. By asking question, and then answering them of course, the reader is led to a better understanding of poetry and the way in which different poet's convey their message within the parameters of fixed poetic rules. In "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" the author, in the case Thomas R. Arp (Laurence Perrine was too ill to update this edition) lays out a rule or argument, gives an example of that rule in the form of a poem, and then asks questions of the reader to broaden, or tighten their understanding of the concepts presented. I found this to be a very effective method of coming to an understanding of poetry and the various rules governing its creation. I tend to be a free-verse poet; I tried to write more structured verse but I found it too constraining. I did not always want my lines and stanzas to rhyme or otherwise conform to some of the more rigid rules of poetry, so I tend to write outside the lines as it were. But "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" helped me tighten my free-verse poetry by pointing out the right and wrong way to write this type of poetry. I have learned that I can drift outside the rules as long as I use some of the rules of poetry. Before reading "Perrine's Sound and Sense" I thought the rules of poetry were set in stone, but after reading the book I realize that poets are free to express themselves in a number of ways and still wear the label Poet. I highly recommend "Perrine's Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry" not only to aspiring and seasoned poets, but for readers of poetry as well. Gaining a broader understanding of what poetry is, can only heighten one's enjoyment of writing and reading this wonderfully expressive art-form.

I've been nibbling away at a 20 year old edition of this book for a few years in my spare time, and almost every bite has increased my ability to appreciate poetry. I like the examples, most of them

seem pretty old, Frost is about as modern as he gets, but that's ok with me. You might find this book a little annoying if it was required reading in a course, sometimes it asks more questions than it answers.

My senior AP Literature and Composition class is using this book as a textbook, and I would have to say it is the best high school English book I've ever used. The questions following each included piece really helps you to focus on what is important in the passage, and the introductions to each chapter are brief and to the point.

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