What Are the Characteristics of Conversation Poems?

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The conversation poem is a genre of poetry most commonly associated with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. These poems are personal and emotional in nature, often drawing on real events from the poet's life. While these poems don't have to follow a highly formulaic structure, they do share several similarities.

Subject Matter

Like most conversation poems, Coleridge's poems each share a meaningful memory or life event. He then uses this story as a springboard for deeper philosophical discussions about human nature and poetry, often linking the two. For example, "The Eolian Harp" tells the story of Coleridge's engagement in idealized terms. Coleridge then expresses the dichotomy between various aspects of human life and nature, such as order and chaos. He resolves these apparent disconnects by explaining that God is in all of nature.

Structure

Conversation poems are **blank-verse style**, which means they have a clear rhythm and meter, **but the lines do not rhyme**. **This means that they may divide sentences into two or more lines to maintain the rhythm. This creates the appearance of a conversation or monologue that has been inserted into the structure of a poem.**

Lyrical Style

Conversation poems are lyrical in nature, which means they place heavy emphasis on personal emotions. All of Coleridge's poems are told in the present tense and read like song lyrics that could be easily set to music. The poems typically end at a point similar to the beginning, by revisiting the initial theme and providing a slightly modified take on the memory or philosophy Coleridge presented earlier in the poem.

Audience – David Bouchard disregarded this point.

Unlike some other poems, conversation poems aren't written to a single entity or person. Instead, they address a general audience seeking information about the nature of life, love and God. Conversation poems generally speak directly to the reader by anticipating and responding to his or her reaction. However, subsections of each poem may address a specific character or entity.

You are asked to emulate David Bouchard’s poem “Nokum is my Teacher” and identify your teacher. Bouchard has a conversation with his Grandmother. You must do the same with your ‘teacher’.