Narrative Poetry

Narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story. Like a short story, it has a plot, characters, a setting, and a theme. However, it is written in verse, with a rhythm, and sometimes a rhyme scheme. Just as stories are broken up into paragraphs, poems are divided up into stanzas. Often, each stanza has the same number of lines and the same rhyme pattern.

Casey at the Bat
by Ernest L. Thayer

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day,
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play.
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go, leaving there the rest,
With that hope which springs eternal within the human breast.
For they thought, "if only Casey could but get a whack at that."
They'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake.
And the former was a pudd'n, and the latter was a fake.
So on that stricken multitude a deathlike silence sat;
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all.
And the much-despised Blakey "tore the cover off the ball."
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Blakey safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell—
It rumbled in the mountaintops, it rattled in the dell;
It struck upon the hillside and rebounded on the flat;
for Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
there was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.
And when responding to the cheers he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt t'was Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt.
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then, while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
and Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur\(^2\) there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped;
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

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1 \textit{pall}: a cloth that is spread over a coffin or tomb

2 \textit{haughty grandeur}: arrogant greatness
From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm waves on a stern and distant shore.  
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.  

With a smile of Christian charity, great Casey's visage shone,  
He stilled the rising tumult, he made the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew,  
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed;  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
and they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer has fled from Casey's lip, the teeth are clenched in hate.  
He pounds with cruel vengeance his bat upon the plate.  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;  
And, somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Mudville: mighty Casey has struck out.

writhe (v) to twist, as in pain, struggle, or embarrassment  
sneer (v/n): a scornful facial expression or manner  
visage (n) the face or facial expression of a person  
awe (n) a mixed emotion of reverence, respect, dread, and wonder inspired by authority, genius, great beauty, or power.
1. How does Thayer show the reader what Casey’s personality is like? Give 2 examples.

2. How is the ending of the poem ironic? Which type of irony is it?

3. Give an example of each of the following in the poem and why that technique was used in that particular example:
   - alliteration:
   - hyperbole
   - onomatopoeia:
   - simile:

4. What is the rhyme scheme of “Casey at the Bat”? Write it below.