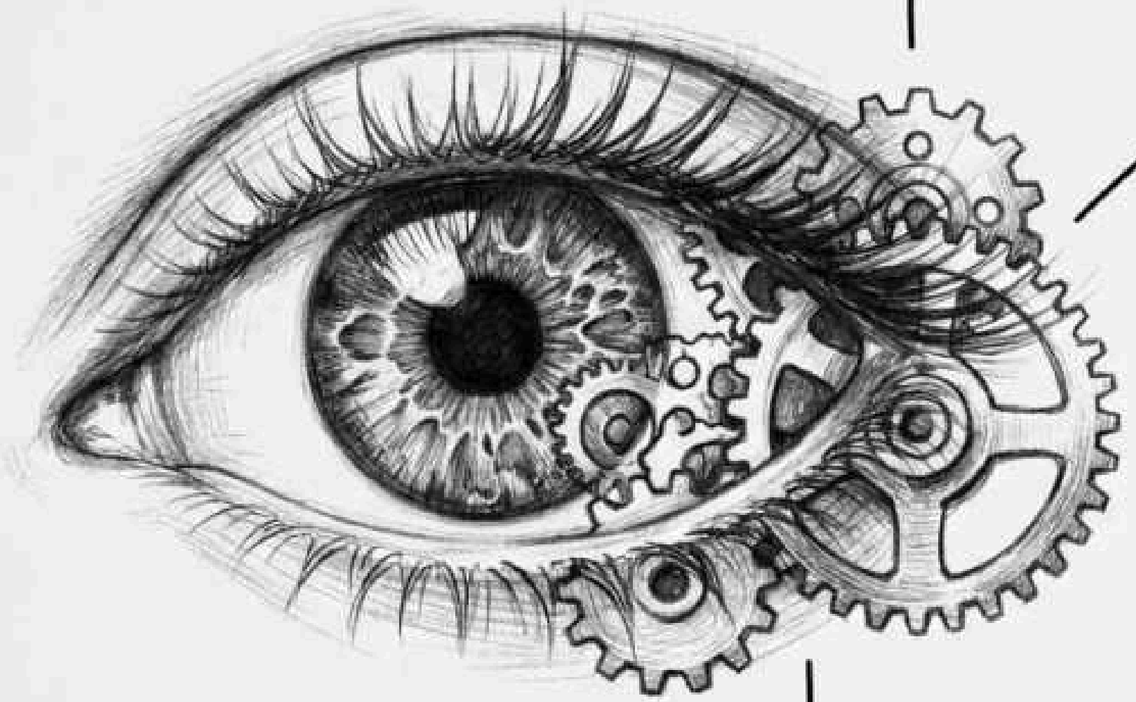
Reverse-Engineering the Poem

¶ 6.1

Impact = f(Word, Line Break, Image)



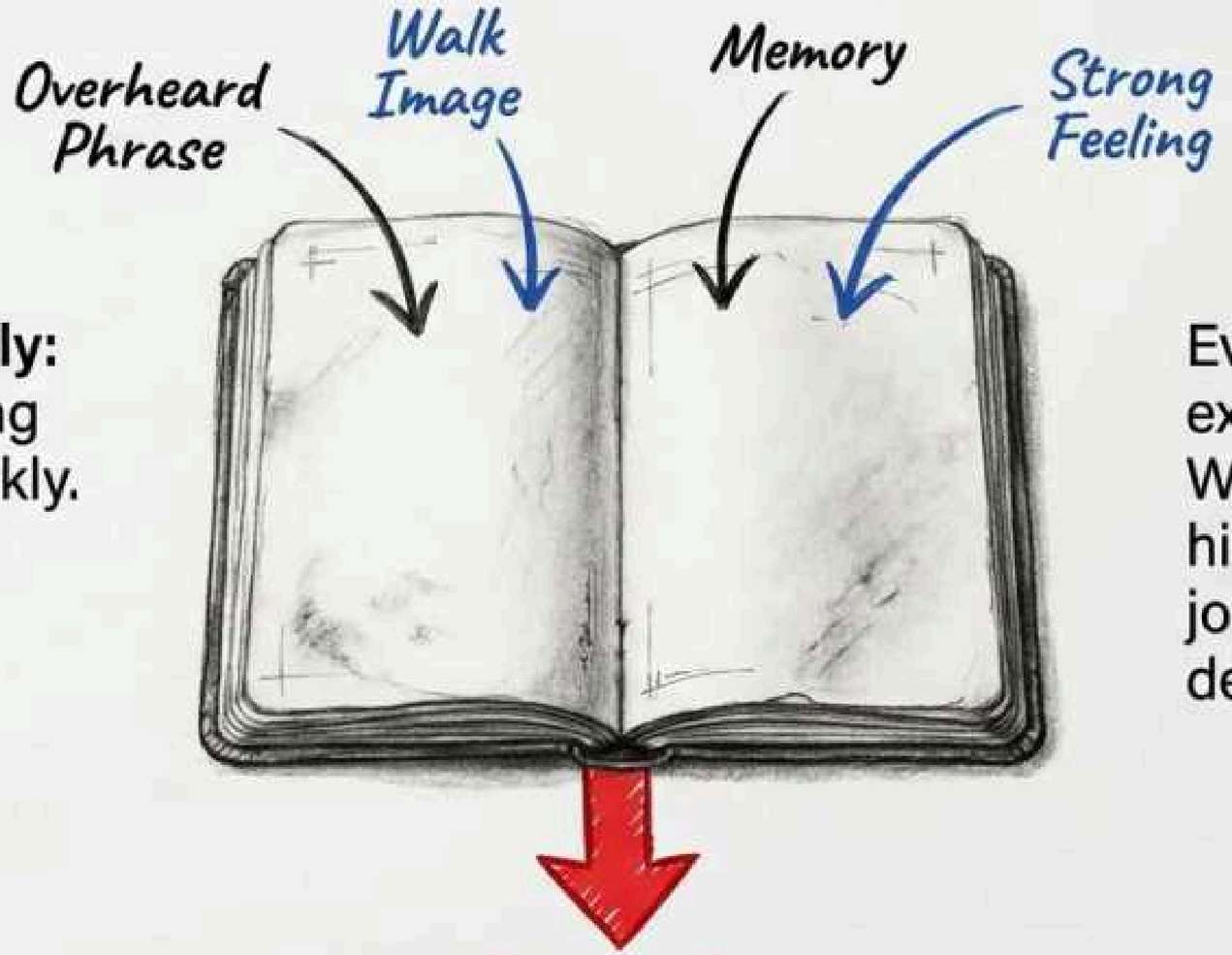
The First Step
Read as a writer.

The Diagnostic Question
When moved, ask how? Is it the word choice, the break, or the image? Keep a running list.

The Imitation Principle
Copy the forms and moves of beloved poets until your own distinct voice emerges.

Gathering Raw Material

¶ 6.2



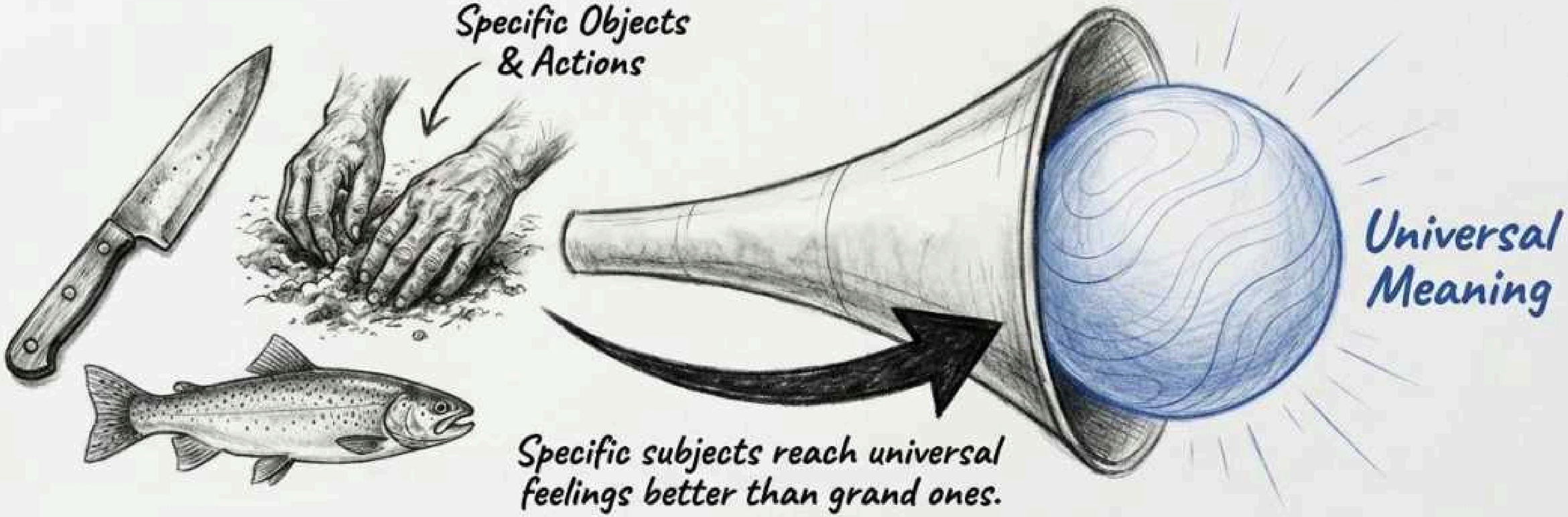
Capture immediately: thoughts and fleeting feelings vanish quickly.

Carry a notebook everywhere.

Even **masters** needed external help: Wordsworth relied on his sister Dorothy's journals for crucial details.

The Inverse Law of Subjects

¶ 6.3



- Finding subjects is easier than it seems: write about what you know closely (a kitchen, a street at night, a loss).
- Small subjects hold large meanings.

The Emotion Equation

¶ 6.4

Emotion ≠ "I was lonely" (Abstract)

Emotion = ∑ (Single Cup in Sink + Radio Left On + Empty Chair) (Concrete)

Let readers feel the emotion themselves; don't dictate what they should feel.

Abstract words (love, beauty, sorrow) must be earned by concrete images.



Piercing the Cliché

¶ 6.5

~~cold as ice~~
~~heart of gold~~
~~tears streaming~~

Clichés (worn-out phrases) kill reader attention.



The Antidote:
Look harder at the real thing.

Ask: How does this particular thing look or feel?
Don't reach for pre-packaged words already in your head.

Form as a Tool, Not a Cage

¶ 6.6

Poetic Form	Emotional Function
Villanelle	Obsession
Sonnet	Argument
Free Verse	Meditation
Ballad	Story

Draft the same material in two forms to see which brings it alive.

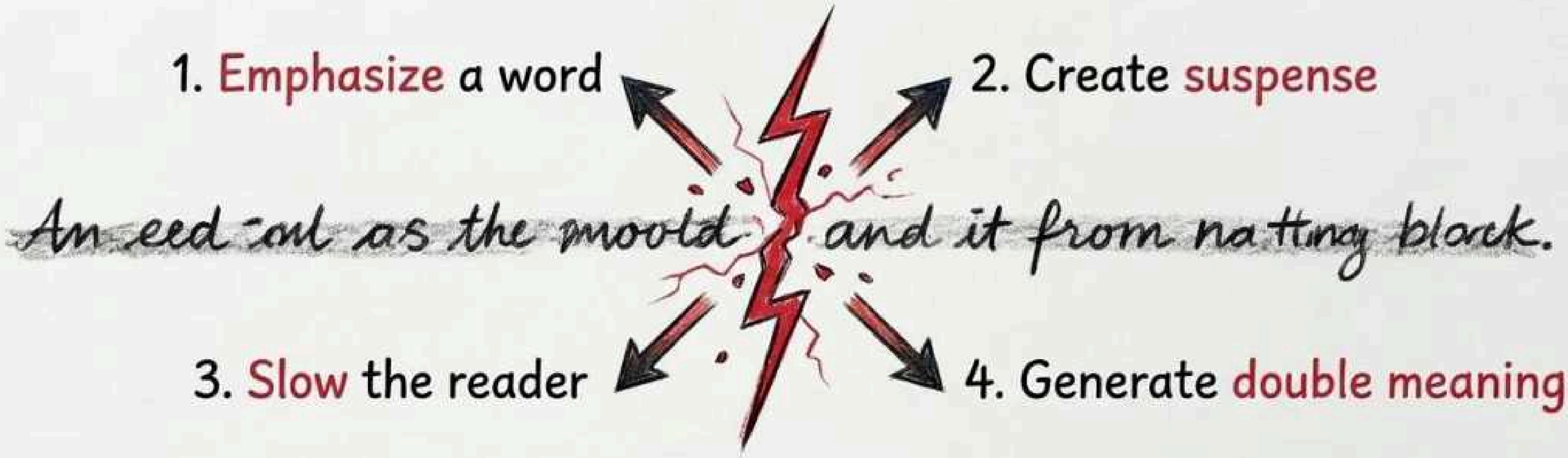
Sometimes the form itself suggests what the poem actually wants to say.

The Physics of Line Breaks

¶ 6.7

1. Emphasize a word

2. Create suspense



3. Slow the reader

4. Generate double meaning

Line breaks are the poet's most important tool in free verse.

The Audio Test
Read aloud and listen for natural breaths.

The Unit Test
Can the line stand on its own as an interesting unit?

Openings and Endings

¶ 6.8





The real poem usually starts later.

The first line must earn the reader's attention.

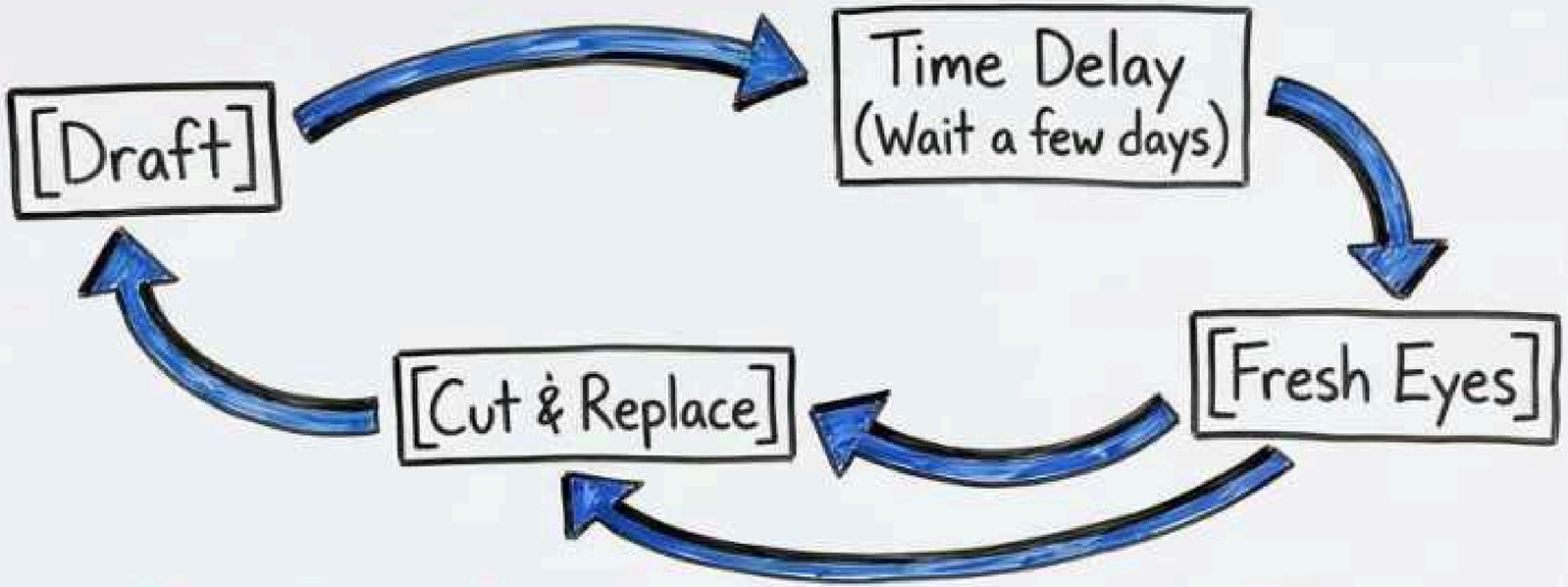
BODY

Resonate. Do not summarize.

Avoid ending with a moral that explains the poem. Trust the final image to do the work.

Re-Vision: Seeing Again

¶6.9

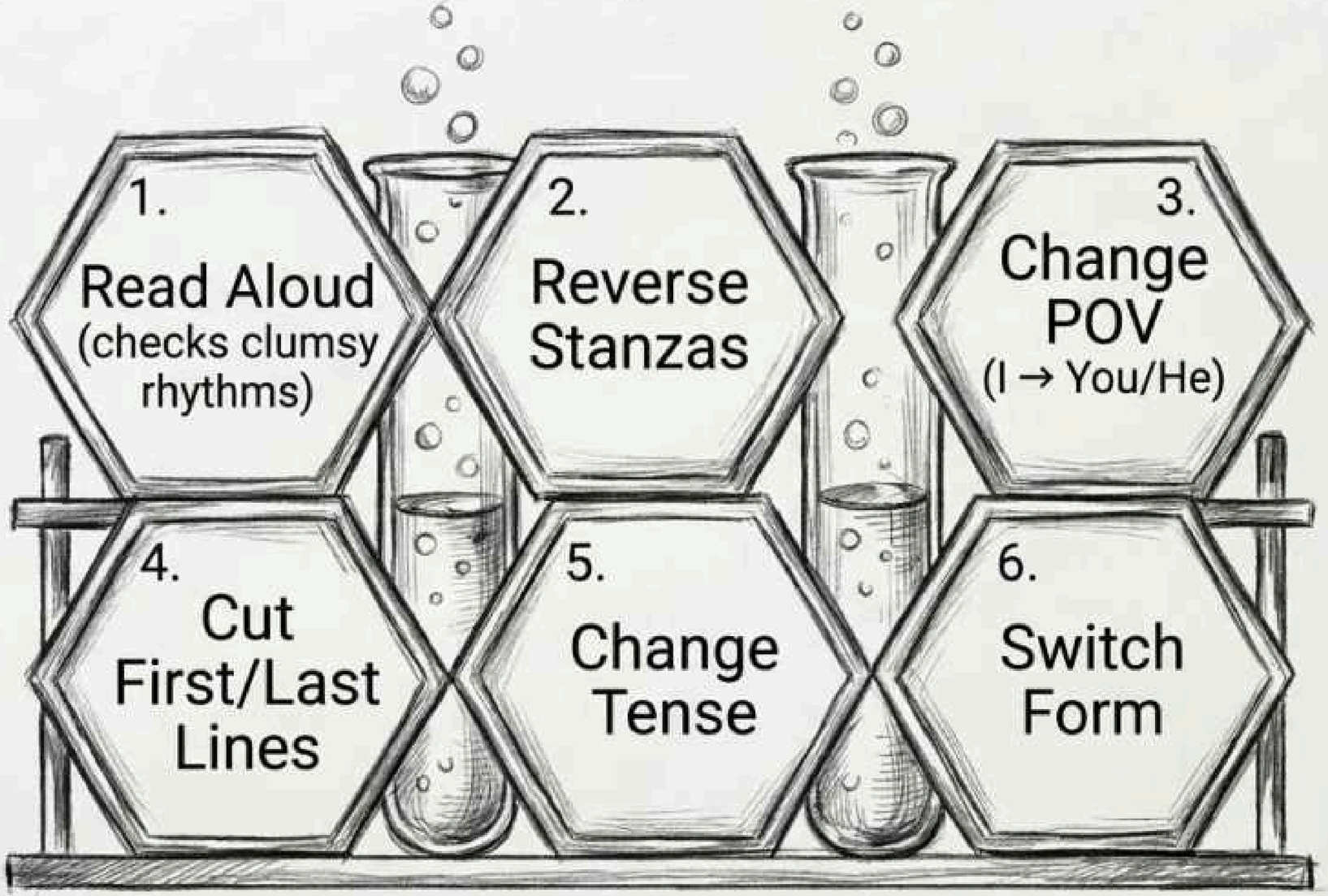


Revision = Draft − Non-contributing Words + Precise Verbs/Nouns

- Revision is where poems are made.
- The Ezra Pound Rule: Cut every word that does not contribute.
- Replace weak verbs and vague nouns with precise ones. (Famous poems undergo dozens of drafts).

A Toolkit for Disruption

¶ 6.10

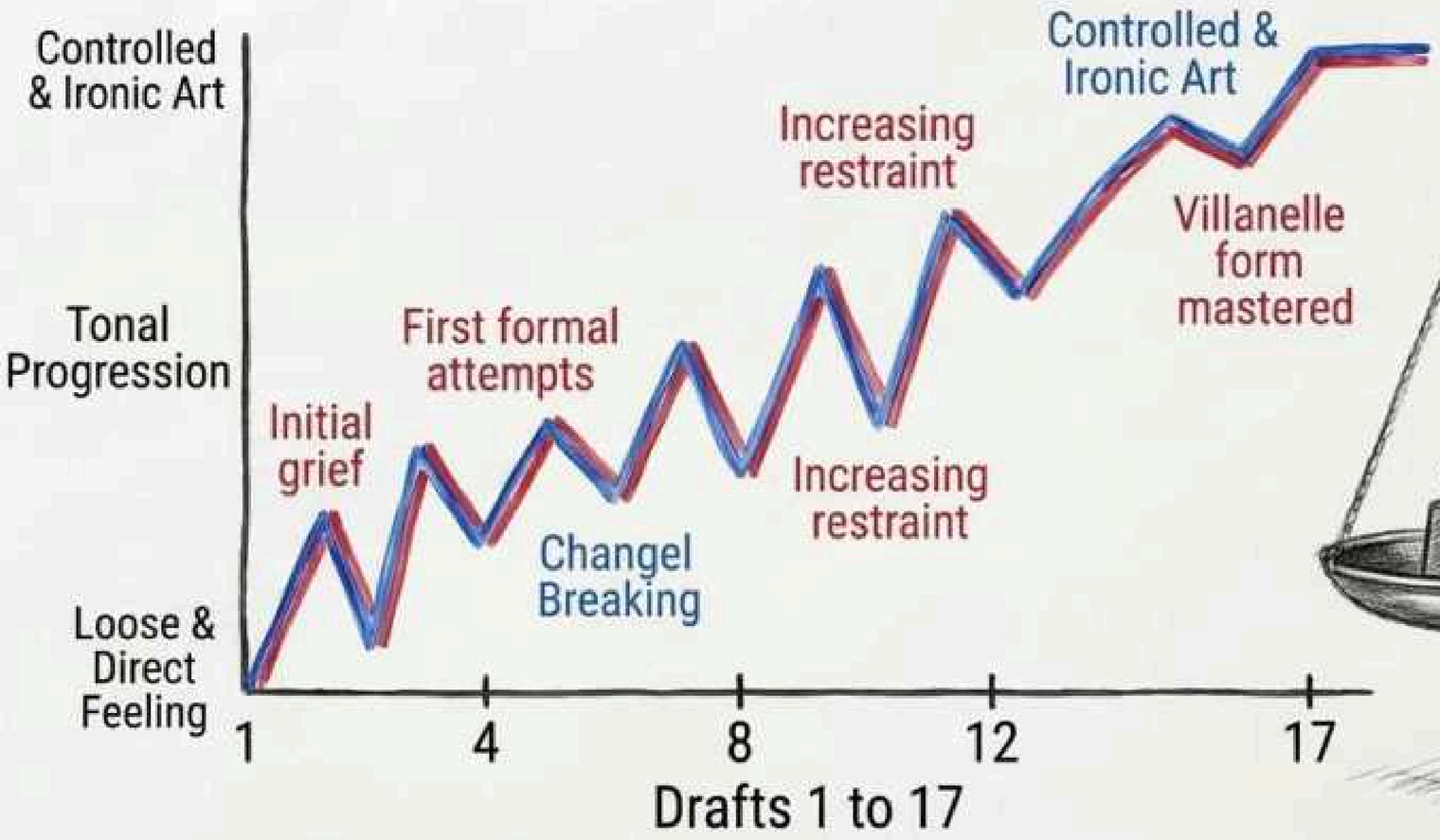


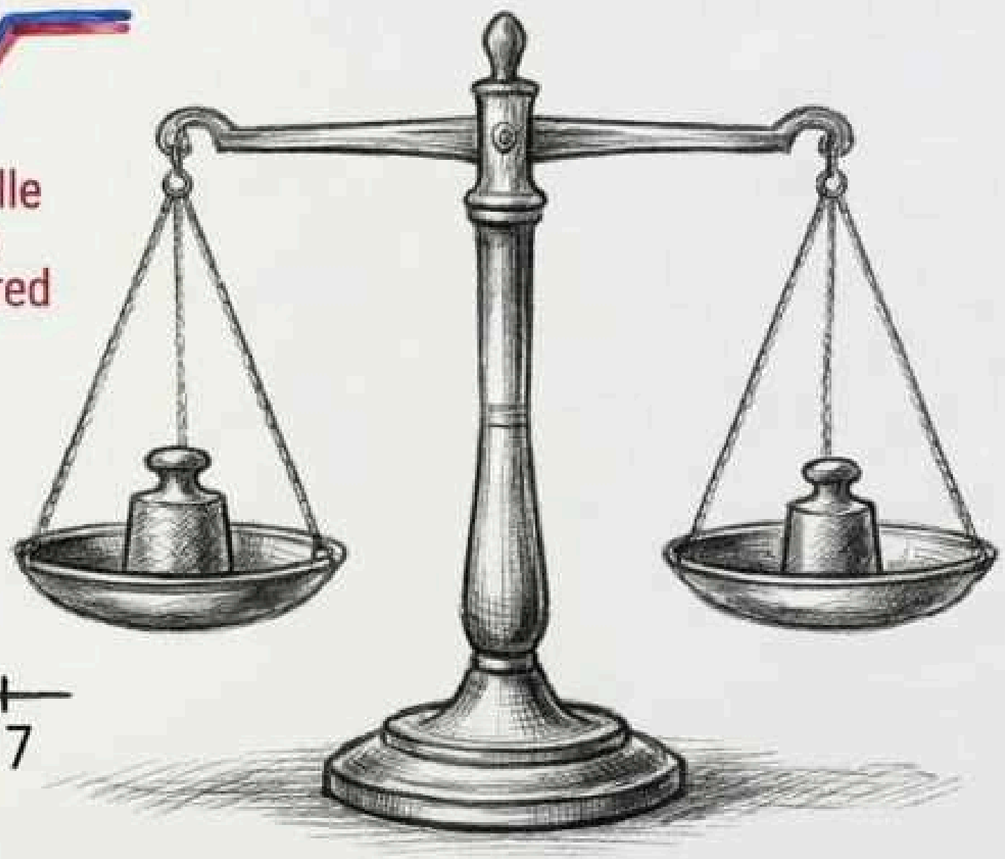
Treat revision as an experiment.

Each alteration reveals entirely new possibilities for the work.

The Evolution of "One Art"

¶ 6.11

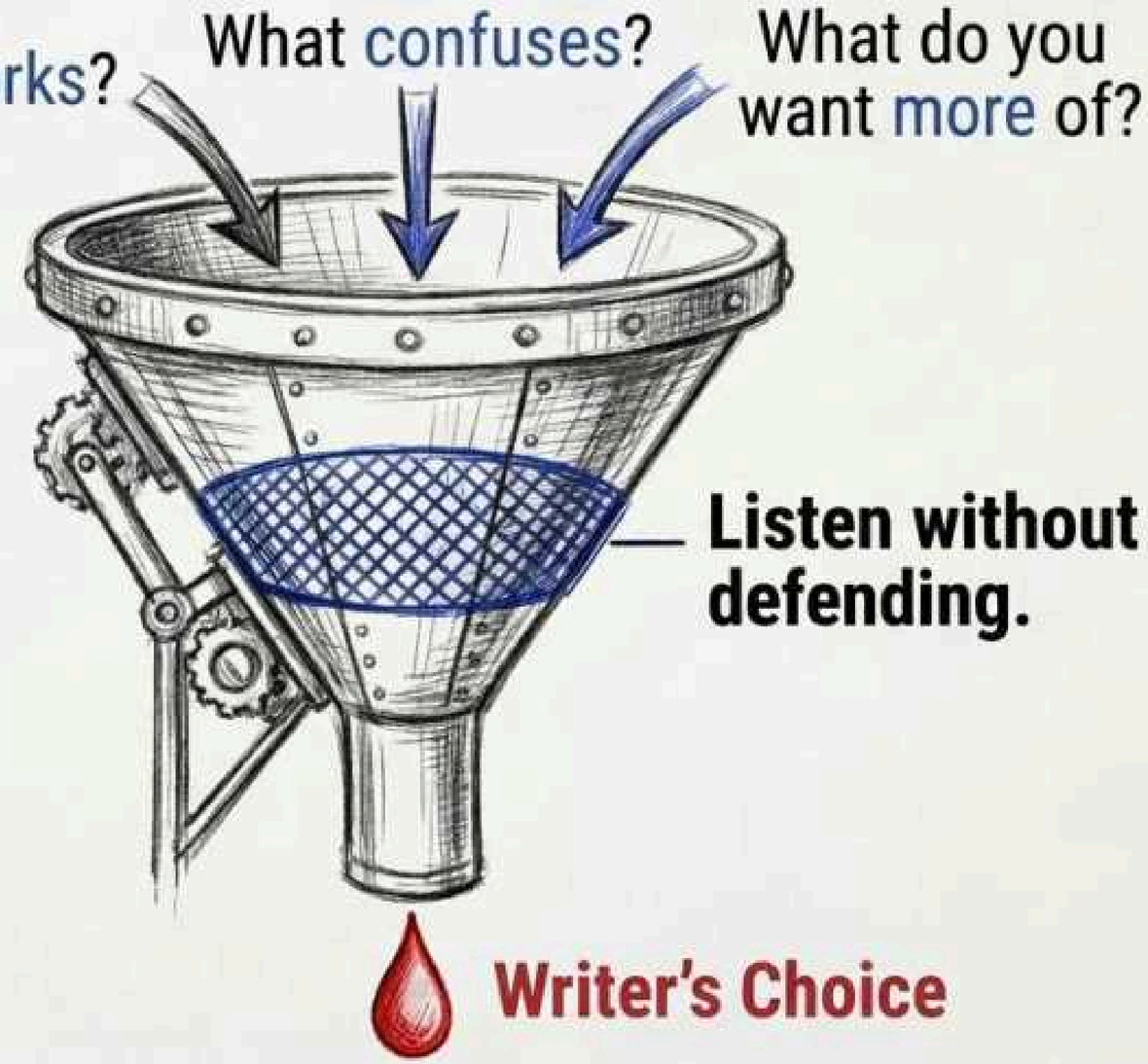




- Elizabeth Bishop's surviving papers show 17 distinct drafts.
- Revision is the exact process of turning raw feeling into refined art.

The Feedback Filter

¶ 6.12

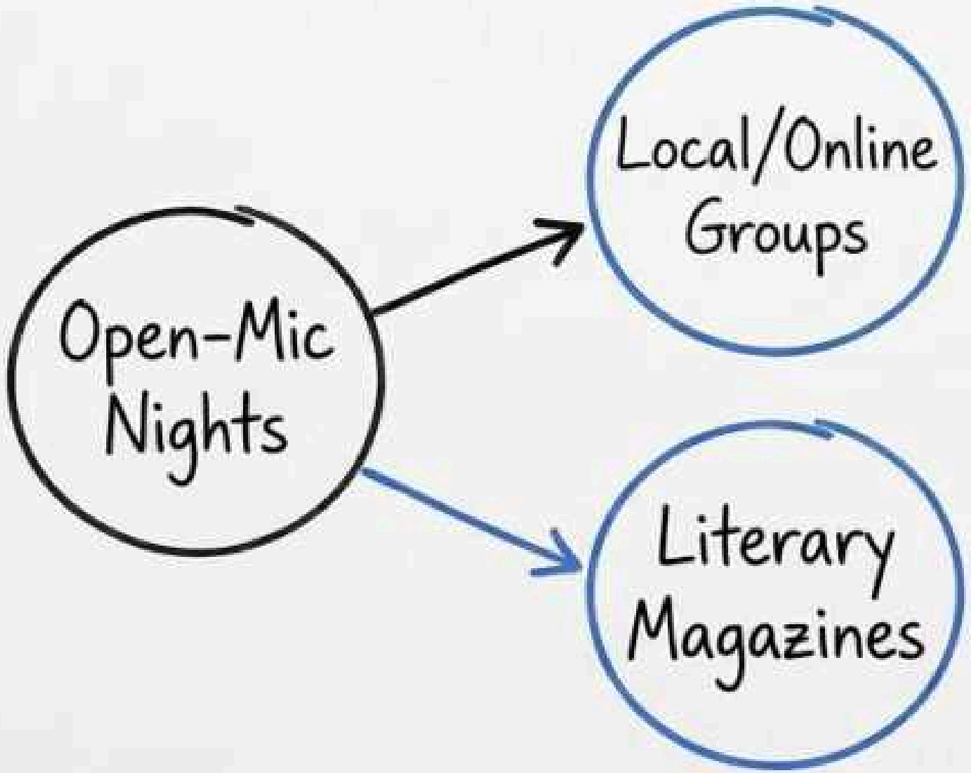


A workshop is a group offering specific and kind responses.

The author remains the final authority on their own poem (Decide for yourself which suggestions to take).

Entering the World

¶ 6.13

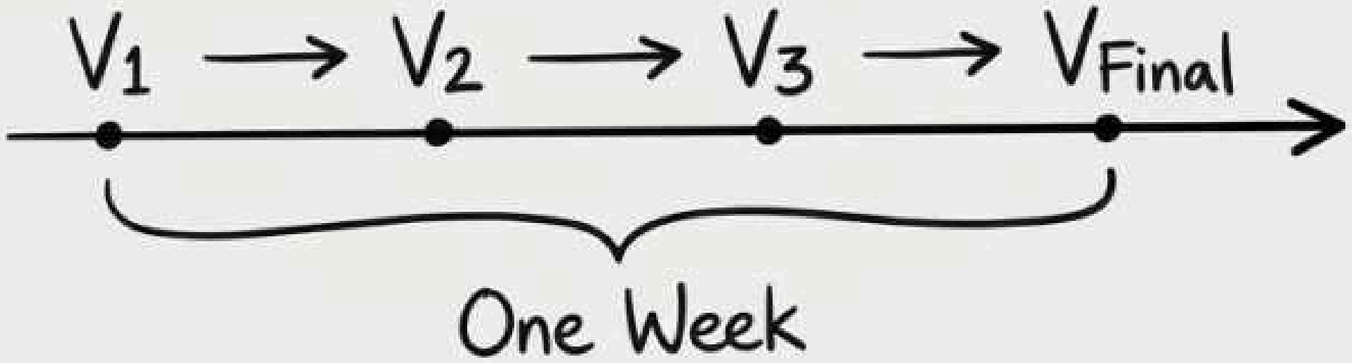




Rejection is normal: even famous poets collect rejection letters.
Persistence and continued reading matter much more than early success.

Measure Your Development

¶ 6.14



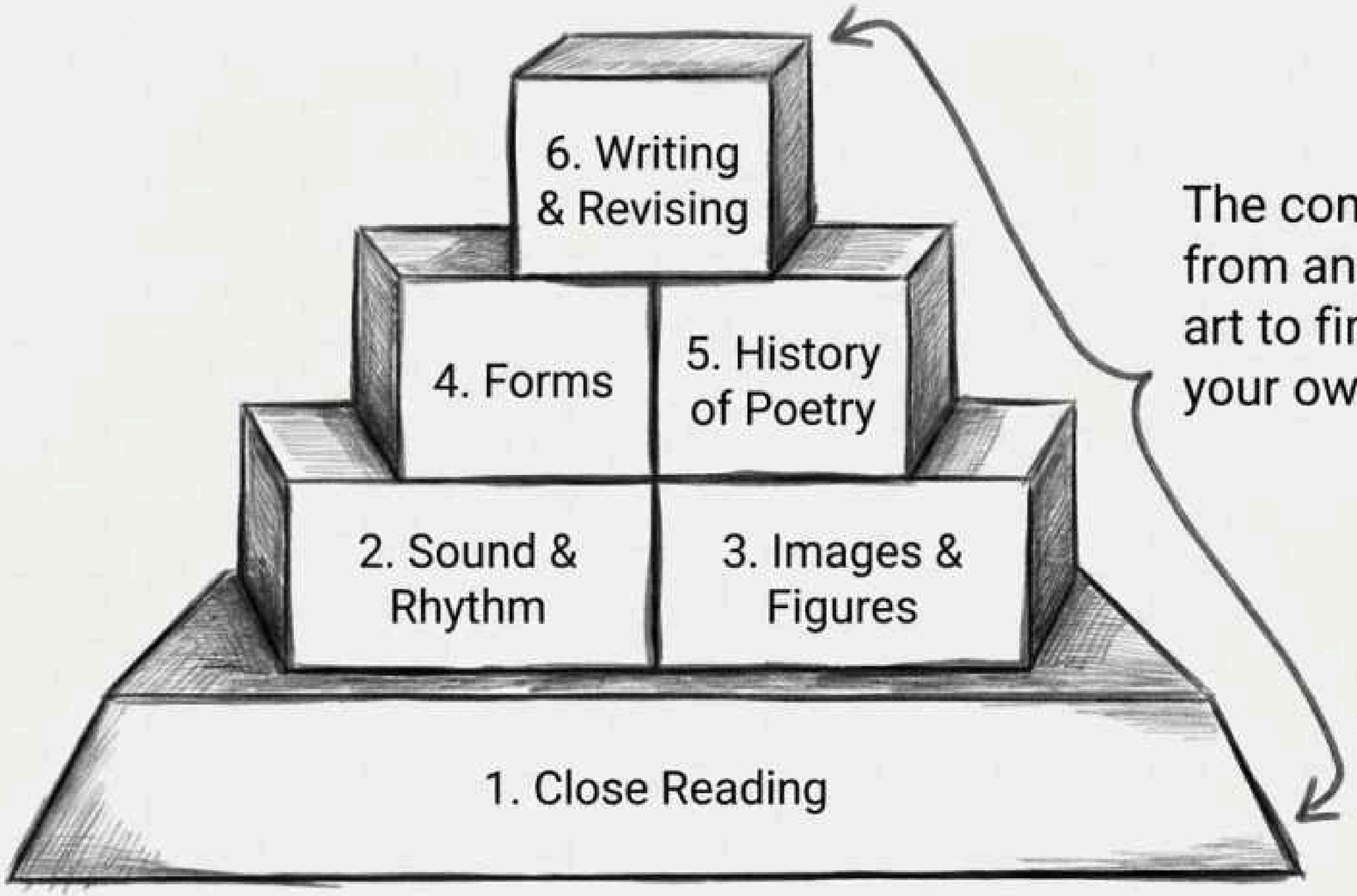
$$\Delta(V_{Final} - V_1) = \text{Your Development (as reader and writer)}$$

The Final Exercise:

1. Take one poem drafted during this course.
2. Revise it three distinct times over a week, keeping every version.
3. Compare the first and last drafts to visibly track what changed and observe your own growth.

What We've Built: Course Summary

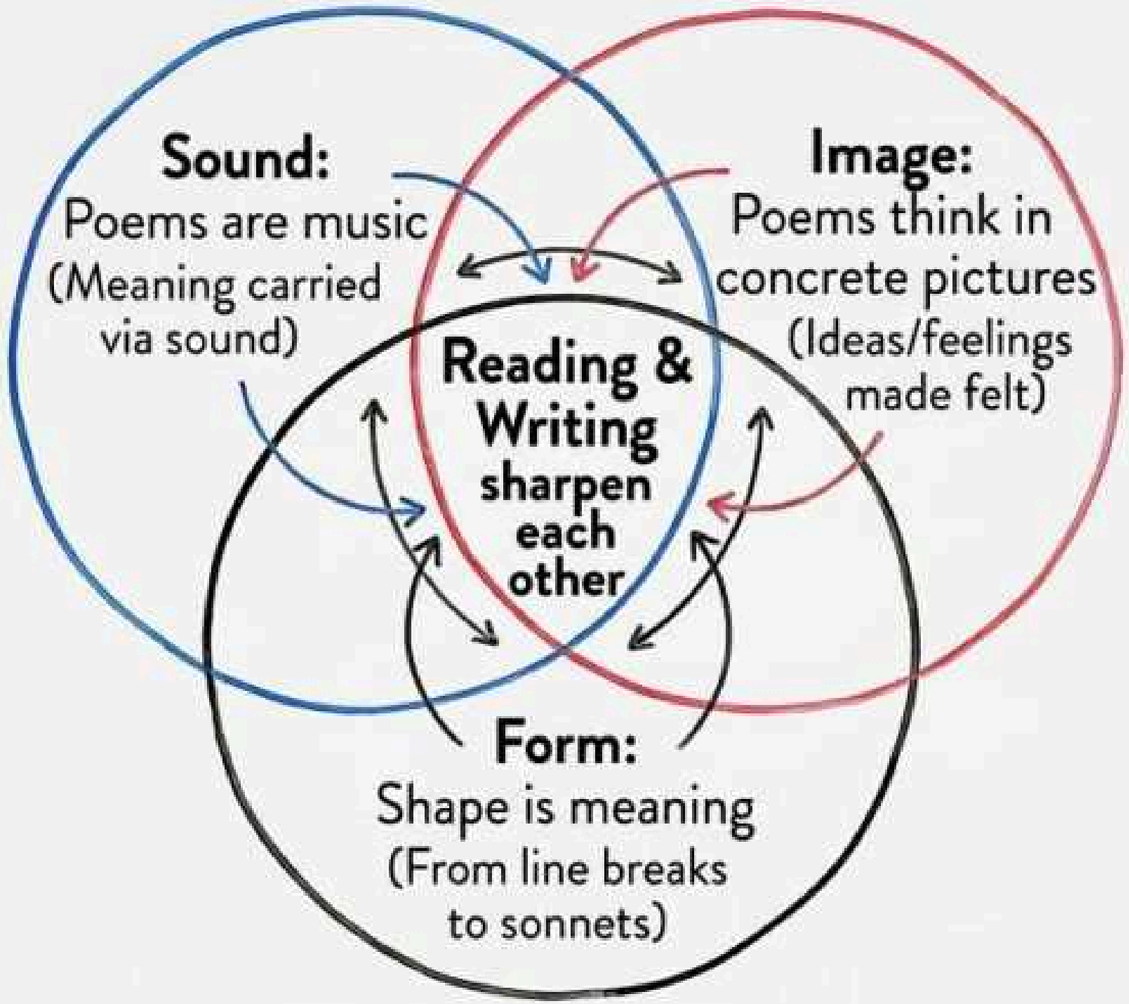
¶ 6.15



The complete journey: from analyzing existing art to finally creating your own.

¶ 6.16

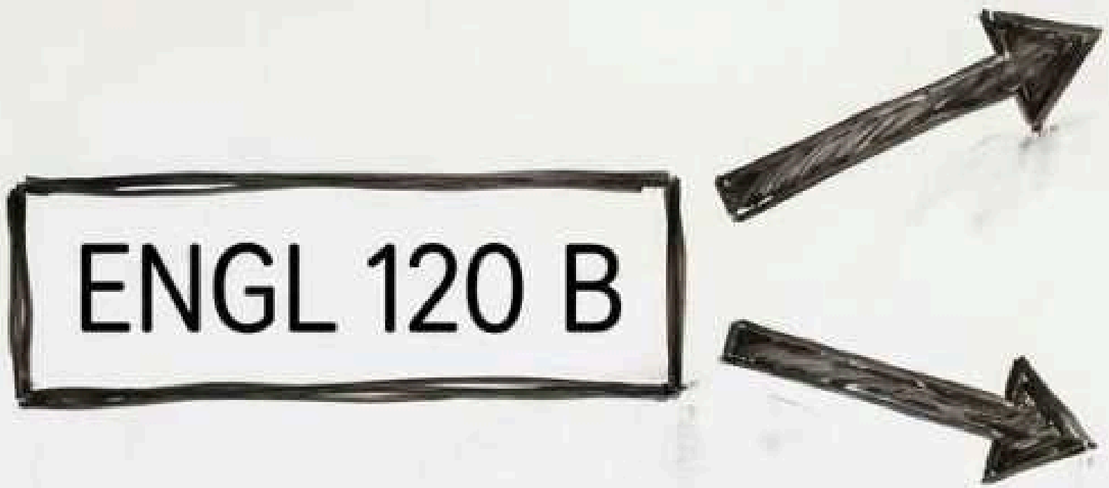
Two Halves of One Art



The fundamental mechanics of poetry always return to these three pillars.

¶ 6.17

The Next Steps



Creative Writing Workshop
(Develop your writing)

Literature Courses
(Explore great poems in depth)

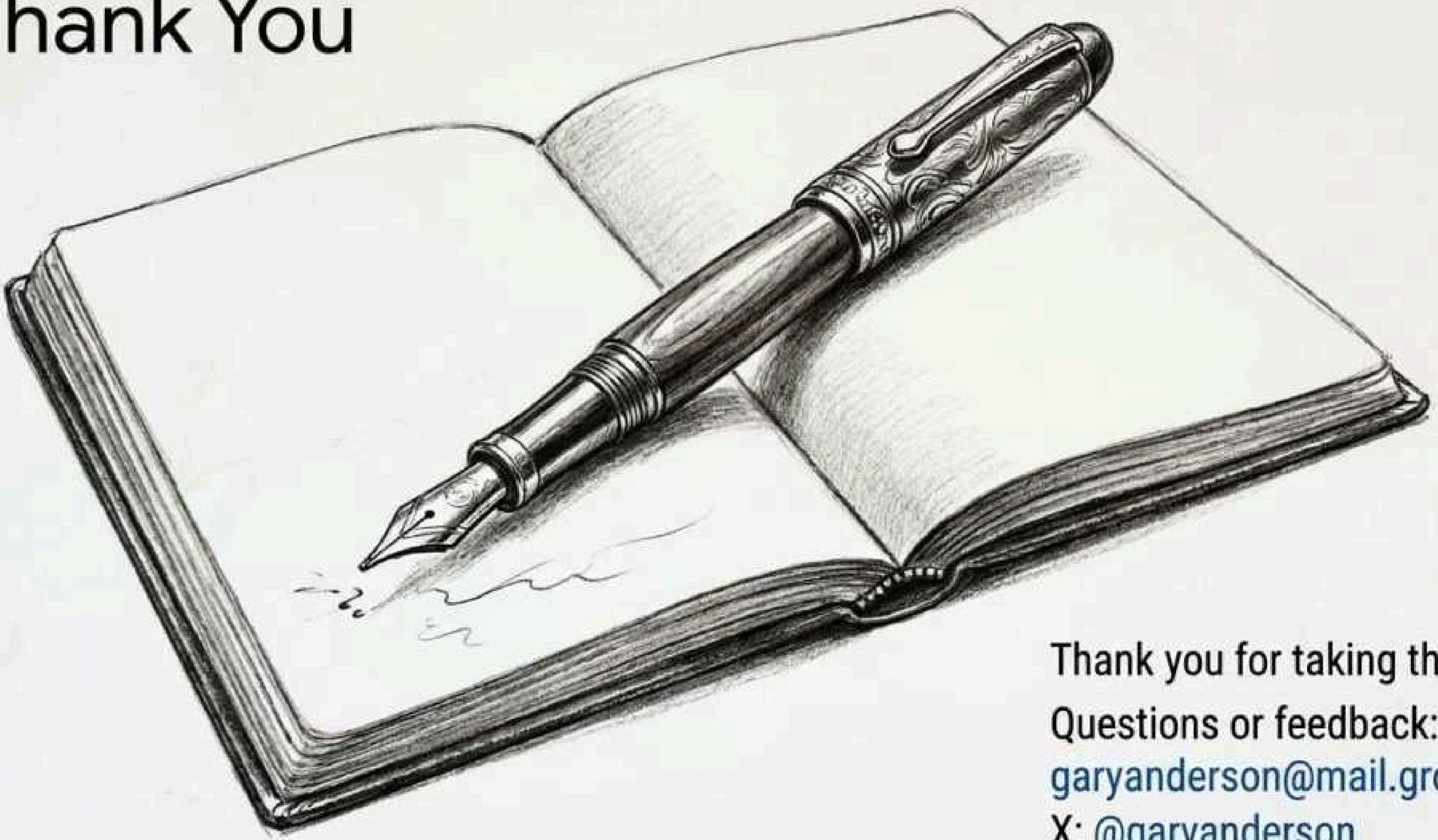
- ☐ Quizzes
- ☐ Final Exam
- ☐ Tripos Paper

Thank you for taking
Poetry: Reading and Writing.

Keep reading, keep writing.

¶6.18

Thank You



Thank you for taking this course.

Questions or feedback:

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X: @garyanderson