

The author discusses his *Emma was a barker*

On the surface, this is a simple poem about our dog that died. It describes her typical dog behavior but ends each stanza with a more human attribute.

There are several techniques that appear in the poem, which I have also referred to as a eulogy.

The first technique is rhythm or pace. The use of rhythm suggests movement that dog's make when they are pursuing something and then somewhat instinctively but also somewhat mindlessly break off to pursue something else. It is most clearly seen in the first stanza. She is barking at the chipmunks and then barking at the squirrels. I could have used chasing just as easily and it would have been more visual, but barking is a little less animalistic and that is important for the second technique—human characteristics—which I will touch on soon.

Chasing is useful for both techniques because it is faster and thus the pause of the last line in each stanza would stand out more. It also would reveal an analogy in a third technique—symbolism. By not using chasing, that third technique becomes more subtle and remains hidden behind the second technique. This helps to keep it as a simple, somewhat happy remembrance for those who don't want a deeper meaning.

Human characteristics are revealed in the pause in the last line of each stanza. After frantically barking at one target to another, Emma does something that a human would do. Barking at the shadows is like chasing ghosts, while sleeping in Bill's bed, eating our dinner, loving everything we love, mimic our habits and our feelings—feelings that dogs may not really have and thus the last stanza is the most symbolic.

This poem is about Emma and the love and memories we have of her, but it is also a nod to our mother. Emma is the companion that stayed when our mother passed on. For Bill, Emma became symbolic of our mother even though she continued to do the things she had always done when our mother was alive.

I wrote this poem for Bill. He is now dealing with the death of our mother a second time with no one to take her place.

And he loved her.