

*Gates & Fields*, by Jennifer Firestone, is a book of lyric poetry connected through the use of the motifs of gates, fields, and identity. The lyric is split into nine labeled sections that flow together, allowing the motifs to intersect, overlap, and converse with one another as Firestone navigates her way through the grieving process.

Firestone utilizes varying forms and white space throughout this lyric poem to create rhythm changes, pauses, and emphasis. Some pages, like page 17 in the “Fields” section of the lyric, have a few words and a lot of white space, which Firestone uses to visually resemble an open field while also varying the rhythm as the lyric moves from page to page. Still, some sections, like “She” incorporate multiple stanzas per page, in order to show the narrative is switching from a more observant, distant POV, to a more personal and intimate perspective. Some parts of the lyric are double spaced, some are single blocks of text, and some use erratic spacing between words, all of which Firestone uses to influence the pacing of the poem as well as to indicate what she is talking about and whom is speaking. All of the structural nuances and variety slow the pace of the reading, allowing the reader to absorb the full imagery and detail of each section—both as unique, separate entities, as well as the purpose those individual sections serve in the function of the piece as a cohesive whole.

The use of repetition throughout *Gates & Fields* is another exceptional craft element Firestone uses. From sound-work, to diction, to syntax, Firestone masterfully encompasses the work of repetition throughout the lyric poem to create cohesion across her ideas. Stanzas will often have repeat lines or keywords, or will be followed by an inverted repetition of a previous idea, thus stringing together the entirety of the lyric poem. For instance, throughout the “Fields” section of the lyric, Firestone uses repetition within nearly every stanza to emphasize the imagery and impact the rhythm of the poem. She opens the section with:

“The field this way and that, the field arising / The field footholds, the field  
of an eye and mind / The sky, the field startlingly aware / Sky, observing field  
containing nothing / The sky’s eye, field shockingly aware/ the field this way  
the field that” (13).

The repetition in this stanza helps to establish the imagery of the field, while also juxtaposing this imagery with the imagery provided in the “Gates” section of the lyric. Because Firestone is writing about an abstraction, the work of the repetition also serves to ground the reader into the imagery and description of the poem, so that the discussion of grief doesn’t become too abstract or undefined for the reader to fully be invested in. The repetition can also be seen as a hook or chorus of sorts, that progresses as the lyric poem lengthens and begins connecting ideas across the threshold of the 9 separate sections.

This book is perfect for people who like poems that break the golden rule of poetry: don’t write about abstractions. Although it is fairly brief, *Gates & Fields* can require a few reads before the

intersectionality of the motifs and the imagery and detail fully resonate and cement themselves in the reader's mind. The movements between the sections, the brilliant sound-work, and the circular repetition of key elements to the lyric poem all weave together a cohesive book about the grieving process.