

# ASL Literature and Poetry

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## Definitions and Questions

- n Define Literature
- n Does literature have to be in written form?
  - Navajo, “Oral Literature”
  - Call ASL Literature an “oral literature?”
  - Redefine “Literature”?
- n Does language have to be from tongues?
  - Lingua-(Latin) tongue, language (root of “Linguistics”)
- n What qualifies a “Deaf culture” literature?
  - Deaf author or Deaf topic or both?
- n Type of records or media since ASL is not a written language?

## Definitions and Questions

ASL Literature: Literature that has been passed down from one generation to the next by culturally Deaf people. It is conveyed in a visual-spatial dimension. It exists on the air and on the videotape.

[http://www.sjw.reach.net/american sign language.curricula.htm](http://www.sjw.reach.net/american_sign_language.curricula.htm)

## Examples of ASL Literature

- n Group Discussion. Think of or imagine examples of "ASL Literature".
- n Biography / Autobiography
- n Historical Literature (Motion Picture Film, 1913)
- n Folktales / Legends (Clyde Vincent)
  - "A Sign Saves a Deaf Man's Life"
  - "Deaf Brotherhood"
  - "Deaf Mules"

## Examples of ASL Literature

### n Deaf Jokes

- “Timber”
- “Which Room Was It?” Adapted to “Bob’s House” on Pepsi commercial during the Superbowl last February.
- “Plenty”
- “Popular Event”

## Examples of ASL Literature

- ### n Mischievous, “Strike Back” stories.
- Inteferiority complex of minority group, paternalism, etc.
- Pay Phone.
  - Sports stories against hearing teams.

## ASL Poetry

- n Define Poetry, Poem
- n How does ASL do poetry without "sound"?
  - Does it have to have words?
  - ASL Poetry can be exclusively in classifier signs.
- n What does ASL poetry look like?
- n Handshapes
  - Alphabetical order, A-Z, Z-A or any logical order.
  - Numerical order, 1-10, 10-1 or any logical order.
  - Acronyms for words and names.

## ASL Poetry

- n Motion, repetition, directions...
- n Location, role shifting, perspectives...
- n Rhythm, according to natural handshapes and motions. Few unique beats like Bision's Song
- n Rhymes, usually with handshapes and motions.

## Examples of ASL Poetry

- n "Dog's Ears" by Kelly Hobson
- n "Flower" by Julie Hobson

## ASL Poetry and Film

- n ASL Poetry can be compared to visual art with lines, space, and movement like film. "Vital Signs" is a good example of this. Watch "History Through Deaf People's Eyes" for this part.
- n You could overlap cinematic techniques with ASL Poetry and storytelling. A long time Deaf actor, Bernard Bragg have done this for years and called it "Visual Vernacular"
- n Expansion of ASL Film, Poetry and Drama today.
- n ASL Poetry and Storytelling competitions.