

What makes a poem?

In my Creative Writing class, we discussed poems by Galway Kinnell and Li Young-Lee. We read Kinnell's works, "Under the Maud Moon", "Little Sleep's-Head Sprouting Hair in the Moonlight" and "The Olive Wood Fire", and Lee's "The Life" and "My Sleeping Loved Ones". Professor Beltz-Hosek asked our class whether or not these poems meet the requirements of a poem. They are all multiple pages long and broken up into numbered sections. Many people say these works should not be called poems because of their length and their subjects. These poems do not seem to have an inner meaning or deep metaphors to sift through like the poem we read in class, "The Word Plum". They are about the authors' families and personal experiences. I think these are perfect examples for Sontag's idea of form over meaning! So, if you want to check them out and see for yourselves you can go to:

[Little Sleep's-Head Sprouting Hair in the Moonlight](#)

[Under the Maud Moon](#)

["My Sleeping Loved Ones" \(p.63\) and "The Life" \(p.53\)](#)

I couldn't find "The Olive Wood Fire", but you are more than welcome to add it if someone finds it! My questions are: Are literary texts still poems if we find they don't have a hidden meaning? What is the exact criteria for a poem?