

Name  
Date  
Mr. Rieger  
English 9

## Poetry

What is poetry?

1. Name five different poetic devices (figurative language devices are ok).  
Define each.  
Give an example of each.
2. Name one American Poet, a work by him/ her, and the publish date.
3. Name one poet from outside America, a work, and publish date.
4. Class Notes
5. Homework
  - a. Minimum 6 lines
  - b. Open or free verse
  - c. Any topic

Poetic Terms  
Student Study

1. Fill in the definitions and provide an example for each of the literary terms.
2. This site is very helpful: [http://www.nellen.com/cybereng/lit\\_terms/](http://www.nellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/).
3. We will go over examples and clarify student work on second day.

**Introduction and Content**

**Steps:** Introduce the WebQuest and have students work on Task One. This may take a significant amount of time. This may take a full 90-min block schedule class period.

This WebQuest was created for you to use with students to take some of the difficult work out of teaching complicated content, such as poetry. The PowerPoint slideshow and all of the worksheets were created by the author of the WebQuest for specific use in teaching this particular unit on the introduction of poetry to ninth grade students. Feel free to edit or change any of the assignment to fit your particular needs. PLEASE, STEAL AND BORROW FROM THE AUTHORS!

The student objectives listed on the Introduction page are as follows:

- Identify and define poetry literary terms.
- Identify defining features of several different types of poetry.
- Write your own poetry that is both creative and follows the rules of poetic forms.

**Learners**

This WebQuest was designed with ninth grade English students in mind. However, with some adaptation, this could be used in any language arts or English classroom, grades 6-12.

This WebQuest was designed for students to work independently or with a partner.

**Standards**

This WebQuest meets the following state standards:

## INDIANA

Academic Standards in English/Language Arts for ninth grade:

- 9.1.1 - Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand the origins of words.
- 9.1.2 - Distinguish between what words mean literally and what they imply and Interpret what the words imply.
- 9.3.7 - Recognize and understand the significance of various literary devices, including figurative language, imagery, allegory (the use of fictional figures and actions to express truths about human experiences), and symbolism (the use of a symbol to represent an idea or theme), and explain their appeal.
- 9.5.8 - Write for different purposes and audiences, adjusting tone, style, and voice as appropriate.

<http://mrsschwartz.com/poetry%20webquest/teacher.html>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

### Poetry Vocabulary

Use this sheet to record the definitions and examples of poetry vocabulary words that we discuss in the poetry notes.

	<u>Poetry</u>
✓	<u>Figurative (Language)</u>
✓	<u>Literal (language)</u>
✓	<u>Speaker</u>
✓	<u>Theme</u>
✓	<u>Diction</u>
✓	<u>Imagery</u>
✓	<u>Verse</u> - 1) Blank 2) Free
✓	<u>Stanza</u>

	<u>Refrain</u>
	<u>Meter/Rhythm</u>
✓	<u>Rhyme</u>
✓	<u>Rhyme Scheme</u>
✓	<u>End Rhyme</u>
✓	<u>Internal Rhyme</u>
✓	<u>Alliteration</u>
✓	<u>Assonance</u>
✓	<u>Metaphor</u>
	Example:

✓ Simile

Example

✓	<u>Personification</u>  Example:
✓	<u>Allusion</u>  Example:
✓	<u>Hyperbole</u>  Example:
✓	<u>Paradox</u>  Example:
✓	<u>Oxymoron</u>  Example:
✓	<u>Symbolism (Symbol)</u>  Example:

✓

<u>Onomatopoeia</u>  Example:
<u>Limerick</u>
<u>Haiku</u>
<u>Ballad</u>
<u>Cinquain</u>
<u>Diamante</u>
<u>Metonymy</u>

✓ Litotes	
✓ Irony	
✓ Antonym	
✓ Connotation	
✓ Denotation	
✓ Form	
Homonym	
Homophone	
✓ Image	
✓ Setting	
✓ Structure	



# POETIC DEVICES

Poetry is the kind of thing poets write. — *Robert Frost*

Man, if you gotta ask, you'll never know. — *Louis Armstrong*

**A** POET IS LIMITED in the materials he can use in creating his works: all he has are *words* to express his ideas and feelings. These words need to be precisely right on several levels at once:

- they must *sound* right to the listener even as they delight his ear
- they must have a *meaning* which might have been unanticipated, but seems to be the perfectly right one
- they must be *arranged* in a relationship and placed on the page in ways that are at once easy to follow and assist the reader in understanding
- they must probe the depths of human thought, emotion, and empathy, while appearing simple, self-contained, and unpretentious

Fortunately, the English language contains a wide range of words from which to choose for almost every thought, and there are also numerous plans or methods of arrangement of these words, called *poetic devices*, which can assist the writer in developing cogent expressions pleasing to his readers.

Even though most poetry today is read silently, it must still carry with it the feeling of being spoken aloud, and the reader should practice “hearing” it in order to catch all of the artfulness with which the poet has created his work.

## THE SOUNDS OF WORDS

**W**ords or portions of words can be clustered or juxtaposed to achieve specific kinds of effects when we hear them. The sounds that result can strike us as clever and pleasing, even soothing. Others we dislike and strive to avoid. These various deliberate arrangements of words have been identified.

**Alliteration:** Repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. A somewhat looser definition is that it is the use of the same consonant in any part of adjacent words.

*Example:* fast and furious

*Example:* Peter and Andrew patted the pony at Ascot

In the second definition, both *P* and *T* in the example are reckoned as alliteration. It is noted that this is a very obvious device and needs to be handled with great restraint, except in specialty forms such as limerick, cinquain, and humorous verse.

**Assonance:** Repeated vowel sounds in words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. These should be in sounds that are accented, or stressed, rather than in vowel sounds that are unaccented.

*Example:* He's a bruisin' loser

In the second example above, the short *A* sound in *Andrew*, *patted*, and *Ascot* would be assonant.

**Consonance:** Repeated consonant sounds at the ending of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. These should be in sounds that are accented, or stressed, rather than in vowel

sounds that are unaccented. This produces a pleasing kind of near-rhyme.

*Example:* boats into the past

*Example:* cool soul

**Cacophony** A discordant series of harsh, unpleasant sounds helps to convey disorder. This is often furthered by the combined effect of the meaning and the difficulty of pronunciation.

*Example:* My stick fingers click with a snicker  
And, chuckling, they knuckle the keys;  
Light-footed, my steel feelers flicker  
And pluck from these keys melodies.  
—“Player Piano,” *John Updike*

**Euphony:** A series of musically pleasant sounds, conveying a sense of harmony and beauty to the language.

*Example:* Than Oars divide the Ocean,  
Too silver for a seam—  
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon  
Leap, plashless as they swim.  
—“A Bird Came Down the Walk,” *Emily Dickenson* (last stanza)

**Onomatopoeia:** Words that sound like their meanings. In *Hear the steady tick of the old hall clock*, the word tick sounds like the action of the clock. If assonance or alliteration can be onomatopoeic, as the sound ‘ck’ is repeated in tick and clock, so much the better. At least sounds should suit the tone – heavy sounds for weightiness, light for the delicate. *Tick* is a light word, but transpose the light *T* to its heavier counterpart, *D*; and transpose the light *CK* to its heavier counterpart *G*, and *tick* becomes the much more solid and down to earth *dig*.

*Example:* boom, buzz, crackle, gurgle, hiss, pop, sizzle, snap, swoosh, whirl, zip

**Repetition:** The purposeful re-use of words and phrases for an effect. Sometimes, especially with longer phrases that contain a different key word each time, this is called *parallelism*. It has been a central part of poetry in many cultures. Many of the Psalms use this device as one of their unifying elements.

*Example:* I was glad; so very, very glad.

*Example:* Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward...  
...  
Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volley’d and thunder’d...

**Rhyme:** This is the one device most commonly associated with poetry by the general public. Words that have different beginning sounds but whose endings sound alike, including the final vowel sound and everything following it, are said to *rhyme*.

*Example:* time, slime, mime

*Double rhymes* include the final two syllables. *Example:* revival, arrival, survival

*Triple rhymes* include the final three syllables. *Example:* greenery, machinery, scenery

A variation which has been used effectively is called slant rhyme, or half rhyme. If only the final consonant sounds of the words are the same, but the initial consonants and the vowel sounds are different, then the rhyme is called a *slant rhyme* or *half rhyme*. When this appears in the middle of lines rather than at the end, it is called *consonance*.

*Example:* soul, oil, foul; taut, sat, knit

Another variation which is occasionally used is called near rhyme. If the final vowel sounds are the

same, but the final consonant sounds are slightly different, then the rhyme is called a *near rhyme*.

*Example:* fine, rhyme; poem, goin'

Less effective but sometimes used are sight rhymes. Words which are spelled the same (as if they rhymed), but are pronounced differently are called *sight rhymes* or *eye rhymes*.

*Example:* enough, cough, through, bough

**Rhythm:** Although the general public is seldom directly conscious of it, nearly everyone responds on some level to the organization of speech rhythms (verbal stresses) into a regular pattern of accented syllables separated by unaccented syllables. *Rhythm* helps to distinguish poetry from prose.

*Example:* i THOUGHT i SAW a PUSsyCAT.

Such patterns are sometimes referred to as *meter*. Meter is the organization of voice patterns, in terms of both the arrangement of stresses and their frequency of repetition per line of verse.

Poetry is organized by the division of each line into "feet," metric units which each consist of a particular arrangement of strong and weak stresses. The most common metric unit is the iambic, in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed one (as in the words *reverse* and *compose*).

*Scansion* is the conscious measure of the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.

Stressed syllables are labeled with an accent mark: / Unstressed syllables are labeled with a dash: -

Metrical feet may be two or three syllables in length, and are divided by slashes: |

There are five basic rhythms:

Pattern	Name	Example
- /	Iamb/Iambic	invite
/ -	Trochee/Trochaic	deadline
- - /	Anapest/Anapestic	to the beach
/ - -	Dactyl/Dactylic	frequently
/ /	Spondee/Spondaic	true blue

Meter is measured by the number of feet in a line. Feet are named by Greek prefix number words attached to "meter." A line with five feet is called pentameter; thus, a line of five iambs is known as "iambic pentameter" (the most common metrical form in English poetry, and the one favored by Shakespeare).

The most common line lengths are:

monometer: one foot	tetrameter: four feet	heptameter: seven feet
dimeter: two feet	pentameter: five feet	octameter: eight feet
trimeter: three feet	hexameter: six feet	

Naturally, there is a degree of variation from line to line, as a rigid adherence to the meter results in unnatural or monotonous language. A skillful poet manipulates breaks in the prevailing rhythm of a poem for particular effects.

## THE MEANINGS OF WORDS

**M**ost words convey several meanings or shades of meaning at the same time. It is the poet's job to find words which, when used in relation to other words in the poem, will carry the precise intention of thought. Often, some of the more significant words may carry several layers or "depths" of meaning at once. The ways in which the meanings of words are used can be identified.

**Allegory:** A representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning. Sometimes it can be a single word or phrase, such as the name of a character or place. Often, it is a symbolic narrative that has not only a literal meaning, but a larger one understood only after reading the entire story or poem

**Allusion:** A brief reference to some person, historical event, work of art, or Biblical or mythological situation or character.

**Ambiguity:** A word or phrase that can mean more than one thing, even in its context. Poets often search out such words to add richness to their work. Often, one meaning seems quite readily apparent, but other, deeper and darker meanings, await those who contemplate the poem.

*Example:* Robert Frost's 'The Subverted Flower'

**Analogy:** A comparison, usually something unfamiliar with something familiar.

*Example:* The plumbing took a maze of turns where even water got lost.

**Apostrophe:** Speaking directly to a real or imagined listener or inanimate object; addressing that person or thing by name.

*Example:* O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done...

**Cliché:** Any figure of speech that was once clever and original but through overuse has become outdated. If you've heard more than two or three other people say it more than two or three times, chances are the phrase is too timeworn to be useful in your writing.

*Example:* busy as a bee

**Connotation:** The emotional, psychological or social overtones of a word; its implications and associations apart from its literal meaning. Often, this is what distinguishes the *precisely correct* word from one that is merely acceptable.

**Contrast:** Closely arranged things with strikingly different characteristics.

*Example:* He was dark, sinister, and cruel; she was radiant, pleasant, and kind.

**Denotation:** The dictionary definition of a word; its literal meaning apart from any associations or connotations. Students must exercise caution when beginning to use a thesaurus, since often the words that are clustered together may share a *denotative meaning*, but not a *connotative* one, and the substitution of a word can sometimes destroy the mood, and even the meaning, of a poem.

**Euphemism:** An understatement, used to lessen the effect of a statement; substituting something innocuous for something that might be offensive or hurtful.

*Example:* She is at rest. (meaning, she's dead)

**Hyperbole:** An outrageous exaggeration used for effect.

*Example:* He weighs a ton.

**Irony:** A contradictory statement or situation to reveal a reality different from what appears to be true.

*Example:* Wow, thanks for expensive gift...let's see: did it come with a Fun Meal or the Burger King equivalent?

**Metaphor:** A direct comparison between two unlike things, stating that one *is* the other or *does the action* of the other.

*Example:* He's a zero. *Example:* Her fingers danced across the keyboard.

**Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which a person, place, or thing is referred to by something closely associated with it.

*Example:* The White House stated today that... *Example:* The Crown reported today that...

**Oxymoron:** A combination of two words that appear to contradict each other.

*Example:* a pointless point of view; bittersweet

**Paradox:** A statement in which a seeming contradiction may reveal an unexpected truth.

*Example:* The hurrier I go the behinder I get.

**Personification:** Attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object, animal, or abstract idea.

*Example:* The days crept by slowly, sorrowfully.

**Pun:** Word play in which words with totally different meanings have similar or identical sounds.

*Example:* Like a firefly in the rain, I'm de-lighted.

**Simile:** A direct comparison of two unlike things using "like" or "as."

*Example:* He's as dumb as an ox.

*Example:* Her eyes are like comets.

**Symbol:** An ordinary object, event, animal, or person to which we have attached extraordinary meaning and significance — a flag to represent a country, a lion to represent courage, a wall to symbolize separation.

*Example:* A small cross by the dangerous curve on the road reminded all of Johnny's death.

**Synecdoche:** Indicating a person, object, etc. by letting only a certain part represent the whole.

*Example:* All hands on deck.

## ARRANGING THE WORDS

Words follow each other in a sequence determined by the poet. In order to discuss the arrangements that result, certain terms have been applied to various aspects of that arrangement process. Although in some ways these sequences seem arbitrary and mechanical, in another sense they help to determine the nature of the poem. These various ways of organizing words have been identified.

**Point of View:** The author's point of view concentrates on the vantage point of the speaker, or "teller" of the story or poem. This may be considered the poem's "voice" — the pervasive presence behind the overall work. This is also sometimes referred to as the *persona*.

- 1st Person: the speaker is a character in the story or poem and tells it from his/her perspective (uses "I").
- 3rd Person limited: the speaker is not part of the story, but tells about the other characters through the limited perceptions of one other person.
- 3rd Person omniscient: the speaker is not part of the story, but is able to "know" and describe what all characters are thinking.

**Line:** The line is fundamental to the perception of poetry, marking an important visual distinction from prose. Poetry is arranged into a series of units that do not necessarily correspond to sentences, but rather to a series of metrical feet. Generally, but not always, the line is printed as one single line on the page. If it occupies more than one line, its remainder is usually indented to indicate that it is a continuation.

There is a natural tendency when reading poetry to pause at the end of a line, but the careful reader will follow the punctuation to find where natural pauses should occur.

In traditional verse forms, the length of each line is determined by convention, but in modern poetry the poet has more latitude for choice.

**Verse:** One single line of a poem arranged in a metrical pattern. Also, a piece of poetry or a particular form of poetry such as *free verse*, *blank verse*, etc., or the art or work of a poet.

The popular use of the word *verse* for a stanza or associated group of metrical lines is not in accordance with the best usage. A stanza is a *group* of verses.

**Stanza:** A division of a poem created by arranging the lines into a unit, often repeated in the same pattern of meter and rhyme throughout the poem; a unit of poetic lines (a “paragraph” within the poem). The stanzas within a poem are separated by blank lines.

Stanzas in modern poetry, such as *free verse*, often do not have lines that are all of the same length and meter, nor even the same number of lines in each stanza. Stanzas created by such irregular line groupings are often dictated by meaning, as in paragraphs of prose.

**Stanza Forms:** The names given to describe the number of lines in a stanzaic unit, such as: *couplet* (2), *tercet* (3), *quatrain* (4), *quintet* (5), *sestet* (6), *septet* (7), and *octave* (8). Some stanzas follow a set rhyme scheme and meter in addition to the number of lines and are given specific names to describe them, such as, *ballad meter*, *ottava rima*, *rhyme royal*, *terza rima*, and *Spenserian stanza*.

Stanza forms are also a factor in the categorization of whole poems described as following a *fixed form*.

**Rhetorical Question:** A question solely for effect, which does not require an answer. By the implication the answer is obvious, it is a means of achieving an emphasis stronger than a direct statement.

*Example:* Could I but guess the reason for that look?

*Example:* O, Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

**Rhyme Scheme:** The pattern established by the arrangement of rhymes in a stanza or poem, generally described by using letters of the alphabet to denote the recurrence of rhyming lines, such as the *ababbcc* of the *Rhyme Royal* stanza form.

Capital letters in the alphabetic rhyme scheme are used for the repeating lines of a refrain; the letters *x* and *y* indicate unrhymed lines.

In quatrains, the popular rhyme scheme of *abab* is called *alternate rhyme* or *cross rhyme*. The *abba* scheme is called *envelope rhyme*, and another one frequently used is *xaxa* (This last pattern, when working with students, is generally easier for them to understand when presented as *abcb*, as they associate matched letters with rhymed words).

**Enjambment:** The continuation of the logical sense — and therefore the grammatical construction — beyond the end of a line of poetry. This is sometimes done with the title, which in effect becomes the first line of the poem.

**Form:** The arrangement or method used to convey the content, such as *free verse*, *ballad*, *haiku*, etc. In other words, the “way-it-is-said.” A variably interpreted term, however, it sometimes applies to details within the composition of a text, but is probably used most often in reference to the structural characteristics of a work as it compares to (or differs from) established modes of conventionalized arrangements.

- **Open:** poetic form free from regularity and consistency in elements such as rhyme, line length, and metrical form
- **Closed:** poetic form subject to a fixed structure and pattern
- **Blank Verse:** unrhymed iambic pentameter (much of the plays of Shakespeare are written in this form)
- **Free Verse:** lines with no prescribed pattern or structure — the poet determines all the variables as seems appropriate for each poem

- **Couplet:** a pair of lines, usually rhymed; this is the shortest stanza
- **Heroic Couplet:** a pair of rhymed lines in iambic pentameter (traditional heroic epic form)
- **Quatrain:** a four-line stanza, or a grouping of four lines of verse

**Fixed Form:** A poem which follows a set pattern of *meter, rhyme scheme, stanza form, and refrain* (if there is one), is called a *fixed form*.

Most poets feel a need for familiarity and practice with established forms as essential to learning the craft, but having explored the techniques and constraints of each, they go on to experiment and extend their imaginative creativity in new directions. A partial listing includes:

- **Ballad:** a narrative poem written as a series of quatrains in which lines of iambic tetrameter alternate with iambic trimeter with an *xaxa, xbx* rhyme scheme with frequent use of repetition and often including a refrain. The “story” of a ballad can be a wide range of subjects but frequently deals with folklore or popular legends. They are written in a straight-forward manner, seldom with detail, but always with graphic simplicity and force. Most ballads are suitable for singing: “Barbara Allen” is an example.

Many of the oldest ballads were first written and performed by minstrels as court entertainment. *Folk ballads* are of unknown origin and are usually lacking in artistic finish. Because they are handed down by oral tradition, folk ballads are subject to variations and continual change. Other types of ballads include *literary ballads*, combining the natures of epic and lyric poetry, which are written by known authors, often in the style and form of the folk ballad, such as Keats’ ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci.’”

- **Ballade:** a French form, it consists of three seven or eight-line stanzas using no more than three recurrent rhymes, with an identical refrain after each stanza and a closing envoi repeating the rhymes of the last four lines of the stanza
- **Concrete Poetry:** also known as *pattern poetry* or *shaped verse*, these are poems that are printed on the page so that they form a recognizable outline related to the subject, thus conveying or extending the meaning of the words. Pattern poetry retains its meaning when read aloud, whereas the essence of concrete poetry lies in its appearance on the page rather than in the words; it is intended to be perceived as a visual whole and often cannot be effective when read aloud. This form has had brief popularity at several periods in history.
- **Epigram:** a pithy, sometimes satiric, couplet or quatrain comprising a single thought or event and often aphoristic with a witty or humorous turn of thought
- **Epitaph:** a brief poem or statement in memory of someone who is deceased, used as, or suitable for, a tombstone inscription; now, often witty or humorous and written without intent of actual funerary use
- **Haiku:** a Japanese form of poetry consisting of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. The elusive flavor of the form, however, lies more in its touch and tone than in its syllabic structure. Deeply imbedded in Japanese culture and strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism, haiku are very brief descriptions of nature that convey some implicit insight or essence of a moment. Traditionally, they contain either a direct or oblique reference to a season
- **Limerick:** a light or humorous form of five chiefly anapestic verses of which lines one, two and five are of three feet and lines three and four are of two feet, with a rhyme scheme of *aabba*. Named for a town in Ireland of that name, the limerick was popularized by Edward Lear in his *Book of Nonsense* published in 1846, and is generally considered the only fixed form of English origin.

While the final line of Lear’s limericks usually was a repetition of the first line, modern limericks generally use the final line for clever witticisms and word play. Their content also frequently tends toward the ribald and off-color.

- **Lyric:** derived from the Greek word for lyre, lyric poetry was originally designed to be sung. One of the three main groups of poetry (the others being narrative and dramatic), lyric verse is the most frequently used modern form, including all poems in which the speaker's ardent expression of a (usually single) emotional element predominates. Ranging from complex thoughts to the simplicity of playful wit, the melodic imagery of skillfully written lyric poetry evokes in the reader's mind the recall of similar emotional experiences.
- **Ode:** any of several stanzaic forms more complex than the lyric, with intricate rhyme schemes and irregular number of lines, generally of considerable length, always written in a style marked by a rich, intense expression of an elevated thought praising a person or object. "Ode to a Nightingale" is an example.
- **Pantoum:** derived from the Malayan *pantun*, it consists of a varying number of four-line stanzas with lines rhyming alternately; the second and fourth lines of each stanza repeated to form the first and third lines of the succeeding stanza, with the first and third lines of the first stanza forming the second and fourth of the last stanza, but in reverse order, so that the opening and closing lines of the poem are identical.
- **Rondeau:** a fixed form used mostly in light or witty verse, usually consisting of fifteen octo- or decasyllabic lines in three stanzas, with only two rhymes used throughout. A word or words from the first part of the first line are used as a (usually unrhymed) refrain ending the second and third stanzas, so the rhyme scheme is *aabba aabR aabbaR*.

An example is "In Flanders Fields," by Lt. Col. John McCrae.

- **Sestina:** a fixed form consisting of six 6-line (usually unrhymed) stanzas in which the end words of the first stanza recur as end words of the following five stanzas in a successively rotating order, and as the middle and end words of each of the lines of a concluding envoi in the form of a tercet. The usual ending word order for a sestina is as follows:

First stanza, 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6  
 Second stanza, 6 - 1 - 5 - 2 - 4 - 3  
 Third stanza, 3 - 6 - 4 - 1 - 2 - 5  
 Fourth stanza, 5 - 3 - 2 - 6 - 1 - 4  
 Fifth stanza, 4 - 5 - 1 - 3 - 6 - 2  
 Sixth stanza, 2 - 4 - 6 - 5 - 3 - 1

Concluding tercet:

middle of first line - 2, end of first line - 5  
 middle of second line - 4, end of second line - 3  
 middle of third line - 6, end of third line - 1

- **Sonnet:** a fourteen line poem in iambic pentameter with a prescribed rhyme scheme; its subject was traditionally love. Three variations are found frequently in English, although others are occasionally seen.
- **Shakespearean Sonnet:** a style of sonnet used by Shakespeare with a rhyme scheme of *abab cdcd efef gg*
- **Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet:** a form of sonnet made popular by Petrarch with a rhyme scheme of *abbaabba cdecde* or *cdcdcd*
- **Spenserian Sonnet:** a variant of the Shakespearean form in which the quatrains are linked with a chain or interlocked rhyme scheme, *abab bcbc cdcd ee*.
- **Sonnet Sequence:** a series of sonnets in which there is a discernable unifying theme, while each retains its own structural independence. All of Shakespeare's sonnets, for example, were part of a sequence.
- **Triolet:** a poem or stanza of eight lines in which the first line is repeated as the fourth and seventh lines, and the second line as the eighth, with a rhyme scheme of *ABaAabAB*, as in Adelaide Crapsey's "Song" (the capital letters in the rhyme scheme indicate the repetition of identical lines).



- **Villanelle:** a poem consisting of five 3-line stanzas followed by a quatrain and having only two rhymes. In the stanzas following the first stanza, the first and third lines of the first stanza are repeated alternately as refrains. They are the final two lines of the concluding quatrain. The villanelle gives a pleasant impression of simple spontaneity, as in Edwin Arlington Robinson's "The House on the Hill."

## THE IMAGES OF WORDS

A poet uses words more consciously than any other writer. Although poetry often deals with deep human emotions or philosophical thought, people generally don't respond very strongly to abstract words, even the words describing such emotions and thoughts. The poet, then, must embed within his work those words which *do* carry strong visual and sensory impact, words which are fresh and spontaneous but vividly descriptive. He must carefully pick and choose words that are just right. It is better to *show* the reader than to merely *tell* him.

**Imagery:** The use of vivid language to generate ideas and/or evoke mental images, not only of the visual sense, but of sensation and emotion as well. While most commonly used in reference to figurative language, imagery can apply to any component of a poem that evoke sensory experience and emotional response, and also applies to the concrete things so brought to mind.

Poetry works its magic by the way it uses words to evoke "images" that carry depths of meaning. The poet's carefully described impressions of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch can be transferred to the thoughtful reader through imaginative use and combinations of diction. In addition to its more tangible initial impact, effective imagery has the potential to tap the inner wisdom of the reader to arouse meditative and inspirational responses.

Related images are often clustered or scattered throughout a work, thus serving to create a particular *mood* or *tone*. Images of disease, corruption, and death, for example, are recurrent patterns shaping our perceptions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Examples:

- **Sight:** Smoke mysteriously puffed out from the clown's ears.
- **Sound:** Tom placed his ear tightly against the wall; he could hear a faint but distinct thump thump thump.
- **Touch:** The burlap wall covering scraped against the little boy's cheek.
- **Taste:** A salty tear ran across onto her lips.
- **Smell:** Cinnamon! That's what wafted into his nostrils.

**Synesthesia:** An attempt to fuse different senses by describing one kind of sense impression in words normally used to describe another.

*Example:* The sound of her voice was sweet.

*Example:* a loud aroma, a velvety smile

**Tone, Mood:** The means by which a poet reveals attitudes and feelings, in the style of language or expression of thought used to develop the subject. Certain tones include not only irony and satire, but may be loving, condescending, bitter, pitying, fanciful, solemn, and a host of other emotions and attitudes. Tone can also refer to the overall mood of the poem itself, in the sense of a pervading atmosphere intended to influence the readers' emotional response and foster expectations of the conclusion.

Another use of tone is in reference to pitch or to the demeanor of a speaker as interpreted through inflections of the voice; in poetry, this is conveyed through the use of connotation, diction, figures of speech, rhythm and other elements of poetic construction.


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## Glossary of Poetic Terms

### **Allegory**

A symbolic narrative in which the surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory often takes the form of a story in which the characters represent moral qualities. The most famous example in English is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the name of the central character, Pilgrim, epitomizes the book's allegorical nature. Kay Boyle's story "Astronomer's Wife" and Christina Rossetti's poem "Up-Hill" both contain allegorical elements.

### **Alliteration**

The repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words. Example: "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy."

### **Anapest**

Two unaccented syllables followed by an accented one, as in *com-pre-HEND* or *in-ter-VENE*. An anapestic meter rises to the accented beat as in Byron's lines from "The Destruction of Sennacherib": "And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea, / When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

### **Antagonist**

A character or force against which another character struggles. Creon is Antigone's antagonist in Sophocles' play *Antigone*; Telresias is the antagonist of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

### **Assonance**

The repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or a line of poetry or prose, as in "I rose and told him of my woe." Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" contains assonantal "I's" in the following lines: "How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, / Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself."

### **Aubade**

A love lyric in which the speaker complains about the arrival of the dawn, when he must part from his lover. John Donne's "The Sun Rising" exemplifies this poetic genre.

### **Ballad**

A narrative poem written in four-line stanzas, characterized by swift action and narrated in a direct style. The Anonymous medieval ballad, "Barbara Allan," exemplifies the genre.

### **Blank verse**

A line of poetry or prose in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's sonnets, Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, and Robert Frost's meditative poems such as "Birches" include many lines of blank verse. Here are the opening blank verse lines of "Birches": When I see birches bend to left and right / Across the lines of straighter darker trees, / I like to think some boy's been swinging them.

#### **Caesura**

A strong pause within a line of verse. The following stanza from Hardy's "The Man He Killed" contains caesuras in the middle two lines:

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
Off-hand-like--just as I--  
Was out of work-had sold his traps--  
No other reason why.

#### **Character**

An imaginary person that inhabits a literary work. Literary characters may be major or minor, static (unchanging) or dynamic (capable of change). In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Desdemona is a major character, but one who is static, like the minor character Bianca. Othello is a major character who is dynamic, exhibiting an ability to change.

#### **Characterization**

The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss Emily in Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" through what she says, how she lives, and what she does.

#### **Climax**

The turning point of the action in the plot of a play or story. The climax represents the point of greatest tension in the work. The climax of John Updike's "A&P," for example, occurs when Sammy quits his job as a cashier.

#### **Closed form**

A type of form or structure in poetry characterized by regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, and metrical pattern. Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" provides one of many examples. A single stanza illustrates some of the features of closed form:

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

#### **Complication**

An intensification of the conflict in a story or play. Complication builds up, accumulates, and develops the primary or central conflict in a literary work. Frank O'Connor's story "Guests of the Nation" provides a striking example, as does Ralph Ellison's "Battle Royal."

#### **Conflict**

A struggle between opposing forces in a story or play, usually resolved by the end of the work. The conflict may occur within a character as well as between characters. Lady Gregory's one-act play *The Rising of the Moon* exemplifies both types of conflict as the Policeman wrestles with his conscience in an inner conflict and confronts an antagonist in the person of the ballad singer.

**Connotation**

The associations called up by a word that goes beyond its dictionary meaning. Poets, especially, tend to use words rich in connotation. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" includes intensely connotative language, as in these lines: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

**Convention**

A customary feature of a literary work, such as the use of a chorus in Greek tragedy, the inclusion of an explicit moral in a fable, or the use of a particular rhyme scheme in a villanelle. Literary conventions are defining features of particular literary genres, such as novel, short story, ballad, sonnet, and play.

**Couplet**

A pair of rhymed lines that may or may not constitute a separate stanza in a poem. Shakespeare's sonnets end in rhymed couplets, as in "For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

**Dactyl**

A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones, as in *FLUT-ter-ing* or *BLUE-ber-ry*. The following playful lines illustrate double dactyls, two dactyls per line:

Higgledy, piggedy,  
Emily Dickinson  
Gibbering, jabbering.

**Denotation**

The dictionary meaning of a word. Writers typically play off a word's denotative meaning against its connotations, or suggested and implied associational implications. In the following lines from Peter Meinke's "Advice to My Son" the references to flowers and fruit, bread and wine denote specific things, but also suggest something beyond the literal, dictionary meanings of the words:

To be specific, between the peony and rose  
Plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;  
Beauty is nectar and nectar, in a desert, saves--  
...  
and always serve bread with your wine.  
But, son,  
always serve wine.

**Denouement**

The resolution of the plot of a literary work. The denouement of *Hamlet* takes place after the catastrophe, with the stage littered with corpses. During the denouement Fortinbras makes an entrance and a speech, and Horatio speaks his sweet lines in praise of Hamlet.

**Dialogue**

The conversation of characters in a literary work. In fiction, dialogue is typically enclosed within quotation marks. In plays, characters' speech is preceded by their names.

**Diction**

The selection of words in a literary work. A work's diction forms one of its centrally important literary elements, as writers use words to convey action,

reveal character, imply attitudes, identify themes, and suggest values. We can speak of the diction particular to a character, as in Iago's and Desdemona's very different ways of speaking in *Othello*. We can also refer to a poet's diction as represented over the body of his or her work, as in Donne's or Hughes's diction.

### **Elegy**

A lyric poem that laments the dead. Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" is elegiac in tone. A more explicitly identified elegy is W.H. Auden's "In Memory of William Butler Yeats" and his "Funeral Blues."

### **Elision**

The omission of an unstressed vowel or syllable to preserve the meter of a line of poetry. Alexander uses elision in "Sound and Sense": "Flies o'er th' unbending corn...."

### **Enjambment**

A run-on line of poetry in which logical and grammatical sense carries over from one line into the next. An enjambed line differs from an end-stopped line in which the grammatical and logical sense is completed within the line. In the opening lines of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," for example, the first line is end-stopped and the second enjambed:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now....

### **Epic**

A long narrative poem that records the adventures of a hero. Epics typically chronicle the origins of a civilization and embody its central values. Examples from western literature include Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

### **Epigram**

A brief witty poem, often satirical. Alexander Pope's "Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog" exemplifies the genre:

I am his Highness' dog at Kew;  
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

### **Exposition**

The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, for instance, begins with a conversation between the two central characters, a dialogue that fills the audience in on events that occurred before the action of the play begins, but which are important in the development of its plot.

### **Falling action**

In the plot of a story or play, the action following the climax of the work that moves it towards its denouement or resolution. The falling action of *Othello* begins after Othello realizes that Iago is responsible for plotting against him by spurring him on to murder his wife, Desdemona.

### **Falling meter**

Poetic meters such as trochaic and dactylic that move or fall from a stressed to an unstressed syllable. The nonsense line, "Higgledy, piggledy," is dactylic, with the accent on the first syllable and the two syllables following falling off from that accent in each word. Trochaic meter is represented by this line: "Hip-hop, be-bop, treetop--freedom."

**Fiction**

An imagined story, whether in prose, poetry, or drama. Ibsen's Nora is fictional, a "make-believe" character in a play, as are Hamlet and Othello. Characters like Robert Browning's Duke and Duchess from his poem "My Last Duchess" are fictional as well, though they may be based on actual historical individuals. And, of course, characters in stories and novels are fictional, though they, too, may be based, in some way, on real people. The important thing to remember is that writers embellish and embroider and alter actual life when they use real life as the basis for their work. They fictionalize facts, and deviate from real-life situations as they "make things up."

**Figurative language**

A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words. Examples include hyperbole or exaggeration, litotes or understatement, simile and metaphor, which employ comparison, and synecdoche and metonymy, in which a part of a thing stands for the whole.

**Flashback**

An interruption of a work's chronology to describe or present an incident that occurred prior to the main time frame of a work's action. Writers use flashbacks to complicate the sense of chronology in the plot of their works and to convey the richness of the experience of human time. Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" includes flashbacks.

**Foil**

A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story. Laertes, in *Hamlet*, is a foil for the main character; in *Othello*, Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

**Foot**

A metrical unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, an iamb or iambic foot is represented by ' ', that is, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. Frost's line "Whose woods these are I think I know" contains four iambs, and is thus an iambic foot.

**Foreshadowing**

Hints of what is to come in the action of a play or a story. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* includes foreshadowing as does Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. So, too, do Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" and Chopin's "Story of an Hour."

**Free verse**

Poetry without a regular pattern of meter or rhyme. The verse is "free" in not being bound by earlier poetic conventions requiring poems to adhere to an explicit and identifiable meter and rhyme scheme in a form such as the sonnet or ballad. Modern and contemporary poets of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries often employ free verse. Williams's "This Is Just to Say" is one of many examples.

**Hyperbole**

A figure of speech involving exaggeration. John Donne uses hyperbole in his poem: "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star."

**Iamb**

An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in *to-DAY*. See *Foot*.

**Image**

A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea. Imagery refers to the pattern of related details in a work. In some works one

image predominates either by recurring throughout the work or by appearing at a critical point in the plot. Often writers use multiple images throughout a work to suggest states of feeling and to convey implications of thought and action. Some modern poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, write poems that lack discursive explanation entirely and include only images. Among the most famous examples is Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro":

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

### **Imagery**

The pattern of related comparative aspects of language, particularly of images, in a literary work. Imagery of light and darkness pervade James Joyce's stories "Araby," "The Boarding House," and "The Dead." So, too, does religious imagery.

### **Irony**

A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters. Flannery O'Connor's short stories employ all these forms of irony, as does Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."

### **Literal language**

A form of language in which writers and speakers mean exactly what their words denote. See *Figurative language*, *Denotation*, and *Connotation*.

### **Lyric poem**

A type of poem characterized by brevity, compression, and the expression of feeling. Most of the poems in this book are lyrics. The anonymous "Western Wind" epitomizes the genre:

Western wind, when will thou blow,  
The small rain down can rain?  
Christ, if my love were in my arms  
And I in my bed again!

### **Metaphor**

A comparison between essentially unlike things without an explicitly comparative word such as *like* or *as*. An example is "My love is a red, red rose,"

From Burns's "A Red, Red Rose." Langston Hughes's "Dream Deferred" is built entirely of metaphors. Metaphor is one of the most important of literary uses of language. Shakespeare employs a wide range of metaphor in his sonnets and his plays, often in such density and profusion that readers are kept busy analyzing and interpreting and unraveling them. Compare *Simile*.

### **Meter**

The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems. See *Foot* and *Jamb*.

### **Metonymy**

A figure of speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. An example: "We have always remained loyal to the crown." See *Synecdoche*.

**Narrative poem**

A poem that tells a story. See *Ballad*.

**Narrator**

The voice and implied speaker of a fictional work, to be distinguished from the actual living author. For example, the narrator of Joyce's "Araby" is not James Joyce himself, but a literary fictional character created expressly to tell the story. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" contains a communal narrator, identified only as "we." See *Point of view*.

**Octave**

An eight-line unit, which may constitute a stanza; or a section of a poem, as in the octave of a sonnet.

**Ode**

A long, stately poem in stanzas of varied length, meter, and form. Usually a serious poem on an exalted subject, such as Horace's "Eheu fugaces," but sometimes a more lighthearted work, such as Neruda's "Ode to My Socks."

**Onomatopoeia**

The use of words to imitate the sounds they describe. Words such as *buzz* and *crack* are onomatopoeic. The following line from Pope's "Sound and Sense" onomatopoeically imitates in sound what it describes:

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line too labors, and the words move slow.

Most often, however, onomatopoeia refers to words and groups of words, such as Tennyson's description of the "murmur of innumerable bees," which attempts to capture the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing.

**Open form**

A type of structure or form in poetry characterized by freedom from regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, metrical pattern, and overall poetic structure. E.E. Cummings's "[Buffalo Bill's]" is one example. See also *Free verse*.

**Parody**

A humorous, mocking imitation of a literary work, sometimes sarcastic, but often playful and even respectful in its playful imitation. Examples include Bob McKenty's parody of Frost's "Dust of Snow" and Kenneth Koch's parody of Williams's "This is Just to Say."

**Personification**

The endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities. An example: "The yellow leaves flaunted their color gaily in the breeze." Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" includes personification.

**Plot**

The unified structure of incidents in a literary work. See *Conflict*, *Climax*, *Denouement*, and *Flashback*.

**Point of view**

The angle of vision from which a story is narrated. See *Narrator*. A work's point of view can be: first person, in which the narrator is a character or an observer, respectively; objective, in which the narrator knows or appears to know no more than the reader; omniscient, in which the narrator knows everything about the characters; and limited omniscient, which allows the narrator to know some things about the characters but not everything.



**Protagonist**

The main character of a literary work--Hamlet and Othello in the plays named after them, Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Paul in Lawrence's "Rocking-Horse Winner."

**Pyrrhic**

A metrical foot with two unstressed syllables ("of the").

**Quatrain**

A four-line stanza in a poem, the first four lines and the second four lines in a Petrarchan sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.

**Recognition**

The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is. Sophocles' Oedipus comes to this point near the end of *Oedipus the King*; Othello comes to a similar understanding of his situation in Act V of *Othello*.

**Resolution**

The sorting out or unravelling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story. See *Plot*.

**Reversal**

The point at which the action of the plot turns in an unexpected direction for the protagonist. Oedipus's and Othello's recognitions are also reversals. They learn what they did not expect to learn. See *Recognition* and also *Irony*.

**Rhyme**

The matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. The following stanza of "Richard Cory" employs alternate rhyme, with the third line rhyming with the first and the fourth with the second:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him;  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown  
Clean favored and imperially slim.

**Rhythm**

The recurrence of accent or stress in lines of verse. In the following lines from "Same in Blues" by Langston Hughes, the accented words and syllables are underlined:

I said to my baby,  
Baby take it stow....  
Lulu said to Leonard  
I want a diamond ring

**Rising action**

A set of conflicts and crises that constitute the part of a play's or story's plot leading up to the climax. See *Climax*, *Denouement*, and *Plot*.

**Rising meter**

Poetic meters such as iambic and anapestic that move or ascend from an unstressed to a stressed syllable. See *Anapest*, *Iamb*, and *Falling meter*.

**Satire**

A literary work that criticizes human misconduct and ridicules vices, stupidities, and follies. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a famous example.

Chekhov's *Marriage Proposal* and O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," have strong satirical elements.

**Sestet**

A six-line unit of verse constituting a stanza or section of a poem; the last six lines of an Italian sonnet. Examples: Petrarch's "If it is not love, then what is it that I feel," and Frost's "Design."

**Sestina**

A poem of thirty-nine lines and written in iambic pentameter. Its six-line stanza repeat in an intricate and prescribed order the final word in each of the first six lines. After the sixth stanza, there is a three-line envoi, which uses the six repeating words, two per line.

**Setting**

The time and place of a literary work that establish its context. The stories of Sandra Cisneros are set in the American southwest in the mid to late 20th century, those of James Joyce in Dublin, Ireland in the early 20th century.

**Simile**

A figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using *like*, *as*, or *as though*. An example: "My love is like a red, red rose."

**Sonnet**

A fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter. The Shakespearean or English sonnet is arranged as three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet divides into two parts: an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet, rhyming abba abba cde cde or abba abba cd cd cd.

**Spondee**

A metrical foot represented by two stressed syllables, such as *KNICK-KNACK*.

**Stanza**

A division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form--either with similar or identical patterns or rhyme and meter, or with variations from one stanza to another. The stanzas of Gertrude Schnackenberg's "Signs" are regular; those of Rita Dove's "Canary" are irregular.

**Style**

The way an author chooses words, arranges them in sentences or in lines of dialogue or verse, and develops ideas and actions with description, imagery, and other literary techniques. See *Connotation*, *Denotation*, *Diction*, *Figurative language*, *Image*, *Imagery*, *Irony*, *Metaphor*, *Narrator*, *Point of view*, *Syntax*, and *Tone*.

**Subject**

What a story or play is about; to be distinguished from plot and theme. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is about the decline of a particular way of life endemic to the American south before the civil war. Its plot concerns how Faulkner describes and organizes the actions of the story's characters. Its theme is the overall meaning Faulkner conveys.

**Subplot**

A subsidiary or subordinate or parallel plot in a play or story that coexists with the main plot. The story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern forms a subplot with the overall plot of *Hamlet*.

**Symbol**

An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself. The glass unicorn in *The Glass Menagerie*, the rocking horse in "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the road in Frost's "The Road Not Taken"--all are symbols in this sense.

**Synecdoche**

A figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole. An example: "Lend me a hand." See *Metonymy*.

**Syntax**

The grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue. The organization of words and phrases and clauses in sentences of prose, verse, and dialogue. In the following example, normal syntax (subject, verb, object order) is inverted:

"Whose woods these are I think I know."

**Tercet**

A three-line stanza, as the stanzas in Frost's "Acquainted With the Night" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The three-line stanzas or sections that together constitute the sestet of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet.

**Theme**

The idea of a literary work abstracted from its details of language, character, and action, and cast in the form of a generalization. See discussion of Dickinson's "Crumbling is not an instant's Act."

**Tone**

The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work, as, for example, Flannery O'Connor's ironic tone in her "Good Country People." See *Irony*.

**Trochee**

An accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, as in *FOOT-ball*.

**Understatement**

A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker says less than what he or she means; the opposite of exaggeration. The last line of Frost's "Birches" illustrates this literary device: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

**Villanelle**

A nineteen-line lyric poem that relies heavily on repetition. The first and third lines alternate throughout the poem, which is structured in six stanzas --five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Examples include Bishop's "One Art," Roethke's "The Waking," and Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

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### Definitions of Poetic Devices

#### Allegory

A representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form and can often be an extended metaphor for a specific historical or political event.

#### Alliteration

A stylistic device, or literary technique, in which successive words (more strictly, stressed syllables) begin with the same consonant sound or letter.

#### Assonance

The repetition of vowel sounds within a short passage of verse.

#### Connotation

The set of associations implied by a word in addition to its literal meaning.

#### Consonance

The repetition of consonant sounds in a short sequence of words.

#### Dactyls

An element of meter in poetry. In quantitative verse, such as Greek or Latin, a dactyl is a long syllable followed by two short syllable.

#### Denotation

The literal dictionary meaning(s) of a word as distinct from an associated idea or connotation.

#### End Rhyme

A rhyme in the final syllable(s) of a verse.

#### End-stopped

A feature in poetry where the syntactic unit (phrase, clause, or sentence) corresponds in length to the line.

#### Enjambment

The breaking of a syntactic unit (a phrase, clause, or sentence) by the end of a line or between two verses. Its opposite is end-stopping, where each linguistic unit

corresponds with a single line.

**Extended Metaphor**

A metaphor which is drawn out beyond the usual word or phrase to extend throughout a stanza or an entire poem, usually by using multiple comparisons between the unlike objects or ideas.

**Figurative**

The use of words, phrases, symbols, and ideas in such a way as to evoke mental images and sense impressions.

**Foot**

A unit of rhythm or meter; the division in verse of a group of syllables, one of which is long or accented.

**Haiku**

A Japanese form of poetry consisting of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Traditionally, they contain either a direct or oblique reference to a season.

**Iambs**

A metrical foot consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable or short syllable followed by a long syllable.

**Imagery**

The use of expressive or evocative images in poetry, art, literature, or music.

**Internal Rhyme**

Also called middle rhyme, a rhyme occurring within the line. The rhyme may be with words within the line but not at the line end, or with a word within the line and a word at the end of the line.

**Metaphor**

A rhetorical trope defined as a direct comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated subjects. This device is known for usage in literature, especially in poetry, where with few words, emotions and associations from one context are associated with objects and entities in a different context.

**Meter**

A measure of rhythmic quantity in poetry. The organized succession of groups of syllables at basically regular intervals in a line of poetry, according to definite metrical patterns. The unit of meter is the foot.

**Ode**

A form of stately and elaborate lyrical verse, usually of a serious meditative nature and having a formal stanzaic structure.

**Persona**

The speaker or voice of a literary work who is doing the talking. Thus persona is the "I" of a narrative or the implied speaker of a lyric poem.

**Rhyme Scheme**

The pattern established by the arrangement of rhymes in a stanza or poem, generally described by using letters of the alphabet to denote the recurrence of rhyming lines.

**Rhythm**

An essential of all poetry, the regular or progressive pattern of recurrent accents in the flow of a poem the rise and fall of stresses on words in the metrical feet.

**Sonnet**

A fixed form consisting of fourteen lines of 5-foot iambic verse at times following a strict rhyme scheme. The conventions associated with the sonnet have changed during its history.

**Sestina**

A verse form first used by the Provençal troubadours, consisting of six six-line stanzas and a three-line closing stanza, with the end words of the first stanza repeated in varied order as end words in the other stanzas and also recurring in the closing stanza.

**Slant Rhyme**

Sometimes known as half or off rhyme, a rhyme in which the sounds are similar, but not exact often using consonance or assonance.

**Stressed**

To place emphasis on a syllable or word in pronouncing or in accordance with a metrical pattern.

**Syllable**

A unit of organization for a sequence of speech sounds and they can influence the rhythm of a language, its prosody, its poetic meter, its stress patterns.

**Symbol**

A symbol is a graphical, written, vocal or physical object which represents another, usually more complex, physical or abstract object, or an object

property.

**Syntax**

The way in which linguistic elements (words and phrases) are arranged to form grammatical structure.

**Tension**

The artistically satisfying equilibrium of opposing forces in a poem, usually referring to the use of language and imagery, but often applied to other elements, such as dramatic structure, rhythmic patterns, and sometimes to the aesthetic value of the poem as a whole.

**Theme**

The central idea, topic, or didactic quality of a work.

**Tone**

The poet's or persona's attitude in style or expression toward the subject. Tone can also refer to the overall mood of the poem itself, in the sense of a pervading atmosphere intended to influence the readers' emotional response and foster expectations of the conclusion.

**Trochee**

A metrical foot with a long or accented syllable followed by a short or unaccented syllable.

For more help see the UWC Poetry Analysis handout.

Text Resources: [The American Heritage College Dictionary](#) (4th ed.)

Web Resources:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry\\_terminology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry_terminology)

<http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary.html>

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<a href="#">PoetryDefinitions.pdf</a>	116.33 KB

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## Poetry Terminology Quiz

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Next to each example, write the word that it represents.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The White House voted yesterday.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ She was as mad as a bull.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Hyperbole, metaphor, and simile are all examples.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ He would meet and greet the people at the meeting.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ His smile was a distant light on the horizon.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The grass danced in the whispering wind.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The bare bear was cold.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ He was not unlike his father.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The water was wild and wet due to the weather.

**Directions:** Write the letter in the blank that matches each word to the definition.

- A. Irony      B. Antonym      C. Blank Verse      D. Connotation  
E. Denotation      F. Form      G. Free Verse      H. Homonym  
I. Hyperbole      J. Image      K. Imagery      L. Meter  
M. Rhyme      N. Rhythm      O. Setting      P. Structure      Q. Symbol  
R. Synonym      S. Tone

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A difference between the surface meaning of the words and the implications that may be drawn from them.



3. \_\_\_\_\_ A line of poetry or prose in unrhymed iambic pentameter.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Figurative language used to create particular mental images.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ One of two or more words that have the same or nearly the same meanings.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Poetry without a regular pattern of meter or rhyme.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Words that are opposite in meaning.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The dictionary meaning of the word.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ An exaggeration of the truth.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ The arrangement, manner or method used to convey the content, such as free verse, couplet, limerick, haiku.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ The personal or emotional associations called up by a word that go beyond its dictionary definition.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ The design or form of a literary work.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ The recurrence of accent or stress in lines of verse.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Two or more distinct words with the same pronunciation and spelling but with different meanings.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ The time and place of a literary work that establishes its context.