

Poetry

A poem is a piece of writing that provides a vivid experience, idea, or emotion by appealing to the imagination of the reader. Each poem is able to create this effect through the use of images, sounds, and rhythm. That poem may contain poetic devices such as onomatopoeia or figures of speech such as simile or personification. The poem may also use allusions in relaying meaning. The most distinguishing characteristics of most poetry, however, is the use of colourful and descriptive images to convey the poem's meaning in as few words as possible. That is, poets use images and unusual comparisons to recreate sights, sounds, and experiences in an abbreviated form.

Although the appearance of a poem is often a guide to its organization, the sound of a poem is usually more important to its meaning. Poets use two important patterns of sound: **rhythm** and **rhyme**.

Rhythm

The single line of poetry, laid one upon another, is the most recognizable unit of a poem. By examining lines of poetry, however, we can further break them down into the common, small units that compose the poem: the consonant, the vowel, the syllable, the foot, and the line. In short, by the process of *scansion* (to look at closely by breaking down into its components), we can understand the movement and sound of the poem. The movement and sound of the poem together make up the **meter** of the poem.

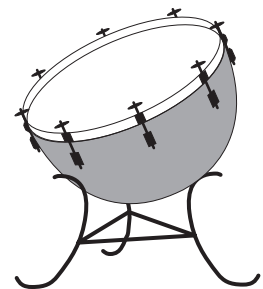
Most traditional poetry had distinct rhythm. Understanding that rhythm helped one to read the poem as the author intended, and provided clues to the poem's meaning.

When we speak English, the language demands that certain words or syllables be stressed over others, or receive more emphasis, and thus stand out from the words around them. The stressed syllables are marked with accents [stan' za, ab stain']. In metrical poetry, the deliberate alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables produces the regular rhythm. The rhythm of a poem is called **meter** and a unit a rhythm is called a **foot**. A foot is composed of either two or three syllables, and that the type of foot is determined by the placement of the accent. Metrical feet have specific names and the two most common are

1. **iambic** (unstressed, stressed)
2. **trochaic** (stressed, unstressed)

Once we have discovered the predominant foot in a line by marking the accents and marking everything else as unstressed, then we can count the number of feet in order to find the total length of the line. The following are the main type of length that occur in English lines:

1.	monometer	-one foot
2.	dimeter	-two feet
3.	trimeter	-three feet
4.	tetrameter	-four feet
5.	pentameter	-five feet
6.	hexameter	-six feet
7.	heptameter	-seven feet.



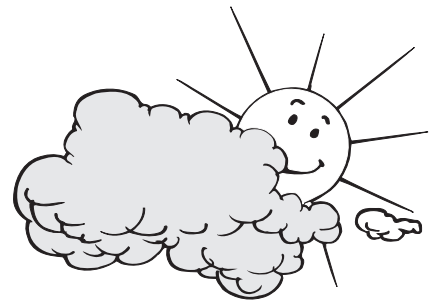
For most practical purposes, the heptameter approaches the longest line length of most poems.

A line of metrical poetry is usually made up a fixed number of feet. Thus, a poem written in iambic pentameter (the most common meter in English poetry) consist of a line of ten syllables; every second syllable is stressed.

Free verse replaces the expected repetition of a particular foot with a looser movement of rhythm. The placement of accents line to line vary with no discernible pattern; the syllabic count follows no measure regularity. Thus, the device of **rhyme** is employed with freedom and irregularity.

Although we've explored the importance of rhythm and accents, syllables and lines, more obvious poetic elements can strike us when we first look at a poem. Thus far, we have looked at lines mainly as single units, but in poems the lines are often strung together. These lines, symmetrical on the left hand margin of the page and irregular on the right, arrange or repeat themselves into blocks of lines. The poem may then have a space, followed by an equal block of lines. We call these groupings of lines **stanzas**. The following are the main types of stanzas:

1.	couplet	-two line stanza
2.	triplet	-three
3.	quatrain	-four
4.	quintet	-five
5.	sestet	-six
6.	septet	-seven
7.	octet	-eight.



Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of the same or similar sounds often occurring at set intervals and most obviously at the end of a line. The most common rhyme is **end rhyme** which occurs at the end of the line. **Internal rhyme** occurs within a line and emphasizes rhythmic structure.

end rhyme	The moon lies <u>low</u> The cows move <u>slow</u>
internal rhyme	The Colonel's <u>son</u> to the fort has <u>won</u>



The following are the main *types of rhymes*:

1. **True (perfect) rhyme** -occurs when the initial consonants change but the succeeding vowels and consonants remain the same.

e.g. In the silence that prolongs the span
The red-haired boy who drove the van

2. **Ear Rhyme** -occurs when words are spelled differently but sound the same.

e.g. Wore cycle boots and jacket here
Heard, as he stretched back from his beer

3. **Half-rhyme** (near or slant rhyme) -occurs when there are changes within the vowel sounds of the words meant to rhyme.
 e.g. Remote exertion had lined and burned
 The heroic fall or climb where they ere earned

4. **Eye Rhyme** -occurs when words are spelled the same and look alike but sound differently.
 e.g. These pretty pleasures might me move
 To live with thee and be thy love

5. **Identical Rhyme** -occurs when the same word is repeated usually for emphasis.

Rhyme Patterns

Stanzas often have specific rhyme schemes or versification. Letters of the alphabet are used to record the pattern of the end rhyme. Each letter corresponds to a different sound in the stanza.

e.g.	line ending	corresponding letter	
stanza a	...way	a	thus <i>aabb</i>
	... say	a	
	... meet	b	
	... retreat	b	
stanza b	... meat	a	thus <i>abab</i>
	... small	b	
	... seat	a	
	... hall	b	
stanza c	...bed	a	free verse
	...glue	b	
	...yellow	c	
	...sea	d	

Punctuation in Poetry

Another element to be considered in the poem is the punctuation. The punctuation marks in poems tell the reader when to fall silent and when to pause. Periods and exclamation marks get full stops. Commas get only half stops. The clear, rhythmic reading of a poem therefore depends on close attention to all punctuation marks. For instance, it is unnecessary to stop at the end of a line unless a comma, period or other punctuation mark tells us to come to full stop or pause. To stop or pause might damage the sense and flow of the poem.

Kinds Of Poems

Narrative Poetry tells a story, gives a snapshot of an event in the life and times of a person and can act as a response to a story, a news event, or a personal situation. The following are some of the main types of narrative poems:

Epic: A long narrative poem on a serious subject or action involving an epic hero. An epic is told in a formal and elevated style.

Ballad: A story told in song, handed down from generation to generation. The story is generally suggested by dialogue in dialect. The theme is usually sad, mainly about love or war.

Lyric Poetry is any short poem in which a speaker expresses intense personal emotion, a state of mind or process of perception, thought and feeling rather than describing a narrative or dramatic situation. Originally, the term lyric designated poems meant to be sung and accompanied by the lyre.

The following are some of the main types of lyric poems:

Ode A long lyric poem that is serious in subject and treatment, elevated in style, and elaborate in its stanzaic structure.

Song A poem adapted to vocal music. It is less intense in feeling than the ode and simpler in form. A funeral song or chant is known as a *dirge* or *coronach*.

Sacred Lyrics The name for hymns.

Elegy A poem that expresses mourning or lamentation. It is formal in style and may be a meditation on the meaning of life or death. Some elegies have been inspired by the death of one particular individual moving from the particular to a general meditation about life and death.

Sonnet A lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen (usually iambic pentameter) lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme.

i. **Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet**

This was the original sonnet. It consisted of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter rhyming in the octave (abbaabba), followed by a sestet (cdcdcd). The octave generally contains a problem or theme that the sonnet develops. The sestet presents the resolution or conclusion.

ii. **Shakespearean Sonnet**

This sonnet is an adaptation so that the fourteen lines consist of three quatrains giving some illustration of the theme and a couplet presenting the conclusion. Its rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg.



Descriptive Poetry describes something primarily through sense images. A truly descriptive poem is objective in nature since the writer is more interested in depicting a scene rather than presenting his own feelings about the scene.

Humorous Poetry often provides nonsensical forms for purely entertainment purposes. The **Limerick** (nonsense poem of five anapestic lines) is a common example.

Concrete Poetry exploits the graphic, visual aspect of writing such as a poem about an apple in the shape of an apple.

Images in Poetry

Poets understand the power of images to evoke feelings. For that reason they often use images in their poems to recreate experiences, impressions, and moods. Poets create this reality by using **sensory images** (words and phrases that appeal to your senses) and **concrete language** (words and phrases that describe things that can be experienced through the senses).

Images may be clear and easy to understand. Some images, however, are not. The poet may refer to special knowledge or allude to something we may need to have explained. In most cases, however, the indirect reference or **allusion** can be understood by the reader. The allusion is used both for brevity and meaning; it often makes the poem more colourful.

The main type of allusions that can be used are



1. **Religious or Biblical Allusions** - a reference to person, event or thing from the Bible or other religious texts (e.g. Solomon)
2. **Classical Allusions** - a reference to something or someone from Classical Greece, Rome, or Egypt (e.g. Zeus, Colossus)
3. **Literary Allusions** - a reference to someone or something in literature (e.g. Moby Dick, Tom Sawyer, Oliver)
4. **Historical Allusions** - a reference to someone or something of importance in history (e.g. Napoleon, Hitler, Churchill)

Repetition in Poetry

The sound of a poem adds to its meaning. A poet can

- create pattern of accented and unaccented syllables that stress selected words and reinforce particular feelings
- arrange rhyming words in selected patterns
- repeat selected sounds, words, and phrases to suggest or emphasize particular words, feeling, and ideas.

Repetition, important to sound, can be achieved using the following figures of sound:

1. **Alliteration** is the repetition of the initial sound which adds to the musical quality of the line.
e.g. About the lilting **h**ouse and **h**appy as the **g**rass was **g**reen
2. **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds in words that are close together.
e.g. Thou still unravished **br**ide of quietness
3. **Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds in the middle of words
e.g. With one **l**ick he found his **l**uck
4. **Repetition of individual words, phrases or lines**
5. **Parallelism** is the repetition of **specific patterns** such as phrases or clauses.
e.g. *Say I'm weary, say I'm sad*
Say I'm growing old, but add

Figurative Language (Figures of Speech, Rhetorical Figures, Figures of Sound)

A poet uses **figurative language** to help the reader make connections. Figurative language is language that is not literal being either metaphorical or rhetorically patterned. Figurative language embodies one or more figures of speech, rhetorical figures, or figures of sound. Figures of speech are used to create strong images in the reader's mind. These figures of speech work alone or in groups

(**synaesthesia**) to create the total imaginative effect of the poem. In short, the poet uses figurative language to help the reader

- look at common objects or ideas in uncommon ways
- better understand and appreciate the poem.

Figurative Language may compare unlike things or ideas

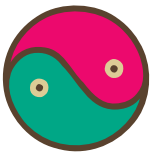
1. **Metaphor** implies a relationship, a similarity, between two different objects. Once established, this relationship changes our perception of both objects. In the simplest metaphors such as ‘my love is a rose’, both the idea love and the object rose become one and the same thing. We call the subject of the comparison (love) the tenor; the figure that completes the comparison (rose) we call the vehicle.

2. **Simile** is a more direct comparison often using the expressions ‘like’ or ‘as.’ In the simile, ‘My love is like a red, red rose’, the identification is not as total since the tenor and vehicle are merely like one another. Similar parts are compared but not the whole.

Note: In identifying the simile, remember to give the entire comparison and not just the phrase with like or as.

Other examples of figurative language are

3. **Contrast** or **Antithesis**, the opposite of comparison, shows the differences between two objects. It is usually done by placing the contrasting elements side by side in parallel structure.



e.g. **white on black**

Marriage has many **pains**, but celibacy has no **pleasures**
Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.
(Julius Caesar)

4. **Hyperbole** is purposeful exaggeration to create a specific effect.

e.g. His **legs bestrid the ocean**; his reared **arm crested the world**
(Anthony and Cleopatra)

5. **Understatement** or **Litotes** is the opposite of hyperbole and achieves its effects by deliberately saying less than could be said either to diminish or to enhance a subject.

e.g. The hydrogen bomb is **no ordinary invention**.

6. **Personification** in its most common form gives the attributes of human beings to ideas or objects.



a. That produced by raising an inanimate object to the rank of an animal or human.

e.g. The **thirsty soil drank** the rain.

b. That produced by raising an animal or plant to the rank of a human.

e.g. The flowers **nodded** to her.

c. That produced by raising an abstraction to the rank of a human.

e.g. Freedom **blushed** with shame.

7. **Apostrophe** is a direct and explicit address either to an absent person or to an abstract or non-human entity. (rhetorical figure)

e.g. **Death**, be not proud.
O wild **West wind**



8. **Metonymy** occurs when a word that merely relates to an object describes the object itself.

e.g. The **pen** is mightier than the sword.
The **White House** announced



9. **Synecdoche** takes a part of an object to describe the whole.

e.g. All **hands** on deck. fifty **head** (of cattle)
to eat of the **tree**

10. **Onomatopoeia** refers to the use of words whose sounds seem to express or reinforce or resemble what it is describing.

e.g. The **mooring** of cows
the **cawing** of parrots



Figures of speech and rhetorical devices also are used to help clarify meaning.

11. **Euphemism** is the calling of an unpleasant name or fact by a more pleasant one.

e.g. 'heck' for 'hell'
'He passed away' for 'He died.'

124. **Ambiguity** is the condition of admitting two or more meanings for the same word or idea. A poetical ambiguity depends on the reader's weighing the possible meanings according to their probability. It gives richness to a poem by allowing more than one interpretation to the meaning of a word or metaphor.

Puns (words with two meanings)

e.g. Tomorrow I shall be a **grave** man (John Donne)

double entendres (pun where one meaning has sexual connotation)

e.g. The bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the **prick** of noon.

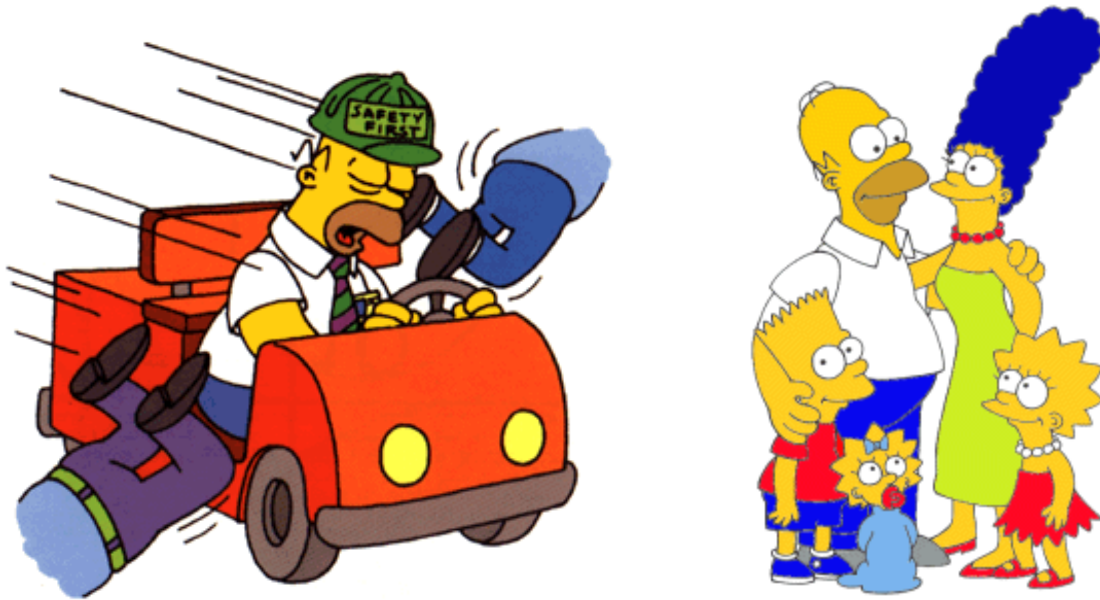
13. **Paradox** is a statement which seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, but yet turns out to make good sense.

e.g. to be lonely in a crowd

14. **Oxymoron** combines two words whose meanings should nullify each other; instead, when brought together, they make sense. (a type of paradox)

e.g. 'sweet' pain bitter sweet
falsely true living death

15. **Irony** is a rhetorical device by which a writer expresses meaning contradictory to the stated one. He may make it clear that the meaning he intends is the opposite of his literal one, or he may construct a discrepancy between an expectation and its fulfillment or between the appearance of a situation and the reality that underlies it.
16. **Satire** is the literary art of ridiculing human vices or follies by making them ridiculous and by evoking attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. The Simpsons uses a lot of satire to make fun of American society.



Tone

It is important to consider how the meaning of a poem is affected by poetic voice, mood, and tone.

Poetic voice refers to the speaker or narrator of the poem. The poet may have created a character or other narrator through which to speak. The poetic voice could be expressing an emotion that the poet may or may not share.

The **tone** of the poem is projected through the poetic voice. Tone is described as the writer's attitude toward his subject, audience, or himself. It is created through diction, rhythm, rhyme, and use of imagery. The tone might be angry or reflective, melancholy or joyful, bitter or ironic. Understanding tone should help the reader understand the intended meaning.

Tone carries with a **mood**. Mood is the atmosphere that the poem creates. It describes the feeling or emotion that the tone of a voice, place, or a person generates. Mood is created primarily through the choice of words and imagery.

Tone and mood are so similar that many people confuse the two. But tone is the manner, atmosphere, or attitude that carries or conveys a feeling. Mood is the feeling itself.

POETRY

READING THE POEM

-to develop your ability to understand and appreciate poetry, there are some suggestions to follow:

1. read a poem more than once
2. be prepared to use your dictionary frequently
3. read so as to hear the sounds of the words in your mind
4. pay attention to what the poem is saying
5. practice reading (when possible) the poem aloud.

-to understand what the poem is saying, the reader might ask himself the following:

1. Who is the speaker and what is he like?
 2. To whom is he speaking?
 3. What is the occasion?
 4. What is the setting in time?
 5. What is the setting in place?
 6. What is the central purpose of the poem?
 - to tell a story
 - to reveal something about human nature
 - to impart a vivid impression about something
 - to express one's mood or feelings
 - to convey some important idea, attitude, or concept
- the functions and details of the poem will relate to the central purpose
7. What is the central idea or theme of the poem?
 8. What is the tone of the poem and how is it achieved?
 9. Is there a structure to the poem and if so what is it?
 - list events of the poem to help determine structure
 10. How might you say the poem in another way? (paraphrase)
 11. What is the diction of the poem? Why did the writer chose the words he has? How effective are they?
 12. What kinds of imagery are used?
 13. What figures of speech of used and how effectively are they used?
 14. What symbols are used and why? If allegorical, what is the allegory?
 15. What is the function of paradox, understatement, irony, or hyberbole if used in the poem?
 16. Is allusion used and if so why?
 17. Is alliteration or onomatopoeia used and if so why?
 18. What is the meter of the poem? (scansion)
 19. Sound to sense?
 20. What is the pattern of the poem?
 21. How would you evaluate the poem on a scale of value?

Terms on Poetry

poem
rhythm
meter
foot
iambic
trochaic
iambic pentameter
monometer
dimeter
trimeter
tetrameter
pentameter
hexameter
heptameter
free verse
rhyme
couplet
triplet
quatrain
quintet
sestet
octet
stanza
internal rhyme
end rhyme
true rhyme
ear rhyme
half rhyme
eye rhyme
identical rhyme
rhyme schemes
assonance
consonance
narrative poetry
 epic
 ballad
lyric poetry
 ode
 sacred lyrics
 elegy
 sonnet

Italian
Shakespearean

descriptive poetry
humourous poetry
concrete poetry
allusions
 religious
 Classical
 historical
 literary
repetition
alliteration
parallelism (parallel structure)
metaphor
simile
contrast
understatement (litotes)
personification
hyperbole
apostrophe
metonymy
synecdoche
onomatopoeia
euphemism
ambiguity
 pun
 double entendre
paradox
oxymoron
irony
 situational
 verbal
 dramatic
parody
satire
poetic voice
tone/mood

