

Glossary of Poetic Terms

alliteration – the repetition of the first sound of a word; for example the “w” sound in “when white moths were on the wing” from “The Song of Wandering Aengus” by W.B. Yeats

assonance – similar vowel sounds in words that end with different consonants; for example: “Wanders and watches, with eager ears” from “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

consonance – similar consonant sounds at the ends of words, i.e. “blank, think, tank”

couplet – two rhymed lines of poetry; for example: “Then he said “Good-night!” and with muffled oar/ Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore” from “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

diction – the specific words an author chooses

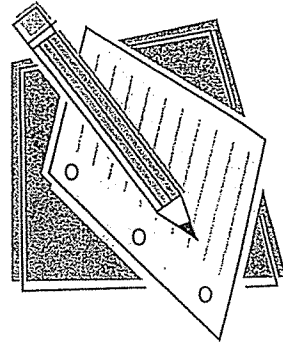
extended metaphor – a metaphor that is applied throughout the entire poem; the poem “The Railway Train” by Emily Dickinson is an extended metaphor

figurative language – using language to create a particular effect; forms of figurative language include simile, metaphor, and personification

hyperbole – extreme exaggeration to make a point; for example: the speaker in the poem “I, Too, Sing America” by Langston Hughes states “I, too, am America.” He creates a hyperbole when he states that he is America.

iamb – a metrical foot consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable or a short syllable followed by a long syllable

iambic pentameter – a rhythmic pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in which there are five stressed syllables in each line (penta = five)



imagery – the primary images or pictures the author uses to convey meaning in a poem

metaphor – a comparison of two unlike things; for example: “I, too, am America” from “I, Too, Sing America” by Langston Hughes

meter – the deliberate use of stressed and unstressed syllables to create a particular beat for a poem; for example the line, “I like to see it lap the miles” from “The Railway Train” by Emily Dickinson contains an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable

narrator—one who tells the story in a piece of work

onomatopoeia – when the sound of a word suggests a particular thing; for example: buzzing bees

paraphrase – to restate a piece of writing in simple terms

parody – an imitation of something, usually with the intent of making fun

persona – the person created by the writer to tell a story

personification – to give human qualities to something that is not human

quatrain – four lines of poetry, which may be rhymed; “The Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll is written in quatrains

rhyme scheme – the pattern of rhyme used in a poem

rhythm – like meter, rhythm refers to the beat of a poem; unlike meter, the rhythm of the poem may be irregular and different in every line

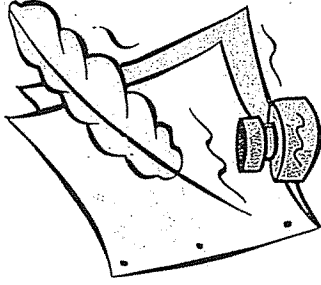
simile – a comparison between two unlike things using *like* or *as* to make the comparison; for example: Mr. Smith is *as angry as a hornet*.

speaker—the voice that tells the story in a poem

stanza – a group of lines in poetry; in prose, you would call it a paragraph

tone – the attitude or behavior the speaker has toward the subject matter; the tone could be formal, informal, humorous, serious, etc.

8 Types of Poetry



ballad – a poem that tells a story; ballads are usually sung

free verse – poetry that doesn't follow any specific patterns in rhythm, rhyme scheme, or line length; free verse may contain rhymes, but they are not used in a prescribed manner

Haiku – a three-line Japanese poetic form in the lines follow the pattern of five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line.

Limerick – a five-line poem that follows a specific rhyme scheme and rhythm. The first, second, and fifth lines contain eight syllables. Lines two and three contain six syllables. Limericks are usually funny or silly.

lyric poem – a poem that express the speaker's thoughts or feelings and creates a single, imaginative impression on the reader. Many poems can be classified as lyric poems including sonnets, ballads, and odes. Originally, lyric poems were set to music (Greeks played the *lyre* while singing the poem).

narrative poem – a poem that tells the sequence of events of a story; "The Song of Wandering Aengus" is a narrative poem

ode – a long, serious poem in praise of something

sonnet – a very structured fourteen-line poem that follows a specific rhyme structure and rhythm. The two most common sonnets are the Italian sonnet and the English sonnet. William Shakespeare wrote many English sonnets, which are also referred to as Shakespearean sonnets.