

Poetry Terms

Alliteration:

the repetition of the initial
consonant sound of words
within a phrase or sentence

Allusion:

a reference to a person, place, or thing--often literary, mythological, or historical. *The infinitive of allusion is to allude.*

Assonance:

the repetition of vowel
sounds

"And so, all the night-tide, I lie down
by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life and
my bride.

--Edgar Allan Poe, *Annabel Lee*

Atmosphere:

the overall feeling of a work,
which is related to tone and
mood

Blank verse:

Poetry or prose written in
unrhymed iambic
pentameter.

Plenty of modern poetry is
written in blank verse.

Consonance:

the repetition of consonant sounds

"The fair breeze blew, the white
foam flew,

The furrow followed free;"

--The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Couplets:

A pair of rhyming lines in a poem often set off from the rest of the poem.

Shakespeare's sonnets all end in couplets.

Diction

the author's choice of words

An author has the option of choosing any word from our language, why does he/she choose to use certain words and not others?

Elegy:

a poem mourning the dead

End rhyme:

Rhyming words that are at the ends of their respective lines—what we typically think of as normal rhyme.

Epic:

a long poem narrating the
adventures of a heroic
figure

i.e. Homer's *The Odyssey*

Figurative Language:

Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language. Any language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words in order to furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject.

Free Verse:

poetry without a regular
pattern of meter or rhyme

Iambic pentameter: ten-syllable lines in which every other syllable is stressed

MACBETH ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.
 / / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.
 / ˘ ˘ / / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / ˘
Seyton, send out. Doctor, the thanes fly from me.
 / / ˘ /
Come, sir, dispatch.

Imagery:

when an author uses a word or phrase to stimulate the reader's memory of one or more of the five senses

i.e. "Tita was so sensitive to onions, any time they were being chopped, they say she would just cry and cry; when she was still in my great-grandmother's belly her sobs were so loud that even Nacha, the cook, who was half-deaf, could hear them easily."

--Like Water for Chocolate

Internal rhyme:

a rhyme that occurs within
one line

i.e. "He's king of the Swing."

Lyric:

A type of poetry that expresses the poet's emotions. It often tells some sort of brief story, engaging the reader in the experience.

Metaphor:

a comparison between
essentially unlike things
without an explicitly
comparative word such as *like*
or *as*

i.e. "This chair is a rock."

Meter:

the measured pattern of
rhythmic accents in poems

Mood:

The feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage. The mood may be suggested by the writer's choice of words, by events in the work, or by the physical setting.

Ode:

a serious or lighthearted poem
revolving around one subject
that is important to the writer
or narrator

Onomatopoeia:

the use of words that sound
like what they mean

i.e. "buzz," "bang," or
"tic-tock"

Oxymoron:

A figure of speech by which a word or phrase produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect.

i.e. "cruel kindness" or
"pretty ugly"

Personification:

the endowment of inanimate
objects or abstract
concepts with animate or
living qualities

i.e. "The wind howled
through the night."

Prose:

Writing organized into sentences and paragraphs that is not poetry.

i.e. novels, short stories,
essays

Quatrain:
a four-line stanza

Refrain:

a phrase or verse recurring at intervals in a song or poem, especially at the end of each stanza; chorus

Rhyme:

the matching of final vowel
or consonant sounds in two
or more words

Rhythm:

the recurrence of accent or
stress in lines of verse

Simile:

a figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using *like*, *as*, or *as though*

i.e. "Her eyes were like stars."

Sonnet:

a fourteen-line poem written in
iambic pentameter

Different kinds of sonnets have
different rhyme schemes. The
most notable are Shakespeare's
sonnets which employ the
abab,cdcd,efef,gg rhyme scheme.

Stanza:

a major subdivision in a poem

A stanza of two lines is called a couplet; a stanza of three lines is called a tercet; a stanza of four lines is called a quatrain.

Symbol:

an object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself

Theme:

the idea of a literary work abstracted from its details of language, character, and action, and cast in the form of a generalization; the lesson or moral

Tone:

the implied attitude of a writer
toward the subject and
characters of a work

Voice:

the authorial presence in a piece of literature whether in the first, second, or third person