Poetry 10 Terminology

This list of terms builds on the preceding list you may have been given at Riverside in grade 9. It contains the terms you were responsible for learning in the past, as well as new terms. The new terms are marked with an asterisk (*). All terms are arranged alphabetically within each category.

Poem – Words organized in such a way that there is a pattern of rhythm, rhyme and/or meaning. The relationships between words are emphasized in poetry, so the various word-clusters or verses have a collective impact on the reader/listener (which is different from prose, where the words "hit" the reader one at a time in sentences).

Types of Poems

- **Ballad** – A long poem that tells a story, usually a folk tale or legend, in rhyme. Often set to music.

- **Concrete** – Concrete poetry experiments with the very materials of the poem itself: words, letters, format. The final product does what it says in that the meaning of the poem is demonstrated by the words, letters, format of the poem. Concrete poems rely heavily on the visual or phonetic to get across their meaning.

- **Free Verse*** – Modern poetry that has no regular pattern of rhythm, rhyme or line length

- **Lyric** – A short poem of intense feeling and emotion.

- **Narrative** – A poem that tells a story, narratives may or may not rhyme

- **Sonnet*** – A fourteen line lyric written in iambic pentameter. Sonnets follow a rigid rhyme scheme. Typical rhyme schemes for sonnets are the Shakespearian or English sonnet (abab cdcd efef gg) or the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet (abba abba cdc cdc OR abba abba cde cde). For more information about iambic pentameter and rhyme scheme, see "Rhythm and Rhyme" below.

Poetic Devices

A. Sound

- **Alliteration** – Repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of a series of words. This device uses sound to catch the reader's attention. *I kicked cold coffee coloured puddles* is an alliteration because of the repeating "ck" sound.

- **Assonance*** – Repeating vowel sounds in the middle of words. This device also uses sound to catch the reader's attention. This is a subtle device for which you have to listen carefully. *Twinkle twinkle little star* is an example of assonance because of the repeating short "i" sound.

- **Consonance*** – Repeating consonant sounds in the middle of words. This device also uses sound to catch the reader's attention. This is a subtle device, although it is less subtle than assonance. *If elephants laugh carefully, it is because they are afraid* is an example of consonance with the repeating "f" sound. Notice that the 'ph', 'gh' and 'f' letter patterns all make the "f" sound.

- **Euphony*** – Sounds that are very pleasant to the ear. The opposite of cacophony.

- **Onomatopoeia** – Words that sound like what they mean are called onomatopoeia. *"Buzz", "hiss", "splash"* are typical examples of this sound device. Also known as imitative harmony.

B. Comparison

- **Metaphor** – A direct comparison between two dissimilar items. *That baby is sugar sweet* is a metaphor, comparing the baby to sugar.

- **Personification** – A comparison between a non human item and a human so that the non human item is given human characteristics. *The trees stretched their arms to the sky* is a personification because the trees are described as if they are people stretching.

- **Simile** – A comparison between two dissimilar items using "like" or "as" to make the comparison. *The stars were like diamonds in the sky* is a simile, comparing stars to diamonds.

C. Word Play

- **Allusion*** – A reference in one piece of literature to something from another piece of literature. Allusions can also be references to person/events/places in history, religion, or myth. Allusions are frequently made in poetry, but can occur in other genres as well.

- **Figurative Language*** – The imaginative language that makes a poem rich to a reader. Figurative language often relies on comparison devices like simile, metaphor, and personification to make the point. The opposite of literal language.

- **Hyperbole** – A deliberate exaggeration to make a point. *I was hungry enough to eat the 'fridge* is a hyperbole.

- **Imagery*** – Poets create pictures in the mind of the reader, which appeal to the sense of sight; they also create descriptions to appeal to the other four senses. This collection of appeals to the five senses is called the imagery of the poem.

- **Literal language*** – The literal meaning of the poem, which ignores imagery, symbolism, figurative language and any imagination on the part of the poet or the reader.

- **Mood*** – The emotion of the poem. The atmosphere. The predominant feeling created by or in the poem, usually through word choice or description. Mood IS NOT THE SAME AS TONE.

- **Oxymoron*** – Placing single word opposites beside each other for dramatic effect is called oxymoron. *"Hot ice"*, *"jumbo shrimp"* and *"cold fire"* are examples of oxymoron.

- **Paradox*** – A large oxymoron. An apparently contradictory statement that, despite the contradiction, has an element of truth in it. Wordsworth's "the child is the father of the man" and Shakespeare's "the truest poetry is the most feigning" are examples of paradoxical statements.

- **Repetition*** – Deliberately repeated words, sounds, phrases, or whole stanzas. Repetition is used to make a point in the poem.

- **Symbol*** – Something that represents something else. For example, a dove often represents the concept of peace.

- **Tone*** – The narrator's attitude toward the subject of the poem and, sometimes, toward the reader of the poem. Tone is NOT THE SAME AS MOOD.

- **Understatement** – the opposite of hyperbole. Understatement achieves its effect through stating less than what is necessary. For example, a person might say to a hospitalized car crash victim, "I bet that hurt."

Verse Forms

- **Couplet** – Two lines of poetry that rhyme. The last two lines of an English sonnet is a couplet. The following example is a couplet:
  Roses are red, violets are blue
  Sugar is sweet and so are you

- **Octave*** – Eight lines of poetry that have a rhyme scheme. The first part of an Italian sonnet is an octave.

- **Quatrain** – Four lines of poetry that have a rhyme scheme. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (above) is an example of a quatrain. Quatrains often have an abab or abcb rhyme scheme, as well as the aabb shown above. The first three verses of an English sonnet are quatrains.

- **Sestet*** – Six lines of poetry that have a rhyme scheme. The second part of an Italian sonnet is a sestet.

- **Stanza** – another word for "verse". See below.

- **Verse** – A paragraph of writing in a poem. These paragraphs are written as clusters of rhyming lines in traditional poetry, such as octaves, sestets and quatrains. Also known as a stanza.

Rhythm and Rhyme

- **Blank Verse*** – Unrhymed iambic pentameter. All sonnets, Shakespearian plays and the King James version of the Bible are written in blank verse. Unrhymed iambic pentameter is said to closely mimic the cadences of natural speech. See below for more information on iambic pentameter.

- **Iambic Pentameter** – An iamb is two syllables. The first one is not stressed when spoken; the second one is stressed. The words "giraffe" or "destroy" are examples of iambs. Five iambs in a row is iambic pentameter. The following is an example from <u>Macbeth</u>:
    Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
    That struts and frets his hour up on the stage
    And then is heard no more. It is a tale
    Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
    Signifying nothing.

- **Rhyme** – When sounds match at the end of lines of poetry, it is considered rhyming (technically, it is end-rhyme). The examples below in "rhyme scheme" and "couplet" demonstrate this.

- **Rhythm** – A pattern of sound in a poem; it may be a regular pattern (such as iambic pentameter – see Shakespeare) or irregular, as in free verse (see below)

- **Rhyme Scheme** – The pattern of rhyme in a poem, indicated with letters of the alphabet. To decide on a rhyme scheme, you assign a letter of the alphabet to all rhyming words at the ends of lines of poetry, starting with the letter "a". When you run out of one rhyme sound, you start with the next letter of the alphabet. For example, the following is an aa bb rhyme scheme (star, are, high, sky):
    Twinkle, twinkle, little star
    How I wonder what you are
    Up above the world so high
    Like a diamond in the sky