

Poetry 9 Terminology

This list of terms is a building block that will be further developed in future grades. It contains the terms you are responsible for learning in your grade 9 year. 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, and format of the poem. Concrete poems rely heavily on the visual or phonetic to get across their meaning.
- **Lyric** – A short poem of intense feeling and emotion.
- **Narrative** – A poem that tells a story, narratives may or may not rhyme.

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.
- **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

• **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.

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

• **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.

• **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

• **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.

• **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:

• **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 Macbeth:

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.

• **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

• **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.