

## Poetry Terminology

**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.
- **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

### 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

### Rhythm and Rhyme

- **Rhyme** – When sounds match at the end of lines of poetry, it is considered rhyming (technically, it is end-rhyme).
- **Rhythm** – A pattern of sound in a poem; it may be a regular pattern