

Poetry 9 Terminology with Examples

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.

The Streets of Laredo

Arranged & adapted by Arlo Guthrie

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo
As I walked out in Laredo one day
I spied a poor cowboy wrapped up in white linen
All wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay

"I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy"
These words he did say as I proudly stepped by
"Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story
I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die

"'Twas once in the saddle I used to go ridin'
Once in the saddle I used to go gay
First lead to drinkin', and then to card-playing
I'm shot in the breast and I'm dying today

"Let six jolly cowboys come carry my coffin
Let six pretty gals come to carry my pall
Throw bunches of roses all over my coffin
Throw roses to deaden the clods as they fall

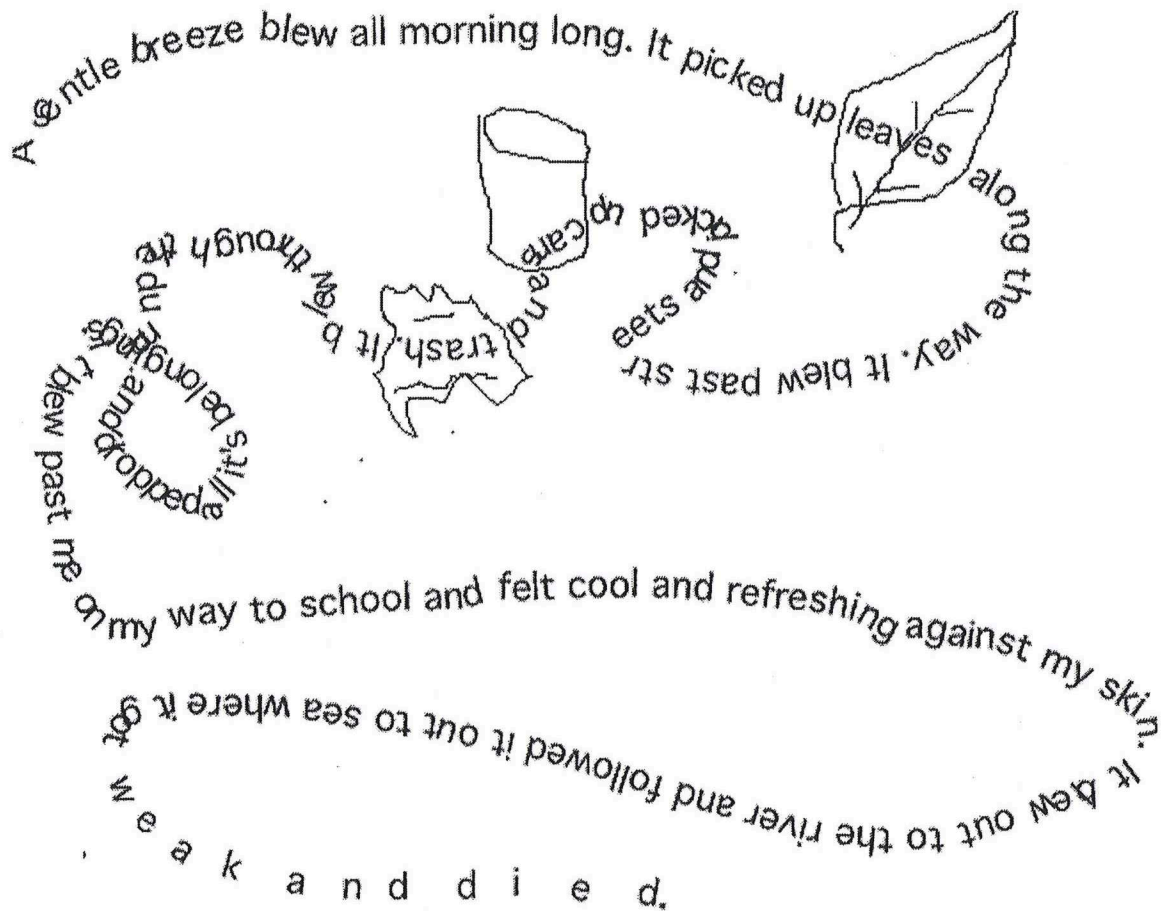
"Oh, beat the drum slowly, and play the fife lowly
And play the dead march as you carry me along
Take me to the green valley and lay the earth o'er me
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done wrong"

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly
And bitterly wept as we carried him along
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young and handsome
We all loved our comrade although he done wrong

- **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.

A concrete poem is a poem that forms a picture of the topic or follows the contours of a shape that is suggested by the topic. These can be used effectively with reports in science or social studies. For example, my students have used them in catastrophe reports. Their poems were about a tornado, a hurricane, a flood, and an earthquake.

A GENTLE BREEZE



A CONCRETE POEM by Shannon Lea K.

Text of the poem is typed below.

A gentle breeze blew all morning long. It picked up leaves (written on a leaf) along the way. It blew past streets and picked up cans (written on a can) and trash (written on a piece of trash). It blew through the dump and dropped all its belongings. It blew past me on my way to school and felt cool and refreshing against my skin. It blew out to the river and followed it out to sea where it got weak and died.

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

SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
--Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

William Wordsworth

1799

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

John Barleycorn

by

Robert Burns

There was three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.
They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.
But the cheerful Spring came kindly on,
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.
The sultry suns of Summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.
The sober Autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.
They've taen a weapon, long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then ty'd him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.
They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.
They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heaved in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.
They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him farther woe,
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.
They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a Miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him between two stones.
And they hae taen his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.
John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.
'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.
Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

Poetic Devices:

A. Sound:

• **Alliteration** – It is the repetition of 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 alliteration because of the repeating “ck” sound.

It is used in clichés:

Sweet smell of success; a dime a dozen; bigger and better; jump for job;

William Wordsworth example:

And sings a solitary song that whistles in the wind.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson example:

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

Beowulf example:

Now **B**eowulf bode in the **b**urg of the Scyldings, **L**eader beloved, and long he ruled In fame with all fold since his **f**ather had gone...

William Shakespeare’s example:

With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino.

Rudyard Kipling’s examples:

For it’s Tommy this, an’ Tommy that, an’ ”Chuck him out, the brute!
But it’s “Savior of ‘is country” when the guns begin to shoot.

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn’t far from London!)
And you shall wonder hand in hand with love in summer’s wonderland;
Come dow to Kew in lilac-time (it isn’t far from London!)

Modern poets also avail themselves of alliteration, especially as a substitute for rhyme. Edwin Markhama’s Lincoln, The Man of the People, is in unrhymed blank verse, but there are many lines as alliterative as:

She left the **H**eaven of **H**eroes and came down **T**o **m**ake a **m**an to **m**eet the **m**ortal need **A**
man to **m**atch the **m**ountains and the sea **T**he friendly **w**elcome of the **w**ayside **w**ell

Alliteration is a great help to memory. It helps us remember such phrases as:
“**s**ink or **s**wim”; “**d**o or **d**ie”; “**f**ull or **f**eathers”; “**t**he **m**ore the **m**errier”; “**w**atchful
waiting”; “**p**oor but **p**roud”; “**h**ale and **h**earty”; “**g**reen as **g**rass”; “**l**ive and **l**earn”; “**m**oney
makes the **m**are go”.

• **Onomatopoeia** – Words that sound like what they mean are called onomatopoeia. The words imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions to which they refer. “Buzz”, “hiss”, “splash” are typical examples of this sound device. Also known as imitative harmony. See the following:

The rusty spigot
sputters,
utters
a splutter,
spatters a smattering of drops,
gashes wider;
slash,
splatters,
scatters,
spurts,
finally stops sputtering
and plash!
gushes rushes splashes
clear water dashes.

by Eve Merriam

B. Comparison:

• **Metaphor** – A direct comparison between two dissimilar items. Metaphors are comparisons that show how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in one important way. They are a way to describe something. Authors use them to make their writing more interesting or entertaining.

Metaphors state that something is something else, unlike similes that use the words ‘as’ or ‘like’. Some examples are:

That baby is sugar sweet is a metaphor, comparing the baby to sugar.
If Tommy hadn’t been such a hog;
Cindy was such a mule;
Our old cat, a bolt of lightning, caught his prey;
He’s such a feather.

• **Personification** – A comparison between a non-human item and a human so that the non - human item is given human characteristics. In other words the poet is giving human qualities to animals or objects.

Examples :

a smiling moon; a jovial sun ; The trees *stretched their arms to the sky*
is a personification because the trees are described as if they are people stretching.

In "Mirror" by Sylvia Plath, the mirror--the "I" in the first line--is given the ability to speak, see and swallow, as well as human attributes such as truthfulness.

I am silver and exact.
I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful—

Simile – A comparison between two dissimilar items using “like” or “as” to make the comparison. They show how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in one important way. Similes are a way to describe something. Authors use them to make their writing more interesting or entertaining.

The stars were **like** diamonds in the sky is a simile, comparing stars to diamonds.
Playing chess with Ashley is **like** trying to outsmart a computer.
His temper was **as** explosive **as** a volcano.

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. Literal means straightforward or factual; the dictionary meaning of a word. When someone says, “I mean that literally,” they mean “exactly” – just the facts!

• **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.”

In *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*, a suburban dinner party is invaded by Death, who wears a long black cloak and carries a scythe. He is the Grim Reaper; the party is over; the guests must all go with him. "Well," says one party guest, "that's cast rather a gloom over the evening, hasn't it?"

In another scene, an Army officer has just lost his leg. When asked how he feels, he looks down at his bloody stump and responds, "Stings a bit."

Rhythm and Rhyme:

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

- **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	a
How I wonder what you are	a
Up above the world so high	b
Like a diamond in the sky	b

