Poetry Terms



- **Alliteration** the repetition of initial consonant sounds. Ex: On the bald street breaks the blank day.
- **Allusion** a reference to a person, place, thing, event or idea in history or literature used to suggest an emotion or idea. Ex: an allusion to the Garden of Eden might suggest a notion of paradise or a time of purity and innocence. (Allusion is different from *illusion*, which is a deception or erroneous perception of reality.)
- **Apostrophe** a figure of speech in which the poem's speaker addresses someone absent or dead, or something nonhuman as if it were alive and present and could reply.
- **Assonance** the repetition, at close intervals, of vowel sounds.
- **Ballad** a fairly short **narrative poem** written in a songlike stanza form.
- **Consonance** the repetition, at close intervals, of consonant sounds found within or at the end of words.
- **Couplet** 2-line stanza, which may or may not rhyme.
- **End rhyme** rhyme that comes at the end of lines. Ex. "It runs and it <u>creeps</u>/ For awhile, till it <u>sleeps</u>"
- Eye rhyme words that look alike but do not sound alike. Ex: bough, cough; brow, blow.
- **Figurative language** words that are literally inaccurate but are used to describe or define something. Usually this language makes use of **metaphors** or **similes** to compare and equate something to another.
- **Fixed form** poetry that is categorized by its patterns of lines, meter, rhymes and stanzas. Examples of fixed forms include the sonnet, ballad and villanelle.
- **Free verse** poetry that is not in a fixed form. Also called *open form*.
- **Imagery** the use of images, often **figurative** ones, that appeal to one of the 5 senses. Images can be olfactory (smell), auditory (sound), tactile (touch), visual (sight), or gustatory (taste).
- Internal rhyme rhyme that comes within one or several lines. Ex: I wished upon the most beautiful moon in June and hope/ that soon I will fall in love.
- Lyric a short poem that expresses the personal emotions and thoughts of a first-person narrator and is characterized by its musical qualities.
- **Metaphor** an implied comparison in which the figurative word is substituted for the original term (in contrast to the explicit comparison of a simile). Ex: "He is a lion in the field."

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- Meter the recurrence of rhythmic stresses or accents in a regular pattern.
- **Narrative poem** a poem that tells a story.
- Onomatopoeia use of a word that resembles the sound it denotes. Ex: buzz, bowwow, choo-choo.
- **Personification** giving human characteristics to an animal, object or abstract concept.
- **Poetry** literature written in meter or verse. It is characterized by language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by such literary techniques as structured meter, rhyme, and metaphor.
- **Prose poem** a poem which is written in prose format; i.e. it has no fixed lines.
- **Quatrain** a four-line stanza.
- Rhyme (see also End, Eye, Internal and Slant rhyme) two or more words that repeat the same end sounds. ALso called *perfect rhyme*. Ex: send, bend, trend.
- **Rhyme scheme** the pattern of end rhymes denoted by lowercase letters (a, b, c, d...) where each letter represents a new rhyme.
- **Setting** the place and time in which a poem takes place; not all poems have settings.
- **Simile** an explicit comparison of one thing to another using the connecting words *like, as, than, similar to, resembles* or *sees.* Ex: He is like a lion in the field.
- **Slant rhyme** words, usually in a set rhyme scheme, which have similar sounds but are not perfect rhymes. Also called *approximate rhyme, imperfect rhyme,* or *near rhyme*. Ex: arrayed/said.
- **Sonnet** a 14-line poem that has traditionally followed specific rules of thyme and meter.
- **Stanza** a group of lines in a poem. People often mistakenly call them paragraphs.
- **Style** the author's manner of expression. An author's style is the result of choices about vocabulary, organization, **imagery**, pace, and recurring themes.
- **Symbol** a figure of speech in which a person or thing stands for some other idea/abstract concept. Ex: the color white has become a symbol of purity or innocence.
- Theme the central or unifying idea that is developed in a work.
- **Tone** the expressions of the author's attitude toward the subject matter.
- **Verse** another name for poetry derived from the Latin "vers" meaning "to turn." It refers to the fact that poetry lines "turn" at a specific point versus *prose*, which has no fixed lines.

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