

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



Sound effects

Alliteration

A group of words in sequence beginning with the same sound (usually a consonant)

Example: "sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence"

or "'Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle' (Wilfred Owen)

Assonance

Repetition of same vowel sound in a sequence of words:

example: "And ice, mast-high came floating by"

"with wise lies lure me on black racks rack me"

Onomatopoeia

The use of words that imitate the sound that the poet is trying to describe e.g. the use of the word 'crackle' in *Thistles* by [Ted Hughes](#):

'Thistles spike the summer air

Or crackle open under the blue-black pressure.'



Dissonance

The deliberate use of inharmonious syllables/words/phrases in order to create a harsh-toned effect. Walt Whitman employs dissonance in his poem [To a Locomotive in Winter](#).

Thy black cylindrical body, golden brass and silvery steel,

Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,"...

Rhyme

Rhyme is the regular repetition of similar sounds at the end of two or more lines of poetry:

Example: friskers/whiskers, come/drum, clear/near,

Rhyme patterns are usually labelled:

Example: a b a b, c d d c, ... (see Sonnets)

Rhythm



Meter/Metre

Is the regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that make up a line of poetry. Meter gives rhythm and regularity to poetry.

Foot/feet

A foot is a basic unit of a meter. In English, a metrical foot normally contains either two or three syllables with varying patterns of stress.



The English language does not always fit exactly into metrical patterns so many employing meter will exhibit irregularities.

In English verse the most common meters are: iambic, dactylic, trochaic and anapestic.

Iambic meter



I DREAMED | there WOULD | be SPRING | no MORE

Trochaic meter

BY the | SHORES of | GIT chee | GUMee,

Anapestic meter

And the SHEEN | of their SPEARS | was like STARS | on the SEA,

Dactylic Meter

WE that had | LOVED him so, | FOLlowed him | HONoured him,

Iambic Pentameter

A line of iambic pentameter is five iambic feet in a row. Shakespeare's plays were largely written in iambic pentameter.

da	DUM	da	DUM	da	DUM	da	DUM	da	DUM
----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----	----	-----



The following line from [John Keats' Ode to Autumn](#) is a good example:

To **swell** the **gourd**, and **plump** the **hazel shells**

Blank Verse

Verse that does not rhyme. Blank verse, however, is not the same as [free verse](#) because it employs a [meter](#) which is written in iambic pentameters.

You stars that reign'd at my nativity,
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist
Into entrails of yon labouring clouds,
That when they vomit forth into the air,
My limbs may issue from their smoky mouths,
So that my soul may but ascend to Heaven.

([Doctor Faustus](#) by Christopher Marlowe)

Free verse

Verse without formal meter or rhyme patterns. Free verse, instead, relies upon the natural rhythms of everyday speech. The American poet Walt Whitman was a pioneer of free verse .

America

[By Walt Whitman](#)

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

Symbolism and Imagery

Allusion

Where a poem makes reference to another poem or text. Experienced readers will notice this and thus have a fuller understanding of the poem. Allusions can also be found in fiction. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, is full of allusions to famous works of literature and therefore difficult to read unless you know all these works.



Image

Images are representations of sensations perceived through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Visual images are the most common e.g. William Carlos Williams' famous: 'a red wheel/barrow/glazed with rain/water'. However, images can rely on any of the senses. 'Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn' from Keats' *To Autumn* is an example of an auditory image.

Metaphor and simile

An imaginative comparison between two actions/objects etc which is not literally applicable. An example of metaphor occurs in *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* by [W.H. Auden](#):

'The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,'

Obviously Yeats' body does not have provinces, nor does his mind have squares but the comparison helps to bring the poem to life. Metaphor is similar to [simile](#) but omits words such as 'like' or 'as'. (as red as a rose)

Personification

Figure of speech whereby inanimate objects or abstractions are given human characteristics. In his poem *Low Water* [Ted Hughes](#) uses personification to describe a river e.g.

'She lolls on her deep couch. And a long thigh
Lifts from the flash of her silks.'

Personification is a form of metaphor.

Special formats and shapes of poems

Acrostic

Poem where the first letter of each line spells out a significant word e.g.

A land of liberty, true Eden found
Made all men equal with same rights abound
Endowed with highest pursuit to be free
Restore world order and true harmony
In God We Trust, all nations Thou will lead
Come to one unity, no place for greed
Attain the great redemption we all need!



Ballad

Term originating from the Portuguese word *balada* meaning 'dancing-song'. However, it normally refers to either a simple song e.g. *Danny Boy* or to a **narrative poem (often with a tragic ending)**. Bob Dylan wrote and sang some wonderfully mournful ballads e.g. *The Ballad of Hollis Brown*.

The ballad stanza is usually a quatrain where the second and fourth lines rhyme: x a x a // x b x b // x c x c //

Concrete Poetry – Visual Poetry

Experimental poetry which emerged during the 1950-1960s and concentrated on the visual appearance of the words on the page. It featured new typographical arrangements, shape poems and the use of collage etc. It owed much to early figure poems such as *The Altar* and *Easter-Wings* by [George Herbert](#). The effect of Concrete Poetry is lost when the poem is read aloud.

Haiku

Miniature Japanese poem consisting of 17 syllables - five syllables in first line, seven in second and five in the last. No rhyme or meter scheme is employed when writing haiku. The aim of the haiku is to create something greater than the sum of the parts.

Traditionally Haiku were used to capture aspects of nature and often feature a seasonal component

Example:

Reflections

Today your surface
Is a mirror where the sky
Bends to see itself.



Imagism

Imagist Poets Movement of early 20th century American and English poets seeking clarity and economy of language (in a reaction against the abstraction of romanticism). [Ezra Pound](#) was one of the main pioneers of imagism but the movement also included poets such as [William Carlos Williams](#), H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Amy Lowell, T. E. Hulme and [D. H. Lawrence](#). Imagist poems tend to be short, focussed on specific images and written in [free verse](#). Imagism was partly inspired by Japanese verse forms such as [haiku](#).

The Red Wheelbarrow

William Carlos Williams

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens.



Limerick

Form of light verse consisting of five lines and rhymed: a-a-b-b-a. The first, second and fifth lines contain three feet while the third and fourth lines contain two feet. The form was popularised by the Victorian poet Edward Lear.

There was an old person of Dean
Who dined on one pea, and one bean;
For he said, "More than that
Would make me too fat,"
That cautious old person of Dean.

Parody

Imitation of a poem or another poet's style for comic/satiric effect.

Veronika

so much depends
upon
a fiery red
mane
and deep brown eyes
smiling
at her friends
in 8b.

With apologies to W.C. Williams



Ode

Comes from the Greek word meaning song. Odes are normally written in an exalted style and praise a person, object, or idea. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn", John Keats expresses his admiration for the timeless beauty of an ancient urn:

Thou still unravished bride of quietness!
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time
A flow'ry tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? ...

Sonnet:

The term sonnet derives from the Italian for 'little song'. Over the years there have been many variations upon the sonnet form e.g.

Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet : The **Italian sonnet** has the following rhyme scheme: a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a, c-d-e, c-d-e.

Shakespearean or English Sonnet: The Shakespearean or English sonnet employs an a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g rhyme scheme.

Essentially it consists of three quatrains and a final couplet and usually has a break between the octave and the sestet.

Sonnet XXIII (W.Shakespeare)

*As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put beside his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burthen of mine own love's might.
O! let my looks be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.
O! learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.*