

English 2201

Poetry Terms:

- alliteration** repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of nearby or closely connected words. (On the bold street breaks the blank day)
- allusion** a reference to a literary, historical or religious person or event. eg. Shakespeare, mythology, the Bible.
- apostrophe** a passage in which a writer addresses directly a dead or absent person or an abstract or inanimate object
- assonance** the effect created when two syllables in words close together, especially in poetry, have the same vowel sound but different consonants. (face, mailed)
- atmosphere** the feelings or emotions evoked by a work of art or literature
- blank verse** poetry in iambic feet, in which the lines do not rhyme
- concrete language** words or phrases denoting material objects that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted
- connotation** the associations (ideas or feelings) that a word or phrase evokes, in addition to its literal or primary dictionary meaning. (“heart” by its dictionary definition is that organ of the body responsible for pumping blood, the connotations of the word include the ideas of love, warmth, affection, goodness, etc.)
- consonance** the repetition of the same or similar consonants in neighbouring words (coming home)
- diction** the choice of words or phrases in speech or writing
- figurative language** language used in a way that is different from the usual, literal meaning in order to create a particular mental image
- figure of speech** a way of using language to convey or suggest a meaning beyond the literal meaning of the words. **Metaphors, similes** and **personification** are all examples of figures of speech.
- form** the way a poem is organized on the page in terms of stanzas, line length, etc.
- free verse** poetry without any pattern at all
- hyperbole** extreme exaggeration; eg., “I’ve asked you a million times to shut the door.”
- iambic pentameter** the most common **metre** in English poetry, consisting of five feet, each of which contains an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable
- image** in literature, a word or phrase that evokes mental pictures or sensory impressions. Images allow readers to see, hear, feel, smell, taste, think about, or generally understand more clearly what the author is saying. Images may be **literal** providing a detailed description of a real scene or situation; or they may be **figurative**, providing a comparison with something that has similar qualities.
- lyric poem** a poem which expresses, thoughts, feelings and personal imaginings.

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| metaphor | a figure of speech involving an implied (not directly stated) comparison, and without using the words “like” or “as”. A poet may base his poem upon an extended metaphor |
| mood | the pervading feeling associated with a composition, poem, play, etc. |
| octave | a group or stanza of eight lines |
| onomatopoeia | a device in which the sound of a word reflects its meaning (“sizzle”) |
| paradox | a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement, which, when investigated or explained, may prove to be well-founded or true |
| personification | a figure of speech in which animals, objects or abstract ideas are given human form, actions, or qualities (“Death lays his icy hands on kings.”) |
| quatrain | a stanza of four lines |
| rhyming couplet | a pair of successive rhyming lines of poetry |
| sestet | a stanza of six lines |
| simile | a figure of speech involving the explicit comparison of two different things, often using the words “like” or “as” (brave as a lion) |
| sonnet | A lyric poem of fourteen lines, usually written in iambic pentameter, using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, and usually having a single theme. The Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet consists of an eight-line octave followed by a six-line sestet. The shift from the octave to the sestet may mark a turn in the argument of the poem. The English (or Shakespearean) sonnet consists of three quatrains and a final couplet. The couplet may mark a turn or twist in the argument. |
| structure | the way in which the argument of a poem is revealed. The poet may structure his poem through the use of comparison, contrast, question/answer, problem/solution, showing how good comes from bad, etc. |
| symbol | a thing that represents, typifies, or recalls something else (a dove is a symbol for peace) |
| theme | the central idea or focus in a work of art. |
| tone | a writer’s or speaker’s attitude to his or her subject revealed by aspects of the text such as diction, style, use of figurative language. |