

BASIC METER and RHYTHM in POETRY

Meter: number of feet in a line of poetry

Dimeter – two feet

Take her up tenderly (Hood)

Trimeter – three feet

The whiskey on your breath (Roethke)

Tetrameter – four feet

And did those feet in ancient time (Milton)

Pentameter – five feet

The summer thunder, like a wooden bell (Bogan)

Hexameter – six feet

That like a wounded snake drags its slow length along (Pope)

Heptameter – seven feet

There's not a joy the world can give us like that it takes away

Octameter – eight feet

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary

Stanza Patterns

Couplet - two line stanza,

Triplet - three line (or tercet; usually a tercet's lines have same rhyme)

Quatrain - four line

Quintet - five line

Sestet - six line

Septet - seven line

Octave - eight line

End-Stopped: A line concludes with a distinct syntactical pause, usually punctuated

Enjambed: line that “runs on “ to the next without punctuation; its “sense“ is carried on to the next line

Sonnet types: (Shakespearean): abab cdcd efef gg

Sonnet types: (Italian or Petrarchan) abba abba cdcdcd

Villanelle: Arlington's “The House on the Hill” is a good example

Figurative Language: Some Critical Terms and Examples

Simile - a direct comparison, usually between two unrelated things indicating likeness or similarity between some attribute found in both things; uses like or as to make the comparison.

He is sleeping like a log.

O, my love's like a red, red rose.

He was as quiet as a mouse.

Metaphor is an implied comparison, usually between two unrelated things indicating likeness or similarity between some attribute found in both things; does *not* use as or like to make the comparison.

All the world's a stage.

The fog comes / on little cat feet.

The screaming headline announced the murder.

Personification - the giving of human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, or animals.

The wind whistled.

Time, the subtle thief of youth...

Bright April shakes out her rain-drenched hair.

Synecdoche (si nek' do ke) - the technique of mentioning a part of something to represent the whole.

All hands on deck! (hands = sailors)

Give us this day our daily bread. (bread = food)

A sail! A sail! (sail = ship)

Metonymy (me ton' e mi) - the substitution for a word naming an object for another word closely associated with it.

Pay tribute to the crown. (crown for king)

He had to sweat for his bread. (sweat for hard work)

He ordered the surf and turf special. (surf for lobster; turf for beef)

Hyperbole (hi per' bo li) - an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis and not to be taken literally.

The speech lasted for about ten hours.

The tackle was as big as a mountain.

She shed buckets of tears.

Litotes (li' to tes) - an understatement; achieved by saying the opposite of what one means or by making an affirmation by stating the fact in the negative; the opposite of hyperbole.

We are having a little quiz. (quiz for comprehensive exam)

The tortoise is certainly speedy. (speedy for slow)

Pollution is no small problem. (no small problem for major crises)

Antithesis (an tith' e sis) - the balancing or contrasting of one term against another.

Man proposes, God disposes.

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.

Art is long; life is short.

Apostrophe - a direct address to a person who is absent or to an abstract or inanimate entity.

You sea! I resign myself to you also - I guess what you mean.

O wild West Wind, thy breath of Autumn's being.

How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, o sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods.