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.