

Poetic Literary Terms

Alliteration – the repetition of the INITIAL consonant sounds in neighboring words. Ex: Tim tried terrible to play tennis.

Assonance – the repetition of identical or similar VOWEL sounds in neighboring words. Ex: green, breeze, lean, mean, machine

Blank verse – poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter, which must not be confused with free verse. Shakespeare's plays are written in this way.

Cacophony (cack-OFF-fone-ee) – harsh, clashing, or dissonant sounds, often produced by combinations of words that require a clipped, explosive delivery, or words that contain a number of plosive consonants.

Consonance – the repetition of identical or similar consonants in neighboring words whose vowel sounds are different (ex: coming home, hot foot).

Couplet – two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme and that are written to the same meter, or pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Three be the things I shall have till I die:
Laughter and hope and a sock in the eye.

-Dorothy Parker

Dramatic monologue – a kind of poem in which a single fictional or historical character other than the poet speaks to a silent audience of one or more persons. Such poems reveal not the poet's own thoughts, but the mind of the impersonated character.

End-stopped line – a line brought to a pause at which the end of a verse line coincides with the completion of a sentence, clause, or other independent unit of syntax. It is the opposite of enjambment.

Enjambment – the running over of the sense and grammatical structure from one verse line or couplet to the next without a punctuated pause.

Epic – a long narrative poem celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes in a grand style. *The Odyssey*.

Euphony – a pleasing smoothness of sound, perceived by the ease with which the words can be spoken in combination. *Adjective: euphonious.*

Foot – the basic unit of rhythmic measurement in a line of poetry.

Free Verse – poetry that is free of rhyme and meter and it resembles natural speech.

Heroic Couplet – two end-stopped iambic pentameter lines rhymed aa, bb, cc, with the thought usually completed in the two line unit.

Iamb – a metrical foot consisting of two syllables, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented as in the word invade.

Lyric – a usually short, personal poem expressing the poet's emotions and thoughts rather than telling a story.

Meter – the pattern of measured sound-units recurring more or less regularly in lines of verse.

Octave – a group of eight verse lines forming the first part of a sonnet; or a stanza of eight lines.

Ode – an elaborately formal lyric poem, often in the form of a lengthy address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone.

Pastoral – a poem dealing with shepherds and rural life.

Pentameter – a line of five feet. Iambic pentameter, normally 10 syllables, has had special status as the standard line in many poetry forms.

Quatrain – a verse stanza of four lines, rhymed or unrhymed.

Refrain – a line, group of lines, or part of a line repeated at regular or irregular intervals in a poem.

Rhyme – the similarity of sound between two words.

- **End rhyme** – rhyme which comes at the ends of lines of poetry.
- **Internal rhyme** – rhyme which comes WITHIN the line of poetry rather than at the usual end of the line.
- **Feminine rhyme** – two-syllable rhyme. (treasure/pleasure)
- **Forced rhyme** – meaning in the poem suffers because of the stilted nature of the rhyme
- **Masculine rhyme** – one-syllable rhyme. (cat/hat)
- **Exact rhyme** – identical rhyme between two words (feature/creature)
- **Slant rhyme (proximate, near)** – inexact rhyme between two words (hold/bald)
- **Eye rhyme** – rhyme based on spelling rather than sound (bough/though)

Rhythm – the patterned flow of sound in poetry and prose. Sound devices create rhythm.

Scansion – analyzing the meter in lines of poetry by counting and marking the accented and unaccented syllables, and dividing the lines into metrical feet.

Sonnet – a fourteen-line lyric poem in iambic pentameter.

- **English sonnet** – rhyme scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gg (a/k/a Shakespearean sonnet)
- **Italian sonnet** – rhyme scheme of abba, abba, cde, cde (a/k/a Petrarchan sonnet)

Stanza – a section or division of a poem, resembling paragraphs in prose.

Stress – the emphasis placed on a word or syllable.

Trochee – a metrical foot consisting of two syllables, an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable, as in the word FORTune. It's the opposite of an iamb – beLIEF.