

# Poetry Vocabulary

## List One

1. **rhyme** - two or more words which match in the same last sound. Ex.: *bat, cat*
2. **rhythm** - the beat or cadence of poetry. Ex.: *But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?*
3. **alliteration** - two words in the same line with the same starting sound. Ex.: the *price* of the *previous* one
4. **assonance** - two words in the same line having similar vowel sounds. Ex.: The *owl* flew *out* of the room
5. **metaphor** - a directly stated comparison. Ex.: Our *defensive line* was a *rock wall* last night.
6. **onomatopoeia** - the attempt to spell out a sound. Ex.: She heard the cat *meow*.
7. **lyric poetry** - that which reveals an emotional moment in life. Example below is from Walt Whitman.

*...a noiseless patient spider [sends]  
filament, filament, filament, out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them,  
  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be formed, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, o my soul.*

8. **narrative poetry** - that which tells a story with characters, a plot, etc. Ex.: "Casey at the Bat"
9. **imagery** - pictures drawn in the reader's mind by the words of the poet. Example below comes from "Preludes" by T.S. Eliot.

*The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street...*

10. **personification**- giving human characteristics to inanimate objects. Ex.: the *teeth* of a *comb*
11. **"traditional" verse** - a definite pattern of both rhythm and rhyme. Ex.: "Mary had a little lamb"
12. **simile** - a comparison using like or as. Ex.: She was *clever* as a *fox*.

13. **refrain** - a few lines repeated almost exactly at certain intervals. ...from "Mariana" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

*With blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all:  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the gable-wall.  
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:  
Unlifted was the clinking latch;  
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
Upon the lonely moated grange.  
**She only said, 'My life is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'***

*Her tears fell with the dews at even;  
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;  
She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
Either at morn or eventide.  
After the flitting of the bats,  
When thickest dark did trance the sky,  
She drew her casement-curtain by,  
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.  
**She only said, 'The night is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'***

*Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:  
The cock sung out an hour ere light:  
From the dark fen the oxen's low  
Came to her: without hope of change,  
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,  
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn  
About the lonely moated grange.  
**She only said, 'The day is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'***

*About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark:  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray.  
**She only said, 'My life is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'***

14. **limerick** - a light, humorous, nonsensical, or bawdy Irish drinking song of five anapestic lines usually with the rhyme scheme *aabba*. Example below:

*There once was a verse form named limerick.  
No one can account for the name of it.  
Some think from a game  
Or from poets it came.  
They came from a small town named Limerick.*

(Adapted from the *American Heritage Dictionary*)

15. **haiku** - lyric verse form having three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, traditionally invoking an aspect of nature or the seasons. [Japanese: *hai*, amusement (from Chinese *pá*, farce) + *ku*, sentence (from Chinese *jù*).] Example below:

*Dead chrysanthemum...  
yet - isn't there still something  
remaining in it?*

16. **free verse** - no predictable rhythm or rhyme. Ex.: “! blac” by eecummings
17. **blank verse** - has no rhyme but has rhythm, usually iambic pentameter. Ex.: Many of the lines in most of Shakespeare’s plays were written this way.
18. **repetition** - using a key word several times throughout a poem. Ex.: The use of “*Nevermore*.” throughout “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe.
19. **stanza** - a paragraph in poetry, surrounded above and below by skipped lines. Ex.: There are 4 stanzas shown in the excerpt from “Mariana” appearing on the previous page.
20. **parallelism** - the consecutive use of similar phrases or grammatical structures. Especially consider **Synonymous Parallelism**, in which the same idea is expressed a second or third time. See example below from *Proverbs* 1:2-9. Note the theme of the passage is the value of wisdom, and the parallelism repeats the theme. Hebrew poets are famous for this technique.

*To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding,  
To receive instruction in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity;  
To give prudence to the naive, To the youth knowledge and discretion,  
A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,  
To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles.  
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.  
Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching;  
Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.*

# Poetry Vocabulary

## List Two

1. **couplet** - two rhyming lines in a row, usually stating an important thematic idea. Example below:

*So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.* (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)

2. **sonnet** - a 14-line poem which sets up a problem and offers a solution (There are two main types: the Italian or Petrarchan, named after Francesco Petrarca, AKA Petrarch, 1304-1374, an Italian poet, scholar, and humanist who is famous for Canzoniere, a collection of love lyrics in a certain sonnet form, and the English or Elizabethan, which was used by William Shakespeare, 1564-1616, English playwright and poet, whose body of works is considered the greatest in English literature. He composed about 154 sonnets, mostly in the 1590's. There are differences in the rhyme scheme and stanza structure between these two. An Italian [Petrarchan] sonnet contains an octave with the rhyme pattern abbaabba and a sestet of various rhyme patterns such as cdecde or cdcdcd. The sonnet form perfected by Shakespeare is composed of three quatrains and a terminal couplet in iambic pentameter with the rhyme pattern abab cdcd efef gg. There are some other variations to the sonnet form as well.) Ex.: Any of Shakespeare's sonnets and Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud."
3. **rhyme scheme** - the pattern of the rhymes in a poem. Example below is from "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost (1874-1963).

<i>Whose woods these are I think I know.</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>His house is in the village though;</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>He will not see me stopping here</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>To watch his woods fill up with snow.</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>My little horse must think it queer</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>To stop without a farmhouse near</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>Between the woods and frozen lake</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>The darkest evening of the year.</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>He gives his harness bells a shake</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>To ask if there is some mistake.</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>The only other sound's the sweep</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>Of easy wind and downy flake.</i>	<i>c</i>

4. **near rhyme** - two or more words having almost the same ending sound. Ex.: *push, rush*
5. **internal rhyme** - rhyming words in the same line of poetry. Ex.: "I'm a *lean* dog, a *keen* dog, a wild dog, and lone." From "Lone Dog" by Irene McLeod.
6. **speaker** - the voice of the poem, usually NOT the poet. Ex.: In the poem by *Emily Dickinson* known as "A narrow fellow in the grass," the *speaker* is a young *boy*.
7. **point of view** - the personal opinion of the speaker. Example below is from "Point of View" which appeared in *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein:

*Oh how I once loved tuna salad  
Pork and lobsters, lamb chops too  
Till I stopped and looked at dinner  
From the dinner's point of view.*

8. **tone** - the feelings the speaker has about the subject. Ex.: "...while I pondered *weak* and *weary*..." from "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.
9. **mood** - the feelings of the reader of a poem. Example is the poem "Days" by Karle Wilson Baker, in which certain details and sensory impressions evoke emotional responses among various readers ranging from detached empathy to curiosity to vicarious swings from dejection to elation.

*Some days my thoughts are just cocoons--all cold, and dull and blind,  
They hang from dripping branches in the grey woods of my mind;  
And other days they drift and shine--such free and flying things!  
I find the gold-dust in my hair, left by their brushing wings.*

10. **diction** - the choice of words of the speaker. Ex.: The use of *shark*, *whale*, or *tuna* instead of just *fish*.
11. **monologue**- a speech made by one character in a poem, usually of thematic significance. Especially consider a **dramatic monologue**, which could be acted out and is a form of drama, yet appears as a speech, either to oneself or to another. A dramatic monologue is written to reveal both the situation at hand and the speaking character's inner self. Example below is by Anna Cormorant:

*Why am I standing here, alone,  
When outside you are knocking, knocking?  
I cannot come to you-  
My feet are glued to the floor.  
Forgive me, but I feared you!  
Would that you could open the door,  
But I have locked it!  
Ah! What sorrow I have brought upon myself!  
How you shout, how you plead for entrance  
And how I want you to enter,  
But you have not the strength to break the door.  
Well, come on then! Find another way in!*

12. **irony** - when the outcome is the opposite of what was expected. Ex.: the *sinking* of the *Titanic*
13. **jargon** - technical terms meaning a certain thing in a certain situation. Ex.: *scalpel*, *touchdown*, *writ of habeas corpus*
14. **allusion** - a reference to something the poet thinks everyone already knows. Ex.: "The Gift of the *Magi*"
15. **connotation** - the extra meaning associated with a word more than just its definition. Ex.: *skinny*, instead of just *thin*
16. **theme** - the generalization about life understood from experiencing any work of art. Ex.: *Love is the greatest gift of all*.
17. **hyperbole** - exaggeration for humorous or thematic effect. Ex.: more than *all* the stars in the night
18. **symbol** - an object which carries more meaning than simply its dictionary definition. Ex.: the *flag* of a nation
19. **concrete poem** - a poem which looks on the page like the subject it is about. Ex.: "The Kite"

20. **ballad** - a folk song, usually about love and/or adventure. Example below is from "Sir Patrick Spens."

*The king sits in Dunfermline town,  
Drinking the blude-red wine o:  
"O whare will I get a skeely skipper  
To sail this new ship of mine o?"*

*O up and spake an eldern-knight,  
Sat at the king's right knee:  
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor  
That ever saild the sea."*

*Our king has written a braid letter,  
And seald it with his hand,  
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,  
Was walking on the strand.*

*"To Noroway, to Noroway,  
To Noroway oer the faem;  
The king's daughter of Noroway,  
'Tis thou maun bring her hame."*

*The first word that Sir Patrick read,  
Sae loud, loud laughed he;  
The neist word that Sir Patrick read,  
The tear blinded his ee.*

*"O wha is this has done this deed,  
And tauld the king o me,  
To send us out, at this time of the year,  
To sail upon the sea?"*