Poetic Terms & Devices - MASTERLIST

| **Device** | **Meaning** | **Example** | **Why it’s used/effect on audience** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Alliteration | A repeated consonant or vowel sound at the start of several words  Some specific types:  **liquid alliteration** – repeated L sound  **Sibilance** – repeated S sound | * **T**orn **t**urned and **t**attered, **B**owed **b**urned and **b**attered * And the **s**heen of their **s**pears was like **s**tars on the **s**ea | * Draws attention to certain key words or links them to other words * Can mimic the sound of what it’s describing e.g. repeated sss sound mimics a snake. * Can create euphony or cacophony – repeated soft sounds create calm gentle feel, repeated harsh sounds create jarring uncomfortable feel. |
| Allusion | A reference to something – usually a well-known story, saying, song, or person. Refers to it indirectly without explaining it in detail. | * Then leaf subsides to leaf. So **Eden** sank to grief. * Mother, mother, what ill-bred aunt, Or what disfigured and unsightly Cousin did you so unwisely keep **Unasked to my christening?** | * Links to the reader’s prior knowledge * Concise way of referencing a complex idea. * Adds depth and complexity. * Can mean different things to the audience depending on their culture/background |
| Assonance | A series of repeated vowel sounds in a line of poetry – occurring in the middle or ends of words. | * Who kn**o**ws why the cold wind bl**o**ws, or where it g**o**es, or what it kn**o**ws? * Gr**ie**f cr**ee**ps in just like a th**ie**f and st**ea**ls all joy away. | * Draws attention to certain key words or links them to other words. * Can mimic the sound of what it’s describing e.g. repeated sss sound mimics a snake. * Can create euphony or cacophony – repeated soft sounds create calm gentle feel, repeated harsh sounds create jarring uncomfortable feel. |
| Cacophony | Using harsh or discordant sounds in poetry to reflect an unpleasant, noisy or chaotic scene. Short vowel sounds and harsh or guttural consonants | * Chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail * The grim ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore | * When read aloud, creates harsh or jarring sounds which mirror the theme or topic of the poem * Creates an uncomfortable or unpleasant mood to suit the topic |
| Caesura | A pause or break in a line of poetry. It can be at the beginning or end but is more often in the middle of the line. It can be marked by punctuation (a full stop or dash), by two parallel vertical lines ||, or sometimes not marked. | * Sing a song of sixpence **||** a pocket full of rye * To be or not to be **–** that is the question | * Shows the reader where the author wants them to pause for breath when reading aloud * Pauses can give emphasis or meaning to certain words and draw attention to them |
| Consonance | A series of repeated consonant sounds in a line of poetry – in the middle or ends of words | * He give**s** hi**s** harne**ss** bell**s** a **s**hake   To a**s**k if there i**s** **s**ome mi**s**take   * If you a**r**e a d**r**eame**r**, a wishe**r**, a lia**r**,   If you'**r**e a p**r**etender, come sit by my fi**r**e | * Draws attention to certain key words or links them to other words * Can mimic the sound of what it’s describing e.g. repeated sss sound mimics a snake. * Can create euphony or cacophony – repeated soft sounds create calm gentle feel, repeated harsh sounds create jarrish uncomfortable feel. |
| Dialogue | When the narrator of the poem quotes another character’s words directly. A ‘dialogue poem’ is a type of poem where two characters have a conversation in the poem. | * Does the road wind up-hill all the way? **“Yes, to the very end.”** Will the day’s journey take the whole long day? **“From morn to night, my friend.”** | * Helps create characters or ‘personas’ in the poem in order to tell a story * Can represent different ideas or perspectives on a topic * Gives the reader an idea of the background and personality of the persona e.g. nationality, education, wealth |
| Diction | The ‘style’ of the persona’s voice. How formal or casual it is, what type of words they use, and what the reader can infer (guess) about them based on this. | * For I’se still goin’, honey, I’se still climbin’, And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair. * Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate. | * Helps the reader understand and form an impression of the persona of the poem * Gives an idea the background and personality of the persona e.g. nationality, education, wealth |
| Enjambment – also called a line break, or run-on line | When a new line occurs in an unusual place, in the middle of a thought or a sentence. The thought continues across the line break. | * Winter keeps us warm, covering /   Earth in forgetful snow, feeding /  A little life with dried tubers / | * Changes the way a line is read * Might hurry the reader on to an important point * Might draw attention to a key word which would normally be lost in the middle or end of a line |
| Euphony | Pleasant soothing sounds help to create the impression of a calm or beautiful scene. Created with long vowel sounds and soft consonants | * Five miles meandering in a mazy motion the sacred river ran * When Zeus stills the winds asleep in the solid drift | * When read aloud, creates soft, gentle or soothing sounds which mirror the theme or topic of the poem * Creates a calm or peaceful mood to suit the topic |
| Hyperbole | Exaggeration for effect. | * Here once the embattled farmers stood, And fired the shot **heard round the world**. * Till **China and Africa meet**, And the **river jumps over the mountain**, And the **salmon sing in the street**. | * Make the poem more interesting, memorable, entertaining or humorous * Expresses an extreme feeling – shows how strongly the author feels about it |
| Imagery | Creating a picture in the reader’s mind, often by using language that describes the senses (sight, taste, smell, touch, sound) or appeals to feelings and emotions. | * 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 | * Creates a clearer and more specific image in the reader’s mind * Links to past experiences or memories the reader has * Makes the poem more interesting, memorable, entertaining or humorous |
| Metaphor | Making a direct comparison by saying something IS something else | * The **moon was a ghostly galleon** tossed upon cloudy seas. * Come into the garden, Maude, For the **black bat, night**, has flown. | * Comparisons help the reader create a specific and accurate mental image of what the poet is describing * Links to past memories or previous experiences the reader has * Concise way to communicate multiple or complex ideas * Is interesting & sticks in the reader’s memory * Adds layers of meaning, creating depth and complexity |
| Persona (also called Narrative voice or Point of view) | The person who is speaking in the poem – not necessarily the author. The writer of the poem can speak from the point of view of another character. | * That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall, Looking as if she were alive. * Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me, Searching my reaches for what she really is. I see her back, and reflect it faithfully. | * If the persona is the author’s own voice, then it is a reflection of their personal thoughts and feelings * If the persona is someone else, this might be a creative way for the poet to speak from another character’s point of view |
| Onomatopoeia | Words that sound like the thing that they describe. | * There was a **rustling** that seemed like a **bustling**, Of merry crowds **justling** at **pitching** and **hustling**, Small feet were **pattering**, wooden shoes **clattering** | * Mimics the real sound of the thing the poem is describing * Makes the reader feel like they are really there and can ‘hear’ the scene * Make the poem more memorable, entertaining or humorous |
| Parallelism | A technique used in Hebrew poetry where ideas are repeated in a certain pattern for emphasis. Can be synonymous, antithesis, or chiasm. | * You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty. | * Creates a balance of ideas and leads the reader to the key point * Providing an example plus an opposite (what it’s like, what it’s NOT like) is a good way to clearly explain a concept |
| Personification | Giving human characteristics to an inanimate object. | * The hills clap their hands and the mountains sing for joy. | * Creates a personal connection between the reader and the object * Makes the reader feel an emotional response that they wouldn’t get from just an adjective e.g. feel sorry for a ‘lonely’ car or annoyed with the ‘screaming’ wind |
| Refrain | A repeated ‘chorus’ in a poem. Can be a single line, a phrase, or a whole verse. Usually appears at the end of each verse, or between verses. | * ‘For his mercy endureth forever’ in psalm 136 | * Highlights a key point or idea * Helps it stick in the reader’s memory * In a ballad or song (intended to be put to music) it creates a familiar and predictable starting point which is returned to again and again. Audience can join in. |
| Rhetorical questions | Asking a question for which no answer is expected – the answer is unknown, or obvious. | * Who knows why the cold wind blows? | * Prompts the reader to consider the question in their own mind. * Creates a thoughtful, contemplative mood |
| Rhyme | When two words have the same or similar sound at the end of a line of poetry. | * Perfect rhyme: plunder & thunder * Imperfect rhyme (slant rhyme/half rhyme): lake & fate, sparring & caring | * Draws attention to certain key words or links them to other words * Creates a predictable pattern which is pleasing to the ear (euphony) * Creates anticipation, the reader can mentally predict which word will come next. * Helps it stick in the reader’s memory |
| Rhythm/metre | A regular pattern of stressed and unstressed beats of poetry | * I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky. | * Creates a predictable pattern which is pleasing to the ear (euphony) * Rhythmic beat can mimic the sound of what it’s describing e.g. galloping horses, rattle of train. * Helps it stick in the reader’s memory * Can draw attention to certain key words or link them to other words |
| Simile | Making a comparison using ‘like’ or ‘as’ | * I wandered, lonely **as** a cloud * She walks in beauty, **like** the night | * Comparisons help the reader create an accurate mental image * Links to past memories or previous experiences the reader has * Concise way to communicate multiple or complex ideas * Adds layers of meaning, creating depth and complexity |
| Symbol | A physical object that represents a concept or idea. | * Don't judge my cover; it's not mine. I was given this to wear for the duration of my time. Over time it has become creased, ripped, and worn, A once perfect canvas the day I was born. * Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it, And splinters, And boards torn up, And places with no carpet on the floor – bare. | * Concise way to communicate multiple or complex ideas * Appeals to the reader’s imagination – is interesting and memorable * Adds layers of meaning, creating depth and complexity * Makes the reader feel clever when they work it out! * Can mean different things to the audience depending on their culture/background |
| Tone & mood | Tone = how the **author** of the poem feels about the subject  Mood = the feeling or emotion created for the **reader** – might seem cheerful, gloomy, thoughtful, silly… | * Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there. I do not sleep. * Tis the voice of the Lobster, I heard him declare “You have baked me too brown: I must sugar my hair. | * Poet may want to give an impression of the mood they felt when they were writing the poem, or help the reader experience the feelings they had when writing it * May want to influence the reader, try and make them feel the same way about a topic as they do |

A close-up of a bracelet

Description automatically generated with low confidence**Feet & Meter**

**Feet:**

Trochee (DAH-da) e.g. TROphy

iamb (da-DAH) e.g. inDEED

Spondee (DAH-DAH) e.g. TV

Dactyl (DAH-da-da) e.g. CERtainly

Anapest (da-da-DAH) e.g. interrupt

(Trochaic, iambic, dactylic, anapestic, spondaic)

**one foot** = monometer

**two feet** = dimeter

**three feet** = trimeter

**four feet** = tetrameter

**five feet** = pentameter

**six feet** = hexameter

**seven feet** = heptameter

**eight feet** = octameter

**Example:**

If there are three IAMBS (three ‘da-DAH’s) per line, the meter would be **iambic trimeter**. Remember, it does not have to be exact – you are looking for the general/overall pattern