

**Alliteration** – is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word, to intensify the beat.

Example: sweet smell of success, do or die, safe and sound

**Assonance** – is the repetition of vowel sounds but not consonant sounds as in consonance in a literary work.

Example: "As asses are." From Iago in *Othello* is an example of assonance.

**Cacophony** – is the term in poetry refers to the use of words that combine sharp, harsh, hissing, or unmelodious sounds. They are often difficult to speak aloud. It is the opposite of euphony.

Example: finger of *birth-strangled* babe.

**Connotation** – are associations and implications that go beyond the literal meaning of a word, which derive from how the word has been commonly used and the associations people make with it.

Example: The word eagle connotes ideas of liberty and freedom that have little to do with the word's literal meaning.

**Consonance** – is the repetition of consonant sounds, but not vowels, as in assonance.

Example: lady lounges lazily , dark deep dread crept in

**Couplet** – is a stanza of two lines, usually rhyming.

Example: When Macbeth decides to participate in the murder, he responds in a couplet, "Away, and mock the time with fairest show: False face must hide what the false heart doth know."

**Denotation** – is the literal meaning of a word, the dictionary meaning. Opposite of connotation

Example: "Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest" of which the literal meaning would be sleep.

**Diction** – is a writer's choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning. Formal diction consists of a dignified, impersonal, and elevated use of language; it follows the rules of syntax exactly and is often characterized by complex words and lofty tone. Middle diction maintains correct language usage, but is less elevated than formal diction; it reflects the way most educated people speak. Informal diction represents the plain language of everyday use, and often includes idiomatic expressions, slang, contractions, and many simple, common words. Poetic diction refers to the way poets sometimes

employ an elevated diction that deviates significantly from the common speech and writing of their time, choosing words for their supposedly inherent poetic qualities. Since the eighteenth century, however, poets have been incorporating all kinds of diction in their work and so there is no longer an automatic distinction between the language of a poet and the language of everyday speech.

Example: The diction in *Huckleberry Finn* is one of the greatest parts of the novel as it is representative of how people spoke during that time period.

**Euphony** – is attempting to group words together harmoniously, so that the consonants permit an easy and pleasing flow of sound when spoken, as opposed to cacophony.

Example: "O star (the fairest one in sight)"

**Extended Metaphor** – is where the same metaphor is continued over several lines or through the entire piece.

Example: In *Othello*, Iago and Roderigo's interaction has an extended metaphor of money (meaning patience and strength) over several lines.

**Figurative Language** – is a type of language that varies from the norms of literal language, in which words mean exactly what they say. Also known as the "ornaments of language," figurative language does not mean exactly what it says, but instead forces the reader to make an imaginative leap in order to comprehend an author's point. It usually involves a comparison between two things that may not, at first, seem to relate to one another.

Example: Macbeth refers to life as "a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage."

**Iambic Pentameter** – a metrical pattern in poetry which consists of five iambic [feet](#) per line. An iamb, or iambic foot, consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Example: Most of Shakespeare's plays and his sonnets were in iambic pentameter.

**Imagery** – is a word or group of words in a literary work which appeal to one or more of the senses: sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell. The use of images serves to intensify the impact of the work.

Example: Throughout the play of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare effectively uses blood imagery to create suspense and horror. Blood imagery is also used to describe murder, treason, and death.

**Juxtaposition** – placing things side by side for the purposes of comparison. Comparison of things or ideas. Authors often use juxtaposition of ideas or examples in order to make a point.

Example: An author might juxtapose the average day of a typical American with that of someone in the third world in order to make a point of social commentary.

**Literal Meaning** – actual word-for-word meaning of the text.

Example: I strolled over to the park = I went to the park

**Metaphor** – invokes a comparison between two things: one is usually the subject at hand, and the other is something associated with it. The comparison is not stated directly but implied (no use of 'like' or 'as'). The purpose of the association is to use some qualities of the distant 'something' to illuminate and unsuspected quality of the subject at hand. There are several varieties of metaphor like: noun metaphor, verb metaphor, implied metaphor, extended metaphor, and prepositional metaphor.

Example: In this metaphor, Macduff compares courage to a "mortal sword." This is important because it portrays Macduff's willingness to fight for his country. "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell: Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace..."

**Meter** – is when a rhythmic pattern of stresses recurs in a poem. Metrical patterns are determined by the type and number of feet in a line of verse by combining the name of a line length with the name of a foot concisely describes the meter of the line. Rising meter refers to metrical feet which move from unstressed to stressed sounds, such as the iambic foot and the anapestic foot. Falling meter refers to metrical feet which move from stressed to unstressed sounds, such as the trochaic foot and the dactylic foot.

**Octave** – is a poem or stanza composed of eight lines. The term octave most often represents the first eight lines of a Petrarchan sonnet.

**Ode** – is a poem in praise of something divine or expressing some noble idea.

Example: *Ode to Newfoundland*

**Onomatopoeia** – is a literary device wherein the sound of a word echoes the sound it represents.

Example: crunch, drip, boom

**Oxymoron** – is a combination of contradictory terms.

Example: In *Romeo and Juliet*, "O brawling love! O loving hate!" are examples of oxymorons.

**Personification** – is a figure of speech in which something nonhuman is given human characteristics.

Example: Macbeth says that "sleep ... knits up the raveled sleeve of care... chief nourisher in life's feast."

**Pun** – is a play on words wherein a word is used to convey two meanings at the same time.

Example: Mark Twain presents a *black-and-white* view on slavery in *Huck Finn*.

**Quatrain** – is a four-line stanza which may be rhymed or unrhymed. A common quatrain is a **heroic quatrain** is a four line stanza rhymed 'abab'.

**Refrain** – is a phrase repeated at intervals throughout a poem. A refrain may appear at the end of each stanza or at less regular intervals. It may be altered slightly at each appearance. Some refrains are nonsense expressions that seem to take on a different significance with each use.

Example: In *Lady of Shalott*, the refrain is the "Lady of Shalott".

**Rhyme Scheme** – is the pattern of rhyme used in a poem, generally indicated by matching lowercase letters to show which lines rhyme. The letter "a" notes the first line, and all other lines rhyming with the first line. The first line that does not rhyme with the first, or "a" line, and all others that rhyme with this line, is noted by the letter "b", and so on. The rhyme scheme may follow a fixed pattern (as in a sonnet) or may be arranged freely according to the poet's requirements. The use of a scheme, or pattern, came about before poems were written down; when they were passed along in song or oral poetry. Since many of these poems were long, telling of great heroes, battles, and other important cultural events, the rhyme scheme helped with memorization. A rhyme scheme also helps give a verse movement, providing a break before changing thoughts.

**Rhythm** – are recurrences of stressed and unstressed syllables at equal intervals, similar to meter. However, though two lines may be of the same meter, the rhythms of the lines may be different. This is because while the meter of a line is identified by the pattern within each foot, the rhythm is accounted for by larger units than individual feet.

**Sestet** – is any six-line poem or stanza.

**Simile** – is a figure of speech that takes the form of a comparison between two unlike quantities for which a basis for comparison can be found, and which uses the words "like" or "as".

Example: Shakespeare's "My love is like a red, red rose..."

**Stanza** – is a major subdivision in a poem. A stanza of two lines is called a couplet; a stanza of three lines is called a tercet; a stanza of four lines is called a quatrain.