

Poetry Terms

anaphora	the repetition of a word or phrase, usually at the beginning of a line.
alliteration	the repetition of sounds in a sequence of words. (See also consonance and assonance .)
allegory	narrative with two levels of meaning, one stated and one unstated.
apostrophe	direct address to an absent or otherwise unresponsive entity (someone or something dead, imaginary, abstract, or inanimate).
assonance	the repetition of vowel-sounds.
beat	a stressed (or accented) syllable.
binary	dual, twofold, characterized by two parts.
blank verse	unrhymed iambic pentameter.
caesura	an audible pause internal to a line, usually in the middle. (An audible pause at the end of a line is called an end-stop .) The French <i>alexandrine</i> , Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter, and Latin dactylic hexameter are all verse forms that call for a caesura.
chiasmus	from the Greek letter Chi (X), a "crossed" rhetorical parallel. That is, the parallel form $a:b::a:b$ changes to $a:b::b:a$ to become a chiasmus.
climax	the high point; the moment of greatest tension or intensity. The climax can occur at any point in a poem, and can register on different levels, e.g., narrative, rhetorical, or formal.
consonance	the repetition of consonant-sounds.
couplet	two lines of verse, usually rhymed. Heroic couplet: a rhymed iambic pentameter couplet.

diction	word choice, specifically the "class" or "kind" of words chosen.
elegy	since the 17 th century, usually denotes a reflective poem that laments the loss of something or someone.
end-stopped line	a line that ends with a punctuation mark and whose meaning is complete.
enjambéd line	a "run-on" line that carries over into the next to complete its meaning.
foot	the basic unit of accentual-syllabic and quantitative meter, usually combining a stress with one or more unstressed syllables.
free verse	poetry in which the rhythm does not repeat regularly.
imagery	the visual (or other sensory) pictures used to render a description more vivid and immediate.
meter	a regularly repeating rhythm, divided for convenience into feet .
metonymy	a figure of speech in which something is represented by another thing that is commonly and often physically associated with it, e.g., "White House" for "the President."
ode	a genre of lyric, an ode tends to be a long, serious meditation on an elevated subject.
prosody	the study of versification , i.e., the form—meter, rhyme, rhythm, stanzaic form, sound patterns—into which poets put language to make it verse rather than something else.
refrain	a phrase or line recurring at intervals. (N.b. the definition does not require that a refrain include the <i>entire</i> line, nor that it recurs at <i>regular</i> intervals, though refrains often are and do.)

rhythm	the patterns of stresses, unstressed syllables, and pauses in language. Regularly repeating rhythm is called meter .
scansion	the identification and analysis of poetic rhythm and meter. To "scan" a line of poetry is to mark its stressed and unstressed syllables.
simile	a figure of speech that compares two distinct things by using a connective word such as "like" or "as."
speaker	the "I" of a poem, equivalent to the "narrator" of a prose text. In lyric poetry, the speaker is often an authorial persona.
speech act	the manner of expression (as opposed to the content). Examples of speech acts include: question, promise, plea, declaration, and command.
stanza	a "paragraph" of a poem: a group of lines separated by extra white space from other groups of lines.
symbol	an image that stands for something larger and more complex, often something abstract, such as an idea or a set of attitudes. (See imagery .)
symbolism	the serious and relatively sustained use of symbols to represent or suggest other things or ideas. (Distinct from allegory in that symbolism does not depend on narrative.)
synecdoche	a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole, e.g., "wheels" for "car."
tone	the speaker's or author's attitude toward the reader, addressee, or subject matter. The tone of a poem immediately impresses itself upon the reader, yet it can be quite difficult to describe and analyze.
topos	a traditional theme or motif (e.g., the topos of modesty).

trope a figure of speech, such as a metaphor (**trope** is often used, incorrectly, to mean **topos**)

valediction an act or utterance of farewell.