

An Introduction to Poetry

Terms and Types

“POETRY IS THE SPONTANEOUS OVERFLOW OF
POWERFUL FEELINGS”

-WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

“Poetry is the human soul entire,
squeezed like a lemon or a lime,
drop by drop, into atomic words

~Langston Hughes

"A poem begins with a lump in the throat; a home-sickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words."

-Robert Frost

What is Poetry?

Poetry is arguably the purest form of writing. Poetry is a sense of the beautiful. It is art. Like art it is very difficult to define because it is an expression of what the poet thinks and feels and may take any form the poet chooses for this expression.

“We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering - these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love - these are what we stay alive for.”

- Mr. Keating, played by Robin Williams in the movie Dead Poets' Society

Types of Poetry

The subject matter can vary dramatically!

Fixed or free form

- **Fixed form** is a poem that may be categorized by the pattern of its lines, meter, rhythm, or stanzas; a style of poetry that has set rules. Ex: sonnet, villanelle, limerick
- **Free Form** is a poem that has neither *regular* rhyme nor *regular* meter. Free verse often uses cadences (natural patterns of speech) rather than uniform metrical feet.

Types of Poetry

Fixed Form Poetry can be classified into three categories or major types

- Lyric: Shakespearean Sonnet, Petrarchan Sonnet, Ode, Elegy
- Narrative: Ballad, Epic, Allegory, Dramatic monologue
- Dramatic.

Lyric Poetry

Lyric poetry conveys emotional intensity and relies heavily on musical and rhythmical qualities. Two types of lyric poetry are odes and sonnets. Well-known authors of lyric poetry include:

- Christine de Pizan
- Teresa of Ávila
- Antonio Machado
- T. S. Eliot
- Shakespeare

Shakespearean/Elizabethan Sonnet

- 14 LINES
- THREE QUATRAINS + RHYMING COUPLET
- IAMBIC PENTAMETER.
- COUPLET: TIES UP THE IMAGES AND FEELINGS AND STATES THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE POET AT THE END.

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Petrarchan Sonnet

- ITALIAN SONNET
- OCTAVE (8 LINES) + SESTET (6 LINES).
- OCTAVE: THE PROBLEM
- SESTET: THE SOLUTION
- BREAK = VOLTA
- OCTAVE: ABBAABBA
- SESTET:
CDECDE OR CDCDC OR CDDCEF.

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Sonnet Comparison

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Example of a Lyric Poem

“Do Not Go Gentle
Into That Good
Night”

By Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Narrative Poetry

In narrative poetry a story is told about societies, cultures, and heroes. Epic poems are very long, many times covering years of events; and ballads are another type of narrative poem. Authors of note include:

- Geoffrey Chaucer
- Edgar Allan Poe
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Here is an excerpt from “Hiawatha” by Longfellow:

- “On the shore stood Hiawatha, Turned and waved his hand at parting; On the clear and luminous water Launched his birch canoe for sailing, From the pebbles of the margin Shoved it forth into the water; Whispered to it, "Westward! westward!" And with speed it darted forward.”

Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic poetry is written in verse and is usually meant to be recited. It tells a story or describes an event in a dramatic and interesting way. Poets of note include:

- Shakespeare
- Ben Jonson
- Christopher Marlowe
- Rudyard Kipling

Following is an excerpt from Kipling's "The Law of the Jungle".

"Wash daily from nose-tip to tail-tip; drink deeply, but never too deep;
And remember the night is for hunting, and forget not the day is for sleep.
The Jackal may follow the Tiger, but, Cub, when thy whiskers are grown,
Remember the Wolf is a Hunter -- go forth and get food of thine own.
Keep peace with the Lords of the Jungle -- the Tiger, the Panther, and Bear.
And trouble not Hathi the Silent, and mock not the Boar in his lair."

Free Verse Poetry

Free verse is just what it says it is - poetry that is written **without** proper rules about form, rhyme, rhythm, and meter.

In free verse the writer makes his/her own **rules**. The writer decides how the poem should **look, feel, and sound**.

Most modern poetry is written in free form/verse.

Free Verse Poetry

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- William Carlos Williams

Key Terms

Verse

Enjambment

Caesura

Lines & Stanza

Meter

Rhyme

Rhyme Scheme

Repetition

Figurative

Language

Simile

Metaphor

Extended Metaphor

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Personification

Assonance

Consonance

Alliteration

Imagery

Allusion

Allegory

Hyperbole

Oxymoron

Diction

Tone

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Verse vs. Prose

English has 2 types of writing styles: Verse and Prose

PROSE:

Most texts we are used to are written in PROSE; they consist of units like sentences, and use grammar and punctuation in a prescribed way.

VERSE:

Poetry is written in VERSE; its units consist of rhyme and meter, not of grammatically-correct sentences. Verse is sometimes used as a synonym for poetry.

It is possible to mix verse and prose in texts.

Speaker

SPEAKER: in prose fiction we have narrators, and in poetry the voice is called the SPEAKER in the poem

PERSONA: sometimes, the poet uses a “persona”, which basically means they create a character and take on the voice of this character to help convey ideas or emotions. This is sometimes done in lyric and narrative poetry.

POLYVOCALITY: the usage of multiple speakers/voices in a poem to convey ideas. This is sometimes done through the use of bracketed lines () or *italics*

Lines and Stanzas

LINE: The basic unit of poetry is the **line**. It serves the same function as the sentence in prose, but usually does not use formal grammatical structures.

Most poems have a structure in which each line contains a set amount of **syllables**; this is called **METER**.

STANZA: Lines are also often grouped into **stanza**. The **stanza** in poetry is equivalent or equal to the paragraph in prose. Often the **lines** in a stanza will have a specific **rhyme scheme**.

Types of Stanzas

Couplet: Two rhymed lines.

* not always a separate stanza

Tercet: a three-line stanza.

* called a Triplet when all three lines rhyme

Quatrain: a four-line stanza. Very common.

Quintet: a five-line stanza

Sestet: a six-line stanza

Septet: a seven-line stanza

Octave: an eight-line stanza

Lines & The Punctuation of Poetry

Lines of poetry are either “enjambéd” or “end-stopped”:

Enjambement:

moving over from one line to another without a terminating punctuation mark. It can be defined as a thought or sense, phrase or clause in a line of poetry that does not come to an end at the **line break** but moves over to the next line. Enjambement is a clever poetic trick that can speed up the pace of the poem, maintain rhythm beyond the end of a line, convey multiple ideas within one line, and encourage readers to keep reading to gain meaning!

Example:

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and asleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.”
(Endymion by John Keats)

Lines & The Punctuation of Poetry

Lines of poetry are either “enjambéd” or “end-stopped”:

End-Stopping:

An end-stopped line is a poetic device in which a pause comes at the end of a syntactic unit (sentence, clause or phrase); this pause can be expressed in writing as a punctuation mark such as a colon, semi-colon, period or full stop. End-stopping is used to create regular rhythm, slow down the pace of a poem, provide order in how information is presented, and can often be more accessible.

Example:

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

(An Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)

Lines & The Punctuation of Poetry

Caesura punctuation is also used in poetry.

Caesura:

A **caesura** is a pause in a line of poetry that is formed by the rhythms of natural speech rather than by metrics. A caesura will usually occur near the middle of a poetic line, but can also occur at the beginning or the end of a line. It can also add emphasis. It is annotated like this: ||

Sometimes a caesura will occur at the beginning of a line, called an '**initial caesura**,' or at the end of a line, called a '**terminal caesura**.'

Examples

1) From John Mole's "Coming Home":

'They lie together now. They sleep apart.

And still, in dreams, each breaks the other's heart.'

2) First line of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Mother and Poet":

'Dead ! One of them shot by the sea in the east' = initial caesura

Meter & Poetic Feet

Meter is an organized way to arrange stressed/accented **syllables** and unstressed/unaccented **syllables**, which are called Poetic Feet to create rhythm. A Syllable is the smallest sound unit of a word (vowel sounds).

A poetic foot is a basic repeated sequence of meter composed of two or more accented or unaccented syllables. In the case of an **iambic foot**, the sequence is "unaccented, accented". There are other types of poetic feet commonly found in English language poetry.

The primary feet are referred to using these terms

(an example word from Fussell's examples is given next to them):

Iambic: destroy (unaccented/accented)

Anapestic: intervene (unaccented/unaccented/accented)

Trochaic: topsy (accented/unaccented)

Dactylic: merrily (accented/unaccented/unaccented)

Stressed syllable: /

Unstressed syllable: U

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Meter & Poetic Feet

The poetic foot then shows the placement of accented and unaccented syllables in **iambic pentameter**, for example. It tells us that each foot consists of an IAMB (1 stressed + 1 unstressed syllable).

The second part of the term, **pentameter**, shows the number of feet per line. In the case of **pentameter**, there are basically five feet per line.

Example of iambic pentameter: “In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;”

- Antonio, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

The types of line lengths are as follows:

One foot: **Monometer**

Five feet: **Pentameter**

Two feet: **Dimeter**

Six feet: **Hexameter**

Three feet: **Trimeter**

Seven feet: **Heptameter**

Four feet: **Tetrameter**

Eight feet: **Octameter**

Rhyme

Rhyme is when the **endings** of the words sound the same.

Dust of Snow

by Robert Frost

The way a **crow**
Shook down on **me**
The dust of **snow**
From a hemlock **tree**
Has given my **heart**
A change of **mood**
And save some **part**
Of a day I had **rued.**

Rhyme Scheme

Rhyme scheme is the pattern of **rhyming** words at the end of each **line**. Not all poetry has a **rhyme scheme**. They are not hard to identify, but you must look carefully at which words **rhyme** and which do not.

Poems of more than **one** stanza often repeat the **same** rhyme scheme in each **stanza**.

Dust of Snow

by Robert Frost

The way a **crow**
Shook down on **me**
The dust of **snow**
From a hemlock **tree**
Has given my **heart**
A change of **mood**
And save some **part**
Of a day I had **rued**.

A
B
A
B
C
D
C
D

Internal Rhyme

Internal Rhyme – rhyme within a line

Time, Slime, Mime

Internal Rhyme – Scornfullyly scalyly snake which held
his very fate

While I nodded nearly napping, suddenly there
came a tapping

Half Rhyme

Half Rhyme can be defined as a rhyme in which the stressed syllables of ending consonants match, however the preceding vowel sounds do not match.

For instance, in words such as “shape/keep” the **consonance** is very strong. The final consonant sounds remain similar but the ending vowel sounds are different in half rhyme.

Half rhyme is generally used to give an inharmonious feeling in a rhyme scheme, and can help convey and reflect the subject of the poem.

More Examples: “moon” and “run” ; “hold” and “bald”

| | |
|--|---|
| That is no country for old men. The young | a |
| In one another’s arms, birds in the trees | b |
| – Those dying generations – at their song, | a |
| The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas, | b |
| Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long | a |

- W.B. Yeats, from “Sailing to Byzantium”

Repetition

Repetition is the repeating of a sound, word, or phrase for emphasis.

COMMON TYPES OF REPETITION:

1) Anadiplosis: Repetition of the last word in a line or clause at the beginning of the next one.

2) Anaphora: Repetition of words at the start of clauses or lines.

3) Epiphora: Repetition of the same word at the end of each line.

4) Epimone: Repetition of a phrase (usually a question) to stress a point.

5) Epizeuxis: Repetition of a word or phrase in quick succession, one after another or very close together, for strong emphasis.

6) Polyptoton: Repetition of the same root word (dream, dreamer, dreaming)

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

Samuel Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

And then the wall rose,
Rose slowly,
Slowly,
Between me and my dream.

Langston Hughes, "As I Grew Older"

Repetition

Repetition is the repeating of a sound, word, or phrase for emphasis.

MORE TYPES OF REPETITION & STRUCTURAL DEVICES:

Isocolon - A series of structured phrases or clauses having the same length or grammatical structure. A kind of parallelism. (*ex. slide 50)

Tricolon - Listing of three parallel elements of the same length occurring together.

Antanacsis - The repetition of a word or phrase whose meaning changes in the second instance.

Symploce - The combination of anaphora and epistrophe

Diacope - Repetition of a word with one or more between, usually to express deep feeling

I came, I saw, I conquered. – Julius Caesar

= TRICOLON

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,

= SYMPLOCE

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes . . ."

(T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917)

"Put out the light, then put out the light..." (*Othello*).

= ANTANACLISIS

The first meaning is that Othello would extinguish the candle, and in the second reference its meaning is that he would end Desdemona's life.

"To be, or not to be!"

= DIACOPE

Tone

The author's attitude about a subject

- This is implied throughout the work through style and language (like diction, punctuation, syntax, imagery, etc.)

"I shall be telling this with a sigh/
Somewhere ages and ages hence:/
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
/I took the one less traveled by,/
And that has made all the difference."

-From "The Road Not Taken" By Robert Frost

~In this example, Frost is commonly interpreted as looking back on his experience with joy. That is true, if he were to speak those lines cheerfully. However, imagine that he actually sighs when he says "sigh" and he appears sullen when he says "And that has made all the difference." The entire meaning of the poem is changed, and Frost is, indeed, not thrilled with the choice he made in the past.

Volta

In poetry, the **volta**, or **turn**, is a rhetorical shift or dramatic change in thought and/or emotion. Turns are seen in all types of written poetry.

Author and historian Paul Fussell calls the volta "indispensable."^[5] He states further that "the turn is the dramatic and climactic center of the poem, the place where the intellectual or emotional method of release first becomes clear and possible.

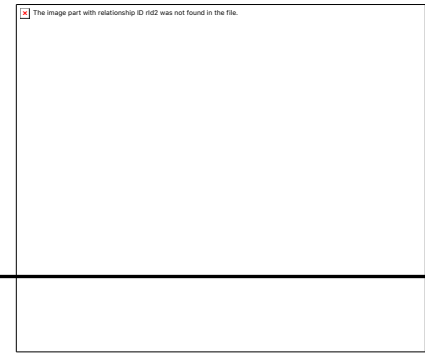
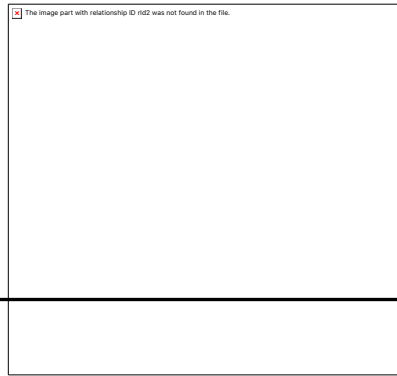
Figurative Language

Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using **figurative language**.

Figurative language is any language that goes beyond the **literal** meaning of words in order to furnish **new effects** or **fresh insights** into an idea or a subject. The most common figures of speech are **simile**, **metaphor**, and **alliteration**. Figurative language is used in poetry to compare two things that are usually **not thought** of as **being alike**.

SIMILE

A comparison using like or as.



EXAMPLES: As brave as a lion, As dumb as an ox

- The call to war has made young men “as swimmers into clearness leaping” according to Rupert Brooke’s poem, “Peace.”

METAPHOR

A figure of speech in which one thing is spoken as though it were something else, a direct comparison of two unlike things.

Clouds **are** cotton candy. → They are fluffy.

War is a game with no rules. → War is chaotic.

ANALOGY

A figure of speech that compares two essentially unlike things at some length and in several ways (an extended metaphor).

EXAMPLE:

“All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players.”

--William Shakespeare, As You Like It

PERSONIFICATION

Figurative language in which a nonhuman subject is given human characteristics

EXAMPLE:

The wind gently called her name.

My country bore and raised me.

RELATED TERMS:

Anthropomorphism = giving animals human qualities

Zoomorphism = giving humans animal qualities

ALLITERATION

Repetition of the same, initial consonant sounds

EXAMPLE: Soft Sighing of the Sea

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CONSONANCE

Repetition of internal or ending consonant sounds of words close together in poetry.

Blow! Bugles! Blow!

windows, doors through, ruthless;

scatter, congregation

- "Beat! Beat! Drums!" by Walt Whitman

CACOPHONY: the use of words with sharp, harsh, hissing, and unmelodious sounds – primarily those of consonants – to achieve desired results.

ASSONANCE

The repetition of the vowel sounds followed by different consonants.

EXAMPLES:

As high as a kite in a bright sky

My words like silent rain drops fell

EUPHONY: The use of words and phrases that have melody or pleasantness in the sounds they create. It gives soothing effects to the ear due to repeated vowels (like assonance) and sometimes smooth consonants.

SIBILANCE

Sibilance is a literary device where strongly stressed consonants are used deliberately to produce hissing sounds. Most of the times, the “s” sound is the sibilant.

With the help of sibilance, descriptive scenes can be explained more carefully by laying stress on the specific letters. Often, the harsh “hissing” sound can reflect a bitter or harsh mood.

Example:

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.....

from “Prelude 3”, by T.S. Eliot

ONOMATOPOEIA

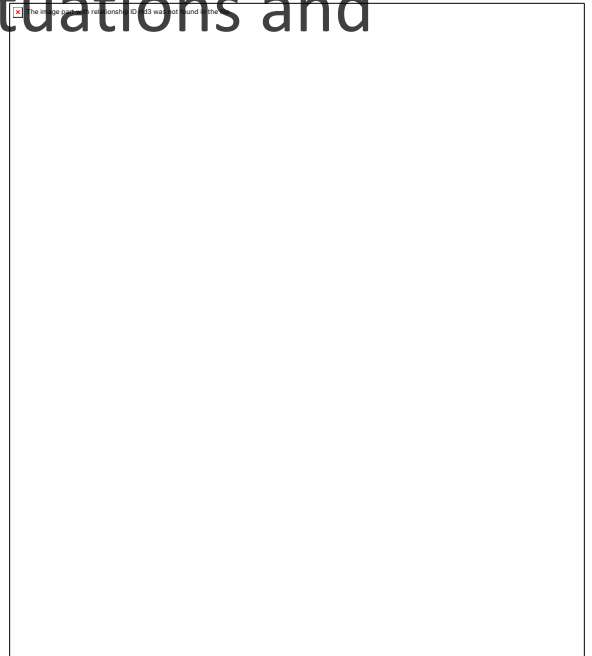
The use of words that imitate sounds.

Often to help visualize events or situations and

Increase the readers' participation

ooze, quack, woof, sizzle

bang, buzz, thud, hiss



IMAGERY

Usually these words or phrases create a picture in the reader's mind. Some imagery appeals to the other FIVE senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell).

EXAMPLES:

- Sight (Visual) – smoke mysteriously puffed out from his ears
- Sound (Auditory) – he could hear a faint but distant thump
- Touch (Tactile) – the burlap wall covering scraped his skin
- Taste (Gustatory) – a salty tear ran down his cheek
- Smell (Olfactory) – the scent of cinnamon floated into his nostrils
- Bodily sensations (Organic) – His leg throbbed with pain.

ALLUSION

An brief and/or indirect reference to a famous person, place, event, or literary work. This relies on the reader to make connections and understand the significance of the allusion.

EXAMPLES:

1. The rise in poverty will unlock the Pandora's box of crimes. – This is an allusion to one of Greek Mythology's origin myth, "Pandora's box".
2. She is such an Einstein!
3. He's battling with the whole "to be or not to be" question...

SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is the use of objects, ideas, people, places, colours, animals, etc. to signify ideas and qualities by giving them meanings that are different from their literal sense.

Symbols can shift their meanings depending on the context they are used in. “A chain”, for example, may stand for “union” as well as “imprisonment”. Thus, symbolic meaning of an object or an action is understood by when, where and how it is used. It also depends on reader responses and personal associations.

EXAMPLES:

- The dove is a symbol of peace.
- A red rose or red color stands for love or romance.
- Black is a symbol that represents evil or death.

MOTIF

A recurring image or pattern of imagery/symbolism in a literary work.

Example:

The words “sun”, “river”, “earth”, “grass”, “dust”, and “soil” are all related to nature, creating a nature MOTIF in the WW1 poem “The Soldier”

F.Scott Fitzgerald uses motifs of colour, nature, and eyes throughout *The Great Gatsby* to develop his themes.

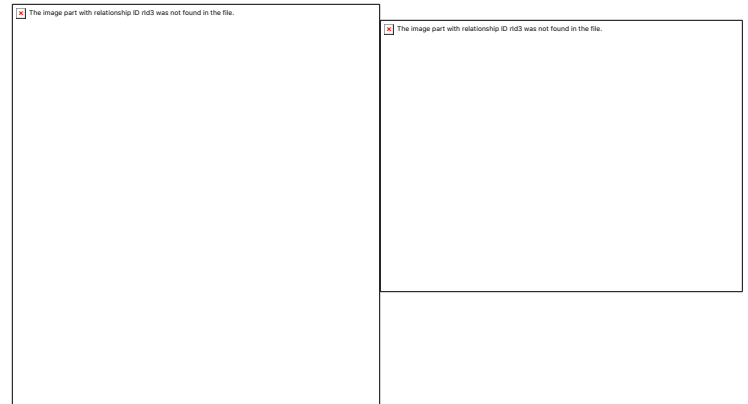
ALLEGORY

A work with two levels of meaning—a literal one and a symbolic one.

- Animal Farm



Literally about animals who overtake their farm and run it themselves.



Symbolically, it is about the Russian Revolution and Stalin's rule.

HYPERBOLE & LITOTES

HYPERBOLE: A bold, deliberate overstatement not intended to be taken seriously. The purpose is to emphasize the truth of the statement.

He weighs a ton.
I could eat a horse.
My parents are going to kill me.

LITOTES: a deliberate understatement (sometimes using a double negative) for effect.

Ex: Shakespeare was a pretty decent playwright.

She is not unlike her mother.

OXYMORON

The junction of words which, at first view, seem to be contradictory, but surprisingly this contradictions expresses a truth or dramatic effect.

EXAMPLES:

Pretty ugly

Jumbo Shrimp

Beautiful disaster

JUXTAPOSITION

Juxtaposition is a literary technique in which two or more ideas, places, characters and their actions are placed side by side in a narrative or a poem for the purpose of developing comparisons and contrasts.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

*Juxtaposition highlights the disparity in France prior to the French Revolution and inequality that fueled it. Readers sense the tension and atmosphere created through the phrasing of these contrasting ideas. * This is also ISOCOLON (parallel sentence structure)*

DICTION & Connotations

A writer's or speaker's choice of words and way of arranging the words in sentences.

Words have denotations (dictionary, factual definition/description) and connotations (ideas, feelings, associations that a word evokes apart from its definition)

Connotations

evil or danger

Gross

Scary

Sin (biblical)

Snake



Denotations

any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venomous reptiles; having a long, tapering, cylindrical body and found in most tropical and temperate regions

LEXICAL CLUSTERING

This is when a text includes a collection of words which are related to one another through their similar meanings, associations (connotations) or through a more abstract relation.

This technique is often used by writers to keep a certain image persistent in their readers' mind.

Example:

This is a valley of ashes--a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air.

◦ - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Chapter 2)

* What images of the valley of ashes are strongly conveyed through Fitzgerald's use of lexical clustering?

METONYMY

A figure of speech that replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated.

Examples:

1) The pen is mightier than the sword.

The "pen" stands in for "the written word." The "sword" stands in for "military aggression and force."

Read more at <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-metonymy.html#AF5xL0JF77Yy84RQ.99>

2) A gun or weapon used to represent war

SYNECDOCHE

There are several different forms of synecdoche examples including:

A synecdoche may use *part of something to represent the entire whole*.

It may use an entire *whole thing to represent a part* of it.

Examples:

- The phrase "hired hands" can be used to refer to workmen.
- The word "wheels" refers to a vehicle.
- The word "suits" refers to businessmen.

Reflection

Take out a sheet (or ½ sheet) of paper and answer the following in point form:

- List 2 things that you like about poetry, poets or poems you enjoy, or activities that you have liked when covering poetry before.
- List 2 things that you do not like about poetry or about activities that you have completed before related to poetry.
- Hand to me before you leave!