

Lesson 19

Elements of Poetry



Learning Target



Understanding about verse, rhythm, meter, and other features used in poems will help you write and talk about them.

- **Read** A poem has features you can both see and hear.

Each line in a poem is called a **verse**. Several verses grouped together form **stanzas**. These are **structural elements** you see.

Other elements in a poem are ones you hear. **Meter** sets up a pattern of strong and weak syllables in each verse. **Rhythm** is the regular pattern of sounds in the whole poem, like the beats in music. **Rhyme** repeats the same ending sounds in different words. Poets use these elements to express their ideas in new and surprising ways.

Read the poem below. Look and listen for structural elements.



Bigfoot's Complaint

by John Hansen

Why do they have to call me that?
I'm more than just a pair of feet.
If humans took a closer look,
They'd see my eyes are rather sweet.
But I walk these woods and hide my face
My footprints left in mud and snow.
The rest of me they'll never see
So I am called by what they know.

► **Think** Use what you've learned about structural elements to complete the chart.

Element	Description	Example
<i>verse</i>		
<i>stanza</i>		
<i>rhyme</i>		

► **Talk** Share your chart with a partner.

- Did you list the same elements, descriptions, and examples?
- Which parts of the poem do you see?
- Which parts do you hear?



Academic Talk

Use these words to talk about the text.

• **structural element**

• **verse**

• **stanza**

• **meter**

• **rhythm**

• **rhyme**

Walking BIG WILLIE

by Clarisse Bartonelli



While I am working hard at school,
To master math and this and that,
At home Big Willie sleeps a lot
And dreams of chasing neighbors' cats.

5 Big Willie shakes himself awake
When through the door I come at three.
A furry bullet knocks me down.
A leash is dropped upon my knee.

We're on the street. No time to waste.
10 A million squirrels must be treed.
Some cats must be tormented next.
Will does this all at double speed.

Around the block and up the street,
He travels at the speed of sound,
15 And I, attached to him by leash,
Am led around and 'round and 'round.

I must confess I like the speed.
It's fun to travel zip-zam-zoom.
But sometimes when I'm out with Will,
20 I wonder, who is walking whom?

Close Reader Habits

As you read, **listen** for a pattern of rhyming words. Then **circle** any word at the end of a verse that rhymes with a word at the end of a different verse. Next, **draw lines** to connect the pairs of rhyming words.

Explore

How do the elements in “Walking Big Willie” contribute to the poem’s structure and meaning?



Poem verses often repeat the same meter. Together, the verses create a rhythm, or clear pattern of beats.

Think

- 1 The pattern of strong (stressed) and weak syllables in a verse is its **meter**. Each verse in this poem has eight syllables, and every other syllable is **STRONG**. Study the meter of verse 1. Then underline the strong syllables in verse 2.

Verse 1 While **I** am **WORKING HARD** at **SCHOOL**,
 Verse 2 To master math and this and that,

- 2 Complete the chart below by adding information about the elements.

Element	Description	Effect
pattern of rhymes		Repeats sounds that help shape the poem stanzas
		Creates a pattern of strong and weak beats in a verse
		Creates a sense of sadness, excitement, or other feelings beyond the poet’s words

Talk

- 3 Describe the structural elements used in “Walking Big Willie.” How do they work together to create a feeling of exciting, speedy walks?

HINT Reread the poem to figure out what elements of poetry the poet chose to use.

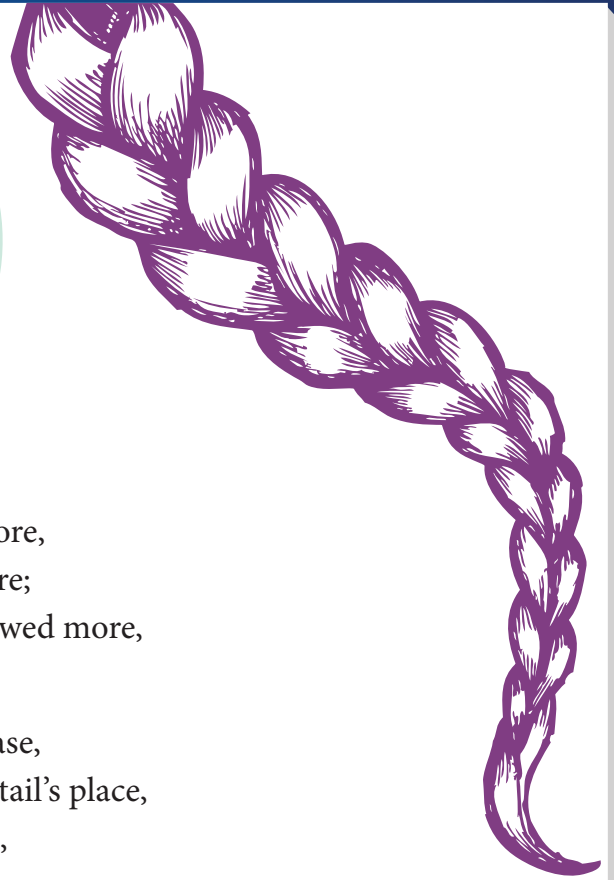
Write

- 4 **Short Response** Describe how the structural elements in “Walking Big Willie,” including meter, create certain effects, or feelings. Use the space on page 304 to write your answer.



A TRAGIC STORY

by W.M. Thackeray,
The Book of Humorous Verse



There lived a sage¹ in days of yore,
And he a handsome pigtail wore;
But wondered much and sorrowed more,
Because it hung behind him.

5 He mused upon this curious case,
And swore he'd change the pigtail's place,
And have it hanging at his face,
Not dangling there behind him.

10 Says he, "The mystery I've found,—
I'll turn me round,"—he turned him round;
But still it hung behind him.

15 Then round and round, and out and in,
All day the puzzled sage did spin;
In vain—it mattered not a pin,
The pigtail hung behind him.

And right and left, and round about,
And up and down, and in and out,
He turned; but still the pigtail stout
Hung steadily behind him.

20 And though his efforts never slack,
And though he twist and twirl and tack,
Alas! still faithful to his back,
The pigtail hangs behind him.

¹ **sage:** a wise person

Close Reader Habits

How does the poet use rhythm in this poem for effect? As you reread the poem, **underline** the verse in each stanza that has a different beat than the others.



Poets often group verses together to form stanzas. Each stanza usually presents a full thought or event.

Think Use what you learned from reading the poem to respond to the following questions.

- 1 Which statement **best** describes the last verse of each stanza?
 - A It uses a different meter and does not rhyme with the last words of the other verses.
 - B It uses the same meter and rhymes with words in the first verse of every stanza.
 - C It uses the same meter, but only the last two verses in the stanza rhyme.
 - D It uses a different meter, but the last verse rhymes with the other verses in the stanza.

- 2 What effect does the rhythm of each stanza have on a reader's understanding of how the sage feels?
 - A The change in the last line creates a feeling of excitement.
 - B The change in the last line creates a feeling of disappointment.
 - C The change in the last line creates a feeling of boredom and restlessness.
 - D The change in the last line creates a feeling of nervousness and concern.

Talk

- 3 Explain how the poet's use of structural elements adds to the meaning of the narrative poem. How do they combine to provide a clearer picture of the sage's problem in "A Tragic Story"? Make a list of your ideas.

HINT Think of how the stanzas help to tell the story.

Write

- 4 **Short Response** Describe how the poet's use of structural elements adds to the meaning of "A Tragic Story." Use at least **two** details from the passage to support your response. Use the space provided on page 305 to write your response.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 301.

Walking BIG WILLIE

4 Short Response Describe how the structural elements in “Walking Big Willie,” including meter, create certain effects, or feelings.



Don't forget to check your writing.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 303.

A TRAGIC STORY

- 4 Short Response** Describe how the poet's use of structural elements adds to the meaning of "A Tragic Story." Use at least two details from the passage to support your response.

Check Your Writing

- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

