Elements of Poetry

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| **Elements of Poetry** | **Definition** | | |
| **Speaker** | The speaker can be a voice meditating a theme or it can be a  specific person. When analyzing poetry, it is also important to  consider the **point of view** of the speaker. | | |
| **Tone/Subject** (Handout) | The **tone** is the attitude the author takes towards the subject or character. The tone can be positive, neutral, or negative. Example(s): serious, humorous, ironic, satirical.  The **subject** is what the poem is about; there should be a clear  difference from the theme. Ideally, the **subject** is one word and  can help to establish the author's tone. | | |
| **Mood** | The **mood** is the reader's emotional response to the piece of  literature (poetry). In essence, it answers, "What are my  feelings or emotions from this poem?" | | |
| **Structure of Poetry**  **- Sound Devices** (Scansion) | Rhythm (Metrical Feet & Lines)  Rhyme  Stanza  Form | | |
| **Imagery** | **Imagery** is language that evokes the five senses: sight (visual), sound (auditory), taste (gustatory), smell (olfactory), and touch(kinaesthetic).   * Synesthesia | | |
| **Figurative Language**  *All literature contains* ***figurative language*** *(connotative*  *language); it is the deeper meaning.*   * **Denotative**(Literal) * **Connotative** (Figurative) | **Figures of Speech**  Simile  Metaphor  Personification  Hyperbole (Overstatement)  Understatement (Litotes)  Apostrophe  Oxymoron  Metonymy  Pathetic Fallacy  Synecdoche  Anthropomorphism | **Figures of Sound**  Alliteration  Assonance  Consonance  Onomatopoeia  (Imitative Harmony) | **Figures of Repetition**  Anaphora  Epizeuxis  Anadiplosis  **Other**  Enjambment  Caesura  End-Stopped  Chiasmus |
| **Literary Devices**  (Literature – e.g., poetry, short stories, novels) | Allusion Ambiguity Euphemism  Symbolism Contrast Asyndeton  Allegory Cliché  Paradox Rhetorical Question  Pun Irony: Verbal, Situational, Irony of Fate, Dramatic | | |
| **Theme** | The **theme** is the general insight or idea about life that the writer wishes to express. As well, the can often be stated in a simple sentence. For instance: After reading this poem, the poet wants me to understand\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | | |
| **Form**: Rhyme/Rhythm | The **form** of the poem pertains to the rhyme and rhythm of a poem. *Rhyme* is the pattern of the words that contain similar  sounds; whereas; the *rhythm* is movement of the poem or the "pulse" of the poem. The rhythm includes beats and accents and the most recognizable rhythm is iambic pentameter. As well, it is important to note the stanzas present in the poem. | | |

**Arranging the Words**

Words follow each other in a sequence determined by the poet. In order to discuss the arrangements that result, certain terms have been applied to various aspects of that arrangement process. Although in some ways these sequences seem arbitrary and mechanical, in another sense they help to determine the nature of the poem. These various ways of organizing words have been identified.

**Point of View**

The author’s point of view concentrates on the vantage point of the speaker, or “teller” of

the story or poem. This may be considered the poem’s “voice” — the pervasive presence behind the overall work. This is also sometimes referred to as the *persona.*

* **1st Person** - the speaker is a character in the story or poem and tells it from his/her

perspective (uses “I”).

* **3rd Person Limited** - the speaker is not part of the story, but tells about the other characters through the limited perceptions of one other person.
* **3rd Person Omniscient** - the speaker is not part of the story, but is able to “know” and

describe what all characters are thinking.

**Structure of Poetry** (Rhythm and Rhyme)

The analysis of a poem's form and meter is termed **scansion**. **Verse** is a synonym for poetry. Also a group of lines in a poem or poem; also a single line of poetry. **Versification**is the structural form of a verse as revealed by the scansion.

1. **Meter** is consistent rhythm, something that we can tap our feet to. Meter comes from the term “to measure”

* **Foot**: one accented syllable with one, two, three or zero unaccented syllables
* **Iamb**: unstressed/stressed (Today)
* **Trochee**: stressed/unstressed (Daily)
* **Anapest**: Unstressed/unstressed/stressed (intervene)
* **Dactyl**: Stressed/unstressed/unstressed (Yesterday)
* **Spondee**: Stressed/stressed (True-blue)

1. **The Line**

The line is fundamental to the perception of poetry, marking an important visual distinction from prose. Poetry is arranged into a series of units that do not necessarily correspond to sentences, but rather to a series of **metrical feet**. Generally, but not always, the line is printed as one single line on the page. If it occupies more than one line, its remainder is usually indented to indicate that it is a continuation. The poetic line is measured by the number of feet it contains:

* 1 foot  =  **monometer**
* 2 feet  =  **dimeter**
* 3 feet  =  **trimeter**
* 4 feet  =  **tetrameter**
* 5 feet  =   **pentameter**
* 6 feet  =  **hexameter**
* 7 feet  =   **heptameter**
* 8 feet  =   **octameter**
* 9 feet  =   **nonometer**

There is a natural tendency when reading poetry to pause at the end of a line, but the careful reader will follow the punctuation to find where natural pauses should occur. In traditional verse forms, the length of each line is determined by convention, but in modern poetry

the poet has more latitude for choice.

1. **Stanza**

A division of a poem created by arranging the lines into a unit, often repeated in the same pattern of meter and rhyme throughout the poem; a unit of poetic lines (a “paragraph” within the poem). The stanzas within a poem are separated by blank lines.

Stanzas in modern poetry, such as *free verse,* often do not have lines that are all of the same length and metre, nor even the same number of lines in each stanza. Stanzas created by such irregular line groupings are often dictated by meaning, as in paragraphs of prose.

**Stanza Forms**

The names given to describe the number of lines in a stanzaic unit, such as: ***couplet*** *(2),* ***tercet*** *(3),* ***quatrain*** *(4),* ***quintet*** *(5),* ***sestet*** *(6),* ***septet*** *(7),* and ***octave*** *(8).*

Some stanzas follow a set rhyme scheme and meter in addition to the number of lines and are given specific names to describe them, such as, *ballad meter, ottava rima, rhyme royal, terza rima*, and *Spenserian stanza.* Stanza forms are also a factor in the categorization of whole poems described as following a *fixed form.*

1. **Types of Rhyme**

There are five basic types of rhyme. The types are:

* **Masculine Rhyme** – The rhyming of a single accented syllable, as in *park/dark*.
* **Feminine Rhyme** (Double Rhyme) – Rhyme in which the accented syllables in two words are followed be identical unaccented syllables, as in *turtle/fertile* or *drifting/lifting*.
* **Slant Rhyme** (half rhyme, imperfect rhyme, near rhyme) – the final sound is the same, but the preceding sound is different. Example: mou**th/**tru**th**, trees/rows, and replie**d**/sai**d**.
* **Internal Rhyme** – the rhyming of two or more words within a single line of poetry. Example:

“*Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary…”*

*– Edgar Allan Poe*

* **End Rhyme** – rhyme occurring at the ends of the lines. Example:

“*A speck that would have been beneath my* ***sight*** */ On any but a paper sheet so* ***white***”– Robert Frost

**Form**

The arrangement or method used to convey the content, such as free verse and elegy. In other words, the “way-it-is-said.” A variably interpreted term, however, it sometimes applies to details within the composition of a text, but is probably used most often in reference to the structural characteristics of a work as it compares to (or differs from) established modes of conventionalized arrangements.

* **Open**: poetic form free from regularity and consistency in elements such as rhyme, line length, and metrical form
* **Closed**: poetic form subject to a fixed structure and pattern
* **Blank Verse**: unrhymed iambic pentameter (much of the plays of Shakespeare are written in this form)
* **Free Verse**: lines with no prescribed pattern or structure — the poet determines all the variables as seems appropriate for each poem
* **Couplet**: a pair of lines, usually rhymed; this is the shortest stanza
* **Heroic Couplet**: a pair of rhymed lines in iambic pentameter (traditional heroic epic form)
* **Quatrain**: a four-line stanza, or a grouping of four lines of verse

**Fixed** (Closed) **Form**

A poem which follows a set pattern of meter, rhyme scheme, stanza form, and refrain (if there

is one), is called a fixed form. For example: ballad, sonnet, haiku, limerick, or villanelle.

**Other**

* **Enjambment** - The continuation of the logical sense — and therefore the grammatical construction beyond the end of a line of poetry. This is sometimes done with the title, which in effect becomes the first line of the poem. (**Like a run-on sentence with no punctuation**)
* *Example*:

She is as in a field a silken tent

At midday when a sunny summer breeze

* **Caesura** - The continuation of the logical sense — and therefore the grammatical construction beyond the end of a line of poetry. This is sometimes done with the title, which in effect becomes the first line of the poem. (**a** **pause in the middle of a line of poetry, indicated by a punctuation mark in order to symbolize a pause**)
  + *Example*: St. Agnes’ Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!
  + *Example:* The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold
* **End-Stopped** – A term that describes a line of poetry that ends with a natural pause often indicated by a mark of punctuation.
* **Chiasmus** - A type of rhetorical balance in which the second part is syntactically balanced against the first, but with the parts reversed.
  + *Example:* Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike.” In prose, this is called **antimetabole**.

**Imagery**

* *Examples*
* **Sight**: Smoke mysteriously puffed out from the clown’s ears.
* **Sound**: Tom placed his ear tightly against the wall; he could hear a faint but distinct thump, thump, thump.
* **Touch**: The burlap wall covering scraped against the little boy’s cheek.
* **Taste**: A salty tear ran across onto her lips.
* **Smell**: Cinnamon! That’s what wafted into his nostrils.
* **Synesthesia**: An attempt to fuse different senses by describing one kind of sense impression in words normally used to describe another.
* *Example:* The sound of her voice was sweet.
* *Example:* a loud aroma, a velvety smile

**Figurative Language**

1. **Speech**

* **Simile** – A direct comparison between two unlike objects. The words “like” or “as” are regularly used in making the comparisons.
  + *Example*: He’s as dumb as an ox.
  + *Example*: Her eyes are like comets.
* **Metaphor** – An indirect or implied comparison between to unlike objects and does not use the words “like” and “as”.
  + *Example*: He’s a zero.
  + *Example*: Her fingers danced across the keyboard.

**Other Types of Metaphor**

**Dead** - Overused that its original impact has been lost

**Extended** - Developed at length and involves several points of comparison

**Mixed** - Two metaphors are jumbled together, often illogically

* **Personification** – A special type of metaphor which gives human qualities to non-human things such as animals, objects, or ideas.
  + *Example:* The days crept by slowly, sorrowfully.
* **Hyperbole** – Exaggeration for effect, not intended to deceive.
  + *Example*: He weighs a ton.
* **Understatement (Litotes)** - Opposite of hyperbole; litotes intensifies an idea by understatement.
  + *Example:* It wasn’t my best moment.
* **Apostrophe** – A particular type of personification in which we address something non-human as if it were human or alive; it is usually capitalized.
  + *Example*: O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done…
* **Oxymoron** – It is composed of a pair of neighbouring contradictory words.
* *Example*: a pointless point of view; bittersweet
* **Metonymy** -A figure of speech in which a person, place, or thing is referred to by something closely associated with it**.**
  + *Example*: The White House stated today that... Example: The Crown reported today that...
* **Pathetic Fallacy** – Faulty reasoning that inappropriately ascribes human feelings to nature or non-human objects.
* **Synecdoche** – A figure of speech in which a part signifies the whole (*fifty* masts for *fifty ships*) or the whole signifies the part (*days* for *life*, as in “*He lived his days under the African skies*.” When the name of a material stands for the thing itself, as in *pigskin* for football that, too, is synecdoche.
* *Example*: In *Julius Caesar*, Antony states, “Friends, Romans, countrymen lend me your ears.” He uses ears to represent the Romans.
* **Anthropomorphism** - to give human qualities to animals

1. **Sound**

* **Alliteration** – The repetition of at least two or three consonants.
* *Example*: The car was fast and furious.
* **Assonance** - It focuses on the repetition of long vowels.
  + *Example*: He’s a bruisin’ loser.
  + *Example*: Peter and Andrew patted the pony at Ascot

In the second example above, the short A sound in Andrew, patted, and Ascot would be assonant.

* **Consonance** – It is the repetition of consonant sounds that is not limited to beginning of the words.
  + *Example*: boa**t**s into the pas**t**
  + *Example*: coo**l** sou**l**
* **Onomatopoeia** (Imitative Harmony) – It is the use of words whose sounds suggest their meaning.
  + *Example*: boom, buzz, crackle, gurgle, hiss, pop, sizzle, snap, swoosh, whir, zip
* **Cacophony** - A discordant series of harsh, unpleasant sounds helps to convey disorder. This is often furthered by the combined effect of the meaning and the difficulty of pronunciation.
* *Example*:

My stick fingers click with a snicker

And, chuckling, they knuckle the keys;

Light-footed, my steel feelers flicker

And pluck from these keys melodies.

—“Player Piano,” John Updike

* **Euphony**: A series of musically pleasant sounds, conveying a sense of harmony and beauty to the language.
* *Example*:

Than Oars divide the Ocean,

Too silver for a seam—

Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon

Leap, plashless as they swim.

— “A Bird Came Down the Walk,” Emily Dickenson (last stanza)

1. **Repetition**

Repetition is when words other than *and* and *an* are repeated for effect. There are many types of repetition but the following are the basics:

* **Anaphora** – It is the repetition of a word at the beginning of a clause, line, or sentence.
* *Example:*

*“We shall* go on to the end, *we shall* fight in France, *we shall* fight on the seas and oceans, *we shall* fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, *we shall* defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, *we shall* fight on the beaches, *we shall* fight on the landing grounds, *we shall* fight in the fields and in the streets, *we shall* fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

-- Winston Churchill

* **Epizeuxis** – It is the emphatic repetition of a word with no other words between.
* *Example*:

"All around me are familiar faces

Worn out places, worn out faces

Bright and early for their daily races

Going nowhere, going nowhere."

* + - * “Tears for Fears”, *Mad World*
* *Example:*

*“*I undid the lantern cautiously--oh, so cautiously--cautiously."

- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"

* **Anadiplosis** - A kind of repetition in which the last word or phrase of one sentence or line is repeated at the beginning of the next
* *Example*

For I have love long, I crave reward,

Reward me not unkindly; think of kindness,

1. **Other**

* **Allusion** – An “indirect or passing reference” to create an image in the mind of the reader. There are four basic types: mythological, literature, religious (biblical), and historical.
* **Symbolism** – A person, place, object and/or actions that usually represents a deeper meaning.
  + *Example*: A small cross by the dangerous curve on the road reminded all of Johnny’s death.
* **Allegory** – It uses different elements to represent different things; it is a series of symbols that are individually represented, but collective relay an overall message.
* **Paradox** – It is a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but in reality expresses a possible truth.
  + *Example*: The hurrier I go the behinder I get.
* **Pun** - Word play in which words with totally different meanings have similar or identical sounds.
  + **Example**: Like a firefly in the rain, I’m de-lighted.
* **Ambiguity:** A word or phrase that can mean more than one thing, even in its context. Poets often search out such words to add richness to their work. Often, one meaning seems quite readily apparent, but other, deeper and darker meanings, await those who contemplate the poem.
  + *Example:* Robert Frost’s “The Subverted Flower”
* **Contrast:** Closely arranged things with strikingly different characteristics.
* *Example*: He was dark, sinister, and cruel; she was radiant, pleasant, and kind.
* **Cliché** - Any figure of speech that was once clever and original but through overuse has become outdated. If you’ve heard more than two or three other people say it more than two or three times, chances are the phrase is too timeworn to be useful in your writing.
* *Example*: busy as a bee
* **Rhetorical Question**: A question solely for effect, which does not require an answer. By the implication the answer is obvious; it is a means of achieving an emphasis stronger than a direct statement.
* *Example*: Could I but guess the reason for that look?
* Example: O, Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

* **Euphemism**: An understatement, used to lessen the effect of a statement; substituting something innocuous for something that might be offensive or hurtful.
  + *Example*: She is at rest. (meaning, she’s dead)
* **Asyndeton:** A series of words separated by commas, with no conjunction where there should be.
* **I** came, **I** saw, **I** conquered.
* **Irony**

In the broadest sense, the recognition of the incongruity, or difference, between reality (what is) and appearance (what seems to be).

* **Verbal Irony -** a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant.
* *Example*: Wow, thanks for expensive gift...let’s see: did it come with a Fun Meal or the Burger King equivalent?
* **Sarcasm** - is yet another popular form of irony where the user intends to wittily attack or make a derogatory statement about something or someone. Often, sarcasm is confused with irony instead of being a recognized form of irony.
  + - *Example*: At a party a lady tells Winston Churchill he is drunk to which Churchill said "My dear, you are ugly...but tomorrow I shall be sober."
* **Situational Irony** - contrast between what is intended or expected and what actually occurs.
* *Example:* *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare: The witches predict one thing, which happens to come true but Macbeth often misinterprets their words.
* **Irony of Fate** (Cosmic Irony) **-** is a phrase used to identify the view that fate, destiny, or God, manipulates beings like puppets and thwarts their plans.
  + *Example:* The Titanic was promoted as being 100% unsinkable; but, in 1912 the ship sank on its maiden voyage.
* **Dramatic Irony** - a situation in a play or other fiction in which a character unwittingly makes a remark that the audience is aware of.
* *Example*: In *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare Romeo finds Juliet in a drugged state and he thinks she is dead. He kills himself. When Juliet wakes up she finds Romeo dead and kills herself.