

## EXAM TERMINOLOGY

**Metaphor:** A comparison between two things without using words such as “like” or “as.” Metaphors can be extended metaphors when they are drawn out and are central to the organization of the poem. *Examples: Her voice is pure crystal. He was a roaring lion. School is a spring of knowledge.*

**Simile:** A comparison between two things using words such as “like,” “as,” or “than.” *Examples: Her hair was like spun gold. Her smile was more haunting than the Mona Lisa’s.*

**Personification:** Giving human qualities / characteristics to animals or objects or ideas. *Examples: The branches moaned with the snow’s weight. Death stops and lays his hand on all.*

**Hyperbole:** An over-exaggeration. It may be used for serious or comic effect. *Example: His hands dragged a mile out of his sleeves.*

**Understatement:** A form of irony when something is underrepresented. The opposite of hyperbole. *Example: Hiroshima killed a few people.*

**Imagery:** Creating vivid mental pictures by using words that appeal to the senses and emotions.

*Example: with a crunching sound / the preying mantis devours / the face of a bee*

**Pun:** A play on words in which a word or phrase can be taken to mean more than one thing.

**Symbol:** Using word/gesture/sign to represent something else.

*Examples: dove = peace / purple = royalty / red = anger love*

**Oxymoron:** Two words with the opposite meanings, used together to create a new meaning. *Examples: bitter sweet, jumbo shrimp, sweet sorrow*

**Paradox:** A statement that seems to contradict itself. *Example: In my beginning is my end.*

**Irony:** Using words to express the exact opposite of their actual meaning. It also refers to combinations or circumstances that have a result opposite of what is expected.

**Synecdoche:** The use of a term for describing *part of something* to represent the whole object. *Examples: We have fifty head of cattle. / Westview played THSS.*

**Metonymy:** The substitution of a word for a closely related term.

*Examples: The crown decided to prosecute. / The pen is mightier than the sword.*

**Apostrophe:** Device of addressing the absent as if present, or the inanimate (sea, wind, tree, etc.) or the abstract as if it could respond. Often used to express powerful emotions. Used in parody, satire, or humor to exaggerate feelings.

**Allusion:** This refers to the inclusion of unacknowledged quotations from other works and references to historical events and any aspect of human cultures.

**Tone:** The author's attitude toward his/her subject or reader. It is similar to tone of voice.

**Mood:** This is different from tone because it is the emotional colouring of the poem; the feeling it evokes.

**Antithesis:** A direct contrast or exact opposite of two characters or ideas. A figure of speech in which sharply contrasting ideas are juxtaposed in a balanced or parallel phrase or grammatical structure.

*Example: Hope is the antithesis of despair.*

**Foil:** One that by contrast underscores or enhances the distinctive characteristics of another. Similar to antithesis except it refers directly to character.

**Euphemism:** The act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive. *Example: "passed away" is used rather than "died."*

## **SOUND DEVICES**

**Alliteration:** The repetition of the initial (consonant) sounds of words.

*Examples: The twisted trout twinkled below. Wild water rippling in the reeds.*

**Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds. *Example: mad as a hatter.*

**Consonance:** The repetition of consonants at the end of words. *Example: odds and ends.*

**Onomatopoeia:** Words whose sounds seem to resemble the sounds that they describe.

*Examples: hiss, buzz, rustle.*

**Euphony:** Speech sounds that sound pleasant or musical to the ear. *Example: swift and slippery serpents slid and slithered silkily, whispering sinful secrets.*

**Cacophony:** The opposite of euphony. A discordant mixture of harsh and unpleasant sounds. *Example: Clocks Clang.*

## POEM TYPES

**Concrete:** Poetry that depends in part on the arrangement of words and letters to convey meaning.

**Acrostic:** A poem in which the letters of successive lines form a word or pattern.

**Limerick:** A humorous 5-line poem that usually tells of the actions of a person.

**Couplet:** A pair of lines that rhyme. Couplets may be a part of a longer poem.

*Example: The icicles melt, the blue jays sing,  
My favourite time of year is spring.*

**Quatrain:** A four-line rhyme. The rhyme scheme may be AABB, ABAB, ABCB, or ABBA. Quatrains are combined to form a longer poem.

**Haiku:** A form of Japanese verse usually employing allusions and comparisons. A haiku is composed of three lines containing a fixed number of syllables, usually seventeen (5,7,5). *Example:*

*Orange, yellow, red  
Leaves dance as the wind blows strong  
They fall to the ground.*

**Epitaph:** A short statement in memory of a dead person, usually written on a tombstone.

**Lyric:** A short, subjective poem with song-like outburst of the author's innermost thoughts and feelings.

**Closed Form:** A poem written in a set pattern. For example, the sonnet or the ode are closed form poems, which make certain demands on the poet, regarding structure, metre, rhyme scheme, and sometimes imagery.

**Blank Verse:** Poetry that lacks rhyme but has a very specific metre or rhythm called iambic pentameter. Shakespearian drama is written in this form of verse.

**Ode:** A poem on an exalted theme expressed in a dignified language, serious tone. An ode usually praises someone or something.

**Sonnet:** A lyric poem of fourteen lines, with rhymes arranged according to certain definite patterns (rhyme schemes). A sonnet usually expresses a single, complete thought, idea, or sentiment. The two main types of sonnets are: Italian (or Petrarchan) and English (Shakespearian). The Italian sonnet is composed of a sestet (6-line stanza, and an octave (8-line stanza).

**Ballad:** A narrative poem usually containing much repetition and a repeated refrain (songs).

**Elegy:** A formal poem, often written as a lament for a departed friend or respected person. The poet usually sets forth his or her ideas about death or some other serious subject.

**Narrative:** A poem that tells a story (usually long).

**Epic:** An extended poem about heroic action, based on history, legend or myth.

**Free Verse:** Rhythmical lines, usually unrhymed, that vary in length and follow no strict metrical structure. (Called “Open Form”)

**Pastoral:** Poetry that portrays or evokes rural life, usually in an idealized way. Relating to country life, shepherds, etc.

**Epigram:** A short poem expressing a single idea that is usually satirical and witty. *Example: Prose is the kind of writing everybody understands; poetry is the other kind.*

**Didactic Verse:** Poems which seem to preach or moralize. Writing intended to instruct.

## **POETIC STRUCTURE**

**Form:** The shape and structure of a work, as opposed to its content.

**Stanza:** Lines of verse grouped so as to compose a pattern that is usually repeated in the poem.

**Refrain:** A reoccurring phrase, stanza, or chorus.

**Repetition:** The repeating of a word or phrase to add rhythm or to emphasize an idea. *Example: Her eyes, her eyes, her haunting eyes!*

**Syllable:** The “beat” in a line of poetry.

**Metre:** The pattern of stressed syllables which occur at regular intervals and make up the rhythm of a verse.

Compositions written in metre are known as verse and have a strict metrical structure.

**Foot/Feet:** a metrical unit in verse (see “iambic pentameter” next page).

**Iambic Pentameter:** 10 syllables in a line of poetry. Pentameter means 5 feet, iambic means 2 syllables, one stressed, one unstressed ( $5 \times 2 = 10$  syllables). In iambic pentameter the stress is on the second syllable. Sonnets are written in rhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespearian drama is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter.

**Rhyme:** The similarity in sound in words. (Words whose final vowels and consonants are the same). Rhyme is used to give a pleasing sound to a poem or a stanza. Much modern poetry does not contain rhyme.

**Internal Rhyme:** Rhyme occurring within the same line.

**Rhyme Scheme:** The pattern of a rhyme within a stanza or a poem. The rhyme scheme is usually shown by applying to each similar rhyme the same letter of the alphabet.

## **DRAMA TERMS**

**Tragedy:** A drama in which the protagonist, a person of nobility, must make a moral decision that influences the outcome of the drama. The protagonist usually has a serious fault, the “tragic flaw,” which leads to his downfall and death.

**Dramatic Monologue:** A “poem” in which a single character, overheard by a silent listener, reveals a dramatic situation.

**Soliloquy:** An utterance of a character who is talking to himself/herself, unaware of any hearers who may be present. It allows insight into the characters innermost feelings.

**Aside:** When a character’s words are heard only by the audience, not the characters on stage.

**Parody:** A ludicrous imitation usually intended for comic effect but often for ridicule of both the style and content of another work. The humour depends on the reader’s familiarity with the original work. Often used in plays (Some of Shakespeare’s plays contain parody).

**Satire:** A literary work which exposes and ridicules human vices or folly. Usually intended as a moral criticism directed against the injustice of social wrongs. May be witty and funny or angry and bitter.

## **OTHER TERMS**

**Genre:** A category in literature. A “type” or form of literature. Ex. common genres are: Epic, Tragedy, Comedy, Satire, Novel, Essay, and Biography.

**Literal Language:** Adhering strictly to the original meaning of the word or text. The opposite of figurative language.

**Figural /Figurative language:** Writing that incorporates figurative language (metaphor, personification...) to gain strength and freshness of expression. The figural meaning of a poem is the hidden or deeper meaning as opposed to the literal level of the words. For example, Robert Frost's poem, "After Apple Picking" is literally about a man picking apples. Figuratively, the apples represent the man's goals in his life and his accomplishments.

**Emotional Appeal:** Writing that arouses the emotions.

**Pathos:** An experience or a work of art that arouses feelings of pity, sympathy, tenderness, or sorrow.

**Connotation:** The emotional suggestions attached to words beyond their strict definition.

**Denotation:** The dictionary definition of a word.

**Wit:** Humour of intellectual quality which is primarily expressed through ingenious phraseology, brilliant epigrams, clever comparisons, etc....

**Cliché:** A trite or overused expression. *Example: It's raining cats and dogs.*

**Jargon:** Technical words. A language of a trade or profession which seems full of unnecessarily complex terminology. *Example: I bought a digital camera with 5.1 megapixels and a 256 megabyte memory card.*

**Colloquial Language:** Suited to spoken language or informal writing; unique expressions that cannot often be literally translated. *Examples: He really ticks me off / I'm bored out of my tree.*

**Slang:** Extremely informal language mostly consisting of colourful expressions not defined in the dictionary. *Example: The student walked into the classroom and asked the teacher: "S'up?"*

**Parallelism:** Likeness, correspondence, or similarity in aspect, course, or tendency. *Grammar:* The use of identical or equivalent syntactic constructions in corresponding clauses or phrases.

**Juxtaposition:** Combining two unlikely elements close to each other, usually for contrast. The effect is the shock created by the combination.

**Contrast:** Writing that highlights differences.

