

Poetic Technique Vocabulary

anaphora	the repetition of a word or phrase, usually at the beginning of a line.
alliteration	the repetition of beginning sounds in a sequence of words.
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.
blank verse	unrhymed iambic pentameter.
caesura	an audible pause internal to a line, usually in the middle.
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 interior consonant-sounds in a sequence of words.
couplet	two lines of verse, whether rhymed or not.
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.
enjambement line	a "run-on" line that carries over into the next to complete its meaning.
free verse	poetry in which the rhythm does not repeat regularly.
imagery	the visual pictures used to render a description more vivid and immediate.
meter	a regularly repeating rhythm

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.
refrain	a phrase or line recurring at intervals.
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.
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.