

English 8

Poetic Terms

Alliteration

Alliteration is a literary or rhetorical stylistic device that consists in repeating the same consonant sound at the beginning of two or more words in close succession.

Example. The Mother Goose tongue-twister, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers ...".

Metaphor

Metaphor is speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance.

Example. "A mighty fortress is our god." (Martin Luther)

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that imitates or suggests the source of the sound that it describes.

Example. Zoom, bang, beep, splash, moo.

Personification

Personification is a description of an object as being a living person or animal.

Example. "The sun shone brightly down on me as if she were shining for me alone." In this example, the sun is depicted as if capable of intent, and is referenced with the pronoun "she" rather than "it."

Rhyme

Rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds in two or more words.

Example. "I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them Sam-I-am." (Dr. Seuss)

Rhyme Scheme

A rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhyming lines in a poem.

Example. Dr. Suess

"I could not, would not, in a house. (a)

I would not, could not, with a mouse. (a)

I would not eat them with a fox. (b)

I would not eat them in a box. (b)

I would not eat them here or there. (c)

I would not eat them anywhere." (c)

In this Dr. Seuss excerpt, the rhyme scheme would be: aabbccdd

Each letter represents one final sound at the end of a line. Each new sound receives a new letter.

dirige me in veritate tua

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Rhythm

Rhythm is a term used to refer to the recurrence of stressed and unstressed sounds in poetry. Depending on how sounds are arranged, the rhythm of a poem may be fast or slow, choppy or smooth. Poets use rhythm to create pleasurable sound patterns and to reinforce meanings. Rhythm in prose arises from pattern repetitions of sounds and pauses that create looser rhythmic effects.

Example. Again, in Dr. Seuss, a rhythm is created at the reader follows the lines:

“I could not, would not, in a house.

I would not, could not, with a mouse.

I would not eat them with a fox.

I would not eat them in a box. “

Simile

Simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the words "like", "as", or "than."

Example. She was as fast as a bullet. He was as weak as a wet noodle.

Speaker

The speaker is the voice used by an author to tell a story or speak a poem. The speaker is often a created identity, and should not automatically be equated with the author's self. Also known as narrator or persona.

Example. In the poem “This is Just to Say,” by William Carlos Williams, the speaker is the “I” who is showing remorse for eating the plums that did not belong to him/her. The “I” should not be mistaken for William Carlos Williams.

“I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast”

The above definitions constitute the terms related to poetry that are examinable in English 8.

These definitions were gathered from public domain content at wikipedia.org, dictionary.com, for students in the Saint Thomas Aquinas High School English Department.

Poetic language could be used in any communication resembling poetry in beauty or the evocation of feeling. While these terms will be used in the study of poetry, they could be applied in any written or verbal expression.