Poetry Literary Terms

Poetic Devices

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| Poetic Device | Definition | Example |
| 1. Allusion | A reference to a person, even, or place in history or literature | “Yes, I will live forever once I cross Jordan’s river”  (“Lost and Found,” Vivian Gilbert Zabel) |
| 2. Apostrophe | A figure of speech where the speaker directly addresses something nonhuman | “Busy old fool, unruly sun why dost thou thus through windows and through curtains call on us?” (“The Sun Rising,” John Donne) |
| 3. Connotation | An implied meaning of a word | School: a place for learning, suffering, surprises, challenge, drudgery, or friends. |
| 4. Denotation | A literal meaning of a word; the dictionary definition | School: “an institution where instruction is given, esp. to persons under college age” (Webster’s Dictionary) |
| 5. Hyperbole | THE USE OF EXAGGERATION, OR OVERSTATEMENT FOR EFFECT | I’m so hungry I could eat a horse! It’s a zillion minutes from here! |
| 6. Metaphor | A comparison of two unlike things without using “like” or “as” | “I painted a broken mirror a broken mirror that somehow reflected a perfect life” (“My Perfect Life,” Courtney Anne Gulihur) |
| 7. Metonymy | A person, place, or thing is referred to by something closely associated with it. (eg. A king is referred to as “the crown”) | Saying “White House” instead of “The President” |
| 8. Oxymoron | Putting two contradictory words together | “Dark with excessive bright” (“Paradise Lost, book iii,” John Milton) |
| 9. Paradox | Two contradictory ideas that, when put together, make sense | “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (“Macbeth,” William Shakespear”) |
| 10. Parallelism | Important phrases, words, or ideas are repeated within a poem in the same manner; parallel structure | “And ain’t I a woman?  Look at me  Look at my arm!  I have plowed and planted  And gathered into barns  And no man could head me …  And ain’t I a woman?  (“Ain’t I am a Woman,” Sojourner Truth) |
| 11.Personification | Giving human qualities to animals or objects | “Bright April shakes out her rain- drenched hair.” (“I Shall Not Care,” Sara Teasdale) |
| 12. Simile | Comparing two unlike things using “like” or “as” | “O my love’s like a red, red rose that’s newly sprung in June (“O, My loves Like a Red, Red Rose,” Robert Burns) |
| 13. Synecdoche | A figure of speech that substitutes a part for a whole (“Bread” for food in general) | I don’t have a penny (meaning any money) We tossed the pigskin around (meaning football) |

Sound and Structure

Literary term

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| Poetic Device | Definition | Example |
| 1. Alliteration | The repetition of initial sounds in neighboring words | “Smoldering through spouts of drifting smoke that shroud the menacing scarred slope.” (“Attack,” Sigfried Sassoon) |
| 2. Assonance | The repetition of vowel sounds in words, but not consonant sounds | “The Cross, the Cross goes deeper than we know, deeper into life.” (“Tortoise Shell,” D.H. Lawrence) |
| 3. Consonance | The repletion of consonant sounds in words, but not vowel sounds | “Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets the muttering retreats” (The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock T.S. Eliot) |
| 4. End stopped | A line that has a natural pause at the end, using periods, commas, etc. | “My mistresses’ eyes are nothing like the sun. Coral is far more red than her lips red. (“Sonnet 116,” William Shakespeare) |
| 5. Refrain | A line or set of lines at the end of a stanza or section of a longer poem that repeat at regular intervals. | “Nameless here for evermore.”  “This is it and nothing more.”  “Darkness there and nothing more”  (“The Raven,” Edgar Allan Poe) |
| 6. Rhyme | A pattern of repeated sounds | “I think that I shall never see A poem as lovely as a tree.” (“Trees,” Joyce Kilmer) |
| 7. Stanza | A unified group of lines in poetry; the paragraph in a poem | “O wind, rend open the heat, cut apart the heat, rend it to tatters.  Fruit cannot drop through this thick air –  That presses up and blunts  The points of pears  And rounds the grapes.  (“Heat,” H.d. {Hilda Doolittle}) |
| 8. Enjambment | The running over of a sentence or thought into the next line without a pause at the end of the line; a run-on line | “Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds or bends with the remover to remove”  (“Sonnet 116,” William Shakespeare) |
| 9. Free verse | Unrhymed poetry without a specific pattern | “I celebrate myself and sing myself, and what I assume you shall assume. For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.” (“Song of Myself,” Walt Whitman) |
| 10. Onomatopoeia | A word that imitates the sound it represents. | “Whoosh, passing breeze flags flutter and flap frogs croaks, bird whistles babbling bubbles from tap” (“Running water,” Lee Emmett) |