

Poetry Vocabulary

alliteration: The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words (e.g., “winter wind”).

allusion: A reference in a literary work to a person, place or thing in history or another work of literature.

assonance: The close repetition of middle vowels (e.g., “rain” and “plain”).

blend: To combine the sounds represented by two or more letters to pronounce a word, such as “gr” in grow; to combine two or more words, creating a new word such as brunch (e.g., combining “breakfast” and “lunch” to form the word “brunch”).

cadence: A term borrowed from music that refers to the audible features of speech.

concrete image: When a speaker or writer uses words that induce audiences to call up “pictures” in their minds by appealing to their senses of taste, smell, hearing, touch and sight.

connotation: The image and feeling unstated but associated with a word. For example, calling a bar of soap “Dove” is much more pleasing than “Pigeon.”

construct meaning: The process of understanding what is read through the interaction with text.

context clues: Information a reader may obtain from a text that helps confirm the meaning of a word or group of words.

denotation: The literal meaning or dictionary definition of a word.

double denotation: A word that has more than one meaning, e.g. fly, heart, sweater.

editing: A step in preparing a written work for publication or review that focuses on clarity and correctness.

enjambéd line: When a line physically ends before its meaning ends (e.g., “The dancers go round, they go round and around”).

figurative language: Language enriched by word images and figures of speech

figurative meaning: A symbolic interpretation of written work.

genre: An established class or category of artistic composition or literature, including poetry, drama and novel.

hyperbole: A figure of speech which uses a deliberate exaggeration (e.g., “I have told you a million times”).

idiom: A combination of words that is not strictly in accordance with grammatical rules and often possesses a meaning other than it’s grammatical or logical one (e.g., an easy test might be described as “a piece of cake”).

imagery: Words and phrases that create vivid sensory experience for a reader.

implicit: To be assumed by not directly expressed.

inference: A general conclusion drawn from information that is given.

irony: The recognition of the difference between reality and appearance; includes situational irony, in which there is a contrast between what is intended or expected and what actually occurs; verbal irony, in which there is a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant; and dramatic irony, in which words or actions are understood by the audience but not by characters.

literal meaning: The actual meaning of a word or a phrase.

metaphor: A figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things (e.g., “he’s a tiger”).

nuance(s): A delicate shade of difference.

onomatopoeia: Words whose sound imitates their suggested meaning, (e.g., “buzz,” “hiss” and “clang”).

parody: A literary or musical work in which the style of an author or work is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule.

personification: Suggesting that an inanimate object has human-like qualities (e.g., “War rearranged my brain to her satisfaction and settled in to live forever”).

resources

poetry: Purposely powerful words chosen to cause a reaction. May have rhyme and rhythm (e.g., "It's startling how much it can enhance when one finally sees an exit as an entrance").

point of view: The perspective or attitude of a narrator of a piece of literature.

pun: The usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound; a play on words. (e.g., the substitution of the slogan "visualize world peace" with "visualize whirled peas").

repetition: Using a word, phrase or clause more than once in a short passage; dwelling on a point.

revision: The stage of the writing process in which one considers and improves the meaning and underlying structure of a written draft.

rhyme: The repetition of an identical or similarly accented sound or sounds in a work.

satire: A literary technique in which ideas, customs, behaviors or institutions are ridiculed for the purpose of improving society.

simile: A figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two unlike things using the words "like" or "as" (e.g., "she's as sly as a fox").

sound device: A resource used by poets to convey and reinforce the meaning or experience of poetry through the skillful use of sound.

stanza: A group of lines in a poem.

symbol: A concrete thing used to suggest something larger and more abstract.

theme: A topic of discussion or writing; a major idea or proposition broad enough to cover the entire scope of a literary work or work of art. *Note:* A theme may be stated or implied, but clues to it may be found in the ideas that are given special prominence or tend to recur in a work.

thesis: The basic argument advanced by a speaker or writer who then attempts to prove it; the subject or major argument of a speech or composition.

understatement: Saying less than is emotionally appropriate and thereby drawing attention to the statement.

viewpoint: The stance or vantage point from which a story is narrated.