**POETRY TERMS: Forms and Devices**

**Alliteration:** repetition of consonants at the beginning of words in a line

**Allusion:** brief reference to mythological, biblical, historical, or literary person/place/thing/idea

Eg. He met his Waterloo.

**Allegory:** a form of extended [metaphor](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/metaphor.html), in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, are

equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often [personifications](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/personification.html) of abstract ideas as charity, greed, or envy. Thus an allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning and a [symbolic](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/symbol.html) meaning.

**Ambiguity**: the expression that gives more than one meaning and leaves uncertainty as to the meaning

**Antithesis:** words and phrases with opposite meanings balanced against each other.

Ex**.** "To err is human, to forgive, divine." by Alexander Pope

**Anachronism:** The representation of someone as existing or something as happening in other than chronological, proper, or historical order.

**Apostrophe:** a form of personification in which the absent or dead person are spoken to directly as if present and the inanimate, as if animate

Eg. Milton! Thou should’st be living at his hour!

**Archaic Language:** old words or phrases that survive in our understanding but are not generally used. Ex. Perhaps the best known archaic word in English is *thou*, the old singular form of *you.*

**Assonance**: repetition of vowel sounds within a line Ex. How now brown cow?

**Ballad (ballad stanza):** A poem that tells a story similar to a folk tale or legend and often has a

repeated refrain.

**Blank verse:** unrhymed iambic pentameter which is a type of meter in poetry, in which there are

five iambs to a line

**Cacophony/Dissonance**: a combination of harsh, unpleasant sounds that create an effect of discordance. Ex. A tap at the pan the quick sharp scratch. – Browning

**Cliché:** a time worn expression which has lost it vitality and to some extent its original meaning

Ex. The villagers were busy as bees.

**Connotation**: is the implications or suggestions evoked by a word. This can be an individual response or one that is culturally conditioned.

Ex. The connotations of the word snake could be “evil or danger.”

**Consonance:** repetition of a consonant sound within a series of words and with different vowel sounds in order to produce a harmonious effect. Ex. But yet we trust

**Couplet:** a pair of lines of meter in poetry and verse. It usually consists of two lines that rhyme and have the same meter.

**Denotation:** refers to the literal meaning of a word; the “dictionary definition”

Ex. If you look up the word snake in a dictionary, you will discover that one of its denotative meanings is “any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venomous reptiles having a long, tapering, cylindrical body and found in most tropical and temperate regions.”

**Diction:** refers to the choice or arrangement of words in a literary work

**Didactic:** literature whose primary purpose is to teach or intending to teach a lesson.

**Dramatic monologue:** a poem where one character is speaking to one or more persons but we only hear the words of the speaker

**Elegy:** A sad and thoughtful poem lamenting the death of a person.

**Epic:** A long, serious poem that tells the story of a heroic figure.

**Epigram:** A very short, satirical and witty poem usually written as a brief couplet or quatrain. The term epigram is derived from the Greek word epigramma, meaning inscription.

**Epitaph:** An epitaph is a commemorative inscription on a tomb or mortuary monument written in praise of a deceased person.

**End Rhyme**: rhyme that occurs at the end of lines Ex. Each day into the upper air

Ascends the politician’s prayer

**Enjambment:** a line of verse that continues into the following line without a grammatical break. This is found more commonly in English verse. Ex. With her gray/breath

**Euphony:** agreeableness of sound; pleasing effect to the ear, especially a pleasant sounding or

harmonious combination or succession of words

**Euphemism:** using pleasant words to describe an unpleasant fact Ex. She passed away

**Eye Rhyme/Slant Rhyme**: approximate rhyme

**Farce:** light dramatic work in which highly improbable plot situations, exaggerated characters, and often slapstick elements are used for humorous effect

**Free Verse:** Poetry composed of either rhymed or unrhymed lines that have no set fixed metrical pattern or expectation

**Hyperbole:** deliberate exaggeration Ex. The shot heard round the world

**Idiom:** expression peculiar to a language that does not translate exactly into what the speaker means; they are culturally based Ex. It looks like rain today.

**Imagery:** is the use of language to descriptively represent things, actions, or abstract things. It suggests visual pictures.

**Internal Rhyme:** rhyming words found within the same line of verse

Ex. Spanish ships of war at sea! We have sighted fity-three.

**Legend:** a [narrative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative) of human actions that are perceived both by teller and listeners to take place

within human history and to possess certain qualities that give the tale [verisimilitude](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verisimilitude_(literature)).

**Lyric:** A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode, that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet.

The term lyric is now generally referred to as the words to a song.

**Malapropism:** a comparison between two unlike things stating that one object is another

Ex. I have never seen so many elevators in this swamp (Elevators for alligators)

**Extended Metaphor (Conceit):** a metaphor that develops throughout a poem and that involves

several points of comparison

**Metaphor:** a comparison between two unlike things stating that one object is another

Ex. Life’s but a whaling shadow, a poor player. -- Shakespeare

**Metonymy**: substituting a closely associated word for something else Ex. Pay tribute to the crown

**Meter:** a combination of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Mood:** words and details that create a feeling in the reader; the prevailing feeling of the scene;

created by diction, imagery, description, dialogue, etc.

**Onomatopoeia:**  word that sounds like the noise it is describing Ex. Snap, crackle, pop

**Octave:** a verse form consisting of eight lines of iambic pentameter (in English)

**Ode:** long lyric poem that praises a person or thing

**Oxymoron:** a form of paradox where contradictory ideas are used to describe one meaning

Ex. Sweet sorrow, cold fire, brawling love, O loving hate!

**Parallelism:** a purposeful repetition of a word or groups of words. The repeated words appear in lines that have matching structures.

Ex. “Because my leaves are of it,

Because my flowers are for it,

Because it is my country …”

* “Lilacs” by Amy Lowell

**Parody:** imitation of either formal or thematic elements of one work in another for humorous

purposes

**Paradox:** statement which contains seemingly contradictory elements or appears contrary to common sense, yet can be seen as perhaps true when viewed from another angle

**Pastoral:** A poem that depicts rural life in a peaceful, idealized way for example of shepherds or

country life.

**Personification:** gives human qualities to inanimate objects Ex. The wind cried in the dark

**Pun:** play on words that are similar or identical in sounds but have opposite meanings

Ex. He was the sole survivor of the Korean war.

**Prose:** the most typical form of language; straight-forward speech.

**Quatrain:** a stanza consisting of fourlines

**Refrain:** one or more lines of a poem (or a major portion of a line) repeated at regular intervals;

usually appears at the end of a stanza

**Repetition:** words repeated for emphasis

**Rhyme (rhyme scheme):** the repetition of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words most often at the ends of lines. There are several derivatives of this term which include double rhyme, triple rhyme, rising rhyme, falling rhyme, perfect and imperfect rhymes.

**Rhythm:** shifts in beat, speed or loudness or the pitch in a line of poetry

**Sestet:**  a stanza consisting of six lines

**Simile:** a comparison between two unlike things using “like” or “as”

Ex. Life is like a box of chocolates.

**Sonnet:** English (or Shakespearean) sonnets are lyric poems that are 14 lines long falling into three coordinate quatrains and a concluding couplet. Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnets are divided into two quatrains and a six-line sestet.

**Stanza:** divisions of a poem

**Style:** the way something is written

**Synedoche:** a form of metonymy in which a significant part is used for the whole

Ex. All hands on deck

**Syntax:** the rules for the formation of the grammatical sentences in a language

**Tone:** the poet’s or speaker’s attitude toward a poem, the subject matter, the reader, himself or

herself.

**Understatement:** deliberate understatement Ex. An atomic bomb could really ruin your day

**Verse:** a single line in a metrical composition

Ex. Where the common unit of poetry, i.e., verse, is based on [meter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_(poetry)) or [rhyme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyme) the common unit of prose is purely grammatical, such as a sentence or paragraph.

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**Make sure you are familiar with these terms prior to the exam!**