

# Poetry Basics

## What is poetry?

Poetry is an art form in which language is *felt* by its audience rather than simply read, like ordinary prose. Poetry relies on literary devices like assonance, repetition, and rhyme scheme to evoke an emotion, image, or deeper meaning for the reader. Poetry really focuses on sound.

## Sound in Poetry

Most poetry focuses on having a rhythm, or cadence, to the reading. Often, poetry will use rhyme – at the end of a line, in the middle – but this is not required. In fact, most modern poetry does not rhyme at all. Have you ever heard Spoken Word poetry? It's beautiful and **does not always rhyme!** To create the sounds we are familiar with in poetry, the poet uses assonance, consonance, internal rhyme, and alliteration to create a rhythm to the reading through sound.

## Form

Unlike prose, poetry does is not formed in sentences but in lines of poetry, or verse. The most common structural elements in poetry that we will use are **lines**, **couplets** (two lines of poetry forming a unit, with the same rhyme scheme or rhythm), and **stanzas** (group of lines together, and several throughout a poem).

### Examples:

**Line:** The sky is blue

**Couplet:** The sky is blue  
And I love you

**Stanza:** The sky is blue  
And I love you  
But not before coffee,  
And for that, I'm sorry.

← This is probably true of Mrs. Brenner, and you know it! 😊

## Literary Devices

Literary devices help your poems to have a specific sound and rhythm. The most common literary devices are

- **Meter:** stressed and unstressed syllables in a line; the rhythm of the line
- **Rhyme:** repetition of the same or similar sound occurs in two or more words
  - o **Full Rhyme:** same vowel sounds and consonant sounds  
Example: Snug as a bug in a rug.

- **Internal rhyme:** rhyming words within the same line, or middle of two separate lines, or the end rhyme with a word in the next line  
*Example:* I had a cat who wore a hat.
  - **End rhyme:** words or syllables at the end of two or more lines rhyme  
*Example:* “Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
 In the forests of the night,” - William Blake
  - **Half/Near/Slant rhyme:** uses assonance and consonance to connect words that do not fully rhyme  
*Example:* bug and bun, or bug and bag
- **Rhythm:** pattern of stressed and unstressed beats that form a meter, found by looking at the number of lines in a verse, syllables in a line, and arrangement of long/short/accented/unaccented syllables.
    - **Iamb:** stressed, unstressed (beGIN)
    - **Trochee:** unstressed, stressed (MARRiage, BRIDESmaid)
    - **Spondee:** two stressed syllables (SUNSHINE)
    - **Dactyl:** stressed, two unstressed; very musical quality like limericks (ANimal, TERRible, DIFFerent)
    - **Anapest:** two unstressed, one stressed (souvenIR, debonAIR)
- **Symbolism:** give meaning to (inanimate) objects  
*Examples:* wedding rings symbolize the lasting union
- **Imagery:** descriptive language drawing on the five senses to help readers better imagine the piece
- **Repetition:** a repeating word, phrase, or sentence to add emphasis, unity, or power.
- **Consonance:** repetition of consonant sounds in quick succession  
*Example:* **C**uriosity **k**illed the **c**at.  
*A **b**lessing in **d**isguise.*
- **Assonance:** repetition of vowel sounds in quick succession  
*Example:* The **ea**rly **bi**rd gets the **wo**rm. (-er sound)
- **Alliteration:** form of consonance; occurs **only** in the beginning or stressed part of the word, to create rhythm.  
*Example:* **P**eter **P**iper **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**eppers.