

Poetry Terms & Examples

Figurative & Stylistic Language:

**Devices that enhance and add interest to
the written and spoken word**

Imagery Devices

Purpose is to create an *IMAGE*
in the reader's mind.

- **1. Simile**
- **2. Metaphor**
- **3. Personification**

1. Simile

- A comparison of two things (that may or not be alike) using the words *like* or *as*.

Examples of a **Simile**

- Bob is hungry as a wolf.
- **Bob** and **wolf** are the two things being compared, using “as”
- Sue smells like a rose.
- **Sue & rose** are the two things being compared, using “like”

2. Metaphor

- A comparison of two unlike things **without** using like or as. (Things = person, place, thing, or thought)

Examples of a Metaphor

- Bob is a hungry wolf.
- **Bob is compared to a wolf.**
- Sue is a rose, filling the room with her sweet scent.
- **Sue (or Sue's scent) and rose are being compared.**

3. Personification

- A type of metaphor in which non-human things or ideas possess human qualities or actions.

Examples of Personification

- The wind whispered her name.
- **Wind** is being personified: “**wind whispered**”, because “**wind**” can’t actually “**whisper.**”
- Justice is blind.
- **Justice** is being personified: **blind justice**, because **justice** has no actual eyes that could be **blinded**.

Sound Devices

Purpose is to create a *RHYTHM* or set the *TONE* in the poem.

1. Alliteration
2. Assonance
3. Onomatopoeia
4. Rhyme
 - A. (True/Pure) Rhyme
 - B. Internal Rhyme
 - C. Near/Half Rhyme (or Impure rhyme)
 - D. Eye Rhyme

1. Alliteration

- The repetition of a **consonant** sound at the beginning of neighboring words. (Consonants are all the letters except a, e, i, o, u, and y.)

Examples of Alliteration

- **The dark dance of death whisked her away.**
- Repetition of the “**d**” sound in “**dark dance of death”**
- **Like a lucky charm, he looks on.**
- Repetition of the “**l**” sound in “**Like,” “lucky,” and “looks”**

2. Assonance

- The repetition of **vowel** sounds (within stressed syllables) of neighboring words. (Vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and y.)

Examples of Assonance

- **Talking and walking, hours on end.**
- Repetition of the “**ah**” sound in
“**talking” “walking”**
- **A turtle in the fertile soil.**
- Repetition of the “**er**” sound in
“**turtle” “fertile”**

3. Onomatopoeia

- Words which imitate the sound they refer to.

Examples of Onomatopoeia

- **The eagle whizzed past the buzzing bees.**
- **“whizzed” and “buzzing”**
- **Rip-roar fire, the gun stutters on.**
- **“Rip-roar” and “stutters”**

4. Rhyme

- **A. Rhyme** (true or pure rhyme): Words which end with the same sounds, usually at the end of lines.

Examples of Rhyme

- **The deepest night
burning bright.**
- **“night” and “bright”**
- **A time to feel,
and a time to heal.**
- **“feel” and “heal”**

4. Rhyme

- **B. Internal Rhyme:**
Rhyme within a line.

Examples of Internal Rhyme

- **Bright night, a full moon above.**
- **“bright” and “night”**
- **We will stay today and then
we must go.**
- **“stay” and “today”**

4. Rhyme

- **C. Near/Half Rhyme:**
Slight or inaccurate
repetition of sounds (also
called impure rhyme).

Examples of Near/Half Rhyme

- **On top of the hill,
the moon is full.**
- **“hill” and “full”**
- **Give this to the man,
he’ll know what I mean.**
- **“man” and “mean”**

4. Rhyme

- **D. Eye Rhyme:** Words that *look* like they rhyme (similar spelling), but do **NOT** rhyme (also called sight rhyme).

Examples of Eye Rhyme

- **Listen to the water flow,
from top I don't see how.**
- **“flow” and “how”**
- **When the game is over,
a true champion we'll discover.**
- **“over” and “discover”**

Miscellaneous Devices

- **1. Hyperbole**
- **2. Irony**
- **3. Paradox**

1. Hyperbole

- An obvious and deliberate exaggeration (to emphasize something or for humorous purposes).

Examples of a Hyperbole

- **I love you more than life itself.**
- **Love is exaggerated.**
- **He could eat a horse.**
- **His appetite is exaggerated.**

2. Irony

- Saying the **opposite** of what you actually mean.

Examples of Irony

- **Water, water everywhere,
but not a drop to drink.**
- **Surrounded by water in the ocean,
but none of it is drinkable.**
- **The directions were as clear as mud.**
- **Obviously, they weren't very clear
directions (this is also a simile!).**

3. Paradox

- A statement that seems to contradict or oppose itself, yet actually reveals some truth.

Examples of a Paradox

- **It's hard work doing nothing.**
- **Youth is wasted on the young.**
- **The more we know, the less we understand.**
- **The less you have, the more you are free.
(Or ...the more you have.)**
- **I can resist anything but temptation.**
- **Her silence was deafening.**

How Figurative & Stylistic Devices are used in Song Lyrics

Examples using the songs:

“The River” by Garth Brooks

“Crossroads” by Tracy Chapman

“She” by Green Day

“One” by Metallica

Examples of Simile

- **“The River” by Garth Brooks**
- You know a dream is like a river / Ever changing as it flows
- **Which two things are being compared?**
- **Dream and river** using the word “like”

Trickier Example in “The River”

- And I will sail
my vessel / ‘Til
the river runs dry
/ Like a bird
upon the wind /
These waters are
my sky



- Which two things are being compared using a simile?
- I (the speaker) and **bird** using “like”
- Re-wording the sentence helps to see the simile:
- I sail these waters like a **bird** flies through the sky.

Examples of Metaphor

- “Crossroads” by Tracy Chapman
- Some say the devil be a mystical thing / I say the devil he a walking man
- **Which two things are being compared?**
- **Devil and man**
- Take off the adjectives to get the two NOUNS that are being compared (not comparing **devil** with “*walking man*,” just “**man**”).



Are These Metaphors?

More from “Crossroads”

- I say the devil he a walking man
(*yes: devil & man*)
- He a fool (devil/man & fool?)
- He a liar (devil/man & liar?)
- (a) conjurer (devil/man & conjurer?)
- and a thief (devil/man & thief?)
- Devil & man is a metaphor
- Devil/man and fool is NOT a metaphor. “Fool” is an ADJECTIVE describing the man/devil
- Same for liar, conjurer, and thief--he could actually BE all these things, so it is not a metaphor.

Trickier Example of Metaphor from “Crossroads”

- All you folks think
you run my life /
say I should be
willing to
compromise / I say
all you demons go
back to hell / I’ll
save my soul, save
myself



- **Which two things are being compared?**
- **Folks and demons**
- Even though the speaker never says “folks are demons,” it is **implied**. When someone uses the cliché, “Go to hell,” they are calling that person a devil or demon--or a resident of Hell. The meaning of the metaphor is for the “folks” to stay out of other people’s business & let the speaker live her own life.

Examples of Personification

- “She” by Green Day
- Waiting for a sign / To smash the silence with the brick of self-control
- **What “thing” is given human-like qualities?**
- **Sign**
- The “**sign to smash the silence**” because a “**sign**” cannot physically “**smash**” anything.



Practice:

Listen to “One” by Metallica

In this *One* song (that’s a pun), find examples of:

1. Simile

5. Internal Rhyme

2. Personification

6. Near/Half Rhyme

3. Alliteration

7. Irony

4. Rhyme

8. Paradox

Examples in “One”

- **1. Simile:** Speaker/narrator and a wartime novelty
- **2. Personification:** “Darkness imprisoning me”
- **3. Alliteration:** “...scream / This terrible silence stops me”
- **4. Rhyme:** dream/scream, me/see, real/feel/reveal, etc.
- **5. Internal rhyme:** “Hold my breath as I wish for death”
- **6. Near/Half Rhyme:** speech/hearing, myself/cell
- **7. Irony:** Machines keep him alive, but he wishes to die
- **8. Paradox:** Speaker can’t live, yet he can’t die; war is also the implied paradox: soldier sent to kill in order to save lives.
- **Kudos if you found an Eye Rhyme:** live/die

Practice: Group work

**Which group can find the most examples
in the following songs?**

- **“The Remedy” by Jason Mraz**
- **“Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin**
- **“Oblivion” by Mastodon**
- **“Stay Together for the Kids” by Blink-182**
- **“Just Like Heaven” by The Cure**
- **“With Me” by Sum 41**
- **“Buffalo Soldier” by Bob Marley & the Wailers**
- **“It’s a New Day” by will.i.am**

“The Remedy”

by Jason Mraz

Copyright 2002

“Stairway to Heaven”

by Led Zeppelin

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“Oblivion”

by Mastodon

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“Stay Together for the Kids”

by Blink-182

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“Just Like Heaven”

by The Cure

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by Bob Marley & the Wailers

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“It’s a New Day”

by will.i.am

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