Poetry Terms: Sound Devices, Figures of Speech, Elements of Literature, and Rhythm

Sound Devices

Alliteration – the repetition of constant sounds in words that are close together.

<u>Assonance</u> – the repetition of similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds, especially in words close together.

<u>Consonance</u> – the repetition of the same or similar final consonant sounds on accented syllables or in important words.

<u>Onomatopoeia</u> – the use of a word whose sound imitates or suggests its use or meaning.

<u>Refrain/ (Repetition)</u> – a word, phrase, line, or group of lines that is repeated, for effect, several times in a poem.

<u>Rhyme</u> – the repetition of vowel sounds in accented syllables and all succeeding syllables. <u>Internal</u> – rhyme that occurs within a line of poetry or within consecutive lines. <u>End Rhyme</u> – rhyme that occurs at the ends of lines. <u>Slant Rhyme</u> – a rhyming sound that is not exact. <u>Couplet</u> – two consecutive rhyming lines of poetry.

Common Figures of Speech - a word or a phrase that describes one thing in terms of another and that Is not meant to be taken literally.

<u>Cliché</u> – a word or phrase, often a figure of speech, that has become lifeless because of overuse.

<u>Conceit</u> – an elaborate metaphor or other figure of speech that compares two things that are startlingly different.

Hyperbole – a figure of speech that uses an incredible exaggeration, or overstatement, for effect.

<u>Metaphor</u> – a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things without the use of such specific words of comparison as *like*, *as*, *than*, or *resembles*. They may be <u>directly states</u>, <u>implied</u>, <u>extended</u>, dead, or <u>mixed</u>.

<u>Metonomy</u> – a figure of speech in which a person, place, or things is referred to by something closely associated with it. Example – referring to a car as "wheels"

<u>Oxymoron</u> - a figure of speech that combines opposite or contradictory terms in a brief phrase. "Sweet sorrow," "deafening silence," and "living death" are common oxymorons.

<u>Personification</u> – a figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human feelings, thoughts, or attitudes.

<u>Simile</u> – a figure of speech that makes an explicit comparison between two unlike things, using a word such as, *like*, *as*, *than*, or *resembles*.

<u>Symbol</u> – a person, place, thing, or event that has meaning in itself and that also stands for something more that itself. We can distinguish between **public** and **personal symbols**.

Elements of Literature

<u>Allusion</u> – a reference to someone or something that is known from history, literature, religion, politics, sports, science, or some other branch of culture.

<u>Atmosphere</u> – the mood or feeling created in a piece of writing.

<u>Connotation</u> – the associations and emotional overtones that have become attached to a word or phrase, in addition to its strict dictionary definition.

<u>Diction</u> – a speaker or writer's choice of words (formal, informal, colloquial, full of slang, poetic, ornate, plain, abstract, concrete, and so on).

<u>Imagery</u> – the use of language to evoke a picture or concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place or an experience.

<u>Irony</u> – in general, a discrepancy between appearances and reality (<u>verbal, situational</u>, or <u>dramatic</u>).

<u>Pun</u> – a "play on words" based on the multiple meanings of a single word or on words that sound alike but mean different things.

Theme – the insight about human life that is revealed in a literary work (different from subject).

Tone – The attitude a writer takes toward the subject of a work, the characters in it, or the audience.

Style – the distinctive way in which a writer uses language. Examples in poetry – **ballad** – a song or poem that tells story; **catalog** – a list of things, people, or events; **concrete poem** – a poem in which the words are arranged on a page to suggest a visual representation of the subject; **epic** – a long narrative poem, written in heightened language, which recounts the deeds of a heroic character who embodies the values of a particular society; **lyric poem** – a poem that does not tell a story but expresses the personal feelings of thoughts of a speaker; **ode** – a lyric poem, usually long, on a serious subject and written in dignified language; and **sonnet** – a fourteen-line poem, usually written in iambic pentameter, that has one of two basic structure – Petrarchan – octave – *abba*, *abba*; and sestet – *cde*, *cde*, or Shakespearean – *abab*, *cdcd*, *efef*, *gg*.

Rhythm

<u>Caesura</u> – a pause or break within a line of poetry (indicated by punctuation or phrasing or meaning).

Rhythm – the alteration of stressed and unstressed syllables in language.

<u>Meter</u> – a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry. <u>Scanning</u> – the analysis of a poem to determine its meter. Stresses or accents are indicated by the symbol (') and unstressed syllables by the symbol ('). <u>Foot</u> – a metrical unit of poetry. <u>Iamb</u> – a metrical foot in poetry that has an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, as in the word *protect*. Iambic Pentameter is a line of poetry that contains five iambic feet.

<u>Dactyl</u> – a metrical good of three syllables in which the first syllable is stressed ant the next two are unstressed. The word *tendency* is a dactyl. <u>Trochee</u> – a metrical good made up of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable, as in the word *taxi*.

Spondee – the metrical good consisting of two syllables, both of which are stressed. The words *true-blue* and *nineteen* are made of spondees. **Anapest** – a metrical good that has two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable. The word *coexist* is an example of an anapest. **Blank verse** – Poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter.

<u>Cadence</u> – the natural, rhythmic rise and fall of a language as it is normally spoken. Cadence is different from meter, in which the stressed an unstressed syllables of a poetic line are carefully counted to conform to a regular patter. **Free verse** – poetry that does not conform to a regular meter or rhyme scheme.