

Glossary

Accent

In poetry, emphasis upon one particular syllable in speech, e.g. **mass**-ive. See also **stress**.

Alliteration

The repetition of *consonants* close enough together to be noticed by the ear. Usually appears on stressed syllables.

Anapest

A **metrical foot** of three **syllables** in which the first two are unstressed and the third stressed.

Ballad

A narrative poem in simple form that is derived from the oral rather than the literature tradition.

Couplet

A successive pair of lines that rhyme, notated: *aa bb*, etc.

Dactyl

A metrical **foot** of three syllables in which the first syllable is stressed and the second two are unstressed.

Dialect

Localized language use that has vocabulary, pronunciation and idiom particular to itself.

End-rhyme

A rhyme that occurs at the end of a line.

Foot

A segment of a poetic line in **metre**. Normally this will be a combination of **stressed** and unstressed **syllables**. For example an **iambic** foot consists of two syllables, the first unstressed and the second stressed: *tee tum*.

Free verse/ vers libre

Most often taken to refer to poetry that has no recurring **metrical** pattern to its lines and does not use **rhyme**.

Full rhyme

A rhyme in which the words involved have the last two or more sounds as identical and thus the only difference is the consonant earlier in the word, or line. The typical pattern is therefore **ConsonantVowelConsonant** as in *knock / mock, insulate / regulate*. Sometimes known as strict rhyme (See **half-rhyme**.)

Ghazal

A lyric poem in which a single rhyme predominates: *aa ba ca da ea*. Its origins are in Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry. There has been considerable modern interest in initiating the form in English by poets including Adrienne Rich.

Haiku

A short form derived from Japanese poetry. Strictly it consists of just seventeen **syllables**, disposed across three lines in the pattern 5-7-5. Its subjects are normally resonant, momentary observations, often of the natural world. Translation in English that transposes its strict count is very difficult. However, imitation of the form in English, sometimes strict, sometimes less so, has been very popular since the early twentieth century.

Half-rhyme

A kind of **rhyme** in which the consonants of the two words sound the same but the vowels differ, e.g. *buck / back*. Sometimes known as **pararhyme**. (See also **rhyme**.)

Iambic

In English **accentual-syllabic** verse, it became the most common foot in the form of an **unstressed** syllable followed by a **stressed** syllable.

Limerick

A highly popular form of comic verse that features in written and oral traditions. It is often nonsensical and frequently bawdy. Its form is very strict: *five* lines rhyming *aabba*; lines 1 2 and 5 have *three stresses* and lines 3 and 4 *two*.

Metre

A specific, recurring pattern of poetic **rhythm**. Typically in English a metred line will have a set number of **syllables**, or **stresses** or a combination of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Ode

A form of lyrical poetry, usually of considerable length, that treats significant subjects such as mortality, and often public events. Its tone is serious and the line and **stanza** forms often elaborate. Its origins are in ancient Greek poetry where name is denoted chanting, or singing.

Performance poetry

Generally any poetry presented to an audience in performance, as opposed to on the page, or indeed *from* the page. In recent years it has come to refer to poetry of large, entertaining verbal effect designed to impress a listening audience, the poets sometimes in competition with each other in what has become called a slam.

Rhyme

The positioning of words of identical or similar sound for effect, normally at the ends of lines. There are many different varieties and patterns of rhyme.

Rhythm

The Ancient Greek philosopher Plato called rhythm 'order in movement', and it is generally understood to be the 'flow' in the sounding of the line and the succession of lines. It will therefore include the effects of the sounds of individual words and beat or stress. There may be a recurring **measure** as in **metrical** verse, but '**free verse**' will also have rhythm.

Sonnet

A major, long-lived lyrical form consisting of *fourteen* lines. Strictly, and most often, these are configured in one of several different rhyming patterns. The major ones in English are the Petrarchan model divided into sections of 8/6 lines and the Shakespearean in 4/4/4/2. More recent sonnets, or 'sonnets', have dispensed with rhyme and pentameter, and sometimes with fourteen lines.

Stanza

A group of lines shaped in the same way, with the lines usually, although not always of the same length. Traditionally they would have rhymed, but by no means always, especially in the twentieth century. Stanzas can vary greatly in length and structure. They serve the function of segmenting the poem and providing pauses in its progression.

Stress

The effect in all sorts of poetry in English, whether it has measure or is 'free', relies upon the effective placing of accent, e.g. '**mass**-ive'. A poem will therefore have stresses but also an overall beat, or rhythm.

Syllabics

Measured lines which count syllables, not stresses.

Syllable

The segment of a word uttered with a single effort of articulation, e.g. *seg-ment*, (2 syllables), *ar-tic-u-la-tion* (5 syllable). It is syllables that bear stress.

Volta

The Italian word for *turn*, used for the moment when the 8/6 **Petrarchan sonnet** changes over from the **octet** to the **sestet**. It is a 'turn' in the rhyme scheme, almost always corresponding with a sentence pause, and a 'turn of thought'.