



Poetic Devices **Glossary**

Language Device	Definition	Example
Alliteration	Repetition of initial consonant sounds.	'While I n odded, n early n apping, suddenly there came a tapping' Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Raven</i>
Anaphora	Using a word previously used in the poem.	' From the memories of the bird that chanted to me, / From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard' Walt Whitman, <i>Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking</i>
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds.	'In what distant deeps or skies . / Burnt the fire of thine eyes ?' William Blake, <i>The Tyger</i>
Cliché	An overused phrase or idea.	'All that glitters isn't gold' William Shakespeare, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
Consonance	Similar sounds between multiple words.	'Though at next door we might meet ' John Donne, <i>Song</i>
Irony	A distance between what is said and what is meant.	'Water, water everywhere, And not a drop to drink.' Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i>
Metaphor	A form of comparison where one thing is said to be another.	'All the world's a stage' William Shakespeare, <i>As You Like It</i>
Onomatopoeia	When the sound of a word echoes its meaning.	'There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling ' Robert Browning, <i>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</i>
Oxymoron	Contradictory words used for effect.	'O brawling love! O loving hate!' William Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
Pathetic Fallacy	Giving human feelings to aspects of nature.	'I wandered lonely as a cloud' William Wordsworth, <i>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud</i>

Personification	Describing a non-human thing as if it were a person.	'Because I could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for me;' Emily Dickinson, <i>Because I could not stop for Death</i>
Persona	The speaker of a poem who is separate to the poet.	'That's my last Duchess painted on the wall' Robert Browning, <i>My Last Duchess</i>
Plosive	Abrupt sound made with consonants /b/, /p/, /t/ and /d/.	' bit ter as the cu d' Wilfred Owen, <i>Dulce et Decorum Est</i>
Semantic Field	Words that relate to each other.	"Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears , That regiment of spite behind the shed' Vernon Scannell, <i>Nettles</i>
Sibilance	Repetition of hushing or hissing sounds.	' S weet dreams of plea sant strea ms' William Blake, <i>A Cradle Song</i>
Simile	A form of comparison where one thing is said to be like another.	'And daisies be showing / Like stars on the ground' Thomas Hardy, <i>Rain on a Grave</i>
Symbolism	A representation of something other than the literal meaning through words, people or ideas.	'And tombstones where flowers should be' William Blake, <i>The Garden of Love</i>

Structural/ Form Device	Definition	Example
Blank verse	Non-rhyming poetry, often in iambic pentameter.	'To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer' William Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i>
Caesura	A break or pause in the middle of a line.	"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Percy Bysshe Shelley, <i>Ozymandias</i>

Couplet	A pair of consecutive rhyming lines.	'So long as men can breathe or eyes can see , / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee .' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 18</i>
Elegy	A poem focusing on death or loss.	'So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this , and this gives life to thee .' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 18</i>
End stopped	A pause at the end of a line.	'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 18</i>
Enjambment	A continuation of an idea over a line of poetry.	'Its loveliness increases; it will never/ Pass into nothingness; but still will keep' John Keats, <i>Endymion</i>
Free verse	Non-rhyming, non-metrical poetry.	'See, they return, one, and by one, With fear, as half-awakened; As if the snow should hesitate And murmur in the wind, and half turn back; These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe," inviolable.' Ezra Pound, <i>The Return</i>
Iambic Pentameter	A metrical foot comprised of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, often in groups of five.	'If music be the food of love , play on ' William Shakespeare, <i>Twelfth Night</i>
Lyric	Short, highly musical poetry that expresses strong emotions.	'I love thee freely, as men strive for right. I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.' Elizabeth Barrett Browning, <i>Sonnet 43</i>
Parody	An exaggerated imitation of another style for comical or satirical effect.	'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral is far more red than her lips' red' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 130</i>

Quatrain	A four line verse/stanza.	'My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends— It gives a lovely light!' Edna St. Vincent Millay, <i>First Fig</i>
Rhyme	Repetition of similar sounds.	'Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary ' Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Raven</i>
Rhythm	The beat or flow of a poem.	'Letters for the rich, letters for the poor, The shop at the corner, the girl next door.' W H Auden, <i>Night Mail</i>
Sestet	A six line stanza or poem, or the final six lines in an Italian sonnet.	'It was many and many a year ago, In a kingdom by the sea, That a maiden there lived whom you may know By the name of Annabel Lee; And this maiden she lived with no other thought Than to love and be loved by me.' Edgar Allan Poe, <i>Annabel Lee</i>
Sonnet	A 14 line poem with a fixed rhyme scheme.	'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun, Coral is far more red, than her lips red, If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun: If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head: I have seen roses damasked, red and white, But no such roses see I in her cheeks, And in some perfumes is there more delight, Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks. I love to hear her speak, yet well I know, That music hath a far more pleasing sound: I grant I never saw a goddess go, My mistress when she walks treads on the ground. And yet by heaven I think my love as rare, As any she belied with false compare.' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 130</i>
Volta	The turn of thought or argument in a poem.	'... And yet by heaven I think my love as rare, As any she belied with false compare.' William Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 130</i>