

Learning About Poetry

Poets put words together to create a musical quality and highly charged meaning. A poem combines verbal music and meaning to create a fresh outlook on a subject.

Figurative language is imaginative writing or speech that is not meant to be taken literally. Here are some common figures of speech:

- A **simile** uses a word such as *like* or *as* to compare two apparently unlike things:
Her eyes were like beacons of light.
- A **metaphor** compares two apparently unlike things but does not use *like* or *as*:
The grass was a carpet of green.
- **Personification** gives human qualities to nonhuman or inanimate things: *The waves danced in glee.*

Poets use **images**—descriptive, sensory language appealing to the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Poets also use various sound devices:

- **Rhyme** is the repetition of sounds at the ends of words.
- **Meter** is the rhythmical pattern—or the arrangement and number of stressed and unstressed syllables—in a poem.
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds in the beginning of words, as in *fearsome foe*.
- **Assonance** is the repetition of similar vowel sounds in stressed syllables that end in different consonant sounds, as in *made* and *rail*.
- **Consonance** is the repetition of final consonant sounds after different vowel sounds in stressed syllables, as in *lend* and *hand*.
- **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that imitate sounds, as in *rap*, *swish*, and *flutter*.
- **Repetition** is the use of any element of language—a sound, word, phrase, clause, or sentence—more than once.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of the answer that best matches each numbered item.

- comparison using *like* or *as*

A. metaphor	B. personification	C. simile
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- pair of rhyming lines

A. assonance	B. couplet	C. limerick
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- sensory language

A. consonance	B. imagery	C. alliteration
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- pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables

A. free verse	B. meter	C. consonance
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- a line of poetry that says, "Their words are trumpet blasts."

A. simile	B. metaphor	C. personification
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- buzz, clink, toll, hiss*

A. personification	B. assonance	C. onomatopoeia
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Jacqueline Woodson
Listening and Viewing

Segment 1: Meet Jacqueline Woodson

- How did Jacqueline Woodson’s fascination with the “power of words” spark her interest in writing? Jacqueline Woodson tries to keep her writing “real and honest.” What do you think that phrase means, and why is “real and honest” important?

Segment 2: Poetry

- Why does Jacqueline Woodson believe that the white space surrounding a poem on its page is important? How do you think poetry can give readers “room for free space” in their lives?

Segment 3: The Writing Process

- Why does Jacqueline Woodson call her writing “character driven”? Which one of Jacqueline Woodson’s writing strategies would you use and why?

Segment 4: The Rewards of Writing

- In what way is writing rewarding to Jacqueline Woodson? Jacqueline Woodson thinks a writer must be brave and should welcome any reaction to his or her work. Do you agree or disagree with her? Why?
