

How to analyse a poem

1- Look at the form and structure of the poem.

Is it organised in stanzas? What length? Do the stanzas vary in length? Why might that be? Do the lines run on (enjambments)?

2- Look for a rhyme scheme

Does the rhyme scheme have any significance? Does the rhyme scheme draw attention to certain words or ideas? Is the poem in free verse (without a rhyming scheme)?

3- Determine the poem's type.

Is the poem a lyric? A sonnet? A narrative? What is the significance of this type of poem? What characteristics of this type of poem are found?

4- Try to figure out the meaning of the poem.

Ask yourself questions like: What happens in the poem? What is the poet trying to say?

5- Focus on imagery which is a common technique used by poets to get their meaning across.

Which images have been chosen? Are they all related? Is there one overall image or are several different images used? What feeling is given by which image?

6- Look at the poet's choice of words.

Try to find out the lexical fields. Determine how these particular words contribute to the meaning of the poem.

7- Try to figure out the poetic devices used by the poet.

8- Last but not least, explain the effect the poem has on you.

Types of poem

A lyric poem- a short, non-narrative poem in which a single speaker presents a state of mind or an emotional state.

A sonnet - a short rhyming poem with 14 lines. Sonnets use **iambic meter** in each line and use **line-ending rhymes**. *The original sonnet form was invented in the 13/14th century by Dante and an Italian philosopher named Francesco Petrarch. The form remained largely unknown until it was found and developed by writers such as Shakespeare.*

A limerick - a **five-line witty poem** with a distinctive rhythm. The first, second and fifth lines, the longer lines, rhyme. The third and fourth shorter lines rhyme. (A-A-B-B-A).

An epic poem - a **long narrative poem in grand language** celebrating the adventures and accomplishments of a legendary or conventional hero. It often involves battles and the intervention of gods.

Free Verse - A Free Verse Poem **does not follow any rules**. Verse without any particular form or rhythm.

An acrostic - An acrostic poem is a poem where the one letter in each line spells out a word or phrase vertically that acts as the theme or message of the poem. The word used for the acrostic can be the [name of the person](#) you are writing the acrostic about, a message such as [Happy Birthday](#) or a theme such as [Love](#) or Hope.

An elegy- a poem of **lament for someone who has died**, or something which has disappeared.

An ode- a lyric poem to celebrate someone or something.

A ballad- a **narrative poem** (which tells a story) and may be meant to be sung. It consists of quatrains which usually alternate lines of 4 and 3 stresses. Lines 2 and 4 rhyme.

Rhyme scheme

Type of rhyme	Scheme	Example
Couplet rhymes	Aa bb cc	He was my North, my South, my East and West, My working week and my Sunday rest, My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song; I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong. W.H AUDEN
Alternate rhymes	Abab cdcd	She walks in beauty, like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies; And all that's best of dark and bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes; LORD BYRON
Enclosing rhymes	Abba cddc	I believe life ends with death, and that is all. You haven't both gone shopping; just the same, in my new black leather phone book there's your name and the disconnected number I still call. TONY HARRISON

- **Iambic pentameter** – a line of poetry that alternates unstressed syllables with stressed syllables, equaling 10 syllables per line of alternating stresses. (unstressed/stressed/unstressed/stressed...)

Poetic devices

alliteration [əˈlɪtəˈreɪʃən] : the repetition of consonant sounds, particularly at the beginning of words

"... like a wanderer white"

assonance [ˈæsnəns] : the repetition of similar vowel sounds

"I rose and told him of my woe"

imagery [ˈɪmɪdʒəri] : word or sequence of words representing a sensory experience (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory)
"bells knelling classes to a close" (auditory)

symbol: an object or action that stands for something beyond itself
white = innocence, purity, hope

Anaphora [əˈnæfərə] : repetition of the same word(s) at the beginning of a line, sentence or clause. (intensifying)

Because the world is round and it turns me on

Because the world is round

Hyperbole [haɪˈpɜːbəli] ; extreme exaggeration/ overstatement (intensifying)

I'm burning through the sky

Two hundred degrees

Simile [ˈsɪmli] ; explicit comparison of two different things using « like » or « as » .
O my love's like a red, red rose

Metaphor [ˈmetəfɔːr] : implicit comparison between two different things.

I'm a rocket ship on my way to Mars.

Personification [pəˈsɒnɪfɪˈkeɪʃən] : giving human characteristics to something that is not human. *The sun smiled at us*

Euphemism [ˈjuːfəˌmɪzəm] (process of disguising a harsh or embarrassing truth (such as sexuality or death) behind a vague, less blunt expression .

"old person" → "Senior citizen"