



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 inanimate objects. | '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/. | ' bitter as the cud' 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. | ' Sweet dreams of pleas ant stream s' 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> |