

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## POETRY: Terms and Techniques

Poets use many different poetic forms when they write and sometimes they invent new ones. Each form has its own structure that can contribute to the meaning of the poem.

- **Free Verse:** A form of modern poetry that does not follow a set rhythm.
- **Sonnet:** A fourteen-line poem that usually follows a set rhyme scheme and rhythm.
- **Ballad:** A narrative poem with a song-like form that usually tells of a love story, historical event, or heroic tale.
- **Lyric:** A poem that expresses intense personal thoughts, moods or emotions.
- **Haiku:** A seventeen-syllable poem set out in three lines in a five-seven-five syllable pattern. Haiku often capture a moment in nature.
- **Concrete:** A poem whose shape or visual appearance contributes to its meaning.
- **Found:** A poem created from words selected from public communications (newspapers, magazines, menus, signs) and then rearranged into lines and stanzas.
- **Dramatic Monologue:** A poem where a character, in a dramatic situation, speaks a monologue to another character who does not appear in the poem directly.
- **Shape Poetry:** The poet manipulates letters, words, and lines to create a poem with a distinct shape. The shape of the poem suggests the poem's topic.

Poets try to make the sounds of their poems fit the meaning they are trying to create. They also use figurative language in order to emphasize an idea for the reader. Some examples of figurative language include the following:

- **Imagery:** Language that creates pictures in a reader's mind to bring life to the experiences and feelings described in a poem. Often, the words the poet chooses appeal to the reader's senses.
- **Simile:** A comparison between two unlike things using *like*, *as*, or *than* (e.g. "His hands were like wild birds" – John Updike).
- **Metaphor:** A comparison between two unlike things (e.g. "An aged man is but a paltry thing/A tattered coat upon a stick" – William Butler Yeats).
- **Personification:** Human qualities are attributed to inanimate objects (e.g. "Time let me play and be/Golden in the mercy of his means" – Dylan Thomas).
- **Apostrophe:** Animate or inanimate objects are addressed as if they were present or alive (e.g. Death be not proud!).
- **Hyperbole:** An overexaggeration to show intensity of feeling (e.g. "And I will love thee still, my dear,/Till a' the seas gang dry" – Robert Burns).

Poets use other techniques to help them convey their message in an artistic way:

- **Rhythm:** The pattern of accented (-) and unaccented (o), or stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem. Rhythm is usually created through repetition of a particular pattern, and gives many poems a musical quality or flow.

- **Rhyme:** The repetition of the same sound in different words. The most common form of rhyme is *end rhyme*, which occurs at the end of lines of poetry. *Internal rhyme* occurs within a line of poetry.
- **Alliteration:** The repetition of the initial consonant sound in a series of words. It adds rhythm or emphasizes emotion (e.g. "And wake to the farm forever fled" – Dylan Thomas).
- **Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words to add a musical effect (e.g. "In silence deep the legions streamed" – Herman Melville).
- **Consonance:** The repetition of consonant sounds (e.g. "A springful of larks in a rolling/Cloud" – Dylan Thomas).
- **Onomatopoeia:** The sound of a word resembles its meaning (e.g. buzz, hiss, zip).
- **Euphony:** The inherent sweetness of the sound (e.g. chimes, hush, wisdom).
- **Cacophony:** A harsh, discordant sound (e.g. "Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge" – Wilfred Owen).
- **Allusions:** References to events or characters from history, myth, religion, literature, pop culture, etc.

### Responding Critically to Poetry

- ❖ Who is the speaker in the poem?
- ❖ How does the speaker feel about the subject of the poem? How is this communicated?
- ❖ What are the dominant images? How do the images support the poem's theme?
- ❖ Does the poet use symbolism to represent anything? How do the symbols develop the poem's meaning?
- ❖ How would you describe the tone of the poem? What develops this tone?
- ❖ Why would the poet choose this form?
- ❖ How are the lines of the poem arranged on the page? How is this arrangement significant?
- ❖ Does the poet's style suit the content of the poem?
- ❖ How does the poet make the personal universal?

■ Adapted from *Themes on the Journey* by James Barry and *ResourceLines 9/10* by Robert Dawe, Barry Duncan and Wendy Mathieu.