

# Tools of the Poet:

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## I. Some Traditional Tools of Poetry

- Poetry has many forms. Some are simple while others are more complicated. Some rhyme, some do not. Some use specific metrical patterns, many do not.
- Lines of poetry are often grouped into stanzas. A two-line stanza is called a couplet, a three-line stanza a tercet or triplet, and a four-line stanza a quatrain. What do you think a five-line stanza might be called?

### Rhyme (including Repetition)

Rhyming patterns within a stanza can take many forms, or be completely non-existent. End rhyme, internal rhyme, true and slant rhyme, thought rhyme—none should mangle grammar.

### Rhythm (including metrical patterns, tempo).

There are rhythms in everything around us, even in our own breathing and heartbeat. **Meter** is repeating patterns of heavily and lightly stressed syllables. Heavily stressed syllables are referred to as Accented. A single metrical unit is called a Foot.

- **An Iambic Foot** is the standard. It consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable, such as in: the girl, to love, amaze.
- **A Trochaic Foot** is the opposite of iambic, the accented syllable leads the unaccented syllable, such as in: strike it, water.
- **An Anapestic Foot** has three syllables, with the last being the accented syllable. For instance: of the house, as a bird, intercede.
- **A Dactylic Foot** is the opposite of the anapestic, with the accented syllable leading the two unaccented syllables. For instance: carelessly, marry them, syllable.
- **A Spondiac Foot** is two accented syllables together, such as: greenhouse, stronghold.

## II. Many Forms of Poetry

**An Acrostic** is a poem in which a word is written vertically. Try writing one using your name, and write about your best self.

C aring  
A rtistic  
T houghtful  
H andsome  
Y outhful

**A Double Crostic** spells out something at the beginning and end of each line.

G.....T  
L.....O  
O.....G  
R.....O  
Y.....D<sup>i</sup>

**A Haiku** is a short poem with a big theme. Its purpose is often to get you to think further about the subject. In this Japanese form of poetry, seventeen syllables are arranged in an unrhymed three-line poem. A true haiku is about nature, has at least one word that identifies or gives a clue to the season, is about a small scene, and is always written in present tense.

**A Limerick** is a five-line verse invented by a teacher to entertain the royal children during lessons. Children enjoy the nonsense rhymes; however, since then many have written limericks to amuse various interests of adults.

A **Quinzaine** is an unrhymed three-line poem containing fifteen syllables. The first line makes a statement and the following lines ask a question about it.

The loud thunder is crashing.  
Are the angels above  
Bowling balls?

A **Cinquain** is a simple five-line poem in the following pattern:

Line 1: 2 syllables	subject	Grandma
Line 2: 4 syllables	describe the subject	Tiny, fragile
Line 3: 6 syllables	actions involving the subject	Baking, gardening, rocking
Line 4: 8 syllables	a feelings about the subject	Singing me to sleep at night
Line 5: 2 syllables	another name for the subject	Nana

A **Diamante** is a five- or seven-line poem in the shape of a diamond (diamante is French for diamond). A diamante is not a pattern poem because it has more specific rules:

Line 1:	is short	1 noun	name or subject
Line 2:	is longer	2 adjectives	describe subject
Line 3:	is even longer	3 verbs	show action
Line 4:	is the longest line	4 adjectives	show feelings
Line 5:	is short	1 noun	name

The seven-line form of the diamante is often written about two different subjects, comparing them as it progresses:

Line 1: 1 noun	subject #1	Cat
Line 2: 2 adjectives	describe subject #1	Fast, greedy
Line 3: 3 “ing” words	related to subject #1	Running, sleeping, hiding
Line 4: 4 nouns	2 related to #1, 2 related to #2	Feline, mammal, animal, rodent
Line 5: 3 “ing” words	related to subject #2	Squeaking, scurrying, sharing,
Line 6: 2 adjectives	describe #2	Small, fuzzy
Line 7: 1 noun	subject #2	Mouse

### III. The Language of Poetry:

#### Subject, Tone, and Style

The first clue to the **subject** of a poem is the occasion for the poem, meaning the person, place, event, idea or object described in the poem. Yet, we must not ignore the metaphoric nature of poetry. Lurking beneath the surface of a poem may be a secondary or truer subject.

- **Tone** is how the poet feels about his subject. Does the poem convey happiness or hope? Despair or longing? Philosophical or social observations? Playfulness or Humor?
- **Style** is the way the subject is presented by the poet. Is the poem forthright about its true subject? Or does the poet surprise you at the end of the poem with a twist in word meanings? Perhaps the poet hides the true subject behind a more acceptable metaphorical story? Some poets write in only a very few styles, others bravely experiment with many.
- A poem’s **Theme** is it’s ability to be applied to the world itself, a symbol of something larger than what it appears to be on the surface. Does the poem represent something, such as life or death, youth or age, time or truth?

- **Meaning** is what the reader ascribes to the poem, it may or may not be the true Theme that the poet was trying to convey. A poem can say many different things to different readers, because we all experience life (and poetry) through the filters of our past experiences and current life events.

Subject	The WHAT of the Poem.
Tone and Style	The HOW of the Poem.
Theme	The WHY of the Poem.
Meaning	The READER'S reaction and interpretation of the Poem.

#### IV. More Tools from the Poet's Toolbox: Figures of Speech

- ☺ **Alliteration** is the repetition of beginning consonant sounds in two or more words or syllables, such as tiny tot, setting sun, kitty and carrot, new and knew and gnu.
- ☺ **Assonance** is the repetition of a vowel sound in two or more words or syllables, such as door and four, or choose and mood.
- ☺ **Consonance** is the repetition of a consonant sound in two or more words or syllables, such as “flitting and fluttering past fast.” Did you notice the alliteration too?
- ☺ **Idioms** are a phrase or sentence with a meaning beyond the words, such as “to know the score” could be used for a variety of meanings in a poem. Idioms are also a good device for twisting the meaning of a poem at the end to surprise and delight the reader.
- ☺ **Onomatopoeia** is when words are used that imitate the sounds they describe, such as buzz, flush or pop.
- ☺ **Simile and Metaphor** are used to describe or compare two different things in a way to make them seem equal or similar.
  - ✓ A **Simile** uses the words: as, like, as if, seems, and appears. “My love is like a red rose.”
  - ✓ A **Metaphor** compares two things by stating or implying that one of them is actually the other thing. “My love is a tower, a beast protecting its young, a sigh at day’s end.” ©
- ☺ **Hyperbole** uses exaggeration in description. It overstates the truth to make it more forceful & express a degree of feeling. “I feel so low I’d have to reach up to touch bottom.”
- ☺ **Personification** gives human traits to non-human, and often non-living, things.
- ☺ **Imagery** paints a word picture by describing something in ways that appeal to all five senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch.
- ☺ **Apostrophe** is when the poet addresses something that cannot answer, such as a tree, the wind or the ocean.
- ☺ **Homographs** are words that are spelled alike but sound different, such as bow (on a gift) and bow (goes with curtsy).
- ☺ **Homophones** are words that are pronounced the same but have different spellings and meanings, such as right and write.
- ☺ **Homonyms** are words that are both spelled and pronounced alike, but have different meanings depending on how they are used. For instance: letter (of the alphabet) and letter (written note), or note (musical), or note (to notice). It’s to play with words!
- ☺ **Palindromes** are words or phrases that are spelled the same backward or forward, such as mom, noon, radar. Also, words that spell a new word when spelled backwards count as palindromes, such as pot and top, or lap and pal.

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