



## How to analyse poetry?

When you are asked to analyse a poem, you should not only look at its poetic features such as its form, its rhythm or its language, you must also look at its content and link this to the poem's form. Only then will you be able to fully understand what the poem conveys.

### Step 1: Read

Read the poem two or three times, then summarize it in one or two sentences. Consider

- the poem's title setting and theme
- the speaker and the addressee
- the link between the title and the poem's content.

### Step 2: Structure

Look at the poem's structure (stanzas, rhythm, rhyme scheme, metre). (It may help to read the poem out loud to get a feeling for the way it sounds.)

- Is it built regularly or are there interruptions in the rhythm or rhyme scheme?
- Is there a refrain?
- Is it a sonnet?

### POEM

#### Ending by Gavin Ewart

The love we thought would never stop  
 now cools like a congealing chop.  
 The kisses that were hot as curry  
 are bird-pecks taken in a hurry.  
 The hands that held electric charges  
 now lie inert as four moored barges.  
 The feet that ran to meet a date  
 are running slow and running late.  
 The eyes that shone and seldom shut  
 are victims of a power cut.  
 The parts that then transmitted joy  
 are now reserved and cold and coy.  
 Romance, expected once to stay,  
 has left a note saying gone away.

### Step 3: A) Examine

Examine the poem's language more closely. Look for

- imagery, e.g. simile, metaphor, analogy, personification
- sound effects, e.g. alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia
- contrasts, repetitions and specific sentence structures (simple/complex sentence, enjambement)
- mythological/literary/social/historical references
- symbols.

### Step 3: B) Analysis

Describe the poem's effect and analyse how it is achieved by connecting your findings on its form to its content.

### Step 4: Evaluation

Comment on the poem's effect from your point of view. What feelings does the poem evoke? What is its effect on you?

### LANGUAGE HELP

- The poem by ... deals with/is about... In the poem ... describes/reflects on ... The poet addresses the topic of ...
- The title reminds the reader of .../refers to ...
- The poem is made up of .../consists of ... verses/ stanzas.
- The rhyme scheme is .../There is no consistent rhyme scheme. The word ... rhymes with ... The use of... creates a certain rhythm.
- Line ... runs into line .... which emphasizes ...

- The poet employs specific images, such as metaphors or similes, in order to ...
- The diction/register is simple/colloquial/formal, which intensifies the feeling of ...
- The most prominent stylistic device used in the poem is .... which serves to ...
- All in all, ... The overall effect is ... The poem aims to show/illustrate/convey/express the idea that ... The overall message of the poem is ...



## How to analyse poetry?

### Glossary of Poetic Terms

<i>term</i>	<i>explanation and example</i>
<i>alliteration</i>	The repetition of initial stressed, consonant sounds in a series of words within a phrase or verse line. Alliteration need not reuse all initial consonants; "pizza" and "place" alliterate.
<i>allusion</i>	A brief, intentional reference to a historical, mythic, or literary person, place, event, or movement. "The Waste Land," T. S. Eliot's influential long poem is dense with allusions. The title of Seamus Heaney's autobiographical poem "Singing School" alludes to a line from W.B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" ("Nor is there singing school but studying /Monuments of its own magnificence").
<i>ambiguity</i>	A word, statement, or situation with two or more possible meanings is said to be ambiguous. As poet and critic William Empson wrote in his influential book <i>Seven Types of Ambiguity</i> (1930), "The machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry." A poet may consciously join together incompatible words to disrupt the reader's expectation of meaning, as e.e. cummings does in [anyone lived in a pretty how town].
<i>anachronism</i>	Someone or something placed in an inappropriate period of time. Shakespeare's placing of a clock in Julius Caesar is an anachronism, because clocks had not yet been invented in the period when the play is set.
<i>anaphora</i> <small>(Specific way of repetition)</small>	It allows writers to convey, emphasize, and reinforce meaning. This word repetition <u>at the beginning</u> of each phrase in a group of sentences or clauses is a stylized technique that can be very effective in speeches, lyrics, poetry, and prose. (see: repetition) One of the most famous uses of anaphora is the beginning of <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> by Charles Dickens. " <u>It was the</u> best of times, <u>it was the</u> worst of times, <u>it was the</u> age of wisdom, <u>it was the</u> age of foolishness, <u>it was the</u> epoch of belief, <u>it was the</u> epoch of incredulity, <u>it was the</u> season of Light, (...)"
<i>cadence</i>	The patterning of rhythm in natural speech, or in poetry without a distinct meter (i.e., free verse).
<i>chiasmus</i>	Repetition of any group of verse elements (including rhyme and grammatical structure) in reverse order, such as the rhyme scheme ABBA. Examples can be found in Biblical scripture ("But many that are first / Shall be last, / And many that are last / Shall be first"; Matthew 19:30).
<i>couplet</i>	A pair of successive rhyming lines, usually of the same length. A couplet is "closed" when the lines form a bounded grammatical unit like a sentence (see Dorothy Parker's "Interview": "The ladies men admire, I've heard, /Would shudder at a wicked word.").
<i>dactyl</i>	A metrical foot consisting of an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables; the words "poetry" and "basketball" are both dactylic. Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is written in dactylic meter.
<i>ellipsis</i>	In poetry, the omission of words whose absence does not impede the reader's ability to understand the expression. For example, Shakespeare makes frequent use of the phrase "I will away" in his plays, with the missing verb understood to be "go."
<i>enjambment</i>	The running-over of a sentence or phrase from one poetic line to the next, without terminal punctuation; the opposite of end-stopped. William Carlos Williams's "Between Walls" is one sentence broken into 10 enjambed lines.
<i>foot</i>	The basic unit of measurement of accentual-syllabic meter. A foot usually contains one stressed syllable and at least one unstressed syllable. The standard types of feet in English poetry are the iamb, trochee, dactyl, anapest, spondee, and pyrrhic (two unstressed syllables).
<i>imagery</i>	Elements of a poem that invoke any of the five senses to create a set of mental images. Specifically, using vivid or figurative language to represent ideas, objects, or actions. Poems that use rich imagery include T.S. Eliot's "Preludes"
<i>metaphor</i>	A comparison that is made directly (for example, John Keats's "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" from "Ode on a Grecian Urn") or less directly (for example, Shakespeare's "marriage of two minds"), but in any case without pointing out a similarity by using words such as "like," "as," or "than."
<i>meter</i>	The rhythmical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse. The predominant meter in English poetry is accentual-syllabic.
<i>onomatopoeia</i>	A figure of speech in which the sound of a word imitates its sense (for example, "choo-choo," "hiss," or "buzz"). In "Piano," D.H. Lawrence describes the "boom of the tingling strings" as his mother played the piano, mimicking the volume and resonance of the sound ("boom") as well as the fine, high-pitched vibration of the strings that produced it ("tingling strings").
<i>oxymoron</i>	A figure of speech that brings together contradictory words for effect, such as "jumbo shrimp" and "deafening silence."
<i>prosody</i>	The principles of metrical structure in poetry.



<i>quatrain</i>	<p>A four-line stanza, often with various rhyme schemes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>ABAC</b> or <b>ABCB</b> (known as unbounded or ballad quatrain), as in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” or “Sadie and Maud” by Gwendolyn Brooks.</li> <li>– <b>AABB</b> (a double couplet); see A.E. Housman’s “To an Athlete Dying Young.”</li> <li>– <b>ABAB</b> (known as interlaced, alternate, or heroic), as in Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”</li> <li>– <b>ABBA</b> (known as envelope or enclosed), as in Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “In Memoriam” or John Ciardi’s “Most Like an Arch This Marriage.”</li> <li>– <b>AABA</b>, the stanza of Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.”</li> </ul>
<i>refrain</i>	A phrase or line repeated at intervals within a poem, especially at the end of a stanza. See the refrain “jump back, honey, jump back” in Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s “A Negro Love Song”
<i>rhyme</i>	The repetition of syllables, typically at the end of a verse line. Rhymed words conventionally share all sounds following the word’s last stressed syllable. Thus “tenacity” and “mendacity” rhyme, but not “jaundice” and “John does,” or “tomboy” and “calm bay.” A rhyme scheme is usually the pattern of end rhymes in a stanza, with each rhyme encoded by a letter of the alphabet, from an onward (ABBA BCCB, for example). Rhymes are classified by the degree of similarity between sounds within words, and by their placement within the lines or stanzas.
<i>rhythm</i>	An audible pattern in verse established by the intervals between stressed syllables. “Rhythm creates a pattern of yearning and expectation, of recurrence and difference,” observes Edward Hirsch in his essay on rhythm, “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking.”
<i>simile</i>	A comparison (see Metaphor) made with “as,” “like,” or “than.”
<i>sonnet</i>	A 14-line poem with a variable rhyme scheme originating in Italy and brought to England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey in the 16th century. Literally a “little song,” the sonnet traditionally reflects upon a single sentiment, with a clarification or “turn” of thought in its concluding lines. There are many different types of sonnets. [ <i>Petrarchan sonnet, Italian sonnet, English (or Shakespearean) sonnet etc.</i> ]
<i>stanza</i>	A grouping of lines separated from others in a poem. In modern free verse, the stanza, like a prose paragraph, can be used to mark a shift in mood, time, or thought.
<i>stress</i>	A syllable uttered in a higher pitch—or with greater emphasis—than others. The English language itself determines how English words are stressed, but sentence structure, semantics, and meter influence the placement and perception of stress.
<i>syllabic verse</i>	Poetry whose meter is determined by the total number of syllables per line, rather than the number of stresses. Marianne Moore’s poetry is mostly syllabic.
<i>syllable</i>	A single unit of speech sound as written or spoken; specifically, a vowel preceded by zero to three consonants (“awl,” “bring,” “strand”), and followed by zero to four consonants (“too,” “brag,” “gloss,” “stings,” “sixths”).
<i>symbol</i>	<p>Something in the world of the senses, including an action, that reveals or is a sign for something else, often abstract or otherworldly. A rose, for example, has long been considered a symbol of love and affection.</p> <p>Every word denotes, refers to, or labels something in the world, but a symbol (to which a word, of course, may point) has a concreteness not shared by language, and can point to something that transcends ordinary experience. Poets such as William Blake and W.B. Yeats often use symbols when they believe in—or seek—a transcendental (religious or spiritual) reality.</p>
<i>tautology</i>	A statement redundant in itself, such as “free gift” or “The stars, O astral bodies!” Also, a statement that is necessarily true—a circular argument—such as “she is alive because she is living.”
<i>tercet</i>	A poetic unit of three lines, rhymed or unrhymed. Thomas Hardy’s “The Convergence of the Twain” rhymes AAA BBB; Ben Jonson’s “On Spies” is a three-line poem rhyming AAA; and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” is written in terza rima form.
<i>tone</i>	The poet’s attitude toward the poem’s speaker, reader, and subject matter, as interpreted by the reader. Often described as a “mood” that pervades the experience of reading the poem, it is created by the poem’s vocabulary, metrical regularity or irregularity, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhyme.
<i>verse</i>	As a mass noun, poetry in general; as a regular noun, a line of poetry. Typically used to refer to poetry that possesses more formal qualities.

see more: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms>