

CHAPTER 5:

STUDYING POETRY

In this chapter, you will read some poems, and, from this:

- Gain understandings of basic poetic language techniques.
- Practise expressing your understanding of poetry.
- Use poetic techniques to write your own poem.

Extra writing space is provided at the end of this chapter:

- Tasks may need repeating.
- Some Tasks may need additional writing space.
- Extra notes can be added.

The purposes of poetic writing

Poetic writing is used to express feelings and emotions, describe experiences and tell stories.

- Poetic writing includes both prose and poetry.
- Prose uses sentences and paragraphs and is used for short stories, personal letters and descriptions of people and places.
- Poetry is usually written in lines, often using verses or stanzas. The lines may **rhyme**, or they may be in **free verse** (where they do not rhyme, but each line is about an idea or thought).

Poetic language techniques

Successful poetic writing depends upon more than simply the writer's choice of language. It also depends upon how the words are used – how they are put together – the formation of a piece. It is often easier to see this formation in poetry.

A poem can be specifically shaped. There are often significant reasons for the divisions (stanzas or verses) in a poem.

The punctuation is important. Full stops and commas are used to create emphasis, rhythm and flow. Some poets do not use any punctuation at all.

Poetry is part of a group of texts called short texts. This group includes short stories, essays, feature writing, etc.



Learning goal

To identify and understand poetic language techniques.



Poems are crafted using imagery – which is language that creates images in the mind of the reader or listener. Often, a poem is written to be heard, so read a poem aloud, as it makes it easier to pick up the rhymes and rhythms of the work.

Task 5A: Finding the best word

In poetry, words are often chosen by the poet because of their vibrancy or intensity, or for the emotional depth of meaning the word represents (the **connotation** of the word).

Replace the highlighted word in each sentence with all the vibrant and colourful words you can find. An example has been completed for you.

The toddler was **dirty**.

grubby mucky messy grotty tatty grimy filthy

1. She wore a **red** dress.

2. He was an **old** man.

3. The **nice** car went fast.

4. The film was **interesting**.

5. It was a **good** party.

6. School was **okay**.

7. We went on a **nice** trip.

8. Saturdays were **boring**.
-
9. The house was in an **odd** street.
-
10. We went on an **interesting** holiday.
-
11. The family meeting was **noisy**.
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Figures of speech

Figures of speech are another way to gain vibrancy and interest in the language used in poetic writing. Figures of speech are techniques used by writers to convey ideas, feelings and images. Poets use figures of speech to create, rhythm, rhyme and emotional language to make the reader respond in a specific way.

Assonance is the repetition of vowel (**a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**) sounds. Assonance is not about the letter. Assonance is about the sound. Poets use assonance to speed a poem up or slow it down, depending on the sound used.

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds at the start of a word.

Some alliteration creates hard sounds, for example use of the consonants **b** and **d**. Other consonants convey soft sounds, for example use of **f**, **l** and **s**. These hard and soft sounds are also used to speed a poem up or slow it down, depending on the sound used.

Additional theory and Tasks on figures of speech can be found in Chapter 2 (pages 26–28) and Chapter 7 (pages 124–132).



Task 5B: Alliteration and assonance

Use the following examples of assonance and alliteration to fill in the table. Some sentences have alliteration or assonance, some have both. The first two are completed for you.

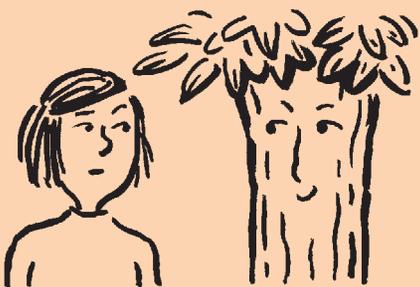
1. She sells sea shells.
2. It was time to define the rhyme.
3. It was the silly season.
4. Seventy-seven ships sailed home.
5. The rain fell heavily in Spain.
6. Little lapdogs ran around hysterically.
7. Bad boys are often trouble.
8. Good girls gain in the long run.
9. The thistle whistled in the blistering wind.
10. The thief refused to leave the ledge.

	<i>Assonance</i>	<i>Alliteration</i>
1.	<u>s</u> ells <u>sh</u> ells	<u>S</u> he <u>s</u> ells <u>s</u> ea <u>sh</u> ells.
2.	t <u>i</u> me de <u>f</u> ine r <u>h</u> yme	
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Personification

Personification is the technique of giving human qualities to something that is not human, such as objects or things. Personification gives things (like the river in the following example) a personality.

‘The river wrapped her arms around the struggling swimmer and drew him softly to her embrace, only grudgingly allowing him to pull free.’



Here, the river is described as a living being, a female human being who is embracing or hugging the swimmer.

What is actually happening is that the swimmer is being dragged under the water by the currents of the river, although he eventually pulls free and rescues himself.



Task 5C: Personification

Describe what is *actually* occurring in the following sentences. Try to avoid using personification at all in your explanations.

1. The wind skipped and danced around the tree and swept the bird into the dance.

2. He opened the door and the heat smacked into his face.

3. The room spun around and dipped, throwing him off his feet.

4. The tower dominated the street, leaning threateningly over the smaller buildings.

5. The bird knocked on the window and called impatiently to be let in.

6. The wave bounced happily onto the shore before running back to join the others.

Metaphors

A metaphor is used to highlight specific qualities of a thing or person. Metaphors are a comparison, where one thing is said to be another. (Metaphors do *not* use **like** or **as**.)

For example, 'He is the sunshine in my life' – here the metaphor is being used to express the absolute importance and the warmth of the person in the life of the writer.

Similes

A simile is also used to highlight qualities of a person or thing. Similes *always* use **like** or **as**.

For example, She shone like the sun.

The comparison also highlights qualities of warmth and sustenance, but it does so using the word **like**.

The metaphor says he *is* the sun, the simile says she *is like* the sun.



Task 5E: Metaphors and similes

Change the following metaphors into similes and similes into metaphors. The first two have been done for you.

	Metaphors	Similes
	He is the sunshine of my life.	He is warm and nurturing like sunshine in my life.
	She snakes around the corners.	She slides like a snake around corners.
1.		He swam like a fish.
2.	She parroted everybody.	
3.		He had eyes like saucers.
4.	She dogged him all day.	
5.		She had ears like a fox.
6.	The baby trumpeted her distress.	
7.		Her neck was like a swan's.
8.	Her hair was corkscrew curls.	
9.	She hissed and spat cattily at the girl.	
10.		She had feet like barges.
11.		He had a memory like an elephant.

12.	He was green with envy.	
13.	She was an angel all day.	
14.		He was blind as a bat.
15.	Her heart broke with a loud crack.	
16.	He punched him with words.	
17.		He was childlike.
18.		The trees stood like sentries.



Rhythm and rhyme

The **rhythm** of a poem is its beat, which is how it sounds when it is read aloud. The rhythm is also about how it flows.

- Is it a fast or a slow poem?
- Do the words encourage you to read it at a certain speed?
- Does the poet use simple words or complicated ones?
- Is the subject of the poem weighty or frivolous?

These all affect how the poem is read, so they are all about the poem's rhythm.

Rhyme is the repetition of final vowel and consonant sounds in words.

Words that sound the same, or almost the same, attract our attention and are easy to remember.

You need to take note of where the rhymes are in the poem – at the end of every line or every alternate line? Where the rhyme falls dictates the pattern and speed of the poem.

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Task 5A: Finding the best word (page 82)

- scarlet / fiery / bright / bold / raspberry / crimson / ruby / cherry.
- ancient / elderly / aged / older / mature.
- fabulous / sporty / good / fine / lovely.
- appealing / exciting / fascinating / remarkable.
- fine / interesting / first-rate / exciting.
- adequate / all right / satisfactory / tolerable / acceptable.
- fact-finding / fascinating / interesting / pleasant / good / fine / lovely.
- tedious / dull / uninteresting / tiresome.
- strange / peculiar / unusual / quirky / weird.
- appealing / exciting / fascinating / remarkable.
- rowdy / chaotic / raucous / tumultuous.

Task 5B: Alliteration and assonance (page 84)

	<i>Assonance</i>	<i>Alliteration</i>
1.	se <u>lls</u> she <u>lls</u>	<u>S</u> he <u>s</u> ells <u>s</u> ea <u>s</u> hells.
2.	ti <u>m</u> e de <u>f</u> ine rhy <u>m</u> e	
3.		<u>s</u> illy <u>s</u> ea <u>son</u>
4.		<u>s</u> ea <u>ven</u> <u>s</u> ea <u>ven</u> <u>s</u> hips <u>s</u> a <u>i</u> led
5.	ra <u>i</u> n Sp <u>a</u> in	
6.		<u>l</u> ittle <u>l</u> ap <u>d</u> ogs h <u>y</u> sterically
7.		<u>b</u> ad <u>b</u> o <u>y</u> s
8.		<u>g</u> ood <u>g</u> ir <u>l</u> s <u>g</u> ai <u>n</u>
9.	th <u>i</u> stle wh <u>i</u> stled bl <u>i</u> st <u>e</u> ring w <u>i</u> nd	
10.	le <u>a</u> ve le <u>d</u> ge	<u>l</u> eave <u>l</u> edge

Task 5C: Personification (page 85)

Suggested answers

- The bird got caught in the wind and was swept off the branch.
- He felt the warmth of the room on his face as he opened the door.
- He felt dizzy and fell over.
- The tower was taller than any other building in the street.
- The bird sang and pecked on the window.

6. The sea rolled onto the beach in waves.
7. The water moved through the pipes, making a noise and then dripped into the sink.
8. The snake slid around the corner of the building.
9. The bee flew quickly from flower to flower.
10. The couch had been placed in the corner of the room.

Task 5D: Onomatopoeia (page 86)

Plunk	Slap
Drip	Tapping
Plop	Pitter-patter
Bang	Dollop
Plunk	Blip
Donk	Tingle
Tinkle	Ring
Smash	Shatter
Clamour	Yell
Ripping	Shout

Task 5E: Metaphors and similes (page 87)

	<i>Metaphors</i>	<i>Similes</i>
1.	He dolphined through the waves.	He swam like a fish.
2.	She parroted everybody.	She repeated everything said, like a parrot.
3.	His eyes saucered with fright.	He had eyes like saucers.
4.	She dogged him all day.	She followed him around like a puppy.
5.	Her fox ears pricked up.	She had ears like a fox.
6.	The baby trumpeted her distress.	The baby's cry sounded like a trumpet.
7.	She stretched her swan neck gently.	Her neck was like a swan's.
8.	Her hair was corkscrew curls.	The curls in her hair looked like corkscrews.
9.	She hissed and spat cattily at the girl.	She hissed like a cat at the other girl.
10.	Her boat feet were just too large.	She had feet like barges.
11.	His elephantine memory won them the quiz.	He had a memory like an elephant.
12.	He was green with envy.	Jealously he looked on, as green as grass with envy.
13.	She was an angel all day.	She was like a little angel.

14.	His little bat eyes blinked blindly.	He was blind as a bat.
15.	Her heart broke with a loud crack.	Her heart felt as if it was broken.
16.	He punched him with words.	His words felt like punches.
17.	He behaved like a six-foot-high child.	He was childlike.
18.	The tree sentries stood implacably.	The trees stood like sentries.

Task 5F: Rhythm and rhyme (page 89)

	slows	snow
	south	mouth
1.	stir	demur
2.	hold	gold
3.	flowing	growing
4.	foal	pole
5.	sea	me
6.	land	sand
7.	remember	Reinga
8.	law	paw
9.	boast	coast
10.	shore	forevermore
11.	shore	yours

Task 5G: Finding the rhythm (page 91)

<i>Speed Up</i>	<i>Slow Down</i>
Thundering a shoreline back upon the sand	Sighing, saltless waters
too wild, too great	homesick for its snowshed
fetlocks burning	Tua Marina murmurs
Rushed up, uncalkined	lonely, long demur
in came the morning	Paradisa! grasses, knee-deep
footloose mountains	glitter of a solstice
taunted Magellan	smoulder of autumns
Massive and flying and nothing to me	Bluff folds down