POETRY DEVICES

***alliteration**. The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words or within words, as in Macbeth's phrase "a**f**ter li**f**e's **f**it**f**ul **f**ever." Alliteration is used in both poetry and prose for unity, emphasis, and musical effect. An especially musical example is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous description of the sacred river Alph in his poem *Kubla Kahn:*

Five **m**iles **m**eandering with **m**azy **m**otion

Alliteration for ludicrous effect is common in nonsense verse, jingles, and tongue twisters:

Betty Botter bought some butter,
But, said she, the butter's bitter;
If I put it in my batter
It will make my batter bitter,
But a bit of better butter,
That would make my batter better.

In English poetry, alliteration is a very old device, predating rhyme. The alliterative verse form used in the Old English poem *Beowulf,* in other early Germanic literature, and in much Middle English narrative poetry features alternating patterns of alliteration on the accented words in the line, as in the following lines from *Piers the Plowman,* a Middle English poem by William Langland:

In a **s**omer **s**eson whan **s**oft was the **s**onne,
I **s**hope me in **s**hroudes as I a **s**hepe were,
In **h**abite as a **h**ermite un**h**oly of workes,
Went **w**yde in this **w**orld **w**ondres to here.

***analogy**. A comparison of similar things, often for the purpose of using something familiar to explain something unfamiliar. For example, the branching of a river system is often explained by comparing it to a tree. The work of the heart is explained by comparing it to a pump. Although the two items being compared in an analogy may be similar in a number of ways, they are not identical. The whole truth about one is not the whole truth about the other. An analogy pushed beyond the points of similarity thus breaks down and loses its effectiveness. An effective metaphor or simile differs from an analogy in that metaphor or a simile makes an imaginative, often unexpected, comparison between basically dissimilar things, as in these lines from Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market:"

Her locks streamed like atorch
Bornes by a racer at full speed.

***anastrophe**. A rhetorical term for the inversion of the normal order of the parts of a sentence. Writers, especially poets, use anastrophe to place emphasis on a word or idea or to create or accommodate a certain rhyme, rhythm, or euphony. Notice what is lost when normal word order replaces the anastrophe in these lines of poetry:

After great pain a formal feeling comes—
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs.
(A formal feeling comes after great pain—
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs.)
—Emily Dickinson

I will arise and go now, and go to Innistree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.
(I will arise and go now, and go to InnisFree,
And build a small cabin there made of clay and wattles.)
-William Butler Yeats

***apostrophe**. The device, usually in poetry, of calling out to an imaginary, dead, or absent person, or to a place, thing, or personified abstraction either to begin a poem or to make a dramatic break in thought somewhere within the poem. In these lines from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Lord Byron twice breaks into his description of a stormy night in the Alps to call out to the night:

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among

Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!
And this is in the night—most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!

An apostrophe asking a god or goddess for inspiration, especially at the beginning of an epic, is an invocation. John Milton begins *Paradise Lost* with the invocation, "Sing, Heavenly Muse."

***assonance**. The close repetition of middle vowel sounds between different consonant sounds: fade/pale. Assonance is usually used within a line of poetry for unity or rhythmic effect, as Edith Sitwell, who is famous for her experiments with carefully arranged assonant and dissonant vowels, uses it in this line from "The Drum":

Wh**i**nnying, n**ei**ghed the m**a**ned blue w**i**nd

Assonance is sometimes used to create near rhymes in place of end rhymes. Folk ballads, which may have been hurriedly improvised, often rely on the near rhyme of assonance:

He had horses and harness for them all.
Their goodly steeds were all milk-wh**i**te.
O the golden bands all about their necks!
Their weapons, they were all al**i**ke.
—from "Johnny Armstrong"

***cacophony**. Harsh, clashing, or dissonant sounds, often produced by combinations of words that require a clipped, explosive delivery, or words that contain a number of plosive consonants such as *b, d, g, k, h* and *t;* the opposite of euphony.
The following lines from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells" are cacophonous:

Hear the loud alarum bells—
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!

****caesura.*** A pause within a line of poetry, often resulting from the natural rhythm of language and not necessarily indicated by punctuation. Skillful poets use the caesura to ease the stiffness of a metrical line without changing the metrical count. A caesura usually occurs near the middle of a line. Sometimes there is more than one caesura in a line. The last four lines of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's famous sonnet demonstrate subtle variation in the placement of the caesura:

I love thee // with a love I seemed to lose
with my lost saints. // I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, // of all my life! // and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better // after death.

carpe diem. A Latin phrase meaning "seize the day," used to designate a theme or motif, especially in lyric poetry, that warns about the brevity of life and the finality of death. The origin of the phrase is Horace's *Odes*. A common example of the carpe diem theme is the rose motif, in which the blooming and fading of the rose symbolizes the brevity of life. The rose motif was used by Cavalier poet Robert Herrick:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

The concern with the passing of time, which is a basic element of the carpe diem theme, has continued in literature up to the present. It is evident in the poetry of John Keats, Emily Dickinson, and Dylan Thomas, among others.

***conceit**. An elaborate figure of speech comparing two very dissimilar things. The comparison may be startling, farfetched, fanciful, or highly intellectual and may develop an analogy or metaphor to its logical limits and beyond. There are two types of conceits. The **Petrarchan conceit**, borrowed from Italian love poetry, compares the subject of the poem to a rose, the sun, a statue, or some other object. Skin is

alabaster, teeth are pearls, and so on. Petrarchan conceits were widely used in Elizabethan love poems and sonnets. In this sonnet William Shakespeare employs conceits to satirize their abuse:

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.

The **metaphysical conceit**, a common feature of the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century, is more startling, ingenious, and intellectual, sometimes carried to the point of absurdity. In *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*, John Donne compares the union of two lovers' souls to a drafting compass:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do.
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect as that comes home.

Though conceits fell out of favor during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they have regained respectability in the poems of such modern poets as T.S. Elliot, Allen Tate, John Crow Ransom, and Emily Dickinson, who wrote:

Remembrance has a Rear and Front—
'Tis something like a House—
It has a Garret also
For Refuse and the Mouse.

***connotation**. The associations, images, or impressions carried by a word, as opposed to the word's literal meaning. For example, the word *mother* means literally "a female parent," but it usually connotes warmth, love, sympathy, security, and nurture. Connotations may be individual (resulting from personal experience), group (shared by people with the same professional, national, linguistic, or racial background), or general (common to everyone). Scientists attempt to hold words to their precise meanings; writers, especially poets, rely on connotations to evoke responses in their readers.

***consonance**. The close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after differing vowel sounds: **l**ea**v**e/**l**o**v**e, **sh**o**rt**/**sh**i**rt**. A number of familiar compound words are consonant: **p**i**ngp**o**ng**, **f**u**lf**i**ll**, **t**i**pt**o**p**. Like alliteration, consonance is used in poetry to create emphasis and unity. A few poets have experimented with substituting consonance for end rhyme. These lines from Wilfred Owen's poem "Insensibility" show the subtle effect of consonant rhyme:

Having seen all things red,
Their eyes are rid
Of the hurt of the colour of blood forever,
And terror's constriction over,
Their hearts remain small-drawn.

***denotation**. The precise, literal meaning of a word, without emotional associations or overtones. For example, although the word *gold* may suggest riches, power, and greed, its denotative meaning is precisely "a malleable, ductile, yellow trivalent and univalent metallic element."

***enjambment.** The carrying of sense and grammatical structure in a poem beyond the end of one line, couplet, or stanza and into the next. Enjambment occurs with the use of run-on lines, as these opening lines from “The Explorer” by Gwendolyn Brooks illustrate:

Somehow to find a still spot in the noise
Was the frayed inner want, the winding, the frayed hope
Whose tatters he kept hunting through the din.

***euphony**. A succession of sweetly melodious sounds; the opposite of cacophony. The term is applied to smoothly flowing poetry or prose. Lingering vowels and liquid consonants, other consonants to move the lines along but none that beat or blast, and perhaps the meaning of the words all combine to create euphony in these lines from John Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes”:

And still she slept an azure-ridded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered.

extended metaphor. A metaphor, or implied comparison, that is sustained for several lines or that becomes the controlling image of an entire poem. In "Sale Today" Phyllis McGinley indirectly compares the lure of bargains for shoppers to that of sweet syrup for flies, extending the metaphor and then stating the comparison in the simile in the next to the last line:

What syrup, what unusual sweet,
Sticky and sharp and strong,
Wafting its poison through the street,
Has lured this buzzing throng
That swarms along the counters there
Where bargain bait is dangled-
Clustered like flies in a honey snare,
Shrill, cross, and well entangled?

***Homeric epithet**. A hyphenated adjective used repeatedly in conjunction with the same noun, so as to form a unit of expression, for example, Homer's "wine-dark sea" and "all-seeing Jove."

***hyperbole**. Obvious, extravagant exaggeration or overstatement, not intended to be taken literally, but used figuratively to create humor or emphasis. The most extreme examples of hyperbole occur, not surprisingly, in love poetry, a context, moreover, in which hyperbole seems psychologically believable. In Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," for example, the speaker declares:

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow,
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze:
Two hundred to adore each breast:
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

image. Language referring to something that can be perceived through one or more of the senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, the sense of motion, or the sense of heat or cold. The following lines from John Masefield's "Sea Fever" contain images referring to sight, touch, hearing, and motion:

And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white
sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face and a gray dawn breaking.

An image may simply name something; it may describe it literally; or it may invoke it figuratively, as in a metaphor, simile, or personification. An image can also be a symbol.

imagery. The making of "pictures in words," the pictorial quality of a literary work achieved through a collection of images a broader sense, imagery is often used as synonymous with figure of speech or figurative language (simile, metaphor, or symbol). Imagery appeals to the senses of taste, smell, hearing, and touch, and to internal feelings, as well as to the sense of sight. It evokes a complex of emotional suggestions and communicates mood, tone, and meaning. It can be both figurative and literal, as these lines from Elinor Wylie's "Puritan Sonnet" demonstrate:

I love those skies, thin blue or snowy gray,
Those fields sparse-planted, rendering meager sheaves;
That spring, briefer than apple-blossom's breath,
Summer, so much too beautiful to stay,
Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,
And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.

incremental repetition. In poetry, the repetition of a previous line or lines, with a slight variation that adds to or advances the story by increments, or regular small additions; a device characteristic of the ballad. These two stanzas from "The Wife of Usher's Well," a folk ballad, illustrate incremental repetition:

They hadna been a week from her,
  A week but barely ane,
When word came to the carline wife
  That her three sons were gene.
They hadna been a week from her,
  A week but barely three,
When word came to the carline wife
  That her sons she'd never see.

***kenning**. A metaphoric compound word or phrase used as a synonym for a common noun. Kennings are characteristic of Old English poetry. Some examples from *Beowulf* "ring-bestower" (king), "whale-road" and "swan-road" (sea), "candle of heaven" (sun), "war-brand" and "leavings of the file" (sword), and "ring-stemmed sea-goer" (ship).

***metaphor**. A figure of speech, an implied analogy in which one thing is imaginatively compared to or identified with another, dissimilar thing. In a metaphor, the qualities of something are ascribed to something else, qualities that it ordinarily does not possess. For example, in "Song of Myself," Walt Whitman's striking metaphor for *grass* is "the beautiful uncut hair of graves." In Beatrice Ianosco's "The Garden Hose," her metaphor for the *hose* is "a long green serpent / With its tail in the dahlias." Eve Merriam in "Metaphor" writes that "morning is / a new sheet of paper / for you to write on." In Edwin A. Hoey's "Foul Shout," *hanging* is a metaphor in the line "And two seconds hanging on the clock."
I. A. Richards says this in *Practical Criticism* :

A metaphor is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new one. In a sense metaphor, the shift of the word, is occasioned and justified by a similarity or analogy between the object it is usually applied to and the new object. In an emotive metaphor the shift occurs through some similarity between the feelings the new situation and the normal situation arouse. The same word may, in different contexts, be either a sense or an emotive metaphor. If you call a man a swine, for example, it may be because his features resemble those of a pig, but it may be you have towards him something of the feeling you conventionally have towards pigs, or because you propose, if possible, to excite those feelings. Both metaphorical shifts may be combined simultaneously, and they often are.

A metaphor may be a single, isolated comparison, or it may be an **extended metaphor** that is sustained throughout the work and functions as a controlling image. In Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death" the journey in a carriage is an extended metaphor for our journey through life—childhood, maturity, death. An allegory could be considered an elaborate extended metaphor.
A **dead metaphor** is one that has been used so often it has ceased to be figurative and is taken literally: the *head* of the class, the *eye* of a needle.
A **mixed metaphor** combines two or more inconsistent metaphors in a single expression, often resulting in unintentional humor: "He'll have to take the bull by the horns to keep the business afloat" mixes an agricultural metaphor with a nautical one.

***metonymy**. A figure of speech that substitutes the name of a related object, person, or idea for the subject at hand. *Crown* is often substituted for monarchy, the *White House* for the President of the United States and *Shakespeare* for the works of Shakespeare. Metonymy should not be confused with synecdoche, a substitution of a part of something for the whole or the whole for a part.

***onomatopoeia**. The use of words whose sound imitates the sound of the thing being named. For example, the pronunciation of words like *hum*, *buzz*, *clang*, *boom*, *hiss*, *crack*, and *twitter* suggests their meaning. The value of onomatopoeia as a poetic device becomes evident when sound echoes sense through an entire phrase or line:

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
And the silken, sad, uncertian rustling of each purple curtain.
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.
'Tis the night of doom," say the ding-dong doom-bells.

***parallelism**. The technique of showing that words, phrases, clauses, or larger structures are comparable in content and importance by placing them side by side and making them similar in form. Parallelism is a

common unifying device in poetry, especially in ancient poetry growing out of the oral tradition—for example, the Hebrew Psalms—and in modern free verse. It is the pervasiveness of Walt Whitman's parallelism that gives his poetry an antique, sometimes even biblical, ring:

"Halcyon Days"

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like fresher, balmier air,
As the days take on mellower light, and the apple at last
hangs really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

***personification**. A figure of speech in which human characteristics and sensibilities are attributed to animals, plants, inanimate objects, natural forces, or abstract ideas. John Updike employs personification in this short poem:

"Sunday Rain"

The window screen
is trying to do
its crossword puzzle
but appears to know
only vertical words.

rhyme. The similarity of sound between two words (*old/cold; foam/dome.*) When the sounds of their accented syllables and all succeeding sounds are identical, words rhyme (*rend/befriend; order/ recorder*). The most common form of rhyme, rhyme at the ends of lines of poetry, is called **end rhyme**, as in Robert Herrick's "To Electra":

I dare not ask a *kiss*,
I dare not beg a *smile*,
Lest having that, or *this*,
I might grow proud the *while*.
No, no, the utmost *share*
Of my desire shall *be*
Only to kiss that *air*
That lately kissed *thee*.

Rhyme of one syllable, as in the Herrick poem, is called **masculine rhyme**. It involves the rhyming of single accented syllables, as in *park/dark* or *define/align*, and is the most common rhyme in English.
Rhyme within the line is called **internal rhyme**, as in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven":

Once upon a midnight *dreary*, while I pondered weak and*weary*,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly *napping*, suddenly there came a*tapping*,
As of someone gently *rapping* , *rapping* at my chamber door.

Two-syllable rhyme, as in "The Raven," is called **feminine rhyme**. Rhyme of three syllables or more is more common in light verse than in serious poetry. Rhyme may also be classified by sound. The rhymes in the preceding selections are **true rhymes**, sometimes called **exact rhymes**. **Identical rhymes** repeat the same word or a homonym of the word (a word that sounds the same but is spelled differently): *two/too*; *rain/reign*. **Slant rhymes** are approximate rhymes, substituting either assonance (*comb/coat; rule/mom*) or consonance (*hope/heap; walk/weak*) in place of exact rhyme. Unlike end rhyme, which is based on repeated vowel and consonant sounds, **near rhyme** is based only on repeated middle vowel sounds between different consonant sounds.
A traditional device of poetry, rhyme contributes to rhythm, helps organize the language of poetry, makes poetry easier to memorize, and is a source of pleasure in itself.

rhythm. The patterned flow of sound in poetry and prose. In traditional English poetry, rhythm is based on the combination of accent and numbers of syllables known as meter. Meter is only the basic pulse of rhythm, however. Other sound devices, such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia,

contribute greatly to rhythm. Whether words are made up of harsh sounds or soft sounds also affects the rhythm of a line of poetry.

***simile**. A figure of speech that uses like, than, as, or as if to compare two essentially different objects, actions, or attributes that share some aspect of similarity. In contrast to a metaphor in which a comparison is implied, a simile expresses a comparison directly:

> Here and there
> his brown skin hung in strips
> like ancient wallpaper... -Elizabeth Bishop

> An old man whose black face
> shines golden-brown as wet
> pebbles under a street light... -Denise Levertov

> Like a small grey
> coffee-pot
> sits the squirrel. -Humbert Wolfe

> The garbage trucks sped away
> gloriously, as if they had been the
> Tarleton twins on thoroughbreds
> cantering away from the gates
> of Tara. -Annie Dillard

speaker. The voice of a poem. The poet may be speaking as himself or herself or taking on the role of a fictional character, an animal, or even an object. The speaker in Reed Hughes's poem "Hawk Roosting" is the hawk itself:

> I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
> Inaction, no falsifying dream
> Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
> Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

symbol. Broadly, anything that signifies, or stands for, something else. In literature, a symbol is usually something concrete an object, a place, a character, an action—that stands for or suggests something abstract. In Joseph Conrad's story "The Lagoon," darkness is a symbol of evil and light a symbol of good. A symbol may be universal or private. Darkness and light are universal symbols of evil and good. Climbing is a universal symbol of progress; descending, of failure. The dove is a universal symbol of peace. In contrast, the great white whale in Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* is a private symbol and a complex one. Many books and articles have been written in an effort to explain it but like many great private symbols in literature and art its significance is complex and elusive. A symbol differs from a literal image, from a metaphor, and also from an emblem in an allegory. Consider a forest, or a wood. In the following lines *woods* is an image presented literally as a place one is going through:

> Over the river and through the woods
> To grandmother's house we go

If the woods were pictured in more detail- snowcovered pines, elm branches black against the sky—it would still be a literal image although a more vivid one.
However in the statement "From the helicopter; we were able to see the windfarm, a forest of windmills" *forest* is a metaphor. The speaker is not seeing, a real forest. A group of windmills is being indirectly compared to a forest. In Dante's allegory, *The Inferno*, Dante awakens to find himself lost in a wood. The wood the reader is told is Error. On an allegorical level Dante is lost in the error of his ways or in sin. The only way out of the wood is through the hazardous landscape of hell (the recognition of' sin) and purgatory (the renunciation of sin). The wood functions as an emblem because its significance is precisely determined by an allegorical context, in which abstract concepts have been translated into a kind of picture language.
In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, all the main characters turn up sooner or later in the play's principal locale, the Forest of Arden. As the action of the play unfolds, the forest becomes richly symbolic, even though it remains a real forest. It is a place of escape from and banishment from civilization, with both the advantages and disadvantages that that involves; a place of freedom; a dream world, where one

can act out one's fantasies; a place of transformation, moral regeneration, and reconciliation; and, ultimately, a place from which one must return. Like many literary symbols, the Forest of Arden both embodies universal suggestions of meaning-the forest as a place of escape from civilization-and takes on a private significance fom the way it is treated in the play.
symbolism. The conscious and artful use of symbols, objects, actions, or characters meant to be taken both literally and as representative of some higher, more complex and abstract significance that lies beyond ordinary meaning. For example, symbolism is at work when the word rose is used not only to signify the flower itself but also to suggest beauty, love, or purity, abstractions that rose represents symbolically.

***synechdoche**. A figure of speech in which a part of something stands for the whole thing. In the expression 'I've got wheels' *wheels* stands for the whole vehicle, usually an automobile.

tone. The reflection in a work of the author's attitude toward his or her subject, characters, and readers. Tone in writing is comparable to tone of voice in speech and may be described as brusque, friendly, imperious, insinuating, teasing, and so on.

POETRY SCANSION

rhyme scheme. The pattern of rhymes in a stanza or poem, usually indicated by letters of the alphabet. For instance, the most common rhyme scheme for the quatrain (a four-line stanza), in which the first line rhymes with the third and the second line rhymes with the fourth, is *abab*. This stanza from Elinor Wylie's "Let No Charitable Hope" illustrates the pattern, *alone* rhyming with *stone* (*a* rhymes) and *beset* rhyming with *get* (*b* rhymes):

I was, being human, born alone; *a*
I am, being woman, hard beset; *b*
I live by squeezing from a stone *a*
The little nourishment I get. *b*

Fixed verse forms, such as the sonnet, have prescribed rhyme schemes. For example, the English (or Shakespearean) sonnet has a rhyme scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

***scansion**. Analyzing the meter in lines of poetry by counting and marking the accented and unaccented syllables, dividing the lines into metrical feet, and showing the major pauses, if any, within the line. The conventional system for scanning English poetry calls for marking accented syllables (') and unaccented syllables (-). Other symbols include a vertical line (**|**) to separate one foot from another, and a double line (**||**) to indicate a caesura, or major pause. The scansion of A. E. Housman's "When I Was One-and-Twenty" shows the standard way to indicate meter in a poem:

_ , _ , _ , _
When I **|** was one- **|** and-twenty

_ , _ , _ ,
I heard **|** a wise **|** man say, **|**

_ , _ , _ , _
"Give crowns **|** and pounds **|** and guineas

_ , _ , _ ,
But not **|** your heart **|** away

***foot**. The basic unit of rhythmic measurement in a line of poetry. In traditional English verse, a foot consists most often of at least one accented (stressed) syllable and one or more unaccented (unstressed) syllables. The number and type of feet in a line of a poem determine its meter. The five most commonly used feet are illustrated below. Accented syllables are indicated by the mark, '; unaccented syllables by -:

The ***iamb** (**iambic foot**) consists of one unaccented syllable followed by one accented syllable:

_ , _ , _ ,
reply today disturb

The iamb is the most common foot in English verse This line from a poem by Sara Teasdale contains five iambs, or iambic feet:

_ ' _ ' _ ' _ ' _ '
I must | have passed | the crest | a while | ago

A poetic line of five iambic feet, **iambic pentameter**, is a common meter in English poetry; it is the meter of blank verse, the sonnet, and the heroic couplet. These lines from "The Lost Symbols" by Elizabeth Jennings are written in iambic pentameter:

_ _ ' _ ' _ ' _ ' _ '
And minds | were gut | ted too. | Men learned | to act

_ ' _ ' _ ' _ ' _ '
As though | there were | no mean | ing in | the town.

The ***trochee** (**trochaic foot**) consists of one accented syllable followed by one unaccented syllable:

' ' _ ' _ ' _
nonsense playful final

This line from Sir John Suckling contains four trochees, or trochaic feet**:**

' _ ' _ ' _ ' _
Why so | pale and | wan, fond | lover.

The ***anapest** (**anapestic foot**) consists of two unaccented syllables followed by one accented syllable:

_ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
understand serenade in a flash

Originally a Greek martial rhythm, the galloping anapest creates a sense of speed and action, as in Lord Byron's “The Destruction of Sermacherik” which begins:

_ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
The Assyr | ian came down | like a wolf | on the fold,

_ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
And his co | horts were gleam | ing in pur | ple and gold;

_ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
And the sheen | of their spears |was like stars | on the sea,

_ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
When the blue | wave rolls night | ly on deep | Galilee.

A musical equivalent of anapestic rhythm is found in Gioacchino Rossini’s “William Tell Overture,” known to millions as the theme song of "The Lone Ranger."

The ***dactyl** (**dactylic foot**) consists of one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables:

' ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _
sympathy bountiful cover me

Each of the feet in the opening lines of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's “Evangeline” are dactyls:

' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ ' _ _ '
This is the | forest pri|meval. The |murmuring | pines...

The ***spondee** (**spondaic foot**) consists of two accented syllables:

' ' ' ' ' '
widespread blue-green Don't move!

The spondee is most often used to vary the meter of a line. Most spondees in English are combinations of monosyllabic words or compounds, such as *heartbreak* and *childood*. It is rare to find an English word of two syllables or more in which two successive syllables have equal accents.

Because the iamb and the anapest move toward stress, they are called **rising meters**. The trochee and the dactyl, which move away from stress, are called **falling meters**. Of the five kinds of feet illustrated here, the iamb is by far the most often used in English verse; the spondee is the rarest. Other feet (such as the amphibrach, amphimacer, antibacchius, bacchius, and dibrach) appear so infrequently that they have not been considered.

***meter**. The fixed (or nearly fixed) pattern of accented and unaccented syllables in the lines of a poem that produces its pervasive rhythm. The basic unit of rhythm is the foot consisting most often of an arrangement of at least one accented syllable (‘) and one or more unaccented syllables (-). Meter is

determined by the type and the number of feet in a line. The most common types of feet in English poetry are **iambic** (-’), **trochaic** (‘-), **anapestic** (--’), and **dactylic** (‘--). The number of feet in a line is described as:

monometer (one foot)
dimeter (two feet)
trimeter (three feet) A line of poetry consisting of three metrical feet. These lines from "'The Night Wind" by Emily Bronte are in trimeter:

> _ , _ , _ ,
> I sat | in si|lent musing,
>
> _ , _ , _ ,
> The soft | wind waved | my hair;

The meter of a line having three anapestic feet is called anapestic trimeter:

> _ , _ _ , _ _ ,
> Oh well | for the fish | erman’s boy

tetrameter (four feet) A line of poetry composed of four metrical feet. These lines from "The Zoo," a poem by Stevie Smith, are in tetrameter:

> _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> The li | on sits | within | his cage
>
> , _ , _ , _ ,
> Weeping | tears of | ruby | rage.

The meter of a line having four trochaic feet is called trochaic tetrameter:

> , _ , _ , _ , _
> Double, | Double, | toil and | trouble.

pentameter (five feet) A five-foot line of verse. The most common pentameter line, iambic pentameter, is the basis of blank verse, the sonnet, and the heroic couplet, and is the most widely used line in English verse. The following couplet, by Alexander Pope, is in iambic pentameter:

> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> True ease | in writ | ing comes | from art, | not chance,
>
> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> As those | move eas | iest who | have learned | to dance.

Thus, the meter of a line of poetry having five iambic feet is called iambic pentameter:

> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> If all | would lead | their lives | in love | like me.

hexameter (six feet) A line of poetry consisting of six metrical feet. A strictly patterned verse form in Greek and Latin poetry, true hexameters are not often found in English poetry because the dominant foot in the classical form, the spondee, is rare in English. However, poets, notably Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in *Evangeline*, have modified classical hexameter to fit the language. These lines from "When I Was Young and Fair," a poem by Queen Elizabeth I, illustrate one such adaptation:

> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> How man | y weep | ing eyes | I made | to pine **I** with woe
>
> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> How man | y sigh | ing hearts, | I have | no skill | to show.

The meter of a line having six dactylic feet is called dactylic hexameter:

> , _ _ , _ _ , _ _
> Nothing was | heard in the | room but the |
>
> , _ _ , _ _ , _ _
> hurrying | pen of the | stripling.

heptameter (seven feet) A line of poetry consisting of seven metrical feet. These lines from Thomas Babington Macaulay's poem Virginia are in heptameter:

> _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> And none | will grieve | when I | go forth, |
>
> _ , _ , _ ,
> or smile | when I | return,
>
> _ , _ , _ , _ , _ ,
> Or sit | beside | the old | man's bed, | or weep
>
> _ , _ ,
> upon | his urn.

octometer (eight feet) A poetic line containing eight metrical feet. A long line that tends to break into two four-foot lines, the octameter is rare in English poetry. The bulkiness of the octameter line is demonstrated by the frequency with which the second of the following pair of octameter lines from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" is misquoted in a shorter form:

, _ , _ , _ , _ , _ , _
In the | spring a | livelier | iris | changes | on the |

, _ ,
burnished | dove

, _ , _ , _ , _ , _
In the | spring a | young man's | fancy | lightly

, _ , _ ,
turns to | thoughts of | love

Note that in some of the example lines, while not all feet are identical, there is a prevailing pattern of accented and unaccented syllables that identifies the meter. Poets occasionally vary the basic metrical pattern to avoid the monotonus rhythm of a metronome. Analysis of the meter of the poem is called scansion.

POETRY FORM

ballad. A form of narrative poetry that presents a single dramatic episode, which is often tragic or violent. Ballads typically tell stories of unhappy love affairs; domestic tragedies, especially family feuds or murders; popular outlaws and rebels, such as Jesse James or Robin Hood; historical events like battles, shipwrecks, and mine disasters; and occupational heroes, such as John Henry and Casey Jones. There are two types of ballads. The folk ballad is one of the earliest forms of literature. Composed anonymously and transmitted orally from generation to generation, folk ballads were originally sung or recited. They have been set down in writing only in fairly recent times. Folk ballads share several characteristics: They deal with common people rather than nobility; the supernatural plays an important role in events; the story line often develops through dialogue; action, rather than characterization or description, is emphasized; a refrain and incremental repetition are common elements; the language is simple and the rhythm pronounced. Many Scottish and English ballads have survived from the Middle Ages. In America the folk-ballad tradition has been kept alive in the Appalachian Mountains, among the cowboys of the Old West, and within some of the early labor movements. Here is an early Scottish folk ballad, which may recount an incident involving a clan feud or a border raid:

"Bonnie George Campbell"
High upon the Highlands,
and low upon the Tay,
Bonnie George Campbell
rade out on a day
Saddled and bridled
and gallant race he;
Hame cam his guid horse,
but never cam he.
Out cam his auld mither
greeting fu' sair,
And out cam his bonnie bride
riving her hair.
Saddled and bridled
and booted race he;
Toom hame cam the saddle,
but never cam he.
"My meadow lies green,
and my corn is unshorn,
My barn is to build,
and my babe is unborn.'
Saddled and bridled

and booted rade he;
Toom hame cam the saddle,
but never cam he.

Written by known authors, the literary ballad is a studied imitation of the general rhythmic pattern and stanza form of the folk ballad. These art ballads, as they are sometimes called, are more polished and consciously artful than folk ballads and often contain the more elevated language and poetic diction of the professional poet. Some well-known English literary ballads are "La Belle Dame sans Merci" by John Keats, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Sir Walter Scott's "Rosabelle." American literary ballads include Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armor," Stephen Vincent Benet's "The Ballad of William Sycamore ' and Ernest Thayer's "Casey at the Bat."

***blank verse**. Poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Blank verse should not be confused with free verse. It is "blank" only in the sense that its lines do not rhyme; it is not metrically blank. These famous lines from Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* exemplify the qualities of blank verse:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Blank verse is uniquely suitable for poetic drama and other long narrative or reflective poems because of its closeness to natural speech rhythms, its lack of rhyme, and its rhythmic flexibility. Employed extensively and brilliantly in dramatic dialogue by Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and the other Elizabethan playwrights, developed by John Milton into a vehicle for his great epic *Paradise Lost*, rediscovered by the nineteenth-century romantic poets, and revived in a freer form by T. S. Eliot and Maxwell Anderson in their verse plays, blank verse has been used for serious poetry more than any other English verse form.

***couplet**. Two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme and that are written to the same meter, or pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, here is a couplet from "Inventory," a poem by Dorothy Parker:

Three be the things I shall have till I die:
Laughter and hope and a sock in the eye.

A **closed couplet**, like the example above, is one that is grammatically and logically complete in itself. It is composed of end-stopped lines (ending with a syntactical pause) rather than run-on lines (sense continuing into next line without a pause). A **heroic couplet** is a pair of rhyming iambic pentameter lines; the favored verse form of the Eighteenth-century neoclassical poets. Although it was introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer, this couplet takes its name from its use in the heroic drama of John Dryden and the mock epics of Alexander Pope. In the hands of these and other neoclassical writers, the closed form of the heroic couplet (each couplet syntactically complete) proved to be an appropriate instrument (one might say *weapon*) for their appropriate WIT. A few lines from Pope's “Essay on Criticism” will show the typical pattern of a complete thought every two lines:

Whatever Nature has in worth denied,
She gives in large recruits of needful pride;
For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find
What wants in blood and spirits, swelled with
Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defense,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.
If once right reason drives that cloud away,
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.
Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
Make use of every friend—and every foe.

dramatic monologue. A poem in which a single character, overheard speaking to a silent listener, reveals a dramatic situation. The poet best known for dramatic monologues is Robert Browning, who, in “My Last Duchess” and “Andrea del Sarto,” created minor masterpieces of dramatic irony. A number of folk ballads are dramatic monologues. Dramatic monologues also have been written by Edgar Lee Masters, Edwin A. Robinson, Carl Sandburg, T. S. Eliot, Conrad Aiken, Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, and Robert Lowell, among others. Here is the beginning of one by Amy Lowell, entitled "Number 3 on the Docket":

The lawyer, are you?

Well! I ain't got nothin' t say.
Nothin'!
I told the perlice I hadn't nothin'.
They know'd real well 'twas me.
Ther warn's no supposin'.
Ketchin' me in the woods as they did,
An' me in my house dress.
Folks don't walk miles an' miles
In the drifted snow,
With no hat nor wrap on 'em
Ef everythin's all right, I guess.
All right? Ha! Ha! Ha!
Nothin' warn't right with me.
Never was.
Oh, Lord! Why did I do it?
Why ain't it yesterday, and Ed here agin?

***elegy**. A poem of sorrow or mourning for the dead; also a reflective poem in a solemn or sorrowful mood. The adjective *elegaic* is used to describe poetry that exhibits the characteristics of an elegy. Well-known elegies lamenting the death of a particular person include John Milton's *Lycidas* (Edward King), Percy Shelley's *Adonais* (John Keats), Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (Arthur H. Hallam), and Walt Whitrman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (Abraham Lincoln). Perhaps the most famous elegy, Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, is a solemn, meditative poem mourning not the death of a person, but the passing of a way of life.

epic. A long narrative poem in lofty style, set in a remote time and place, and dealing with heroic characters and deeds important in the legends and history of a nation or race. The epic hero (for example, Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*) is larger than life, having superhuman strength, character, or intellect. The action is simple, presenting a central incident or series of incidents, of historical or legendary significance (for example, the siege of Troy). Supernatural forces (gods, demons, angels) influence and participate in the action. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost* all the characters except Adam and Eve are supernatural beings. The setting may be national, worldwide, or cosmic; the time, a distant past that seems greater than the present, a heroic or golden age. The style is objective, elevated, and dignified. The epic form is highly traditional and employs many conventions. For example, the epic conventionally opens with a statement of the theme (for example, the wrath of Achilles) and an appeal to the Muses for inspiration (an invocation). The story begins in medias res, in the middle of things, There are catalogs, long lists, of warriors, armies, armor, and such. The *Iliad* has a catalog of ships; *Paradise Lost*, a catalog of angels. There are long formal speeches by main characters and often a journey to the underworld. Stock epithets, like Homer's “rosy fingered dawn,” appear repeatedly throughout the poem, as do epic similes, extended comparisons so long that the reader often forgets what is being compared. Although there is general agreement that epics are an outgrowth of traditional storytelling, there is some debate about the specific details of their development. As a result, epics are often divided into two types: the **folk epic**, also called the “primary epic" or "primitive epic," and the **literary epic**, also called the "secondary epic" or "art epic." Folk epics are of unknown or uncertain authorship, were recited before an audience, and were passed along as part of an oral tradition. Literary epics are written by a poet employing the epic conventions and are meant to be read. Examples of the folk epic are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Greek), *Beowulf* (Old English), *Song of Roland* (French), *Poem of the Cid* (Spanish), and *Mahabharata* (East Indian). Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* are famous literary epics.

***free verse**. A type of poetry that differs from traditional verse forms in that it is "free" of the regular beat of meter, depending instead on the individual poet's sensitivity to the music of natural speech rhythms. Also, free verse usually lacks rhyme and often has irregular line lengths and fragmentary syntax. The modern free-verse movement began in the nineteenth century with Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and the poetry of French symbolists Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine and of the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Forerunners of free verse range from the alliterative verse of the middle ages to the Psalms of the King James Bible to the blank verse of John Milton and a number of poems by William Blake and Emily Dickinson. Although twentieth-century poetry is predominantly free verse, some poets

are more comfortable working with traditional rhyme and meter. For them, writing free verse seems, as Robert Frost put it, "like playing tennis with the net down." For other poets, writing free verse is an opportunity to create their own rhythmic and visual form. Others establish a pattern that they use from poem to poem, such as William Carlos Williams' variable foot or Whitman's pause for breath at the end of each line:

> When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me
> When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,
> and measure them,
> When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with
> much applause in the lecture-room,
> How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

***idyll**. A short descriptive and narrative piece, usually a poem, about picturesque country life, an idealized story of happy innocence. The idyll originated with Theocritus, a Greek bucolic poet of the third century B.C., who described the simple, rustic life of Sicily for his patrician readers. The term has also been applied to prose tales of rural life and to longer descriptive and narrative poems with epic, romantic, or tragic themes, such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and Robert Browning's *Dramatic Idylls*. Thus idyll is a descriptive term rather than a specific poetic genre. *Maude Muller*, byJohn G. Whittier, is perhaps the best-known American idyll.

octave. The first eight lines or **octet** of the Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet. Usually the octave asks a question or states a generalization that is answered or resolved in the last six lines, the sestet of the poem.
An octave is also a stanza of eight lines. In this sense the term is often applied to **ottava rima**, an eight-line stanza of iambic pentameter rhyming *abababcc* . This stanza pattern was used with distinction by such English poets as Edmund Spenser John Milton, John Keats, and Lord Byron. This last stanza from W.B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" is ottava rima:

> Once out of nature I shall never take *a*
> My bodily form from any natural thing, *b*
> But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make *a*
> Of hammered gold and gold enamelling *b*
> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake; *a*
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing *b*
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium *c*
> Of what is past, or passing, or to come. *c*

***ode**. A long and elaborate lyric poem, usually dignified or exalted in tone and often written to praise someone or something or to mark an important occasion. The Greek poet Pindar developed the form of the ode from the varying stanza pattern of the choral songs in Greek tragedy. Pindar's odes were written in honor of the winners of the Olympic Games and for other public occasions. The Latin odes of Horace were private, personal expressions written in regular stanza form. The seventeenth-century English poet Abraham Cowley developed the free, or irregular, ode, influencing John Dryden, who wrote the finest odes in English, among them "Song for St. Cecelia's Day" and "Alexander's Feast." Other well-known odes include John Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," and several great odes by John Keats: "On a Grecian Urn," "To a Nightingale" "To Autumn," and "On Melancholy." Among odes written in the twentieth century are two particularly fine ones: W. H. Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" and Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead."

quatrain. A stanza of four lines rhymed or unrhymed; also a poem consisting of four lines only. The quatrain is the most common stanza form in English. It exists in a variety of rhyme schemes and meters including iambic pentameter lines rhyming abab, called the **heroic quatrain**; iambic tetrameter lines rhyming abba, called the ***In Memoriam* stanza**; alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines rhyming abcb, called the ballad stanza; iambic pentameter lines rhyming aaba, called the ***Rubaiyat* stanza;** and lines

rhyming aabb. This last pattern of rhyme is illustrated in the following quatrain from "Self Analysis," a poem by Anna Wickham:

The tumult of my fretted mind *a*
Gives me expression of a kind; *a*
But it is faulty, harsh, not plain- *b*
My work has the incompetence of pain. *b*

sestet. A six-line poem or stanza. The term is most commonly used to designate the second part of an Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet, which is organized into two sections of eight lines(the octave) and six lines (the sestet) respectively.

***sonnet**. A fourteen-line lyric poem in iambic pentameter. The sonnet originated in thirteenth-century Italy, was developed by the Italian poet Petrarch and was brought to England by Sir Thomas Wyatt. The sonnet was modified greatly by the Earl of Surrey and by William Shakespeare and, to a lesser extent, by poets since Shakespeare. The two most important types of sonnets are the **Italian** (**Petrarchan**) and the **Shakespearean (English).**

The **Italian sonnet** is organized into two parts - an octave, consisting of the first eight lines and rhyming *abba, abba;* and a sestet, the remaining six lines, which usually rhyme *cce, cde.* There may be variations in the rhyme scheme of the sestet. The octave establishes a theme or poses a problem that is developed or resolved in the sestet. John Milton, in his famous sonnet "On His Blindness," uses indentation to emphasise the Italian pattern and begins his new line of thought early in line eight:

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied,
I fondly ask; but paitence to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, his state
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.

The rhyme scheme of the **Shakespearean sonnet**, *abab*, *cdcd*, *efef*, *gg*, is looser than that of the Italian sonnet, allowing for seven different rhymes instead of five. Since rhymes are harder to find in English than in Italian, most writers of sonnets in English have used the Shakespearean form. Although the content of the Shakespearean sonnet sometimes Follows the Petrarchan organization, usually it develops through three quatrains, followed by the conclusive, often epigrammatic, comment of the final couplet, as in this famous sonnet by Shakespeare:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to now,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

The relative brevity and rigidity of the sonnet form challenges the poet's concentration of thought, exactness of expression, and skill in working with a rigid rhyme scheme. Among the greatest sonnet writers in English have been Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Shakespeare, John Donne, John Milton,

William Wordsworth, John Keats, D. G. Rossetti, Henry W. Longfellow, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elinor Wylie, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and W. H. Auden.

Spenserian stanza. A stanza pattern, created by Edmund Spenser,
that consists of nine lines in iambic meter rhyming *ababbcbcc*. The first eight lines are in pentameter and the final line is in hexameter (called an Alexandrine). Spenser invented the form for his long, allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene*. The stanza is noted for the unifying effect of its three interwoven rhymes, and for the opportunity for summary and tone of dignity afforded in the added length of the Alexandrine. The Spenserian stanza has also been used by Robert Burns in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," by Lord Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* by Percy Bysshe Shelly in *Adonais,* and by John Keats in "The Eve of St. Agnes."

stanza. A section or division of a poem; specifically, a grouping of lines into a recuring pattern determined by the number of lines, the meter of the lines, and the rhyme scheme. For example, the stanza pattern called **rhyme royal** (used by Geoffrey Chaucer in several of his poems) has seven lines of iambic pentameter rhyming *ababbcc*:

> 0 lady myn, that called art Cleo, a
> Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse, b
> To ryme wel this book, till I have do; a
> Me nedeth here noon othere art to use. b
> Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse, b
> That of no sentement I this endite, c
> But out of Latyn in my tonge it write c

While a given stanza form is generally repeated as a unit of structure throughout a poem, it may sometimes be varied slightly for effect by the substitution of a different foot, the lengthening or shortening of a line, or the addition of a line or two. Each stanza in a poem is of interest both as a unit in itself and also as an important element in the development and effect of the whole.
Some stanza forms have been used often enough to have acquired names. Among these are **couplet**, **heroic couplet** (two lines); **tercet**, **terza rima**, **villanelle** (three lines), **quatrain**, **ballad stanza**, **envoy** (four lines); **cinquain** (live lines); **sestet** (six lines); **rhyme royal** (seven lines); **octave**, **ottava rima** (eight lines); and **Spenserian stanza** (nine lines).

tercet. Also known as **triplet**. A group, often a stanza, of three lines usually having the same rhyme; also called a triplet. Here is the final tercet of Robert Frost's poem "Provide, Provide":

> Better to go down dignified
> With boughten friendship at your side
> Than none at all. Provide, provide!

The interlocking three-line stanzas in terza rima are called tercets, as are the three-line stanzas in the villanelle. The term is also used to designate each of the two three-line groups that make up the sestet of the Italian sonnet. The three-line stanzas in terza rima are triplets.

***terza rima**. A form of verse composed of three-line stanzas, or tercets, linked by rhyme, as follows: *abc, bcb, cdc, ded,* and so on. The word at the end of the middle line of each stanza rhymes with the words at the ends of the first and third lines of each succeeding stanza. A poem in terza rima concuIdes with a couplet rhyming with the middle line on the previous stanza. Dante composed the entire *Divine Comedy* in terza rima. English examples of the first form are fairly rare; however, these lines from Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" illustrate both the linking of the terza rima stanzas and the rhyming of the concluding couplet:

> If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear,
> If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
> A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
>
> The impulse of thy strength, only less free
> Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
> I were as in my boyhood, and could be
>
> The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
> As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed

Scarce seemed a vision; I would never have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

***villanelle**. A lyric poem made up of five stanzas of three lines (tercets), plus a final stanza of four lines (quatrain). In the tercets, the rhyme scheme is aba; in teh quatrain, it is abaa. The villanelle also includes a refrain, arepetition of the first and third lines of the first stanza. A familiar villanelle is Dylan Thomas' "Do not go Gentle into that Good Night."