



Elements of Poetry I

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Terms:

Subject:

what a poem literally and physically discusses ~ “just the facts.”

Theme:

the unifying concept or idea of a literary work ~ a reader's interpretation of what the author intended the poem to mean.

Tone:

the poet's attitude toward the subject of a poem as expressed through the use of diction, sounds, and other poetic devices.

Diction:

the word choice in a poem ~ poets should always choose their words very carefully to impart the right imagery, meaning, sound, rhythm, and tone.

Image:

word pictures that relate sensory details ~ or language that addresses the senses.

Imagery:

most good poetry appeals to sensory details and images: sight, sound, touch, taste, & smell.

Speaker:

the narrative voice of a poem. The speaker may or may not be in the poem itself. The *speaker* is never to be confused with the *author* of the poem.

Persona:

when we know for sure the speaker of a poem is a creation of the poet, the speaker can be referred to as a *persona*, a character.

Line:

a sequence of words printed as a separate entity on a page.

“The South China Sea
drives in another herd.
The volleyball's a punching bag:
Clem's already lost a tooth
& Johnny's left eye is swollen shut.
Frozen airlifted steaks burn
on a wire grill, & miles away
machine guns can be heard.
Pretending we're somewhere else,
we play harder...”

*Excerpt from **A Break from the Bush** by Yusef Komunyakaa*

Stanza:

a grouping of lines set off by a space ~ a poetic paragraph.

“A poem's not
A black cat hiding
Under the bed
In a dark room.

Poem's the cat
That jumps to life
At mice of ideas
Roaming around...”

Excerpt from Poem's a Poem by Tirupathi Chandrupatla

End-Stopped Line:

a poetic line with a stop at the end that does not have to continue to the next line for its meaning.

*The volleyball's a punching bag:
Clem's already lost a tooth
& Johnny's left eye is swollen shut.*

Enjambéd Line: (*enjambment*)

a poetic line that ends without a stop and continues to the next line for its meaning.

*A poem's not
A black cat hiding
Under the bed
In a dark room.*

Alliteration:

the repetition of similar sounds at the beginning of words.

“Five miles meandering with mazy motion...”

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*

Assonance: (*near rhyme*)

the repetition of similar vowel sounds within words

"Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light..."

-Dylan Thomas

Consonance: (*near rhyme*)

the repetition of consonant sounds within words.

“His dumb warm comfort to the heart,
A fount where dreams ascend...”

-Joseph Burrows, *The Road That Has No End*

Elements of a Poem

Poems Have Two Subjects:

1. The initiating or “triggering” subject (*what starts or “causes” the poem to be written*).
2. The real or “generated” subject (*what the poem comes to say or mean, and what is discovered in the poem during its writing – it is the poem’s “theme”*).

~ Courtesy *The Triggering Town*, By Richard Hugo

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- e.e. cummings

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