**alliteration**

The repetition of the same or similar sounds at the beginning of words: “What would the world be, once bereft/Of wet and wildness?” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Inversnaid”)

assonance

The repetition or a pattern of similar sounds, especially vowel sounds: “Thou still unravished bride of quietness,/Thou foster child of silence and slow time” (“Ode to a Grecian Urn,” John Keats).

ballad

A poem that tells a story similar to a folk tale or legend and often has a repeated refrain. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is an example of a ballad.

blank verse

Poetry that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse.

conceit

A fanciful poetic image or metaphor that likens one thing to something else that is seemingly very different. An example of a conceit can be found in Shakespeare's sonnet “Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?”

couplet

In a poem, a pair of lines that are the same length and usually rhyme and form a complete thought. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.

elegy

A poem that laments the death of a person, or one that is simply sad and thoughtful. An example of this type of poem is Thomas Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.”

enjambment

The continuation of a complete idea (a sentence or clause) from one line or couplet of a poem to the next line or couplet without a pause.

epic

A long, serious poem that tells the story of a heroic figure. Two of the most famous epic poems are the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer, which tell about the Trojan War

epigram

A very short, witty poem: “Sir, I admit your general rule,/That every poet is a fool,/But you yourself may serve to show it,/That every fool is not a poet.” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

haiku

A Japanese poem composed of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku often reflect on some aspect of nature.

free verse (also vers libre)

Poetry composed of either rhymed or unrhymed lines that have no set meter.

hyperbole

A figure of speech in which deliberate exaggeration is used for emphasis. Many everyday expressions are examples of hyperbole: tons of money, waiting for ages, a flood of tears, etc.

lyric

A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode, that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet. A lyric poem may resemble a song in form or style.

metaphor

A figure of speech in which two things are compared, usually by saying one thing is another, or by substituting a more descriptive word for the more common or usual word that would be expected. Some examples of metaphors: the world's a stage, he was a lion in battle, drowning in debt, and a sea of troubles.

meter

The arrangement of a line of poetry by the number of syllables and the rhythm of accented (or stressed) syllables.

onomatopoeia

A figure of speech in which words are used to imitate sounds. Examples of onomatopoeic words are buzz, hiss, zing, clippety-clop, and tick-tock. Keats's “Ode to a Nightingale” not only uses onomatopoeia, but calls our attention to it: “Forlorn! The very word is like a bell/To toll me back from thee to my sole self!”

personification

A figure of speech in which things or abstract ideas are given human attributes: dead leaves dance in the wind, blind justice.

quatrain

A stanza or poem of four lines.

refrain

A line or group of lines that is repeated throughout a poem, usually after every stanza.

rhyme

The occurrence of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words.

simile

A figure of speech in which two things are compared using the word “like” or “as.” An example of a simile using like occurs in Langston Hughes's poem “Harlem”: “What happens to a dream deferred?/ Does it dry up/ like a raisin in the sun?”

stanza

Two or more lines of poetry that together form one of the divisions of a poem. The stanzas of a poem are usually of the same length and follow the same pattern of meter and rhyme.