

Poetry



Poetic Devices



Alliteration –
repetition of the same
letter at the beginning
of two or more words
in a line of poetry.

Coleridge's 'Kubla
Khan' (1816):
'Five *miles*
meandering with a
mazy motion'.



Assonance – repetition of the same vowel sound in two or more words in a line of poetry.

Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1820):

'Thou still unravished bride of quietness, Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time.'



Consonance – repetition of the same consonant sound before and after different vowels in two or more words, such as ‘live’ and ‘love’.

Owen’s ‘Strange meeting’ (1920):

‘It seemed that out of battle I escaped

Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped

Through granites which titanic wars had groined

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned.’

Archaism – the use of old or antiquated words in poetry, especially in modern poetry.

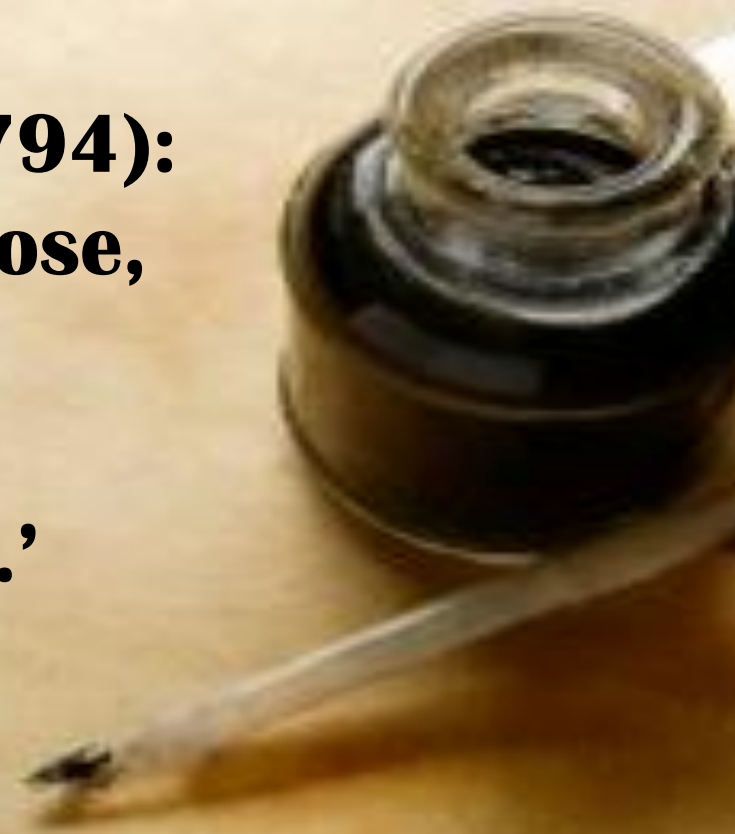
Spenser's Faerie Queene (1596):

'He *nigher* drew, to *weete* what *mote* be; There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found, Full merrily, and making gladfull glee.'



Simile – the comparison of two ‘similar’ things using the words ‘like’ or ‘as’, such as, *as thin as a rake*.

Burn’s ‘A Red, Red Rose’ (1794):
‘O My Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O My Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.’



Metaphor – a figure of speech where one thing is described in terms of another, such as wafer/rake thin. Language is being used figuratively to make the ideas vivid.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601):

'To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer *the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*, or to take arms against *a sea of troubles* and by opposing end them.'



Metaphor – one thing is said to be another although the possibility is not apparent without further emphasis from the poem.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597):

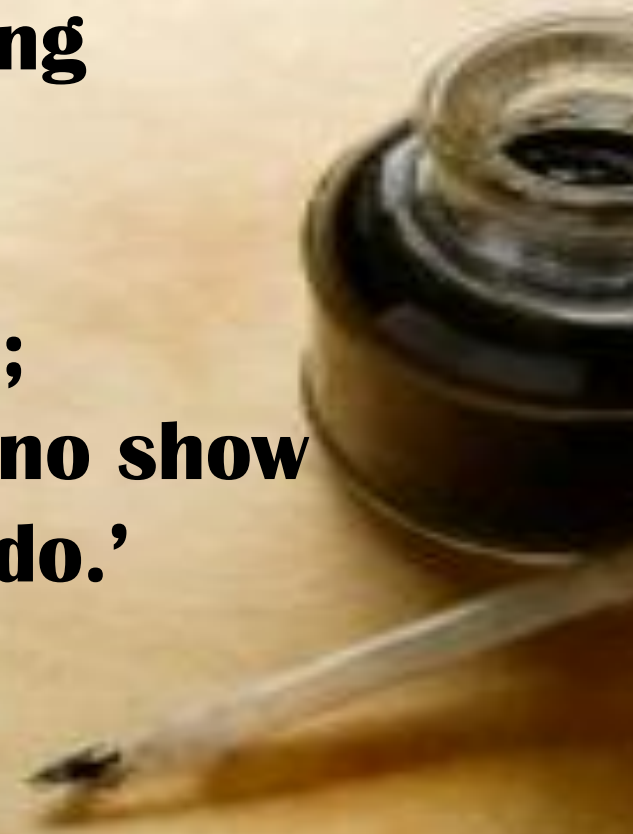
In the famous balcony scene Romeo associates Juliet with sunlight: 'It is the east and Juliet is the sun!'



Conceit – a far-fetched metaphor in which a very unlikely connection between two things is established.


Donne's 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' (1600):

**'If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.'**



Personification – when human emotions or characteristics are given to inhuman or inanimate objects, such as emotions, animals and everyday things.

**Blake's 'Two Sunflowers
Move in the Yellow Room' (1800):**
“Ah, William, we're weary of weather,”
said the sunflowers, shining with dew.
“Our traveling habits have tired us.
Can you give us a room with a view?””

A glass inkwell with a dark liquid inside, and a quill pen resting on a wooden surface. The inkwell is on the right side of the image, and the quill is partially visible below it.

Onomatopoeia – the use of sound words that give emphasis to a poem, such as bang, buzz, boom, oh, ah etc.; or the use of words that mimic sound words that are connected to the poem, such as using ‘b’ alliteration in a poem about bees.

Browning’s ‘The Pied Piper Of Hamelin’ (1860):
“So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!”

Tennyson’s ‘Come Down, O Maid’ (1888):
‘...the moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.’

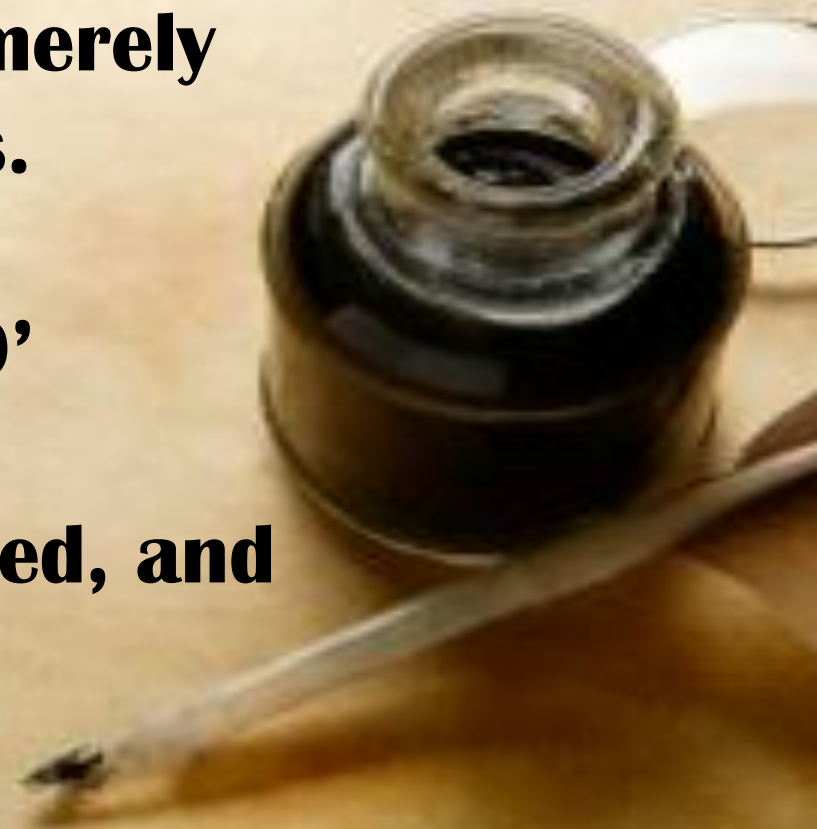
Oxymoron/Ambiguity – the use of two words or images that are contrasting within the same line. The use of these images can be to highlight ambivalence in themes or feelings, such as the joy and pain of love.

Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* (1603):
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything of nothing first create;
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick
health, Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

Imagery – the images in a poem are constructed, often with the use of figures of speech, so that the reader can imagine the scene set by the poet. Poetry is merely images painted with words.

Shelley's 'England in 1819'
(1819):

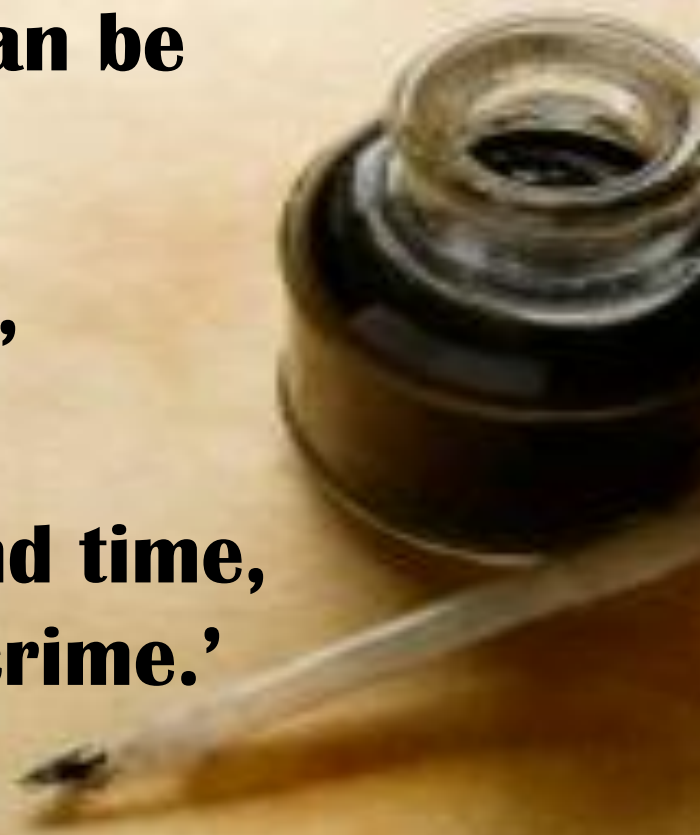
'An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king.'



Rhyme – two or more words sound the same, thereby creating unity in the text and allowing unhindered movement from beginning to end. Usually end-line rhyme, but can be internal.

**Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress'
(1681):**

**'Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.'**



Internal rhyme:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798):

**I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;**

**I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.**

Rhythm – the flow or movement of a line, whether it goes fast or slow, is calm or troubled. We can tell the rhythm by the meaning of the poem: sombre poems have slow lines, whereas happy poems are usually fast and sprightly.

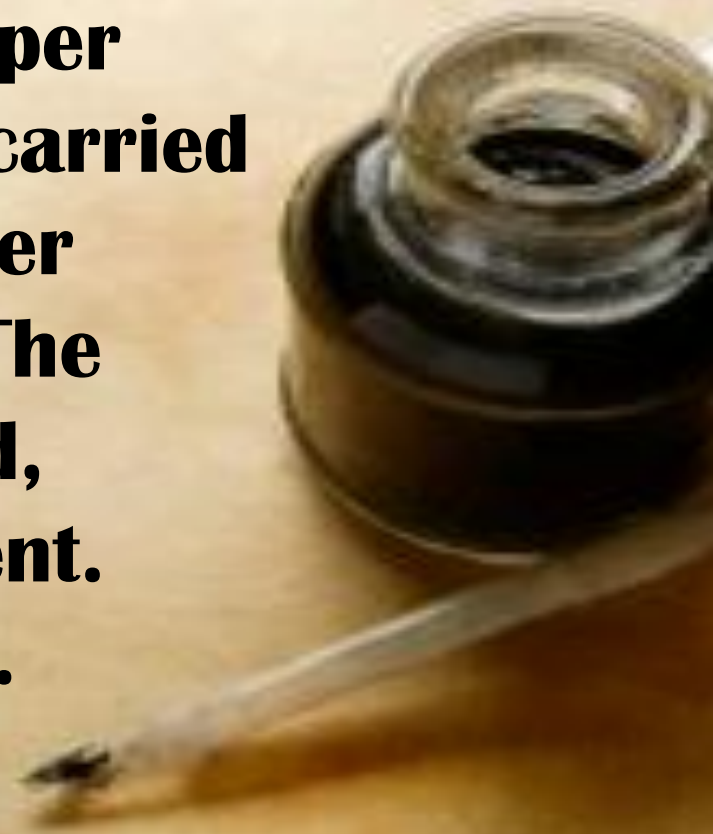
Hardy's 'The Voice' (1914):

**'Thus I: faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,**

**Wind oozing thin through the thorn from
northward, And the woman calling.'**



Symbol – an object stands for something else, such as a rose for love and a dove for peace. The word in the poem may signify something specific, may also have a deeper meaning. The image may be carried throughout the poem but never truly revealed or discussed. The real meaning may be guessed, although is often very apparent. Connotations vs. denotations.



Symbol –

Blake's 'The Sick Rose' (1794):

'O Rose, thou art sick!

The invisible worm

That flies in the night,

In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed,

Of crimson joy,

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy.'



Allusion – a passing reference in a poem to a person, place or event, especially from history or mythology, or to another literary work, which adds meaning to the poem.

Pound's *Cantos* (1945):

'Oh to be in England now that Winston's out.

Burn's 'Home Thoughts From Abroad' (1868):

Oh to be in England, Now that April's there.



Irony – a way of writing where what is said is in contradiction to what is meant.

‘I can’t wait for my dentist appointment next week!’

Coleridge *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

**‘Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink ;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.’**



Satire – An attack on or criticism of any stupidity or vice in the form of scathing humour, or a critique of what the author sees as dangerous religious, political, moral, or social standards. The satirist mocks certain individuals, but may do it so well that the person is unaware that he is being mocked. Satire is a form of irony.

Simon's 'No Money, No Poet':

**'There's no money in poetry
Coz poets are the biggest fools'**

Satire



Paradox – a seemingly absurd statement that on closer inspection turns out to be true.

Killing someone with kindness.

If you want peace, prepare for war.



Hyperbole – an over-exaggeration to emphasise a point.

I told you about hyperbole a thousand times.

I have enough food to feed an army.

I could eat a horse.



Euphemism – Expresses an unpleasant or uncomfortable situation in a more sensitive way to soften the blow.

He passed away.

He is not well-off.

He's a midnight golfer.



Litotes – a form of euphemism that
uses a negative to soften the blow.

He is no Einstein!

The world doesn't spin around you.



Pun/Double Entendre – a clever play on words, especially words that sound the same but have a different meaning in the context.

Cricket captain stumped!

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. It's impossible to put down.

It's not that the man did not know how to juggle, he just didn't have the balls to do it.



Parody – used to mock a well-known style or piece of writing.

Bored of the Rings, which is a parody of J.R.R. Tolkien's ***The Lord of the Rings***.



Bathos – a device that builds up tension and then ends in anti-climax or a silly surprise.

The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.

The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't.



Synecdoche – a part is substituted for the whole, or vice versa.

South Africa played New Zealand yesterday.

The pen is mightier than the sword.



Metonymy – one thing is used to refer to a related thing.

Hollywood is just a city but if you say Hollywood people associate it with the movie industry.

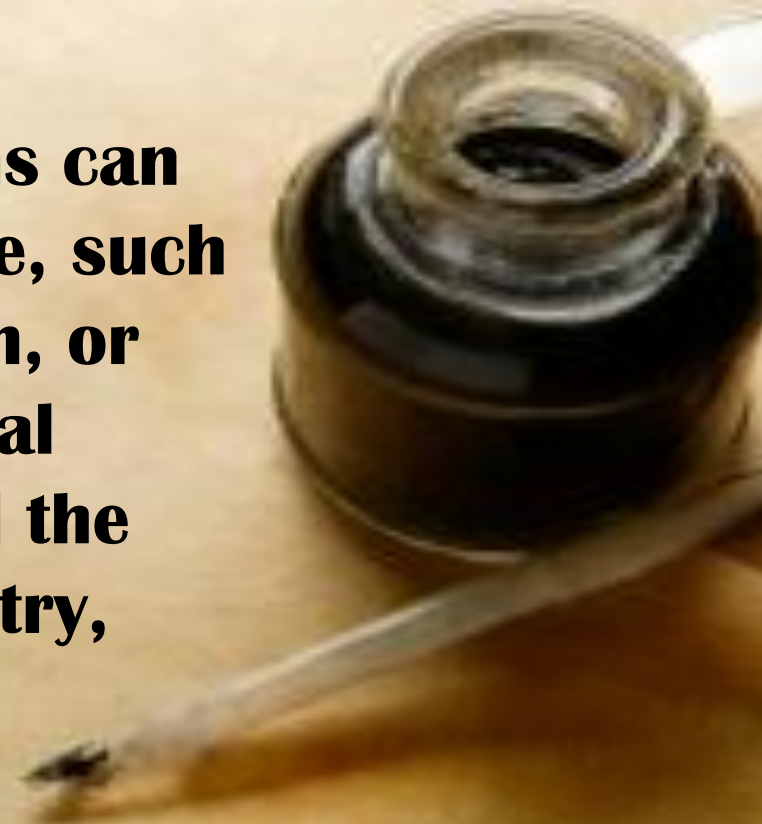
A bar is just the counter but we call the establishment.



Poetic Forms



Lyric – a poem where the poet writes about his or her thoughts and feelings. The basic type is the song, but the term covers all poetry that presents the poet's immediate response to life, including odes, sonnets and elegies. Lyric poems can deal with any facet of experience, such as love, death, nature of religion, or some domestic, social or political issue, but we are always offered the poets direct response. Most poetry, unless narrative, falls into this category.



Narrative Poetry – a poem that tells a story.

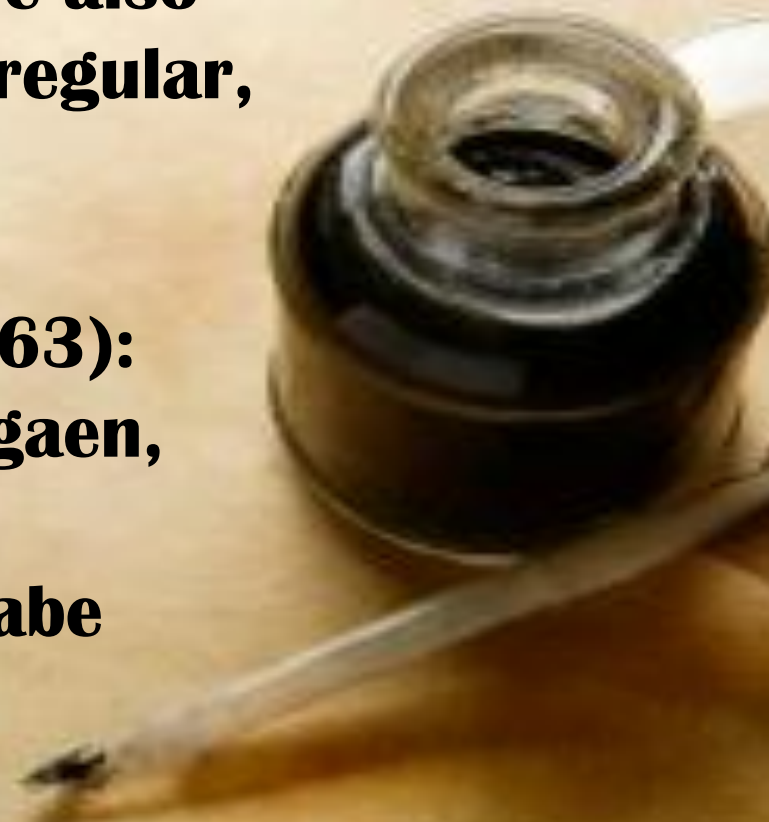
Poetry can be split into two broad groups: lyric and narrative. A poet can use narrative when he does not want to tell about his own experiences personally, so he uses a story to get his point across. The poems are not meaningless, for all poetry has a message. Consider it this way: lyric is an inward journey while narrative is an outward journey, where in both similar destinations are met.

Frost's 'The Road Not Taken' (1920):

**'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both'**

Ballad – the traditional ballad is a song that tells a story. The theme is often tragic, dealing with personal sorrows and public events, such as battles. Supernatural themes are also common. Usually comprised of regular, fairly plain four-line stanzas.

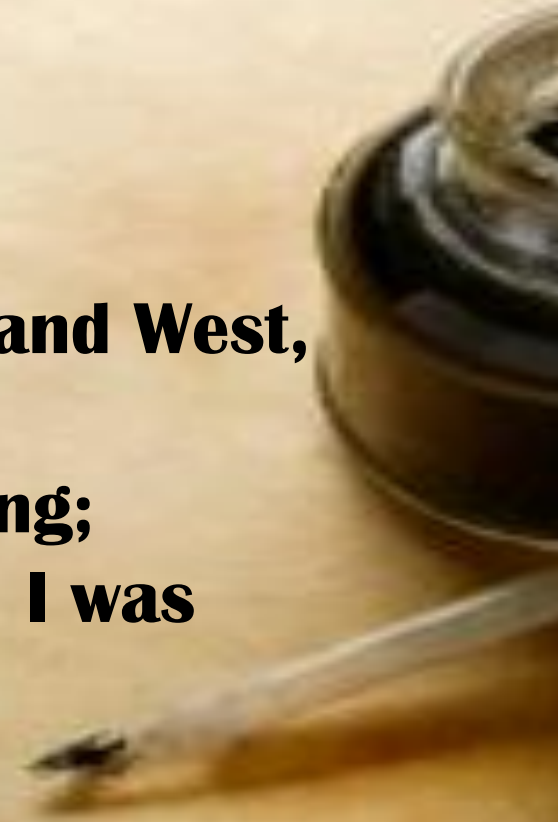
Traditional ‘Mary Hamilton’ (1563):
‘A sad tale through the town is gaen,
A sad tale on the morrow:
Oh Mary Hamilton has born a babe
And slain it in her sorrow.’



Elegy – a poem written on the death of a friend of the poet. The ostensible purpose is to praise the friend, but death prompts the writer to question the inevitability of death and life's true purpose. At the end the poet comes to terms with his grief.

Auden's 'Funeral Blues' (1938):

**'He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was
wrong.'**



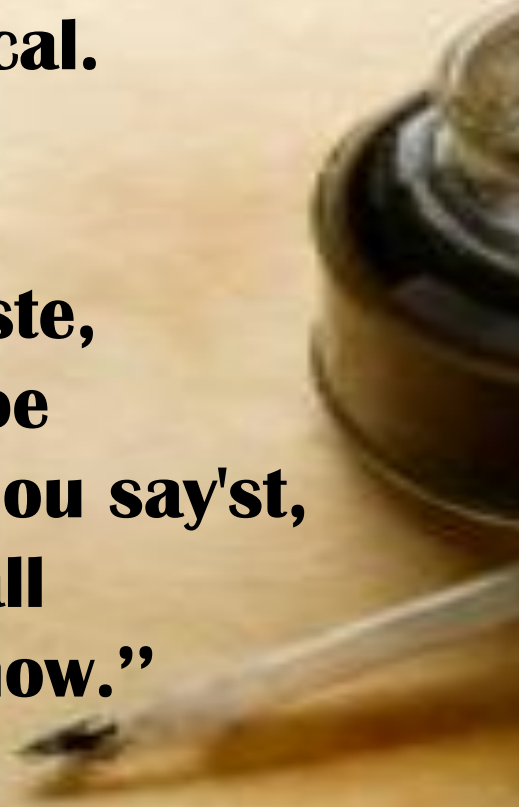
Epic – the most ambitious kind of poem. An epic presents the great deeds of a heroic figure or group of figures. The form is classical, starting with Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and finds an outpouring in English mostly in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Mock-heroic – the form is similar to the epic but deals with comical themes, usually overblown for satirical effect. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is considered the best example.



Ode – an elaborate and elevated lyric poem, extending over quite a few stanzas, and addressed to a person or thing or to an abstraction, such as love or melancholy. In its more straightforward form it merely praises the subject, but can at times be philosophical.


Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1820):
'When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'



Pastoral – means dealing with the life of shepherds and shepherdesses. Pastoral poetry presents a peaceful, rural world far removed from the corruption of contemporary life. The world of nature is always idealised whereas the urban life is ridiculed. Pastoral can also be a theme.

Milton's 'Lycidas':

**'Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never-sear,
I com to pluck your Berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime.'**



Sonnet – a fourteen line poem. There are two types: the Italian (Petrarchan) has an octave and a sestet; the English (Shakespearian) has three quatrains and a couplet. The rhyme scheme is regular and the metre is iambic pentameter. Most deal with love but their themes can be diverse.

Verse epistle – a poem that is actually a letter written in verse, dealing with moral or philosophical themes. The poet is often responding to a critic.

Pope's 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot' (1735):

**Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said,
Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
The dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:**