Poetry Terms and Devices

English 12

There are several ways to look at poetry. One can read it

1. Simply for pleasure (the best way!)
2. With a subjective response (with emotion)
3. With an objective response (without emotion or bias)
4. As something to deconstruct

The first thing we normally experience is a **subjective or emotional response**. We feel touched or sad, we feel elated, inspired or angry. We laugh or we giggle. All of these reactions are valid and also insightful. Although we often do not initially know why we feel these ways, they are a hint into the **meaning**, **tone** and **mood** of the poem. If we begin to explore what **form**, **diction** or **style** has created this feeling, we begin the process of ***deconstruction***.

Try to look at poetry from three angles.

1. **Meaning or content**: What is the poem about? What is its theme? What tone, mood and voice is created ? Who is the speaker? The audience?
2. **Form**: Is there an overall form to the poem? Is it a classical and well-known form or a contemporary free-verse? What is the meter or rhythm? What things create the internal structure of the poem? Look at rhyme and rhythm.
3. **Style**: How has the author created the effect of the poem? What words were chosen that create rhyme or rhythm. What devices are used? How does the author manipulate the connotation of language?

**FORM**

Overall:

**Ballad** – a narrative poem, usually short and simple, originally intended to be sung

**Ballad Stanza** – a quatrain of alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines rhyming abcb

**Blank Verse** – unrhymed iambic pentameter

**Epic** – an extended narrative poem, exalted in style and heroic in theme

**Epigram** –a short, usually witty statement, graceful in style and ingenious in thought

**Epitaph** – originally referring to an inscription in verse on a tombstone, the term now also refers to a poem or a part of a poem that expresses respect, and occasionally disrespect, for the dead. Some epitaphs are humorous.

**Free Verse** – verse lacking end rhyme, regular rhythm, or regulated stanza and line length. Instead it relies on natural speech rhythms

**Lyric** – a brief music-like poem about nature, love or death expressing strong emotions or thoughts. (Note: the term “lyrics” is used to describe the words of a song)

**Monologue** – an extended speech by one person

*Dramatic Monologue* - a poem written as a speech by a narrator addressing a silent audience

*Soliloquy* – an extended speech in which a character alone on stage expresses his thoughts

*Stream of Consciousness* – a depiction of the thoughts and feelings which flow, with no apparent logic, through the mind of a character

**Ode** – a longer lyric poem having a serious subject and dignified style, often addressed to some person, natural creature or object. Ex. Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn”

**Pastoral** – a brief poem that focuses on scenes from rural or pastoral life

**Sonnet** – a lyric poem consisting of fourteen lines, usually with a complicated rhyme pattern

*Elizabethan/Shakespearean Sonnet* – consists of three quatrains (stanzas of four lines, rhyming ABAB CDCD EFEF) followed by a rhyming couplet (GG) Typically the quatrains establish the theme and the couplet closes the poem with a main point or paradoxical observation.

*Petrarchan/Italian Sonnet* – consists of an octave (rhyming ABBA ABBA) and a sestet (rhyming CDE CDE) This sonnet often presents a problem in the octave and the answer in the sestet.

Internal:

**Chorus:** see refrain

**Couplet:** two successive lines of rhyming verse having the same number of feet

U /

**Iambic Pentameter:** five iambic feet (U/) per line (see meter) Ex. Control (x 5)

**Internal Rhyme:** rhyme that occurs within a single line

Ex. When you’re lying *awake*, with a dismal *headache,* and repose is taboo’d by anxiety,

I conceive you may *use*, any language *you choose* to indulge in, without impropriety

* From Gilbert and Sullivan

**Meter:** a system for identifying and measuring the rhythmic pattern of a poem according to its stressed and unstressed syllables. Stresses syllables are marked with a **/** and unstressed syllables are marked with a **U**.

Ex. U / U / U / U / U /

I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (Shakespeare – in Iambic Pentameter)

U / U U /

Iambic: control Anapestic: contradict

/ U / U U

Trochaic: stupid Dactylic: clumsiness

/ /

Spondaic: snow storm

**Octave:** an eight-line poem or stanza

**Prologue:** an opening section of longer work that may establish theme, situation, moral point etc.

**Quatrain:** a stanza consisting of four lines

**Refrain:** line or lines repeated at intervals during a poem or music

**Rhyme:** repetition of similar or duplicate sounds at regular intervals, usually the end sounds of words at the ends of lines of verse

**Rhyme Scheme:** the arrangement of rhymes in a unit of verse

**Rhythm:** sense of movement of language due to stressed and unstressed syllables

**Sestet:** a poem or stanza of six lines

**Stanza**: a group of lines of verse (poetry)

STYLE

**Figurative Devices** – devices that add meaning, imagery, emphasis or contrast

Definition Example

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Allusion |  |  |
| Antithesis | Directly opposing ideas within a grammatically balanced structure. | The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity (Yeats) |
| Apostrophe |  |  |
| Aside |  |  |
| Comic Relief |  |  |
| Connotation |  |  |
| Epiphany |  |  |
| Euphemism |  |  |
| Extended Metaphor |  |  |
| Hyperbole |  |  |
| Imagery |  |  |
| Oxymoron |  |  |
| Paradox |  |  |
| Pun |  |  |
| Symbol |  |  |

Aural Devices – devices that appeal to the sense of sound

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Alliteration |  |  |
| Assonance |  |  |
| Cacophony |  |  |
| Consonance |  |  |
| Dissonance |  |  |
| Euphony |  |  |
| Onomatopoeia |  |  |
| Repetition |  |  |