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EDUTECH

# POETRY MADE EASY

SECONDARY SCHOOL POETRY NOTES | DON.N

# Poetry

Poetry is the study of poems and the poetic language. A poem is a creative composition usually written in verse and that uses diction, imagery and economy of words to communicate.

TEACHER: What is poetry?

It is not easy to say what exactly poetry is. But poetry explores the possibility of language more vividly than prose. In poetry language is used in a powerful ways.

BETT: But then sir, what is poetry?

TEACHER: Why sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is, but it is not easy to tell what it is.

Poetry expresses language more powerfully than prose. Poetry can be compared to a palace if prose is a house. So just as a palace is more than a house, but it must be a house at least so also poetry is more than prose but it must still be language at least.

## Definition of Terms

A poet is someone who writes poems. The voice speaking in a poem is called the persona. What the persona refers to or talks to in a poem would be the subject and the issue that is being talked about or being raised is the subject matter or theme.

In many cases the voice speaking in the poem or the persona is different from the poet. The persona can be a female voice denouncing men but the writer of the poem is male.

## The girl next door by G.R. Lazarus

She was the girl next door

Beautiful booming and shy

Our interaction was measured

Our chemistry guarded

But she was curious and hideous

Then she was of age and I married

But more lustful and hideous

- By G.R Lazarus

In the poem above the poet is Lazarus. The subject of the poem is the girl next door because the persona is referring to her. The subject matter or theme of the poem is love/lust because the persona is attracted to the girl next door and although he later gets married to someone else he still sees her. The persona in the poem is a man who neighbours the girl (she was the girl next door). Remember the persona is different from Lazarus, the poet.

### Lapobo by Cliff Lumbwa

Lapobo,

Tall but not too tall

Short but not too short

She is of medium height

Lapobo

Her teeth are not as ash

Nor the colour of maize flour

Her teeth are as white as fresh milk

The whiteness of her teeth

When I think of her Lo!

Makes food drop from my hand

Lapobo

Black but not too black

Brown but not too brown

Her skin colour is just between black and brown

Lapobo

Her feet have no cracks

Her palms are smooth and tender to touch

Her eyes—Ho! They can destroy anybody

The structure of the poem refers to how the lines in a poem are arranged. For example, a poem can have four stanzas and each stanza can carry five lines. In some cases like in this poem by Lumbwa, the

structure of the poem is made to resemble a picture of a beautiful woman whose features are well arranged.

In this poem the poet is Cliff Lumbwa, the persona is a lover who admires Lapobo (Lapobo, black but not too black), the subject is Lapobo (Lapobo, her teeth are white as fresh milk), subject matter is love—the persona loves Lapobo (Her eyes—ho! They can destroy anybody)

### Clementine by Okot P'Bitek

Ocol is no longer in love with the old type  
He is in love with a modern girl  
The name of the beautiful one is Clementine

Brother when you see Clementine  
The beautiful one aspires  
To look like a white woman

Her lips are red-hot like glowing charcoal  
She resembles the wild cat  
That has dipped its mouth in blood

Her mouth is like raw meat  
It looks like open ulcers  
Like the mouth of an ogre

Tina dusts powder on her face  
And it looks so pale  
She resembles the wizard  
Getting ready for the midnight dance

## Questions

Identify the structure, the persona, the poet, the subject and the subject matter of the poem.

### Rhythm in Poetry

Rhythm in poetry is achieved through repetition of words or sounds.

Rhyme is the repetition of sounds at the end of lines in a poem. This repetition can be in form of a scheme where it forms a pattern that runs across the poem or just in a few lines. E.g.

They said we should be honest

And taught us to be the best

In staying pure and chaste

But I feel and look like a guest

Because here, to be best

Is to be corrupt with zest

In this poem the end sounds /est/ has been repeated several times and therefore the poem has rhyme. When identifying rhyme only sounds should be considered not words. The last two sounds whether they constitute a syllable or not. E.g. –est in best, /eid / in made, /et/ in set. A long sound is considered as a single sound and must therefore be attached to another before deciding if it rhymes or not. E.g.

The words bee, see and tea do not rhyme although they all end with /i: / but the words dear, seer, fear and tear rhyme because they end with two distinct sounds /ia/.

Sometimes words rhyme although they have different spellings, so it is important to only consider how words are pronounced and not written. For example, the words day, weigh, grey and bouquet rhyme

for they all end with the /ai/ sounds as in /dei/ /wei/ /grei/ and /bukei/ but they have different spellings at the end.

When a poem has a few words that rhyme then the style in the poem will be use of rhyming words e.g.

We suffer from normalcy  
And ignorance in our diplomacy  
We ought to find normal boring  
Life should not get comfortable  
Too much comfort kills

In this poem there is use of rhyming words i.e. diplomacy and normalcy but the poem has not rhyme scheme.

Internal rhyme refers to use of rhyming words within a line of a poem if the line is dived into two clauses and they all end with the same sound e.g.

Although they set a target, it was not met

So she devised a different structure, amidst the troubled future

Rhyme scheme is a pattern that is created by repetition of sounds at the end of lines to create rhythm. The scheme can be regular or irregular depending on whether the next set of sounds can be predicated or not. Letters of the alphabet are used to represent sounds in a rhyme scheme. A rhyme scheme is written in a flowing manner without uses of commas or any other punctuation.

This the debt I pay (a)

Just for one riotous day (a)

Year of regret and grief (b)

Sorrow without relief (b)

Pay it, I will to the end (c)

Until the grave, my friend (c)

Gives me a true release (d)

Gives me the clasp of peace (d)

Slight was the thing I bought (e)

Small was the debt I thought (e)

Poor was the loan at best (f)

God! But the interest (f)

The rhyme scheme in the poem above will be aabbccddeeff this rhyme scheme is a regular one because we can easily predict the next sound to be gg. This rhyme scheme creates musicality in the poem and also reinforces the meanings of the words that rhyme.

Alliteration involves the repetition of initial consonant sounds in close proximity in order to create rhythm, for example,

She sang a sad song or They lasted longer than they had last time

Consonance on the other hand involves repetition of consonant sounds present at the middle or at the end of words e.g.

He fought and thought about it or She had talked about it a lot

### Exercise

Describe the use of alliteration and consonance in the poem below.

#### Hague

The gloomy gallant faces

Stare sadly at their fate

The silent voices so eloquent

Begging for justice as Jesus justified

'No love between neighbours

Is the biggest sin on earth.'

## Assonance in poetry

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in words that follow each other closely in a poem usually to create musicality.

### Question

Describe assonance in the poem below.

### Politics

All his life James had thanked her

Pleading heaving and leaning on false fortified force

Filth sickly and sinful to her hateful eyes

Booing him she looked good—sly fly and likely to puke

She had slept with him and borne him a boy

The boy was buoyant and young

I am their only son and they are rival politicians

### IMAGERY

Imagery in poetry is the use of Figurative language or language that create mental pictures of situations. Such mental pictures are created by the following styles:

Metaphor which is the direct reference to something using the quality of something else in order to show that they share such a trait. E.g. Joseph is a lion. To show that Joseph is as strong/dangerous/brave etc as a lion.

Simile is making a comparison of two things using words like as...as, like, akin to etc e.g. she sung like an angel.

Symbolism refers to the use of objects or things in a poem that have meaning outside the poem. For example a snake is generally considered to be an embodiment of evil and trickery; whiteness a symbol of purity, blood a symbol of violence and death etc. when such things are used in a poem they create symbolism.

Personification refers to giving human qualities to animals and things like plants or stones. A tree whispering, a stone crying, an elephant talking etc.



### Exercise

Describe imagery in the poem below.

He toiled from dawn to dusk for a piece of silver  
He was a lioness in the hunt for meat  
Many days the needs grew as the muscles moaned  
Six pack abs, triceps and biceps winked  
His lean body mysterious like an aphrodisiac  
Was a source of lustful admiration to the master's wife  
who wished her husband had such a body  
Yet the husband was full of silver  
She did not wish her husband to lose the silver  
She wanted the lean body and the silver  
But it seemed it was difficult to have both

The silver in the poem is used symbolically to represent wealth or money. The man is said to be a lioness which means he was very brave and determined as a lioness usually is when it wants to kill a big game. The six pack abs, biceps and triceps are said to wink which would be personification to show that they were tempting and charming. Also the muscles moaning is personification. His lean body mysterious like an aphrodisiac—this is a simile which shows how sexually attractive the man was.

### Irony in Poetry

Irony in poetry occurs when there is a contradiction between what the reader expects and what happens in the poem.

Describe irony in the poem below.

They Ran Out of Mud by Miriam Were

There is a little hut  
Built across from here  
They've mudded two walls  
And the rest stands unmade  
For they ran out of mud

There is a deep gully  
Running along the road  
They have filled it halfway  
And the rest is still gaping  
For they ran out of mud

There is a pot y the alter  
That they began to mould  
They finished the base  
But the neck remains undone  
For they ran out of mud

Mud! Mud!  
Who can find mud  
Maybe if it were gold  
Someone would

Answer

Mud is commonplace—it is ubiquitous and hence a lame excuse for not finishing to mud the walls, or fill the gully or complete moulding the alter. The persona suggests that if it was gold which is very expensive they could have found it but not mud. This shows that the workers are very lazy and give

inexplicable excuses to hide their laziness. It is thus ironical that they have run out of mud but if it were gold they could have found it.

### The Beard

In the pulpit he swayed and turned  
Leant forward, backward,  
To the right: to the left  
His solemn voice echoed;  
Lowly the congregation followed  
“Do you love your neighbour?”  
Meekly they bow at his keen eye.  
Now examining a grey head  
Heaving under her sobs  
His heart leapt assured—  
“Her sins weigh on her”  
So with her he chat outside;  
“Weep not child, you are pardoned.”  
“But, Sir, your beard conjured up  
The spirit of my dead goat!”

#### Question

Describe irony in the poem above.

The lady cries and the preacher thinks that it is because her sins weigh on her so he talks to her and thinks that by her repentance she has been pardoned. But in reality the woman was weeping because she saw the preacher's beard which conjured up memories of her dead goat.

## Satire in Poetry

Satire is a stylistic device where a persona uses a mocking language to criticise people, things or situations. The poet might create characters at whom we can laugh, especially by depicting them in a ridiculous way.

Satire is mainly used to expose the wrong or foolish deeds or beliefs of a person or society.

### Spoiling Our Celebrations

When last Jamuhuri day

The ceremonial flag stuffs were laid in our streets

It was soon discovered

Twenty of the new flags had been stolen

“We fear,” said the council

that if the theft continue

the whole of the Jamuhuri celebrations

may be ruined

We only recently acquired this new set

Of one thousand from the government

Each cost sh1000, we spent sh 1,000,000 on all

Police are searching for the thieves

The flags which are six feet by four

Are not being stolen for display

They are probably used as rags

Or bedcovers by beggars

This is misusing a national emblem

In an undignified manner

What a shame that beggars in their beds

Are not dignified with their bedcovers

Question

Describe satire in the poem above.

The persona is mocking the government for putting so much emphasis on the dignity of the flag as a national emblem but ignoring the wants of the poor and beggars who have no beddings and have now resorted to stealing the flags for this purpose. It is funny that the government officials talk about indignity of the beggars when they actually have been abandoned with no self dignity by the government.

I Went to Church

I went to church today

Yes I went and prayed for all

Friends and foes alike

Dead and those alive

I also prayed hard

For the soul of that soldier

Who got shot

Fighting for our motherland

While I shot hot life into his wife

And I prayed to God too

That I live long

To go and pray again

Question

Describe satire in the poem above

The poet uses the poem to ridicule church goers. That some of them go there to cover up their sins and do not really go with an aim to repent and worship. The persona thinks of carrying on with his adulterous behaviour which will keep him coming to church. He says he prays for the soldier who got shot while the persona was shooting hot life into his wife.

Western Civilization

Sheets of tin nailed to post

Driven in the ground

Make up the house

Some rags complete

The intimate landscape

The sun slanting through the cracks

Welcome the owner

After twelve hours of slave

Labour

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Fair weather

Wet weather

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Old age comes early

A mat on the dark nights

Is enough when he dies

Gratefully

Of hunger

Question

Describe Satire in the above poem.

The poet mocks western civilisation. The received wisdom is that western civilisation is always associated with exotic modern things and ways of living but the persona in his quest for western civilisation experiences hardships working on hot and rainy days until he ages quickly living in a shanty house. This is the darker side of the civilisation that many people go through and that the persona knows well.

## Mood Attitude and Tone in Poetry

Mood refers to the feelings you get when you read a poem or the atmosphere that surrounds events in a poem and that could influence how the reader or the audience feels after reading or listening to the poem.

A poem that centres on a funeral/death will certainly have a sorrowful or sad mood, whereas, one that centres on a wedding or any celebration of an achievement should have a happy, contented or jovial mood.

Attitude refers to the feelings that the persona has towards the subject the persona is talking about. For instance, in the poem the persona may describe someone who is corrupting children and oppressing people using words like disgusting, blemish, rogue etc. We can define attitude into two:

- i) The poet's attitude towards his subjects (what he is writing about)
- ii) A poet may choose to write about attitudes that are not his. His subjects (characters in his poem) can have their own attitudes towards one another or towards a certain issue e.g. in the poem, 'Building the Nation (9) what is the driver's attitude towards the PS? Sometimes a poet may show disapproval without using negative words. In the poem, 'Cow for breakfast'(16) the author disapproves his subject without using negative words instead he makes us laugh at him. This is called satire. Satire is the mocking or ridiculing or ridiculing people and their characteristics to expose their foolishness and weaknesses. In the poem, cow for breakfast (16) greed is satirized without being mentioned. In satire the poet attacks indirectly.

The attitude therefore would be resentful or hateful or even malicious. If the persona uses polite

and loving terms to describe an event or a person like charming, amiable, kind etc. Then the attitude of the persona towards the subject is approving, welcoming, sympathetic etc. It is important to use the persona's words in determining his or her attitude towards the subject.

Tone refers to the nature of the voice used in a poem. It is important to know what the poem is talking about in order to identify the tone of the persona. The tone of the persona is closely influenced by the attitude towards the subject and the general mood of the poem. For instance, if the persona loved the subject and his attitude towards it was loving; if the subject is dead, then the tone would be sad, if the subject is around it might be loving tone etc. If the persona is a father talking to a son in a polite way then the tone can be patronizing.

Adjectives for tone in poetry

Sarcastic remorseful obnoxious dull guilty alarmed fresh dreary light startled sadistic happy heavy horrified secular sad quizzical/inquisitive disgruntled political narcissistic sardonic/ mocking hurtful social devoted foolish loving liberal/democratic bitter/ sour sympathetic mysterious conservative angry intelligent/enlightened/clever religious resentful/hateful irritated spiteful prayerful annoyed suspicious/doubtful melancholic



## Attitude

Joyous angry sad cold Warm agreeable contemptuous calm delightful kind trustful sadistic cheerful  
playful appreciative fearful resentful

## Mood

Serene/calm respectful happy fearful sorrowful sombre melancholic jovial reflective/meditative  
angry nostalgic thoughtful

## Question

Read the poem below and establish its mood, tone and attitude.

### A Pregnant School Girl

He paid her seat in the matatu

And walked away:

As he disappeared in the city crowd

All her dreams vanished

One more passenger squeezed in

And lit a cigarette

She opened the window

And spat cold saliva out

As the cigarette smoke intensified

She wanted to vomit

She remembered the warm nights

When she was her man's pet

She remembered the promises

The gifts, the parties, the dances

She remembered her classmates at school

Who envied her expensive shoes

Lipstick, wrist watch, handbag

Which she brought to school

After a weekend with him

The future stood against her

Dark like a night without the moon

And silent like the end of the world

As the matatu sped away from the city

She began to tremble with fear

Wondering what her parents would say

With all hope gone

She felt like a corpse

Going home to be buried

The mood of this poem is sad because when you read you feel sad and a bit sympathetic for the pregnant school girl who has been used by her lover and dumped and who now feels like a corpse with no future.

The attitude of the persona towards the school girl is sympathetic. The persona feels sympathy for the girl and that is why he dwells on the consequences of her condition by saying the future stood against her; she began to tremble with fear etc.

The tone of the persona is calm/indifferent because the persona remains calm throughout the poem only showing a bit of sympathy for the girl's condition but not getting emotionally involved in the life of the girl.

## Dramatisation in Poetry

Introduction by Richard Nturu

Perhaps it was his ugly shirt

The missing button

The unassertive collar;

Perhaps it was his knotty hair

That boasted little acquaintance with the comb

Or maybe it was his usualness

--one more impersonal handshake

Along the constant street—

That induced the functional smile

And operated the mechanical handshake.

His name didn't help either;

Mugambo Mugenge—you'd hear the name

In the out-patient's attendance queue;

Not in the current telephone directory

You certainly needed prompting

I said he was an old-time friend

But you continued to wave to passing cars;

I added that he was a high placed man

And you promptly too you cue  
--"A university teacher, author of several works"—  
"RE-E-E-ally? Er-um-oh..."  
And you became word and emotional perfect  
Like a dog that mistakes a thief for a visitor  
And remembers to bark at his mater's coughing,  
You renewed and pumped the handshake  
--reshaped your mouth to a proper smile  
--recalled his famous public talk  
That you had regretfully missed...  
And observed, thoughtfully,  
How unlike his photograph he looked

You were tuned—  
Delved deep into his latest novel  
And wondered why his main characters  
Do not walk on the solid earth  
And fail to effect living communication  
You'd have rambled on, no longer looking at him  
But he quipped: "They are in good company!"  
And was about to add when you knowledgeably interrupted  
"Society is a market stall  
And men goods on display  
Where the label is more important than the labelled  
And price more fascinating than the value."

We parted hoping to meet again

You went away rehearsing his name

But probably unremembering his face

### Questions

1. How would you say the following lines?

- a) Perhaps it was his ugly shirt.
- b) Perhaps it was his knotty hair.
- c) That induced a functional smile.
- d) But you continued to wave to passing cars.
- e) But probably unremembering his face

PRACTICE EXERCISE

Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

"Tears in Heaven"

by Eric Clapton and Will Jennings.

Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?

Would it be the same if I saw you in heaven?

I must be strong and carry on 'cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.

Would you hold my hand if I saw you in heaven?

Would you help me stand if I saw you in heaven?

I'll find my way through night and day 'cause I know I just can't stay here in heaven.

Time can bring you down, time can bend your knees.

Time can break the heart, have you beggin' "please," 'beggin' "please."

Beyond the door there's peace, I am sure.

And I know there'll be no more tears in heaven.

Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?

Would you be the same if I saw you in heaven?

I must be strong and carry on 'cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.

'Cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.

- a) Describe any one sound pattern. (2 mks)
- b) Which line would demand for a definite tone variation? Why? (2mks)
- c) Explain the meaning of the first line, stanza three. (2mks)
- iv) Explain the meaning of each of the following expressions:- (4marks)
  - a) A close shave.

b) A snake in the grass.

c) To pass the buck.

d) To be a lame duck.

### 3. POETRY (20 MARKS)

Q. Read the following poem and answer the questions which follow.

#### The Brewing Night

It was that moment night when I heard it,

Yes, I heard it all.

That night sleep deserted me;

So I lay awake, sleep in all my senses.

It was long past midnight.

Time dragged on, the clock couldn't chime / tick

The dog wouldn't bark, nor the baby cry;

It was a moonless and windless night;

The whole universe seemed to stagnate

In dark, dreary, dead slumber.

What was amiss? I knew not.

The dead quietness and solitude

Seemed to be eternal - but

Waves of babbling and muttering

Began to trickle through the street;  
the air;  
Hummed footsteps echoed through the street  
What was amiss? I knew not.

I pulled my curtain to see,  
And then I saw it all  
Heavy boots, thick uniforms and solid helmets  
Dimly discernible under the pale street lamp  
The atmosphere stood stiff and solid with  
Brawny-faced and clenched - teeth determination  
Thus the cauldron had boiled that sleepless night

The night had pulsed with passions high and wild;  
The streets were stained with new portraits framed;  
The wheel changed hands and new plans were filed.  
The morning saw the country strangely dressed  
And every one attended the rally  
To hear the eloquence from a strange face,  
And everyone quietly nodded and said, 'yes'.

Questions.

1. The night was unusual as explained in stanza one and two.  
Identify three things that explain this night.

(3mks)



2. Explain the meaning of the following phrases as used in the poem:
  - a) In dark, dreary, dears slumber. (1mk)
  - b) Waves of babbling and muttering. (1mk)
  - c) Heavy boots, thick uniforms and solid Helmets (1mk)
3. How appropriate is the tittle of the poem? (2mks)
4. From this poem Identify three figures of speech or elements of style and show how effective they are.
5. Comment on the mood depicted in the poem. (2mks)
6. What is the significance of the last stanza. (4mks)

## ANSWERS

1. The three things
  - i The persona couldn't sleep / was alert throughout the night
    - ii. Time couldn't move / dragged
    - iii. It was very quiet / silent / unusually silent. (3mks)
2. Meaning of phrases:
  - a) The silent night was scaring / frightening
  - b) He saw soldiers / army men / armored men.
  - c) He heard people talking
3. The title is appropriate because it talks about the change over of power / change in the making and materialize - govt. change. Any 2 marks
4. Stylistic devices:
  - i) Imagery - 'sleep deserted me' it shows vividly or visualize how awake the persona was.
  - ii) Hyperbole / exaggeration - 'the whole universe seemed to stagnate' it shows the extend of silence or quietness.
  - iii) Personification - "a distant roaring of heavy trucks" The atmosphere stood still". It brings out the reality of the false movement.
  - iv) Alliteration - "..... dark dreary dead ....." it emphasizes the anxiety of the persona during the silent night.  
Metaphor e.g. "Streets were stained with new portraits framed" they vividly describe the change of government.
  - v) Repetition - "What was a miss" shows the anxiety ..... (6mks)
5. Mood
  - i) Tense

ii) Anxiety

iii) Excitement      Any one (Double tick)

(2mks)

6. Significance of the last stanza.

i) It shows the culmination of the people's expectations / change of our government / change over ceremony or celebration and people's satisfaction or acceptance of the change.      (4mks)

3. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow:

### Footpath

Path – let ... Leaving home, leading out

Return my mother to me.

The sun is sinking and darkness coming,

Hens and cocks are already inside and babies drowsing,

Return my mother to me.

We do not have firewood and I have not seen the lantern,

There is no more food and the water has run out

Path – let me pray, you return my mother to me.

Path of the small hills, path of the small stones

Path of slipperiness, path of the mud

Return my mother to me.

Path of papyrus, path of the rivers

Path of small forests, path of reeds

Return my mother to me

Path, I implore you, return my mother to me

Path of the crossways, path that branches off,

Path of the stringing shrubs, path of the bridge  
 Return my mother to me  
 Path of the open, path of the valley  
 Path of the steep climb, path of the downward slope  
 Return my mother to me.  
 Children are drowsing about to sleep,  
 Darkness is coming and there is no firewood,  
 And I have not found the lantern;  
 Return my mother to me.

Stella Ngatho.

Questions:

- (i) Who is the persona in this poem? Why? (2mks)
- (ii) Identify and explain the effectiveness of any two stylistic devices. (6mks)
- (iii) What is the tone of the poem?  
(2mks)
- (iv) What is the mood of the poem? (2mks)
- (v) Comment on the title of the poem. (2mks)
- (vi) Explain the meaning of the following lines in the poem:
  - (a) Path – let ..... leaving home, leading out.  
Return my mother to me,  
  
The sun is sinking and darkness coming..... (3mks)
  - (b) Path of the cross – ways, path that branches off  
Path of the stinging shrubs, path of the bridge  
  
Return my mother to me. (3mks)

**ANSWERS**

1. (i) The persona is a child – perhaps an older child – whose mother is away. The child is longing for her return. 'Return my mother to me'. (2mks)
- (ii) Repetition – 'Path' is repeated severally, to create the tone of the poem.  
Personification – the paths are personified, the speaker begs them to return the mother.

*(Expect the two plus any other style well illustrated + the effectiveness 3marks for each.*

*No mark lack of one of these).*

- (iii) The poem is in a pleading / imploring / beseeching tone. '..Path, I implore you, return my mother to me. (2mks)
- (iv) The poem is in a sad mood. One feels sad at the concern and despair of the child who pleads for the mother's return. (2mks)
- (v) The title leads us to the events in the poem. The persona addresses the footpath requested it to return the mother. (2mks)
- (vi)(a) The persona requests all the paths / she eagerly longs to see her mother to come back through the same paths she departed on. (3mks)
- (b) The persona mentions different types of paths, the paths he / she imagines the mother took on her way home to give back to the mother. (3mks)

4. Read the poem below and answer the question that follows:

### Western Civilization

Sheets of tin nailed to posts

Driven in the ground

Make up the house

Some rags complete

The ultimate landscape

The sun slanting through the cracks

Welcomes the owner.

After twelve hours of slave labour

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Fair weather

Wet weather

Breaking rock

Shifting rock

Old age comes early

A mat on dark rights

Is enough when he dies

Gratefully

Of hunger

Agostiriho Neto

a) i) Why does old age come early to the owner?

2mks

ii) Why should the owner die gratefully?

2mk

(b) What is implied in ; " The sun slanting through the crack welcomes the owners"

(c) What is the irony in the poem?

4mks

(d) How has rhythm been brought out in the poem. Explain and show its effect.

4mks

(e) Describe the poem ordinary language .

4mks

(f) What is the meaning of :

“ sheets of tin nailed to posts”

2mks

## ANSWERS

1. a) i) He’s meant to work very hard and in dilapidated conditions - ‘twelve hours of slave labour, breaking rock and shifting it. 2mks
- ii) He’d prefer death to living. There seems to be more peace in death than in being alive because of the bad conditions of living. 2mks
- b) The shanties in which they stay are not well covered by the sun rays penetrate through the gaps to wake up ‘the owner’.  
2mks
- c) The title is ironical, whereas civilization is meant to be positive, it is not in this poem since it appears to have brought a lot of suffering to the owner.  
Its also ironical that the poet should talk of dying gratefully. People prefer death to life.  
Expect both points well explained
- d) Rhythm has been brought out by use of repetition  
“Breaking rock  
  
Shifting rock  
  
This is repeated to show the cycle of the working by the owner. It brings about the mood in the poem.  
4mks
- e) In the poem “the owner” – a black who lives in a shanty made of tin and putting on rags is made to work in a construction twelve hours in a day. This is done irrespective of the weather conditions – in good or bad weather. This causes him to age quickly and die of hunger. 4mks
- f) It means shanties constructed from iron sheets nailed on posts. 2mks

5. Poetry

Read the following poem and answer the questions which follow.

The masqueraders

When the crocodile crunches its prey  
Is it pity or pain that moves it to tear?  
When a dog crushes bones to nothingness,  
Is it remorse that makes it weep?  
Brides weep on their wedding days.....)

In this unsung and songless age,  
We wear masks during the day,  
We wear ourselves inside out,  
To avoid the prying rays of the sun  
That focus our action into question marks.

On this turbulent and shoreless sea,  
We huddle together like rejected spirits  
Revealing our essence to the shy moon  
Like night-runners that have no shame  
Betraying their secrets to the virgin sky  
We wear ourselves the right side out  
To show the stars that we grudge the sun.  
Even our relationship with our neighbours  
It punctuated with calculated apologies  
Our accomplices proudly quip "Is all right"  
We are not satisfied with reality  
Our natural port is artificiality  
In this unmourned unmorning age,  
We stand at dusk with downcast eyes.

(Like bats ready for the midnight flight)  
Swallowing flatteries and condoning pretences,  
Mortgaging our substance for our shadows,  
Even the destitutes embrace our plight  
They complete with glee to subsidize the rich  
Scorning the meaningless myth of the common man.

We love shadows  
    they are unreal  
We wear rubber teeth  
    they can't bite!  
We walk at night  
    to mingle with the dead.

We disregard the moon because it won't scream  
We regard our lives as an endless dream.

Richard Ntiru.

- (i) Who are the masqueraders? (2mks)  
(ii) What is the attitude of the poet towards the masqueraders?  
(2mks)  
(iii) Pick out three stylistic devices employed in the poem and explain their effectiveness in  
the poem. (6mks)  
(iv) What is the meaning of the following terms in ordinary language?  
Mortgaging our substance for our shadows,  
Even the destitutes embrace our plight: (3mks)  
We huddle together like rejected spirits  
Revealing our essence to the shy moon (3mks)  
(v) Give the meaning of Stanza 6 (lines 31 to 36). (2mks)  
(vi) What is the relationship between the persona and the subject of the poem. (2mks)

#### ANSWERS

##### 1. POETRY

- (i) The pretenders. People who want to live in pretences, they do not condone truth, prefer shadows to real beings i.e. are unrealistic. (2mks)



(ii) Scornful.

In the second last paragraph the poet seems to scorn the masqueraders by satirising their love for entopic things, things that would give satisfaction not for their worth but because they shield us from truth.

(iii) (a) Similes e.g. we huddle together like rejected spirits

Like night runners we have no shame

a) These give a clear picture of what the masqueraders are the poet does this by making use of things we encounter oftenly in society.

b) Rhetoric questions e.g. Is, it pity or pain that moves it to tears?, Is it remorse that makes it weep?. These questions involve the reader / audience in the performance. He's given an opportunity to jog his mind abit.

c) Satire – the poet satires the masqueraders in his quest to portray them as being unrealistic as revealed in the second last stanza and.. Brides weep on their wedding days --- etc this brings out the tone of the poem as being scornful.

Expect these three plus any other. 1mark for the style and another for the illustration. No mark for style without illustration and vice versa. If the effectiveness is lacking, no mark.

(iv) The masqueraders prefer shadows to our real beings because shadows can 'witness' all that they do and say without uttering anything. Those who have no money, food (the poor) have also taken up this mentality.

At night the masqueraders do all sorts of weird things because they know that it is not very bright – the moon doesn't generate as much light as the sun. (3mks)

(v) The masqueraders prefer things that don't have much significance to the significant such as shadows to real beings, rubber teeth to the real teeth and day to night since these don't place their actions in focus.

(2mks)

(vi) The persona is among the masqueraders. He looks at himself as part of the subject and that is why there is the extensive use of the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns for reference items e.g. our, me, etc.

(2mks)

## 6. POETRY

### THE OWL

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not stowed

Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof

Against the North wind; tired, yet so that rest

Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest  
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I  
All of the night was quite barred out except  
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,  
No merry note, nor cause of merriment  
But one telling me plain what I escaped  
And others could not, that night, as in I went

And salted was my food, and may response,  
Salted and sobered, too, by the birds voice  
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,  
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice

Edward Thomas.

1. The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is:  
Staved A  
Proof B  
Rest C  
Roof B

What is the rhyme scheme of the other stanzas?

6mks

2. What is the poet saying in stanzas 1 and 2? Explain in your own words. 2mks
3. Give any three stylistic devices used in the poem. Illustrate your answer. 6mks
4. What do you think is the relationship between the title and what the poet is saying? 2mks
5. Who is the persona in the poem? 1mks
6. What is the theme of the poem? 2mks
7. Describe the mood of the poem. 4mks
8. What other title do you think would be suitable for this poem? Give reason(s) 2mks

### ANSWERS

- |                    |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. i) Stanza 2 : C | Stanza 3: E | Stanza 4: F |
| D                  | C           | G           |
| C                  | A           | H           |
| D                  | C           | G           |
| 2mks               | 2mks        | 2mks        |

2. a) In stanza one, the poet is telling us the condition of his body after the journey ie very tired,  
not very hungry and not freezing from the cold.

- a) In stanza two, the poet is telling us how at the inn, his problems were catered for ie he was given food, a fire and a place to rest, and that during the night, it was very quiet except for the owl's cry.  
1mk

3. Stylistic devices used in the poem include:
- a) The rhyme scheme eg. 1mk
- |              |             |             |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Stanza 1 : A | Stanza 2: C | Stanza 4: E | Stanza 4: F |
| B            | D           | C           | G           |
| C            | C           | A           | H           |
| B            | D           | C           | G           |

b) Alliteration eg 1mk  
Had, heat (Stanza 1; line 2)

How, hungry (Stanza 2, line e)

Food, fire (Stanza 2 line 1)

c) Repetition e.g 1mk  
Salted - repeated in the last stanza to emphasize how the persona lost interest in the food

form the birds cry that reminded him of the poor and the soldiers out in the cold

that night without food.

4. 'The owl' is related to the poet's grievances ironically, ie inspite of the comfort he had received through food, fire and rest, the owls cry reminded him of the fate of the others he had escaped from up the hill, thus, taking away his appetite and comfort.  
1mk

5. A runaway soldier / captive Or the traveller

6. a) Escapism - the poet has run away from the others camped up the hill for his own safety. Or

b) Guilt - the poet ran away from the others to seek comfort at the inn, ironically, the owls

cry reminds him of what the others are going through and he suffers from

reproach (guilt)

Or any other suitable theme + illustration = 2mks

7. The mood is sentimental ie the poet's heart is reached out to the poor and others suffering in the open sky that he loses his comfort and appetite at the inn.  
4mks

8. The Runaway / The traveller 1mk  
- Because, he's run away from others / he's been travelling down the hill and from the description in stanza one we know what he's feeling like. 1mk
9. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow.

WHERE IS YOUR GOLDMINE?

Yes, tell us

Tell us where it is situated

Your goldmine that never runs dry

That feeds you with shining gold

To keep you in the millionaire city.

Tell us from where you mine your gold all day long

To make another stride away from the millionaire city

With the wake of everyday

Your eyes greedily fixed to the city ahead

The magnificent billionaire city.

Their eyes are down cast

Anger simmers in their dry

Sunken sockets

The eyes of the many

Whose lips are not in your favour

Whose curses are spat on you  
To whom your sight spells danger

Their common talk bears meaning  
How much do you get as a director?  
Their inflated estimate goes to twenty thousand shillings  
Tell us where twenty thousand shillings bought a limousine  
And built ten tourist hotels in the city  
Tell us when it bought a private plane  
Tell us when it built a multi-million mansion  
Yes, tell us.

Tell us where your goldmine is  
So that we can make an early gold rush  
So that we can join you in the millionaire city  
And never will our lips be against you  
Our curses on you shall fade  
As the hands of all shall dig into the earth  
To prospect for gold in plenty  
In the rush to millionaire city.

Questions:

- a) i) Who is being addressed in the poem? 2mks  
ii) What is the poet attitude towards the you? 2mks

- b) i) Identify two rhetoric questions and discuss their use in the poem. 4mks  
 ii) What is the effect of repetition in the poem? 4mks
- c) Identify and illustrate any two themes brought out in the poem. 4mks
- d) Explain the meaning of the following as used in the poem  
 i) Whose lips are not in your favour. 2mks  
 ii) Your goldmine that never runs dry

#### ANSWERS

- a) i) - A corrupt politician  
 - a corrupt civil servant  
 - a corrupt person in a government position  
 1 mk any of the above)
- He lives beyond his means or earnings. "tell us where 20,000 bought a Limousine".
- ii) - The poet is critical / scornful / satirical / bitter/ provocative towards the year.  
 1mk for identification)
- he asks him to show him where the goldmine is so that they can join in  
 1 mk for illustration
- total = 2mks
- b) i) 1. "Where is your goldmine?" 1mk  
 2. "How much do you earn as a director?" 1mk

Illustration.

1. It is used to effect ridicule and to express the poet's doubts / suspicion over the existence of a goldmine.
2. It also ridicules and expresses disgust at the 'you' in the poem. 1mk

**Total 4mks**

ii) Repetition: "Tell us....." 1mk

Illustration: It emphases (1mk) the poet's feelings of betrayal 1mk

And denial 1mk total 4mks

(NB: No mark if repeated line is not quoted.

c) Corruption (Greed / selfishness 1mk

2. Poverty / want / Envy / inequality: 1mk

the                      you                      is                      contrasted                      with





1. Read the poem and answer the questions which follow.

### THE MARKET WOMAN

The market woman  
Strong sun  
and the market woman in the shade  
of the mulemba

- Orange, my lady  
a nice little orange!

Light plays in the town  
its burning game  
of brightness and shade  
and life plays  
in worried hearts  
its game of blind-man's buff.

The market woman  
who sells fruit  
sells herself.

- My Lady  
orange, nice little orange!

Buy sweets oranges  
buy from me too the bitterness

of this torture  
of life without life

buy from me the childhood of the spirit  
this rosebud  
that did not open  
start still impelled to a beginning.

Orange, my lady!  
I exhausted the smiles  
with which I cried  
I no longer cry.  
And there goes my hopes  
as did the blood of my children  
mingled with the dust of roads  
buried on plantations  
and my sweat  
soaked in the cotton threads.

As effort was offered to  
the security of machines  
the beauty of tarmac roads  
of tall buildings  
comfort or ricy gentlemen  
happiness dispersed in towns  
and I  
became a part  
of the very problems of existence.

There go the oranges  
as I offered myself to alcohol  
to anaesthetize myself  
and stupefied myself to live.

I gave all.

Even my pain  
and the poetry of my naked breasts  
I gave to the poets.

Now I myself am selling me

Buy oranges!  
my lady!  
Take me to the markets of life  
My price is only one: - Blood.

Perhaps selling myself  
I possess my self  
- Buy oranges!

From Scared Hope by Agostino Neto,  
Tanzania Publishing House, 1974, 12 - 14

## QUESTIONS

- (a) Identify the three voices in this poem.  
3mks
- (b) What is the Poet's attitude to the market woman?  
2mks
- (c) What is the theme of the poem?  
3mks
- d) Describe the feeling of the market woman.  
3mks
- e) Identify the lines spoken by the persona in his role as an observer.  
3mks
- f) Explain the meaning of the following lines.  
6mks
- (i) I exhausted the similes  
With which I cried  
  
I no longer cry
- (ii) Even my pain  
and the poetry of my naked breasts  
  
I gave to the poets  
  
.....  
My price is only one: - Blood

## Answers

### The three voices

- The person who introduces the market woman
  - Market woman's voice calling to buyers
  - Market woman's inner voice of reflection
- b) Sympathetic / pities the market woman  
c) Suffering / exploitation / destitution  
d) Mood of anger, hurt feelings / defiant mood  
e) "The market woman/..... Mulemba"

- f) (i) The market woman has given up tactics of persuasion and self-pitying hope.  
She is now hardened person
- (ii) The market woman became the subject for poet's verses
- (iii) Her ventures are for survival.

2. Read the following poem and answer the questions that follow.

### THE SMILING ORPHAN

And when she passed away,

They came,

Kinsmen came,

Friends came,

Everybody came to mourn her.

Hospitalized for five months

The Ward was her world

Fellow patients her compatriots

The meager hospital supply-her diet

When she was dying

Her son was on Official Duty

The State demanded his Services.

Her only daughter, uneducated,

Sat by her  
Crying, praying, waiting for an answer  
From God far above  
Wishing, she spoke the language  
Figures in white-coats do understand.  
They matched, the figures did  
Stiff, numb and deaf, to the cries and wishes  
Of her dying mother.

As she was dying  
Friends and kinsmen TALKED of her  
How good, how helpful: a very practical woman.  
None reached her: they were too busy, there was no money,  
Who would look after their homes?  
Was it so crucial their presence?

But when she passed away, they came,  
Kinsmen came, friends hired cars to come,  
Neighbours gathered to mourn her,  
They ought to be there for the funeral  
So they swore.

The mourners shrieked out cries  
As they arrived in the busy compound of the dead.

Memories of loved ones no more  
Stimulated tears of many.

They cried dutiful tears for the deceased  
Now stretching their hands all over to help.  
The daughter looked at them  
With dry eyes, quiet, blank.  
The mourners pinched each other  
Shocked by the stone-heartedness  
Of the be-orphaned.

She sat: watching the tears soak their garments  
Or in the soil around them; wasted.

That night, she went to her love,  
In the freshly made emergency grass hut,  
And let loose all ties of the Conventional Dress she wore  
Submitting to the Great Power, she whispered:

‘Now.....  
You and I must know Now....  
Tomorrow you might never understand  
Unable to lick my tears.....’



And there was light  
In the darkness of the hut  
While outside  
The mourners cried  
Louder than the Orphan.

By Grace Birabwa Isharaza.

1. What is the poem about?  
(3mks)
2. Comment on the title of the poem.  
(2mks)
3. What is the attitude of the persona towards the mourners? Explain your answer.(4mks)
4. Paraphrase the message in the fourth stanza.  
(3mks)
5. Explain the following lines as used in the poem  
(2mks)
  - (i) They cried dutiful tears for the deceased.
  - (ii) And there was Light in the darkness of the hut
6. Comment on the tone of the poem  
(2mks)
7. Identify and illustrate two stylistic devices used in the poem.  
(4mks)

## Answers

1. - A woman who was sick and hospitalized  
- Was never visited by her relatives who claimed they were busy✓  
- Later the woman dies and ironically the relatives come in large numbers vowing that they cannot miss the burial✓  
- During the funeral her only daughter (who had stayed with her in hospital) seems unmoved and the relatives start backbiting her  
( Total 3 mks)

2. “The smiling orphan” has been used in reference to the illiterate daughter who had stayed in hospital with the mother but now is perceived as not being in mourning by the other mourners.

3. Sarcastic

“They had initially said that:-

Stanza 4 lines 3-5 how good .....

Stanza 7- line 1 mourned dutiful tears

He can see through their hypocrisy, initially they were not bothered but after her death they come in droves

- (Student must cite examples and explain their relevance to the attitude identified)

Mark 1 mark for identification, 1 for example and 1 for illustration

4. While the woman is in hospital suffering her relatives never bothered to visit her they pledged lack of time and money and they also said that there was no need for them to visit her at the hospital
5. i) Their tears were not genuine

- ii) She felt relieved- she had unburdened her grief (with her lover there's no condemnation)

6. Sarcastic/ satirical

- The mourners are satirized- they mourn louder than the bereaved

(Illus) stanza 8 last line 1 and 2

OR

Reproachful

- The persona condemns the mourners for assuming a self righteous attitude. They condemn the daughter who seems not to be mourning. The persona feels that their concern is rather belated

7. Repetition

----- they came

----- came

- To illustrate the fact that the mourners arrived for the funeral in large numbers

Rhetoric questions

- Would look after their homes?
- Was it crucial their presence?

Reveals the attitude of the mourners at the beginning; that they were not bothered

Symbolism

- there was light in the darkness  
Light to symbolize the relief she feels after unburdening herself to the lover

## Hyperbole

- Stanza 8..... their tears soak their garments. Enhances the satire – that the mourners cry much and we know that their grief isn't genuine

## Ellipsis

2<sup>nd</sup> last stanza (10)

Enhances suspense, allows imagination, and reveals the feelings of the orphan the strain she's been under e.t.c.

3. 3. Read the poem below and then answer the questions that follow.  
(15mks)

TO JAMES

Do you remember  
How you won  
That last race .....?  
How you flung your body  
At the start.....  
How your spikes  
Ripped the cinders  
In the stretch.....  
How you catapulted  
Through the tape.....  
Do you remember .....?  
Don't you think  
I lurched with you  
Out of those starting holes....?  
Don't you think  
My sinews tightened  
At those first  
Few strides....  
And when you flew into the stretch  
Was not all my thrill

of a thousand races in your blood....?

At your final drive

Through the finish line

Did not my shont

Tell of the

Triumphant ecstasy

Of victory....?

Live

As I have taught you

To run, Boy \_

It's a short dash

Dig your starting holes

Deep and firm

Lurch out of them

Into the straightaway

With all the power

That is in you

Look straight ahead

To the finish line

Think only of the goal

Run straight

Run high

Run hard

Save nothing

And finish  
With an ecstatic burst  
That carries you  
Hurtling  
Through the tape  
To victory .....

- a) What event is the speaker describing? Illustrate.  
(2mks)
- b) Explain how the person gets involved in the event he describes.  
(4mks)
- c) What is the relationship the persona and the 'you'? Illustrate.  
(4mks)
- d) Identify and illustrate any 2 stylistic features in this poem.  
4mks)
- e) Explain 'you catapulted'  
1mk

## Answers

- a) A race, running competition  
Illustration: - How you won that race  
  
How you captured through the tape e.t.c.
- b) 1 mk for identification 1 mk for illustration  
2 mks

i) He's a physically involved e.g. "lurched with" "As I have taught you" "you"

sinews tightened" - "My

2 mks

He's emotionally involved

e.g. "Was not all my thrill"

"Did not my shout tell of the triumphant ecstasy

2 mks

c) The relationship is that of:

- Instructor - Learner "The thrill of a thousand races in your blood"

- Father - Son

- Teacher - Student

"As I have taught you to run boy"

"Think only of the goal"

"Dig your starting holes deep and firm" e.t.c.

4 mks

b) Features of style:

i) Repetition

- Do you remember?

- Run

ii) Rhetorical questions

Do you remember?

How you won

That last race.....?



iii) Exaggeration

- A thousand races

Any two styles. 1 mk for  
identification 1 mk for illustration

c) You catapulted \_\_\_\_\_ accelerated/ shot through

4. Read the following oral poem and answer the questions that follow  
The Timi of Ede.

Huge fellow whose body fills an anthill

You are heavily pregnant with war.

All your body except your teeth is black.

No one can prevent the ape

From sitting on the brannh of a tree.

No one can dispute the throne with you.

No one can try to fight you.

One who shakes a tree trunk shakes himself.

We do not try to resist you.

The seeds of the Ayo game  
Do not complain of being shoved about.  
You are like death,  
Who plucks a man's eyeballs suddenly.  
You are like a big ripe fruit  
that falls on a child at midnight.

Fighting a battle in front  
You mark out the next battlefield behind.  
My lord , please give the world some rest.  
If one greets you there is also trouble.  
The fire of destruction is part of your baggage  
Wherever you go.

You kill your opponents gently,  
Like cutting a calabash in two.  
When the leopard kills,  
Its tail trails gently on the ground.  
Whenever you open your mouth wide,  
You swallow a hero.

(Source: Ulli Beier(ed), African Poetry, Cambridge University Press, 1966)

- (a) Classify the above poem.  
1mk
- (b) What images does the poet use to build up the character of Timi?  
6mks
- (c) What is the attitude of the speaker towards Timi?  
2mks
- (d) Identify the themes of the poem.  
4mks
- (e) Describe the mood of the poem.  
2mks
- (f) Mention any three aspects of performance that can be lost if this song is written down. 3mks
- (g) State any four functions of this song.  
2mks

## Answers

- a) A praise poem  $\frac{1}{2}$  it seeks to extol the military ✓  $\frac{1}{2}$  virtues of the leader or a political poem  
1 mk
- b) ..... metaphors..... Whose body fills an anthill ✓ 1.....you are heavily pregnant with war  
.... no one can prevent ape for sitting on the branch of a tree ✓ 1.... Show how invisible Timi is.  
  
.... Fire of destruction is part of your baggage showing how ✓ 1 destructive his ventures are  
  
Similes..... you kill your opponents gently, like cutting a calabash in two.....he's discrete in his deals..... ✓ 1  
  
Similes..... you are like a big ripe fruit..... You are like death ✓ 1

.....Proverbial streak..... one who shakes a tree trunk✓1  
shakes himself” ..... he’s invincible

- c) The attitude of the speaker.
- d) ..... Fear..... my lord, please give the world some rest.....  
awe.....✓1  
..... Mystery..... Fighting a battle in front✓1..... mark  
next behind

Any two

2 mks

- e) Themes: - Timi’s gallantry and efficiency in war

- i) Subjugation of the citizens to the leader✓1  
“We do not try to resist you”
- ii) Fear –“you are like death.....”✓1
- iii) Terror inherent in the leader. ✓  
Any two 4 mks

- f) Mood: Humorous awe e.g. Comparing Timi to an ape,  
-Apprehensive/ fear..... you kill your opponents gently....”

Any one illustrated mood  
2 mks

- f) Facial expression 4  
mks

Tonal variation

-Gestures

-Dramatization 1  
mk each

g) Functions: Praise  
2mks

Worship

Education

Entertainment

1/2

mark each

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



### **Allegory**

A symbolic narrative in which the surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory often takes the form of a story in which the characters represent moral qualities. The most famous example in English is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the name of the central character, Pilgrim, epitomizes the book's allegorical nature. Kay Boyle's story "Astronomer's Wife" and Christina Rossetti's poem "Up-Hill" both contain allegorical elements.

### **Alliteration**

The repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words. Example: "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy."

### **Antagonist**

A character or force against which another character struggles. Creon is Antigone's antagonist in Sophocles' play *Antigone*; Teiresias is the antagonist of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

### **Assonance**

The repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or a line of poetry or prose, as in "I rose and told him of my woe." Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" contains assonantal "I's" in the following lines: "How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, / Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself."

### **Aubade**

A love lyric in which the speaker complains about the arrival of the dawn, when he must part from his lover. John Donne's "The Sun Rising" exemplifies this poetic genre.

### **Ballad**

A narrative poem written in four-line stanzas, characterized by swift action and narrated in a direct style. The Anonymous medieval ballad, "Barbara Allan," exemplifies the genre.

### **Blank verse**

A line of poetry or prose in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's sonnets, Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, and Robert Frost's meditative poems such as "Birches" include many lines of blank verse. Here are the opening blank verse lines of "Birches": When I see birches bend to left and right / Across the lines of straighter darker trees, / I like to think some boy's been swinging them.

### **Caesura**

A strong pause within a line of verse. The following stanza from Hardy's "The Man He Killed" contains caesuras in the middle two lines:

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
Off-hand-like--just as I--  
Was out of work-had sold his traps--  
No other reason why.

### **Character**

An imaginary person that inhabits a literary work. Literary characters may be major or minor, static (unchanging) or dynamic (capable of change). In Shakespeare's *Othello*,

Desdemona is a major character, but one who is static, like the minor character Bianca. Othello is a major character who is dynamic, exhibiting an ability to change.

### **Characterization**

The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss Emily in Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" through what she says, how she lives, and what she does.

### **Climax**

The turning point of the action in the plot of a play or story. The climax represents the point of greatest tension in the work. The climax of John Updike's "A&P," for example, occurs when Sammy quits his job as a cashier.

### **Closed form**

A type of form or structure in poetry characterized by regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, and metrical pattern. Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" provides one of many examples. A single stanza illustrates some of the features of closed form:

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

### **Complication**

An intensification of the conflict in a story or play. Complication builds up, accumulates, and develops the primary or central conflict in a literary work. Frank O'Connor's story "Guests of the Nation" provides a striking example, as does Ralph Ellison's "Battle Royal."

### **Conflict**

A struggle between opposing forces in a story or play, usually resolved by the end of the work. The conflict may occur within a character as well as between characters. Lady Gregory's one-act play *The Rising of the Moon* exemplifies both types of conflict as the Policeman wrestles with his conscience in an inner conflict and confronts an antagonist in the person of the ballad singer.

### **Connotation**

The associations called up by a word that goes beyond its dictionary meaning. Poets, especially, tend to use words rich in connotation. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" includes intensely connotative language, as in these lines: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

### **Convention**

A customary feature of a literary work, such as the use of a chorus in Greek tragedy, the inclusion of an explicit moral in a fable, or the use of a particular rhyme scheme in a villanelle. Literary conventions are defining features of particular literary genres, such as



novel, short story, ballad, sonnet, and play.

### **Couplet**

A pair of rhymed lines that may or may not constitute a separate stanza in a poem. Shakespeare's sonnets end in rhymed couplets, as in "For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

### **Dactyl**

A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones, as in *FLUT-ter-ing* or *BLUE-ber-ry*. The following playful lines illustrate double dactyls, two dactyls per line:

Higgledy, piggledy,  
Emily Dickinson  
Gibbering, jabbering.

### **Denotation**

The dictionary meaning of a word. Writers typically play off a word's denotative meaning against its connotations, or suggested and implied associational implications. In the following lines from Peter Meinke's "Advice to My Son" the references to flowers and fruit, bread and wine denote specific things, but also suggest something beyond the literal, dictionary meanings of the words:

To be specific, between the peony and rose  
Plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;  
Beauty is nectar and nectar, in a desert, saves--  
...  
and always serve bread with your wine.  
But, son,  
always serve wine.

### **Denouement**

The resolution of the plot of a literary work. The denouement of *Hamlet* takes place after the catastrophe, with the stage littered with corpses. During the denouement Fortinbras makes an entrance and a speech, and Horatio speaks his sweet lines in praise of Hamlet.

### **Dialogue**

The conversation of characters in a literary work. In fiction, dialogue is typically enclosed within quotation marks. In plays, characters' speech is preceded by their names.

### **Diction**

The selection of words in a literary work. A work's diction forms one of its centrally important literary elements, as writers use words to convey action, reveal character, imply attitudes, identify themes, and suggest values. We can speak of the diction particular to a character, as in Iago's and Desdemona's very different ways of speaking in *Othello*. We can also refer to a poet's diction as represented over the body of his or her work, as in Donne's or Hughes's diction.

### **Elegy**

A lyric poem that laments the dead. Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" is elegiac in tone. A more explicitly identified elegy is W.H. Auden's "In Memory of William Butler

Yeats" and his "Funeral Blues."

### **Elision**

The omission of an unstressed vowel or syllable to preserve the meter of a line of poetry. Alexander uses elision in "Sound and Sense": "Flies o'er th' unbending corn...."

### **Enjambment**

A run-on line of poetry in which logical and grammatical sense carries over from one line into the next. An enjambed line differs from an end-stopped line in which the grammatical and logical sense is completed within the line. In the opening lines of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," for example, the first line is end-stopped and the second enjambed:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now....

### **Epic**

A long narrative poem that records the adventures of a hero. Epics typically chronicle the origins of a civilization and embody its central values. Examples from western literature include Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

### **Epigram**

A brief witty poem, often satirical. Alexander Pope's "Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog" exemplifies the genre:

I am his Highness' dog at Kew;  
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

### **Exposition**

The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, for instance, begins with a conversation between the two central characters, a dialogue that fills the audience in on events that occurred before the action of the play begins, but which are important in the development of its plot.

### **Falling action**

In the plot of a story or play, the action following the climax of the work that moves it towards its denouement or resolution. The falling action of *Othello* begins after Othello realizes that Iago is responsible for plotting against him by spurring him on to murder his wife, Desdemona.

### **Falling meter**

Poetic meters such as trochaic and dactylic that move or fall from a stressed to an unstressed syllable. The nonsense line, "Higgledy, piggledy," is dactylic, with the accent on the first syllable and the two syllables following falling off from that accent in each word. Trochaic meter is represented by this line: "Hip-hop, be-bop, treetop--freedom."

### **Fiction**

An imagined story, whether in prose, poetry, or drama. Ibsen's *Nora* is fictional, a "make-believe" character in a play, as are Hamlet and Othello. Characters like Robert Browning's Duke and Duchess from his poem "My Last Duchess" are fictional as well, though they

may be based on actual historical individuals. And, of course, characters in stories and novels are fictional, though they, too, may be based, in some way, on real people. The important thing to remember is that writers embellish and embroider and alter actual life when they use real life as the basis for their work. They fictionalize facts, and deviate from real-life situations as they "make things up."

### **Figurative language**

A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words. Examples include hyperbole or exaggeration, litotes or understatement, simile and metaphor, which employ comparison, and synecdoche and metonymy, in which a part of a thing stands for the whole.

### **Foil**

A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story. Laertes, in *Hamlet*, is a foil for the main character; in *Othello*, Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

### **Foreshadowing**

Hints of what is to come in the action of a play or a story. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* includes foreshadowing as does Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. So, too, do Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" and Chopin's "Story of an Hour."

### **Free verse**

Poetry without a regular pattern of meter or rhyme. The verse is "free" in not being bound by earlier poetic conventions requiring poems to adhere to an explicit and identifiable meter and rhyme scheme in a form such as the sonnet or ballad. Modern and contemporary poets of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries often employ free verse. Williams's "This Is Just to Say" is one of many examples.

### **Hyperbole**

A figure of speech involving exaggeration. John Donne uses hyperbole in his poem: "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star."

### **Iamb**

An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in *to-DAY*. See *Foot*.

### **Image**

A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea. Imagery refers to the pattern of related details in a work. In some works one image predominates either by recurring throughout the work or by appearing at a critical point in the plot. Often writers use multiple images throughout a work to suggest states of feeling and to convey implications of thought and action. Some modern poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, write poems that lack discursive explanation entirely and include only images. Among the most famous examples is Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro":

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

### **Imagery**

The pattern of related comparative aspects of language, particularly of images, in a literary

work. Imagery of light and darkness pervade James Joyce's stories "Araby," "The Boarding House," and "The Dead." So, too, does religious imagery.

### **Irony**

A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters. Flannery O'Connor's short stories employ all these forms of irony, as does Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."

### **Lyric poem**

A type of poem characterized by brevity, compression, and the expression of feeling. Most of the poems in this book are lyrics. The anonymous "Western Wind" epitomizes the genre:

Western wind, when will thou blow,  
The small rain down can rain?  
Christ, if my love were in my arms  
And I in my bed again!

### **Metaphor**

A comparison between essentially unlike things without an explicitly comparative word such as *like* or *as*. An example is "My love is a red, red rose,"

From Burns's "A Red, Red Rose." Langston Hughes's "Dream Deferred" is built entirely of metaphors. Metaphor is one of the most important of literary uses of language. Shakespeare employs a wide range of metaphor in his sonnets and his plays, often in such density and profusion that readers are kept busy analyzing and interpreting and unraveling them. Compare *Simile*.

### **Meter**

The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems. See *Foot* and *Iamb*.

### **Metonymy**

A figure of speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. An example: "We have always remained loyal to the crown." See *Synecdoche*.

### **Narrative poem**

A poem that tells a story. See *Ballad*.

### **Narrator**

The voice and implied speaker of a fictional work, to be distinguished from the actual living author. For example, the narrator of Joyce's "Araby" is not James Joyce himself, but a literary fictional character created expressly to tell the story. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" contains a communal narrator, identified only as "we." See *Point of view*.

### **Octave**

An eight-line unit, which may constitute a stanza; or a section of a poem, as in the octave

of a sonnet.

### **Ode**

A long, stately poem in stanzas of varied length, meter, and form. Usually a serious poem on an exalted subject, such as Horace's "Eheu fugaces," but sometimes a more lighthearted work, such as Neruda's "Ode to My Socks."

### **Onomatopoeia**

The use of words to imitate the sounds they describe. Words such as *buzz* and *crack* are onomatopoeic. The following line from Pope's "Sound and Sense" onomatopoeically imitates in sound what it describes:

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line too labors, and the words move slow.

Most often, however, onomatopoeia refers to words and groups of words, such as Tennyson's description of the "murmur of innumerable bees," which attempts to capture the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing.

### **Open form**

A type of structure or form in poetry characterized by freedom from regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, metrical pattern, and overall poetic structure. E.E. Cummings's "[Buffalo Bill's]" is one example. See also *Free verse*.

### **Personification**

The endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities. An example: "The yellow leaves flaunted their color gaily in the breeze." Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" includes personification.

### **Pyrrhic**

A metrical foot with two unstressed syllables ("of the").

### **Quatrain**

A four-line stanza in a poem, the first four lines and the second four lines in a Petrarchan sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.

### **Resolution**

The sorting out or unraveling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story. See *Plot*.

### **Rhyme**

The matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. The following stanza of "Richard Cory" employs alternate rhyme, with the third line rhyming with the first and the fourth with the second:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him;  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown  
Clean favored and imperially slim.

## **Rhythm**

The recurrence of accent or stress in lines of verse. In the following lines from "Same in Blues" by Langston Hughes, the accented words and syllables are underlined:

I said to my baby,  
Baby take it slow....  
Lulu said to Leonard  
I want a diamond ring

## **Satire**

A literary work that criticizes human misconduct and ridicules vices, stupidities, and follies. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a famous example. Chekhov's *Marriage Proposal* and O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," have strong satirical elements.

## **Sestet**

A six-line unit of verse constituting a stanza or section of a poem; the last six lines of an Italian sonnet. Examples: Petrarch's "If it is not love, then what is it that I feel," and Frost's "Design."

## **Sestina**

A poem of thirty-nine lines and written in iambic pentameter. Its six-line stanza repeat in an intricate and prescribed order the final word in each of the first six lines. After the sixth stanza, there is a three-line envoi, which uses the six repeating words, two per line.

## **Setting**

The time and place of a literary work that establish its context. The stories of Sandra Cisneros are set in the American southwest in the mid to late 20th century, those of James Joyce in Dublin, Ireland in the early 20th century.

## **Simile**

A figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using *like*, *as*, or *as though*. An example: "My love is like a red, red rose."

## **Sonnet**

A fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter. The Shakespearean or English sonnet is arranged as three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet divides into two parts: an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet, rhyming abba abba cde cde or abba abba cd cd.

## **Stanza**

A division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form--either with similar or identical patterns or rhyme and meter, or with variations from one stanza to another. The stanzas of Gertrude Schnackenberg's "Signs" are regular; those of Rita Dove's "Canary" are irregular.

## **Style**

The way an author chooses words, arranges them in sentences or in lines of dialogue or verse, and develops ideas and actions with description, imagery, and other literary

techniques. See *Connotation, Denotation, Diction, Figurative language, Image, Imagery, Irony, Metaphor, Narrator, Point of view, Syntax, and Tone.*

### **Subject**

What a story or play is about; to be distinguished from plot and theme. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is about the decline of a particular way of life endemic to the American south before the civil war. Its plot concerns how Faulkner describes and organizes the actions of the story's characters. Its theme is the overall meaning Faulkner conveys.

### **Symbol**

An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself. The glass unicorn in *The Glass Menagerie*, the rocking horse in "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the road in Frost's "The Road Not Taken"--all are symbols in this sense.

### **Synecdoche**

A figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole. An example: "Lend me a hand." See *Metonymy*.

### **Syntax**

The grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue. The organization of words and phrases and clauses in sentences of prose, verse, and dialogue. In the following example, normal syntax (subject, verb, object order) is inverted:

"Whose woods these are I think I know."

### **Tercet**

A three-line stanza, as the stanzas in Frost's "Acquainted With the Night" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The three-line stanzas or sections that together constitute the sestet of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet.

### **Theme**

The idea of a literary work abstracted from its details of language, character, and action, and cast in the form of a generalization. See discussion of Dickinson's "Crumbling is not an instant's Act."

### **Tone**

The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work, as, for example, Flannery O'Connor's ironic tone in her "Good Country People." See *Irony*.

### **Trochee**

An accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, as in *FOOT-ball*.

### **Understatement**

A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker says less than what he or she means; the opposite of exaggeration. The last line of Frost's "Birches" illustrates this literary device: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

**Villanelle**

A nineteen-line lyric poem that relies heavily on repetition. The first and third lines alternate throughout the poem, which is structured in six stanzas --five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Examples include Bishop's "One Art," Roethke's "The Waking," and Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

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