INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

Compiled and Prepared by:

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DR. SHAIMAA ADHAM

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POETRY

I

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I

CHAPTEER ONE

WHAT IS POETRY?

1 What Is Poetry?

Poetry is as universal as language and almost as ancient. The most primitive peoples have used it, and the most civilized have written—and eagerly read or listened to—by all kinds and conditions of people, by soldiers, statesmen, lawyers, farmers, doctors, scientists, clergymen, philosophers, kings, and queens. In all ages it has been especially the concern of the educated, the intelligent, and the sensitive, and it has appealed, in its simpler forms, to the uneducated and to children. Why? First, because it has given pleasure. People have read it or listened to it or recited it because they liked it, because it gave them enjoyment. But this is not the whole answer. Poetry in all ages has been regarded as important, not simply as one of several alternative forms of amusement, as one man might choose bowling, chess, and poetry. Rather, it has been regarded as something central to each man's existence, something having unique value to the fully realized life, something that he is better off for having and spiritually impoverished without. To understand the reasons for this, we need

to have at least a provisional understanding of what poetry is — provisional, because man has always been more successful at appreciating poetry than at defining it.

Initially, poetry might be defined as a kind of language that says *more* and says it *more intensely* than does ordinary language. In order to understand this fully, we need to understand what it is that poetry "says." For language is employed on different occasions to say quite different kinds of things; in other words, language has different uses. Perhaps the commonest use of language is to communicate *information.* We say that it is nine o'clock, that there is a good movie downtown, that George Washington was the first president of the United States, that bromine and iodine are members of the halogen group of chemical elements. This we might call the practical use of language; it helps us with the ordinary business of living.

Suppose, for instance, that we are interested in eagles. If we want simply to acquire information about eagles, we may turn to an encyclopedia or a book of natural history. There we find that the family Falconidae, to which eagles belong, is characterized by imperforate nostrils, legs of medium length, a hooked bill, the hind toe inserted on a level with the three front ones, and the claws roundly curved and sharp; that land eagles are feathered to the toes and sea-fishing eagles halfway to the toes; that their length is about three feet, the extent of wing seven feet; that the

nest is usually placed on some inaccessible cliff; that the eggs are spotted and do not exceed three; and perhaps that the eagle's "great power of vision, the vast height to which it soars in the sky, the wild grandeur of its abode, have . . . commended it to the poets of all nations."*

But unless we are interested in this information only for practical purposes, we are likely to feel a little disappointed, as though we had grasped the feathers of the eagle but not its soul. True, we have learned many facts about the eagle, but we have missed somehow its lonely majesty, its power, and the "wild grandeur" of its surroundings that would make the eagle something living rather than a mere museum specimen. For the living eagle we must turn to literature.

The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

BY ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

QUESTIONS

1. What is peculiarly effective about the expressions "crooked hands," "close to the sun," "ringed with the azure world," "wrinkled," "crawls," and "like a thunderbolt"?

2. Notice the formal pattern of the poem, particularly the contrast of "he stands" in the first stanza and "he falls" in the second. Is there any other contrast between the two stanzas?

If the preceding poem has been read well, the reader will feel that he has enjoyed a significant experience and understands eagles better, though in a different way, than he did from the encyclopedia article alone. For if the article ***analyzes*** man's experience with eagles, the poem in some sense *synthesizes* such an experience. Indeed, the two approaches to experience — the scientific and the literary — may be said to complement each other. And

it may be contended that the kind of understanding one gets from the second is at least as valuable as the kind he gets from the first.

Literature, then, exists to communicate significant experience – significant because concentrated and organized. Its function is not to tell us *about* experience but to allow us imaginatively to *participate* in it. It is a means of allowing us, through the imagination, to live more fully, more deeply, more richly, and with greater awareness. It can do this in two ways: by *broadening* our experience–that is, by making us acquainted with

a range of experience with which, in the ordinary course of events, we might have no contact – or by *deepening* our experience – that is, by making us feel more poignantly and more understandingly the everyday experiences all of us have.

CHAPTER TWO:

DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

Denotation and Connotation

Primary distinction between the practical use of language and the literary use is that in literature, especially in poetry, a *fuller* use is made of individual words. To understand this, we need to examine the composition of a word.

The average word has <u>three component parts</u>: sound, denotation, and connotation.

<u>SOUND:</u> It begins as a combination of tones and noises, uttered by the lips, tongue, and throat, for which the written word is a notation. But it differs from a musical tone or a noise in that it has a meaning attached to it.

<u>DENOTATION:</u> The basic part of this meaning is its DENOTATION or denotations: that is, the dictionary meaning or meanings of the word. Beyond its denotations, a word may also have connotations.

<u>The CONNOTATIONS</u> are what it suggests beyond what it expresses: its overtones of meaning. It acquires these connotations by its past history and associations, by the way and the circumstances in which it has been used.

<u>Examples</u>: The word *home,* for instance, by denotation means only a place where one lives, but by connotation it suggests security, love, comfort, and family. The words *childlike* and *childish* both mean "characteristic of a child," but *childlike*

suggests meekness, innocence, and wide-eyed wonder, while *childish* suggests pettiness, willfulness, and temper tantrums.

Connotation is very important to the poet, for it is one of the means by which he can concentrate or enrich his meaning – say more in fewer words. Consider, for instance, the following short poem:

THERE IS NO FRIGATE LIKE A BOOK

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry:
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears the human soul!

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

In this poem Emily Dickinson is considering **the power of a book-or of poetry** to carry us away, to let us escape from our immediate surroundings into a world of the imagination. To do this she has compared literature to various means of transportation: a boat, a team of horses, a wheeled land vehicle.

But she has been careful to choose kinds of transportation and names for them that have romantic **connotations.** "Frigate" **suggests** exploration and adventure; "coursers," beauty, spirit, and speed; "chariot," speed and the ability to go through -the air as well as on land. (Compare "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and the

myth of Fhaethon, who tried to drive the chariot of Apollo, and the famous painting of Aurora with her horses, once hung in almost every school.) How much of the meaning of the poem comes from this **selection** of vehicles and words is apparent if we try to substitute for them, say, *steamship, horses,* and *streetcar.*

QUESTIONS

1. What is lost if *miles* is substituted for "lands" (2) or *cheap* for "frugal" (7)?

2. How is "prancing" (4) peculiarly appropriate to poetry as well as to coursers?

Could the poet have without loss compared a book to coursers and poetry to a frigate?

3. Is this account appropriate to all kinds of poetry or just to certain kinds? That is, was the poet thinking of poems like Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" or of poems like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Walter de la Mare's "The Listeners"?

Just as a word has a variety of connotations, so also it may have more than one denotation. If we look up the word *spring* in the dictionary, for instance, we will find that it has between twenty-five and thirty distinguishable meanings: It may mean (1) a pounce or leap, (2) a season of the year, (3) a natural source of water, (4) a coiled elastic wire, etc. This variety of denotation, complicated by additional tones of connotation, makes language

confusing and difficult to use. Any person using words must be careful to define by context precisely the meanings that he wishes.

But the difference between the writer using language to communicate information and the poet is this: the practical writer will always attempt to confine his words to one meaning at a time; the poet will often take advantage of the fact that the word has more than one meaning by using it to mean more than one thing at the same time. Thus when Edith Sitwell in one of her poems writes, "This is the time of the wild spring and the mating of tigers," she uses the word *spring* to denote both a season of the year and a sudden leap and she uses *tigers* rather than *lambs* or *birds* because it has a connotation of fierceness and wildness that the other two lack.

RICHARD CORY

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.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich –yes, richer than a king
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything

To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)

QUESTIONS

1. In how many senses is Richard Cory a gentleman?

2. The word "crown" (3), meaning the top of the head, is familiar to you from

"Jack and Jill," but why does Robinson use the unusual phrase "from sole to crown" instead of the common *from head to foot* or *from top to toe?*

3. List the words that express or suggest the idea of aristocracy or royalty.

4. Try to explain why the poet chose his wording rather than the following alternatives: *sidewalk* for "pavement" (2), *good-looking* for "Clean favored" (4), *thin* for "slim" (4), *dressed* for "arrayed" (5), *courteous* for "human" (6), *wonderfully* for "admirably" (10), *trained* for "schooled" (10), *manners* for "every grace" (10), *in short* for "in fine" (11). What other examples of effective diction do you find in the poem?

5. Why is "Richard Cory" a good name for the character in this poem?

6. This poem is a good example of how ironic contrast (see chapter 7) generates meaning. The poem makes no direct statement about life; it simply relates an incident. What larger meanings about life does it suggest?

7. A leading American critic has said of this poem: "In 'Richard Cory' . . . we have a superficially neat portrait of the elegant man of mystery; the poem builds up deliberately to a very cheap surprise ending; but all surprise endings are cheap in poetry, if not, indeed, elsewhere, for poetry is written to be read not once but many times."* Do you agree with this evaluation? *Discuss.*

EXERCISES

1. Robert Frost has said that "Poetry is what evaporates from all translations."

On the basis of this chapter, can you explain why this statement is true? How much of a word can be translated?

2. Which of the following words have the most "romantic" connotations?

a. horse ( ) steed ( ) equine quadruped ( )

b. China ( ) Cathay ( )

Which of the following is the most emotionally connotative?

c. mother ( ) female parent ( ) dam ( )

Which of the following have the more favorable connotations?

d. average ( ) mediocre ( )

e. secret agent ( ) spy ( )

f. adventurer ( ) adventuress ( )

3. Fill each blank with the word richest in meaning in the given context.

Explain.

a. I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,

Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;

To husband out life's at the close, *candle, taper*

And keep the flame from wasting by repose.

Goldsmith

b. She was a of delight

When first she gleamed upon my sight.

Wordsworth

c. His sumptuous watch-case, though concealed it lies,

Like a good conscience, joy supplies.

Edward Young

d. Charmed magic opening on the foam

Of seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Keats

e. Thou unravished bride of quietness.

Keats

ghost, phantom,

spectre, spook

perfect, solid,

thorough

casements, windows

dangerous, perilous

still, yet

g. The iron tongue of midnight hath twelve. *said, struck, told*

Shakespeare

h. In poetry each word reverberates like the note of a well-tuned and always leaves *banjo, guitar, lyre* behind it a multitude of vibrations.

Joubert

i. I think that with this new alliance *holy, sacred*
I may ensure the public, and defy
All other magazines of art or science.

Byron

Care on the maiden brow shall put
A wreath of wrinkles, and thy foot
Be shod with pain: not silken dress
But toil shall thy loveliness. *clothe, tire, weary*

C. Day Lewis

4. Ezra Pound has defined great literature as being "simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." Would this be a good definition of poetry? The word "charged" is roughly equivalent to *filled.* Why is "charged" a better word in

Pound's definition? What do its associations with storage batteries, guns, and dynamite suggest about poetry?

CHAPTER THREE

IMAGERY

Imagery

Experience comes to us largely through the senses. My experience of *a* spring day, for instance, may consist partly of certain emotions I feel and partly of certain thoughts I think, but most of it will be a cluster of sense impressions. It will consist of *seeing* blue sky and white clouds, budding leaves and daffodils; of *hearing* robins and bluebirds singing in the early morning; of *smelling* damp earth and blossoming hyacinths; and of *feeling a* fresh wind against my cheek.

The poet seeking to express his experience of a spring day must therefore provide a selection of the sense impressions he has. Like Shakespeare (page 11), he must give the reader "daisies pied" and "lady-smocks all silver-white" and "merry larks" and the song of the cuckoo and maidens bleaching their summer smocks. Without doing so he will probably fail to evoke the emotions that accompanied his sensations. His language, therefore, must be more *sensuous* than ordinary language. It must be more full of imagery.

Imagery Definition:

IMAGERY may be defined *as* the representation through language of sense experience. Poetry appeals directly to our senses, of course, through its music and rhythms, which we actually hear when it is read aloud. But indirectly it appeals to our

senses through imagery, the representation to the imagination of sense experience. **The word *image* perhaps most often suggests a mental picture, something seen in the mind's eye–**and *visual* imagery is the most frequently occurring kind of imagery in poetry. But an image may also represent a sound; a smell; a taste; a tactile experience, such as hardness, wetness, or cold; an internal sensation, such as hunger, thirst, or nausea; or movement or tension in the muscles or joints. If we wished to be scientific, we could extend this list further, for psychologists no longer confine themselves to five or even six senses, but for purposes of discussing poetry the above classification should ordinarily be sufficient.

MEETING AT NIGHT

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

"Meeting at Night" is a poem about **love**. It makes, one might say, a number of statements about love: being in love is a sweet and exciting experience; when one is in love everything seems beautiful to him, and the most trivial things become significant; when one is in love his sweetheart seems the most important object in the world. But the poet actually *tells* us none of these things directly. He does not even use the word *love* in his poem. His business is to communicate experience, not information. He does this largely in two ways. First, he presents us with a specific situation, in which a lover goes to meet his sweetheart. Second, he describes the **lover's journey** so vividly in terms of sense impressions that the reader not only sees and hears what the lover saw and heard but also shares his anticipation and excitement.

Every line in the poem contains some images, some appeal to the senses: the gray sea, the long black land, the yellow half-moon, the startled little waves with their fiery ringlets, the blue spurt of the lighted match –all appeal to our sense of sight and convey not only shape but also color and motion. The warm sea-scented beach appeals to the senses of both smell and touch. The pushing prow of the boat on the slushy sand, the tap at the pane, the quick scratch of the match, the low speech of the lovers, and the sound of their hearts beating–all appeal to the sense of hearing.

A NARROW FELLOW IN THE GRASS

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides;
You may have met him — did you not?
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen,
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,
A floor too cool for corn,
Yet when a boy, and barefoot,
I more than once at noon

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun,
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing
And zero at the bone.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

QUESTIONS

1. The subject of this poem is never named. What is it? How does the imagery identify it?

2. The last two lines might be paraphrased as "without being frightened." Why is Dickinson's wording more effective?
3. Who is the speaker?

THOSE WINTER SUNDAYS

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,
Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Robert Hayden (b. 1913)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *offices (14).*
2. What kind of imagery is central to the poem? How is this imagery related to the emotional concerns of the poem?
3. How do the subsidiary images relate to the central images?
4. From what point in time does the speaker view the subject matter of the poem? What has happened to him in the interval?

TO AUTUMN

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, –
While barred douds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats (1795-1821)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *hook (17), barred (25), sallows (28), bourn (30), croft (32).*
2. How many kinds of imagery do you find in the poem? Give examples of each.
3. Are the images arranged haphazardly or are they carefully organized? In answering this question, consider: (a) With what

aspect of autumn is each stanza particularly concerned? (b) What kind of imagery is dominant in each stanza? (c) What time of the season is presented in each stanza? (d) Is there any progression in time of day?

4. What is Autumn personified as in stanza 2? Is there any suggestion of personification in the other two stanzas?

5. Although the poem is primarily descriptive, what attitude toward transience and passing beauty is implicit in it?

ON MOONLIT HEATH AND LONESOME BANK

On moonlit heath and lonesome bank
The sheep beside me graze;
And yon the gallows used to clank
Fast by the four cross ways.

A careless shepherd once would keep
The flocks by moonlight there,
And high amongst the glimmering sheep
The dead man stood on air.

They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:
The whistles blow forlorn,
And trains all night groan on the rail
To men that die at morn.

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail to-night,
Or wakes, *as* may betide,
A better lad, if things went right,
Than most that sleep outside.

And naked to the hangman's noose
The morning clocks will ring
A neck God made for other use
Than strangling in a string.

And sharp the link of life will snap,
And dead on air will stand
Heels that held up as straight a chap
As treads upon the land.

So here I'll watch the night and wait
To see the morning shine,
When he will hear the stroke of eight
And not the stroke of nine;

And wish my friend as sound a sleep
As lads' I did not know,
That shepherded the moonlit sheep
A hundred years ago.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *heath (1).*
2. Housman explains in a note to lines 5-6 that "Hanging in chains was called keeping sheep by moonlight." Where is this idea repeated?
3. What is the speaker's attitude toward his friend? Toward other young men who have died by hanging? What is the purpose of the reference to the young men hanged "a hundred years ago"?
4. Discuss the kinds of imagery present in the poem and their role in the development of the dramatic situation.
5. Discuss the use of language in stanza 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: PART ONE

Metaphor, Personification, Metonymy

Figurative Language

Figurative language is language that one must figure out. The term “figurative” is an antonym of “literal.” In literal language the words convey meaning exactly as defined, whereas in figurative language there is room for interpretation. An effort is required on the part of the interpreter to determine the speaker or writer’s intended meaning. The listener or reader must “figure” out what is meant. This page will discuss common figures of speech, provide examples, and offer resources to help you learn, review, or teach figurative language. It is important to note that, as an educator, I make a distinction between figurative language and **poetic devices**. Though the skills are related, I find that it is easier to understand these concepts in separate units. This page focuses exclusively on figurative language techniques.

Let us assume that your roommate has just come in out of a rainstorm and you say to him, "Well, you're a pretty sight! Got slightly wet, didn't you?" And he replies, "Wet? I'm drowned! It's raining cats and dogs outside, and my raincoat's just like a sieve!"

It is likely that you and your roommate understand each other well enough, and yet if you examine this conversation literally, that is to say unimaginatively, you will find that you have been speaking nonsense. Actually you have been speaking figuratively. You have been saying less than what you mean, or

more than what you mean, or the opposite of what you mean, or something else than what you mean. You did not mean that your roommate was a pretty sight but that he was a wretched sight. You did not mean that he got slightly wet but that he got very wet. Your roommate did not mean that he got drowned but that he got drenched. It was not raining cats and dogs; it was raining water. And your roommate's raincoat is so unlike a sieve that not even a baby would confuse them.

If you are familiar with Moliere's play *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, you will remember how delighted M. Jourdain was to discover that he had been speaking prose all his life. You may be equally surprised to discover that you have been speaking a kind of subpoetry all your life. The difference between your figures of speech and the poet's is that yours are probably worn and trite, the poet's fresh and original.

On first examination, it might seem absurd to say one thing and mean another. But we all do it and with good reason. We do it because we cansay what we want to say more vividly and forcefully by figures than we can by saying it directly. And we can say more by figurative statement than we can by literal statement. Figures of speech are another way of adding extra dimensions to language. We shall examine their usefulness more particularly later in this chapter.

Broadly defined, a FIGURE OF SPEECH is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way, and some rhetoricians have classified as many *as* 250 separate figures. For our purposes, however, a figure of speech is more narrowly definable as a way of saying one thing and meaning another, and we need be concerned with no more than a dozen. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** —language using figures of speech—is language that cannot be taken literally.

Metaphor, Personification, Metonymy

1- **METAPHOR and SIMILE are both used as a means of comparing things that are essentially unlike. The only distinction between them is that in simile the comparison is *expressed* by the use of some word or phrase, such as *like, as, than, similar to, resembles,* or *seems;* in metaphor the comparison is *implied*— that is, the figurative term is *substituted for* or *identified with* the literal term.**

FORMS OF METAPHOR

Metaphors may take one of **four forms**, depending on whether the **literal** and **figurative** terms are respectively ***named*** or ***implied***.

1- **In** the first form of metaphor, as in simile, both the literal and figurative terms are named. In Francis's poem, for

example, the literal term is "life" and the figurative term is "hound." In the second form, the literal term is *named* and the figurative term is *implied.*

2-

THE HOUND

Life the hound
Equivocal
Comes at a bound
Either to rend me
Or to befriend me.
I cannot tell
The hound's intent
Till he has sprung
At my bare hand
With teeth or tongue.
Meanwhile I stand
And wait the event.

Robert Francis (b. 1901)

QUESTION

1. What does "equivocal" (2) mean? Show how this is the key word in the poem. What is the effect of placing it on a line by itself?

2- **In the second form of metaphor**, the literal term is *named* and the figurative term is *implied.*

BEREFT

Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar?
What would it take my standing there for,

Holding open a restive door,
Looking downhill to a frothy shore?
Summer was past and day was past.
Somber clouds in the west were massed.
Out in the porch's sagging floor
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad,
Word I was in my life alone,
Word I had no one left but God.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the situation precisely. What time of day and year is it? Where is the speaker? What is happening to the weather?
2. To what are the leaves in lines 9-10 compared?
3. The word "hissed" (9) is onomatopoetic (see page 200). How is its effect reinforced in the lines following?
4. Though lines 9-10 present the clearest example of the second form of metaphor, there are others. To what is the wind ("it") compared in line 3?

Why is the door (4) "restive" and what does this do (figuratively) to the door? To what is the speaker's "life" compared (15)?

5. What is the tone of the poem? How reassuring is the last line?

3- <u>In the third form of metaphor</u>, the literal term is *implied* and the figurative term is *named.*

IT SIFTS FROM LEADEN SIEVES

It sifts from leaden sieves,
It powders all the wood.
It fills with alabaster wool
The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it rail by rail
Till it is lost in fleeces;
It deals celestial veil

To stump and stack and stem —
A summer's empty room
Acres of joints where harvests were,
Recordless°, but for them. unrecorded

It ruffles wrists of posts
As ankles of a queen,
Then stills its artisans like ghosts,
Denying they have been.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

QUESTIONS

1. This poem consists essentially of a series of metaphors having the same literal term, identified only as "It." What is "It"?

2. In several of these metaphors the figurative term is named — "alabaster wool"
(3), "fleeces" (11), "celestial veil" (12). In two of them, however, the figurative term as well as the literal term is left unnamed. To what is "It" compared in lines 1-2? In lines 17-18?
3. Comment on the additional metaphorical expressions or complications contained in "leaden sieves" (1), "alabaster wool" (3), "even face" (5), "unbroken forehead" (7), "a summer's empty room" (14), "artisans" (19).

4- **Metaphors of the <u>fourth form</u>, as one might guess, are comparatively rare.** An extended example, however, is provided by Dickinson's "I like to see it lap the miles"

<u>Personification</u>

<u>PERSONIFICATION consists in giving the attributes of a human being to an animal, an object, or a concept.</u>

It is really a subtype of metaphor, an implied comparison in which the figurative term of the comparison is always a human being. When Sylvia Plath makes a mirror speak and think, she is personifying an object. When Keats describes autumn as a harvester "sitting careless on a granary floor" or "on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep" , he is personifying a concept. Personifications differ in the degree to which they ask the reader actually to visualize the literal term in human form. In Keats's comparison we are asked to make a complete identification of autumn with a human being. In Sylvia Plath's, though the mirror speaks and thinks, we continue to visualize it as a mirror;

similarly, in Frost's "Bereft", the "restive" door remains in appearance a door tugged by the wind. In Browning's reference to "the startled little waves", a personification is barely suggested; we would make a mistake if we tried to visualize the waves in human form or even, really, to think of them as having human emotions.*

Closely related to personification is **APOSTROPHE**, **APOSTROPHE consists in addressing someone absent or something nonhuman as if it were alive and present and could reply to what is being said.**

When the speaker in James Joyce's poem cries out, "My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone?" he is apostrophizing his departed sweetheart. The speaker in Shakespeare's "Fear no more the heat o' the sun" is apostrophizing the body of a dead boy. William Blake apostrophizes the tiger throughout his famous poem but does not otherwise personify it. Keats apostrophizes as well as personifies autumn, and David Wagoner both apostrophizes and personifies the old English measures in his elegy.

Personification and apostrophe are both says of giving life and immediacy to one's language, but since neither requires great imaginative power on the part of the poet—apostrophe specially does not—they may degenerate into mere mannerisms and are to be found as often in bad and mediocre poetry as in

good. We need to distinguish between their effective use and their merely conventional use.

DR. SIGMUND FREUD DISCOVERS THE SEA SHELL

Science, that simple saint, cannot be bothered
Figuring what anything is for:
Enough for her devotions that things are
And can be contemplated soon *as* gathered.

She knows how every living thing was fathered,
She calculates the climate of each star,
She counts the fish at sea, but cannot care
Why any one of them exists, fish, fire or feathered.

Why should she? Her religion is to tell
By rote her rosary of perfect answers.
Metaphysics she can leave to man:
***She* never wakes at night in heaven or hell**

Staring at darkness. In her holy cell
There is no darkness ever: the pure candle
Burns, the beads drop briskly from her hand.

Who dares to offer Her the curled sea shell!
She will not touch it! —knows the world she sees
Is all the world there is! Her faith is perfect!

And still he offers the sea shell . . .
What surf
Of what far sea upon what unknown ground
Troubles forever with that asking sound?
What surge is this whose question never ceases?

Archibald MacLeish (b. 1892)

*The various *figures of* speech blend into each other, and it *is* sometimes difficult to classify a specific example as definitely metaphor or symbol, symbolism or allegory, understatement or irony, irony or paradox. Often a given example may exemplify two or more figures at once. When Donne's speaker in "Break of Day" (page 32) says "Light hath no tongue, but is all eye" and then imagines light speaking as well as spying, she is not only personifying light but is metaphorically comparing the sun to an eye and is metonymically identifying light and the sun. In the poem "A White Rose" (page 82), beginning "The red rose whispers of passion," the red rose is personified by the verb *whispers* but is at the same time a symbol. The important consideration in reading poetry is not that we classify figures definitively but that we construe them correctly.

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *metaphysics (11).*
2. This poem employs an extended personification. List the ways in which science is appropriately compared to a saint. In what way is its faith "perfect" (18)?
3. Who is "he" in line 19?
4. Who was Sigmund Freud, and what discoveries did he make about human nature?
5. What does the sea shell represent?

TO DAFFODILS

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the tasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay as you;
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain ;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again.

Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *evensong (8).*
2. Try rewriting this poem without the apostrophe. For instance, lines 1-2 might be rendered as "We weep to see fair daffodils / Hasten away so soon" and line 5 *as* "If they'd but stay," with third person pronouns substituted for second person pronouns throughout the rest of the poem. How does the revision compare with the original in effectiveness? Why?
3. Is the statement made in line 11 literally true? What is the poem about? What do the daffodils and "the hasting day" (6) symbolize?
4. What other figures of speech are used in the poem? What form of metaphor is contained within the simile in line 19?

SYNECDOCHE and METONYMY

SYNECDOCHE (the use of the part for the whole)

METONYMY (the use of something closely related for the thing actually meant)

SYNECDOCHE and METONYMY are alike in that both substitute some significant detail or aspect of an experience for the experience itself. **Thus, Shakespeare uses synecdoche when he**

says that the cuckoo's song is unpleasing to a "married ear" (page 11), for he means a married *man.* Robert Graves uses synecdoche in "The Naked and the Nude" (page 38) when he refers to a doctor as a "hippocratic eye," and T. S. Eliot uses it in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" when he refers to a crab or lobster as "a pair of ragged claws" (page 262).

Shakespeare uses metonymy when he says that the yellow cuckoo-buds "paint the meadows with delight" (page 11), for he means with bright color, which produces delight. Robert Frost uses metonymy in **"Out, Out–" (page 124) when he describes an injured boy holding up his cut hand "as if to keep / The life from spilling,"** for literally he means to keep the blood from spilling. In each case, however, there is a gain in vividness and meaning. Eliot, by substituting for the crab that part which seizes its prey, tells us something important about the crab and makes us see it more vividly. Shakespeare, by referring to bright color as "delight" evokes not only the visual effect but the emotional response it arouses. Frost tells us both that the boy's hand is bleeding and that his life is in danger.

Many synecdoches and metonymies, of course, like many metaphors, have become so much a part of the language that they no longer strike us as figurative; such is the case with *redskin* for *Indian, paleface* for white man, and *salt* and *tar* for sailor. Such figures are referred to as dead metaphors or dead figures.

Synecdoche and metonymy are so much alike that it is hardly worth while to distinguish between them, and the latter term is increasingly coming to be used for both. In this book metonymy will be used for both figures—that is, for any figure in which a part or something closely related is substituted for the thing literally meant.

SHE SIGHTS A BIRD

She sights a bird, she chuckles,
She flattens, then she crawls,
She runs without the look of feet,
Her eyes increase to balls,

Her jaws stir, twitching, hungry,
Her teeth can hardly stand,
She leaps — but robin leaped the first!
Ah, pussy of the sand,

The hopes so juicy ripening
You almost bathed your tongue
When bliss disclosed a hundred wings
And fled with every one!

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

QUESTIONS

1. Identify the metonymy in line 11. Why is it effective? How is it prepared for in the poem?
2. What other figures of speech does the poem make use of?

We said at the beginning of this chapter that figurative language often provides a more effective means of saying what we mean than does direct statement.

TO HIS COY MISTRESS

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Times winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,

And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough° the iron gates of life
through
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *mistress* (title), *Humber (7), transpires (35), chapped (40).*
2. Outline the speaker's argument in three sentences, beginning with *If, But,* and *Therefore.* Is the speaker urging his mistress to marry him?
3. Explain the appropriateness of "vegetable love" (11). What simile in the third section contrasts with it and how? What image in the third section contrasts with the distance between the Ganges and the Humber in section one?
4. Explain the figures in lines 22, 24, and 40 and their implications.
5. Explain the last two lines. For what is "sun" a metonymy?
6. Is this poem principally about love or about time? If the latter, what might making love represent? What philosophy is the poet advancing here?

LOVELIEST OF TREES

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

QUESTIONS

1. Very briefly, this poem presents a philosophy of life. In a sentence, what is it?
2. How old is the speaker? Why does he assume that his life will be seventy years in length? What is surprising about the words "only" (8) and "little" (10)?
3. A good deal of ink has been spilt over whether "snow" (12) is literal or figurative. What do you say? Justify your answer.

TO A FRIEND WHO'S WORK HAS COME TO NOTHING

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honor bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies,
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbors' eyes?

Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

QUESTIONS

1. The specific occasion for this poem was the defeat of Yeats's friend and patroness, Lady Augusta Gregory, in a bitter political contest to bring a magnificent collection of French Impressionist paintings to Dublin. The city officials, provincial, complacent, and ignorant, instituted a campaign of vilification and misrepresentation against Lady Gregory and her associates. The person referred to in Lines 5-8 was a powerful Dublin journalist. How does Yeats raise a purely local and ephemeral dispute into a matter of lasting and universal significance?
2. Discuss the major contrasts on which the poem rests. What essentially is the poet's advice to his friend? Is this primarily a poem of advice or tribute?
3. Identify and discuss the figures of speech involved in line 3.
4. Discuss the meaning of the simile in lines 11-14 and the importance of its contribution to the poem.

DREAM DEFERRED

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

QUESTIONS

1. Of the six images, five are similes. Which is a metaphor? Comment on its position and its effectiveness.
2. Since the dream could be any dream, the poem is general in its implication.
What happens to your understanding of it on learning that its author was a black American?

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864)

QUESTIONS

1. What has been the speaker's attitude toward life? What is his attitude toward approaching death? Why?
2. What does the metaphor contribute to the meaning of the poem?

ON A CLERGYMAN'S HORSE BITING HIM

The steed bit his master;
How came this to pass?
He heard the good pastor
Cry, "All flesh is grass."

Anonymous

THE SILKEN TENT

She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when a sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought
To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one's going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTIONS

1. A poet may use a variety of metaphors and similes in developing his subject or may, as Frost does here, develop a single figure at length (this poem is an excellent example of EXTENDED or SUSTAINED SIMILE). What are the advantages of each type of development?
2. Explore the similarities between the two things compared.

A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
While some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss:

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

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* th' other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

John Donne (1572-1631)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *valediction* (title), *profanation (7), laity (8), trepidation (11), innocent (12), sublunary (13), elemented (16).* Line 11 is a reference to the spheres of the Ptolemaic cosmology, whose movements caused no such disturbance as does a movement of the earth—that is, an earthquake.
2. Is the speaker in the poem about to die? Or about to leave on a journey?
3. The poem is organized around a contrast of two kinds of lovers: the "laity" (8) and, as their implied opposite, the priesthood. Are these terms literal or metaphorical? What two major contrasts are drawn between these two kinds of lovers?
4. Find and explain three similes and one metaphor used to describe the parting of true lovers. The figure in the last three stanzas is one of the most famous in English literature. Demonstrate its appropriateness by obtaining a drawing compass or by using two pencils to imitate the two *legs.*
5. What kind of language is used in the poem? Is the language consonant with the figures of speech?

EXERCISE

1. Identify each of the following quotations as literal or figurative. If figurative, explain what is being compared to what and explain the appropriateness of the comparison.
EXAMPLE: "Talent is a cistern; genius is a fountain."
ANSWER: A metaphor. Talent = cistern; genius = fountain. Talent exists in finite supply; it can be used up. Genius is inexhaustible, ever renewing.

a. O tenderly the haughty day
Fills his blue urn with fire. *Emerson*

b. It is with words *as* with sunbeams—the more they are condensed, the deeper they burn.

Robert Southey

c. Joy and Temperance and Repose
Slam the door on the doctor's nose. *Anonymous*

d. The pen is mightier than the sword.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

e. The strongest oaths are straw
To the fire i' the blood. *Shakespeare*

f. The Cambridge ladies . . . live in furnished souls.

e. e. cummings

g. The green lizard and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.
Shelley

h. Dorothy's eyes, with their long brown lashes, looked very much like her mother's. *Laetitia Johnson*

i. Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?

Marlowe

j. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven?

Shakespeare

k. Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails.

Shakespeare

1. The tawny-hided desert crouches watching her.

Francis Thompson

m. . . . Let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.

Shakespeare

n. See, from his [Christ's, on the cross] head, his hands, his side
Sorrow and love flow mingled down. *Isaac Watts*

o. Now half [of the departing guests] to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day. *Tennyson*

p. I do not know whether my present poems are better than the earlier ones.

But this is certain: they are much sadder and sweeter, like pain dipped in honey.

Heinrich Heine

q. . . . clouds. . . Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.
Shelley

r. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.

Isaiah 22:13

s. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.

Common misquotation of the above

CHAPTER FIVE

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: PART TWO

Symbolism and Allegory

1. Read the following poem. Find the **symbols** in it.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and II
took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTIONS

I. Does the speaker feel that he made the wrong choice in taking the road "less traveled by"? If not, why does he sigh? What does he regret?

2. Why does the choice between two roads that seem very much alike make such a *big* difference many years later?

A Symbol may be roughly defined as something that means **more** than what is.

"The Road not Taken," for instance, concerns a choice made between two roads by a person out walking in the woods. He would like to explore both roads. He tells himself he will explore one and then come back and explore the other, but he knows that he shall probably be unable to do so.

By the last stanza, however, we realize that the poet is **talking about something more than the choice of paths** in a wood, for such a choice would be relatively unimportant, while this choice is one what will make a great difference in the speaker's life and that he will make a great difference in the speaker's life and that he will remember that with a sigh "ages and ages hence."

We must interpret his choice of a road as a symbol for any choice in life between alternatives that appear almost equally attractive but will result through the years in a large difference in the kind of experience one knows.

Image, metaphor, and symbol shade into each other and are sometimes difficult to distinguish. In general, however, an image means only what it is; a metaphor means something other than what it is; and a symbol means what it is and something more

too.* If I say that a shaggy brown dog was rubbing its back against a white picket fence, I am talking about nothing but a dog (and a picket fence) and am therefore presenting an image. If say, "Some dirty dog stole my wallet at the party," I am not talking about a dog at all and am therefore using a metaphor. But if I say, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," I am talking not only about dogs but about living creatures of any *species* and am therefore speaking symbolically. Images, of course, do not cease to be images when they become incorporated in metaphors or symbols. If we are discussing the sensuous qualities of "The Road Not Taken" we should refer to the two leaf-strewn roads in the yellow wood as an image; if we are discussing the significance of the poem, we talk about them as symbols.

Symbols vary in the degree of identification and definition given them by their authors. Frost in this poem forces us to interpret the choice of roads symbolically by the degree of importance he gives it in the last stanza. Sometimes poets are much more specific in identifying their symbols. Sometimes they do not identify them at all. Consider, for instance, the following poems.

Function of Symbolism

Symbolism gives a writer freedom to add double levels of meanings to his work: a literal one that is self-evident and the symbolic one whose meaning is far more profound than the literal

one. The symbolism, therefore, gives universality to the characters and the themes of a piece of literature. Symbolism in literature evokes interest in readers as they find an opportunity to get an insight of the writer's mind on how he views the world and how he thinks of common objects and actions, having broader implications.

*This account does not hold for nonliterary symbols such *as* the letters of the alphabet and algebraic signs (the symbol c'z' for infinity or = for equals). Here, the symbol is meaningless except as it stands for something else, and the connection between the sign and what it stands for is purely arbitrary.

YOU, ANDREW MARVELL

And here face down beneath the sun
And here upon earth's noonward height
To feel the always coming on
The always rising of the night:

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever-climbing shadow grow

And strange at Ecbatan the trees
Take leaf by leaf the evening strange
The flooding dark about their knees
The mountains over Persia change

And now at Kermanshah the gate

Dark empty and the withered grass
And through the twilight now the late
Few travelers in the westward pass

And Baghdad darken and the bridge
Across the silent river gone
And through Arabia the edge
Of evening widen and steal on

And deepen on Palmyra's street
The wheel rut in the ruined stone
And Lebanon fade out and Crete
High through the clouds and overblown

And over Sicily the air
Still flashing with the landward gulls
And loom and slowly disappear
The sails above the shadowy hulls

And Spain go under and the shore
Of Africa the gilded sand
And evening vanish and no more
The low pale light across that land

Nor now the long light on the sea:
And here face downward in the sun
To feel how swift how secretly
The shadow of the night comes on .

*William Lyon Phelps, *Robert Browning: How to Know Him* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1932), p. 165.

t Quoted from William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Crofts, 1935), p. 202.

Archibald MacLeish (b. 1892)

QUESTIONS

1. We ordinarily speak of *nightfall.* Why does MacLeish speak of the "rising" of the night? What implicit metaphorical comparison is suggested by phrases like "rising of the night" (4), "the flooding dark" (11), "the bridge/Across the silent river gone" (17-18), "deepen on Palmyra's street" (21), "Spain go under" (29), and so on?
2. Does the comparative lack of punctuation serve any function? What is the effect of the repetition of "and" throughout the poem?
3. Ecbatan was founded in 700 B.C. and is associated in history with Cyrus the
Great, founder of the Persian Empire, and with Alexander the Great. Kermanshah was another ancient city of Persia. Where are Baghdad, Palmyra,
Lebanon, Crete?

On the literal level, "You, Andrew Marvell" is about the coming on of night. The poet, lying at noon full length in the sun somewhere in the United States,* pictures in his mind the earth's shadow, halfway around the world, moving silently westward over Persia, Syria, Crete, Sicily, Spain, Africa, and finally the Atlantic — approaching swiftly, in fact, the place where he himself lies. But the title of the poem tells us that, though particularly concerned with the passage of a day, it is more generally concerned with the swift passage of time; for the title is an allusion to a famous poem on this subject by Andrew Marvell "To His Coy Mistress," and especially to two lines of that poem:

But at my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near. Once we are aware of this larger concern of the poem, two symbolical levels of interpretation open to us. Marvell's poem is primarily concerned with the swift passing of man's life; and the word ***night,*** we know, if we have had any experience with other literature, is a natural and traditional metaphor or symbol for death. The poet, then, is thinking not only about the passing of a day but about the passing of his life. He is at present "upon earth's noonward height" — in the full flush of

manhood — but he is acutely conscious of the declining years ahead and of "how swift how secretly" his death comes on.

If we are to account fully for all the data of the poem, however, a third level of interpretation is necessary. What has dictated the poet's choice of geographical references? The places named, of course, progress from east to west; but they have a further linking characteristic. Ecbatan, Kermanshah, Baghdad, and Palmyra are all ancient or ruined cities, the relics of past empires and crumbled civilizations. Lebanon, Crete, Sicily, Spain, and North Africa are places where civilization once flourished more vigorously than it does at present. On a third level, then, the poet is concerned, not with the passage of a day nor with the passage of a lifetime, but with the passage of historical epochs. The poet's own country –the United States – now shines "upon the earth's noonward height" as a favored nation in the sun of history, but its civilization, too, will pass.

Meanings ray out from a symbol, like the corona around the sun or like connotations around a richly suggestive word. But the very fact that a symbol may be so rich in its meanings makes it necessary that we use the greatest tact in its interpretation. Though Browning's "My Star" might, if memory and reason be stretched, make us think of a rag doll, still we should not go around telling people that in this poem Browning uses the star to symbolize a rag doll, for this interpretation is private, idiosyncratic, and narrow. The poem allows it but does not itself suggest it. Moreover, *we* should never assume that because the meaning of a symbol is more or less open, we may make it mean anything we choose. We would be wrong, for instance, in interpreting the choice in "The Road Not Taken" as some choice between good and evil, for the poem tells us that the two roads are much alike and that both lie "in leaves no step had trodden black."

Whatever the choice is, it is a choice between two goods. Whatever our interpretation of a symbolical poem, it must be tied firmly to the facts of the poem. We must not let loose of the string and let our imaginations go ballooning up among the clouds. Because the symbol is capable of adding so many dimensions to a

poem, it is a peculiarly effective resource of the poet, but it is also peculiarly susceptible of misinterpretation by the untrained or incautious reader.

Accurate interpretation of the symbol requires delicacy, tact, and good sense. The reader must keep his balance while walking a tightrope between too little and too much–b between under-interpretation and over-interpretation. If he falls off, however, it is much more desirable that he fall off on the side of too little. The reader who reads "The Road Not Taken" as being only about a choice between two roads in a wood has at least gotten part of the experience that the poem communicates, but the reader who reads into it anything he chooses might as well discard the poem and simply daydream. Above all, we should avoid the disease of seeing symbols everywhere, like a man with hallucinations, whether there are symbols there or not. It is better to miss a symbol now and then than to walk constantly among shadows and mirages.

*MacLeish has identified the fixed location of the poem as Illinois on the shore of Lake
Michigan.

A WHITE ROSE

The red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;
Oh, the red rose is a falcon,
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud,
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.

John Boyle O'Reilly (1844-1890)

QUESTIONS

1. Could the poet have made the white rose a symbol of passion and the red rose a symbol of love? Why not?

2. In the second stanza, why does the speaker send a rosebud rather than a rose?

MY STAR

All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

In his first two lines O'Reilly indicates so clearly that his red rose is a symbol of physical desire and his white rose a symbol of spiritual attachment that when we get to the metaphor in the third line, we unconsciously substitute passion for the red rose in our minds, knowing without thinking that what O'Reilly is really likening is falcons and passion, not falcons and roses. Similarly in the second stanza, the symbolism of the white rosebud with pink tips is specifically indicated in the last two lines, although, as a matter of fact, it would have been clear from the first stanza. In Browning's poem, on the other hand, there is nothing specific to tell us that Browning is talking about anything other than just a star, and it is only the star's importance to him that makes us suspect that he is talking about something more.

The symbol is the richest and at the same time the most difficult of the poetical figures. Both its richness and its difficulty result from its imprecision. Although the poet may pin

down the meaning of his symbol to something fairly definite and precise, as O'Reilly does in "A White Rose," more often the symbol is so general in its meaning that it is able to suggest a great variety of more specific meanings. It is like an opal that flashes out different colors when slowly turned in the light. The choice in "The Road Not Taken," for instance, concerns some choice in life, but what choice? Was it a choice of profession? (Frost took the road "less traveled by" in deciding to become a poet.) A choice of hobby? A choice of wife? It might be any or all or none of these. We cannot determine what particular choice the poet had in mind, if any, and it is not important that we do so. The general meaning of the poem is clear enough. It is an expression of regret that the possibilities of life-experience are so sharply limited.

One must live with one wife, have one native country, follow one profession. The speaker in the poem would have liked to explore both roads, but he could explore only one. The person with a craving for life, however satisfied with his own choice, will always long for the realms of experience that had to be passed by. Because the symbol is a rich one, the poem suggests other meanings too. It affirms a belief in the possibility of choice and says something of the nature of choice – how each choice limits the range of possible future choices, so that we make our lives as we go, both freely choosing and being determined by past choices. Though not primarily a philosophical poem, it obliquely comments on the issue of free will versus determinism and indicates the poet's own position. It is able to do all these things, concretely and compactly, by its use of an effective symbol.

"My Star," if we interpret it symbolically, likewise suggests a variety of meanings. It has been most often interpreted as a tribute to Browning's wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. As one critic writes, "She shone upon his life like a star of various colors; but the moment the world attempted to pry into the secret of her genius, she shut off the light altogether." The poem has also been taken to refer to Browning's own peculiar genius, "his gift for seeing in events and things a significance hidden from other men."t

A third suggestion is that Browning was thinking of his own peculiar poetic style. He loved harsh, jagged sounds and rhythms and grotesque images; most people of his time found beauty only in the smoother-flowing, melodic rhythms and more conventionally poetic images of his contemporary Tennyson's style, which could be symbolized by Saturn in the poem. The point is not that any one of these interpretations is right or necessarily wrong. We cannot say what the poet had specifically in mind.

Literally, the poem is an expression of affection for a particular star in the sky that has a unique beauty and fascination for the poet but in which no one else can see the qualities that the poet sees. If we interpret the poem symbolically, the star is a symbol for anything in life that has unique meanings and value for an individual, which other people cannot see. Beyond this, the meaning is "open." And because the meaning is open, the reader is justified in bringing his own experience to its interpretation.

Browning's cherished star might remind him of, for instance, an old rag doll he particularly loved as a child, though its button eyes were off and its stuffing coming out and it had none of the crisp bright beauty of waxen dolls with real hair admired by other children. Between the extremes represented by "The White Rose" and "My Star" a poem may exercise all degrees of control over the range and meaning of its symbolism. Consider another example.

ALLEGORY is a narrative or description that has **a second meaning beneath the surface one.** Although the surface story or description may have its own interest, the author's major interest is in the ulterior meaning. When Pharaoh in the Bible, for instance, has a dream in which seven fat kine are devoured by seven lean kine, the story does not really become significant until Joseph interprets its allegorical meaning: that Egypt is to enjoy seven years of fruitfulness and prosperity followed by seven years of famine. Allegory has been defined sometimes as an extended metaphor and sometimes as a series of related symbols. But it *is*

usually distinguishable from both of these. It is unlike extended metaphor in that it involves a *system* of related comparisons rather than one comparison drawn out. It differs from symbolism in that it puts less emphasis on the images for their own sake and more on their ulterior meanings. Also, these meanings are more fixed. In allegory usually there is a one-to-one correspondence between the details and a single set of ulterior meanings. In complex allegories the details may have more than one meaning, but these meanings tend to be definite. Meanings do not ray out from allegory as they do from a symbol.

OTHERS, I AM NOT THE FIRST

Others, I am not the first,
Have willed more mischief than they durst:
***If* in the breathless night I too**
Shiver now, 'tis nothing new.
More than I, if truth were told,
Have stood and sweated hot and cold,
And through their reins in ice and fire
Fear contended with desire.
Agued once like me were they,
But I like them shall win my way
Lastly to the bed of mold
Where there's neither heat nor cold.
But from my grave across my brow
Plays no wind of healing now,
And fire and ice within me fight
Beneath the suffocating night.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *reins (7), agued (9).*
2. In what condition or predicament does the speaker see himself? With what reflections does he try to console himself? How successfully?

3. How does the speaker view human life? Of what is "night" (3, 16) a symbol? Of what are "heat" and "cold" (12) symbols?

FIRE AND ICE

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTIONS

1. Who are "Some"? To what two theories do lines 1-2 refer?
2. Do "fire" and "ice," in this and in the preceding poem, have the same or different meanings? In which poem are the terms metaphorical? In which, symbolical? Explain.
3. Frost's poem ends with an example of *understatement* (see next chapter). How does it affect the tone of the poem? In what state of mind is the speaker in Frost's poem as compared with the speaker in Housman's?

DUST OF SNOW

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

SOFT SNOW

I walked abroad in a snowy day;
I asked the soft snow with me to play;
She played and she melted in all her prime,
And the winter called it a dreadful crime.

William Blake (1757-1827)

EXERCISE

1. Which of the following poems are symbolical? Which are not?

EPIGRAM

Oh, God of dust and rainbows, help us see
That without dust the rainbow would not be.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

FOG

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

ON SEEING WEATHER-BEATEN TREES

Is it as plainly in our living shown,
By slant and twist, which way the wind hath blown?

Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914)

WIND AND SILVER

Greatly shining,
The Autumn moon floats in the thin sky;
And the fish-ponds shake their backs and flash their dragon scales
As she passes over them.

Amy Lowell (1874-1925)

PESSIMIST AND OPTIMIST

Two men look out through the same bars:
One sees the mud, and one the stars.

Frederick Langbridge (1849-1923)

THE SILVER SWAN

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached, unlocked her silent throat;
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore,
Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:
Farewell, all joys; 0 death, come close mine eyes;
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.

Anonymous (c. 1612)

EXERCISE

1. Determine whether "sleep,' I in the following poems, is literal, metaphorical, symbolical, or other. In each case explain and justify your answer.

a. "On moonlit heath and lonesome bank," line 13.
b. "On moonlit heath and lonesome bank,"
c. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,"
d. "The Chimney Sweeper,"
e. "Is my team ploughing,"
f. "Ulysses," line 5.
g. "The Toys,"
h. "Elegy for Yards, Pounds, and Gallons," is ,"My Sweetest Lesbia,"
j. Nature the gentlest mother is,

CHAPTER SIX

FIGURATIVE LANUAGE: PART THREE

Paradox, Overstatement, Understatement, Irony

Paradox, Overstatement, Understatement, Irony

Aesop tells the tale of a traveler who sought refuge with a Satyr on a bitter winter night. On entering the Satyr's lodging, he blew on his fingers, and was asked by the Satyr what he did it for. "To warm them up," he explained. Later, on being served with a piping hot bowl of porridge, he blew also on it, and again was asked what he did it for. "To cool it off," he explained. The Satyr thereupon thrust him out of doors, for he would have nothing to do with a man who could blow hot and cold with the same breath.

A PARADOX is an apparent contradiction that is nevertheless somehow true. It may be either a situation or a statement. Aesop's tale of the traveler illustrates a paradoxical situation. As a figure of speech, paradox is a statement. When Alexander Pope wrote that a literary critic of his time would "damn with faint praise," he was using a verbal paradox, for how can a man damn by praising?

When we understand all the conditions and circumstances involved in a paradox, we find that what at first seemed impossible is actually entirely plausible and not strange at all. The paradox of the cold hands and hot porridge is not strange to a man who knows that a stream of air directed upon an object of different temperature will tend to bring that object closer to its own temperature. And Pope's paradox is not strange when we realize that *damn* is being used figuratively, and that Pope means only

that a too reserved praise may damage an author with the public almost as much as adverse criticism. In a paradoxical statement the contradiction usually stems from one of the words being used figuratively or in more than one sense.

The value of paradox is its shock value. Its seeming impossibility startles the reader into attention and, thus, by the fact of its apparent absurdity, it underscores the truth of what is being said.

TO LUCASTA, GOING TO THE WARS

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more.

Richard Lovelace (1618-1658)

QUESTIONS

1. State the basic paradox of the poem in a sentence. How is the paradox to be resolved?
2. Do you find any words in the poem used in more than one meaning?

Overstatement, understatement, and verbal irony form a continuous series, for they consist, respectively, of saying more, saying less, and saying the opposite of what one really means.

OVERSTATEMENT, or *hyperbole*, is simply exaggeration but exaggeration in the service of truth.

It is not the same as a fish story. If you say, "I'm starved!" or "You could have knocked me over with a feather!" or "I'll die if I don't pass this course!" you do not expect to be believed; you are merely adding emphasis to what you really mean. (And if you say, "There were literally millions of people at the dance!" you are merely piling one overstatement on top of another, for you really mean that "There were figuratively millions of people at the dance," or, literally, "The dance hall was very crowded.")

Like all figures of speech, overstatement may be used with a variety of effects. It may be humorous or grave, fanciful or restrained, convincing or unconvincing. When Tennyson says of his eagle that it is *"Close* to the sun in lonely lands," he says what appears to be literally true, though we know from our study of astronomy that it is not. When Wordsworth reports of his daffodils in "I wandered lonely as a cloud" that they "stretched *in never-ending line"* along the margin of a bay, he too reports faithfully a visual appearance. When Frost says, at the conclusion of "The Road Not Taken"

I shall be saying this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence,

We are scarcely aware of the overstatement, so quietly is the assertion made. Unskillfully used, however, overstatement may seem strained and ridiculous, leading us to react as Gertrude does to the player-queen's speeches in *Hamlet:* "The lady doth protest too much."

It is paradoxical that one can emphasize a truth either by overstating it or by understating it. **UNDERSTATEMENT, or saying less than one means**, may exist in what one says or merely in how one says it. If, for instance, upon sitting down to a loaded dinner plate, you say, "This looks like a good bite," you are actually stating less than the truth; but if you say, with Artemus Ward, that a man who holds his hand for half an hour in a lighted fire will experience "a sensation of excessive and disagreeable warmth," you are stating what is literally true but with a good deal less force than the situation might seem to warrant.

A RED, RED ROSE

O my luve is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June.
O my luve is like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass, **5**
So deep in hive am I,
And I will luve thee still, my dear,

Till a'° the seas gang° dry. ***all; go***

Till a' the seas *gang* dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee wel, my only luve,
And fare thee wel awhile!
And I will come again, my luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile!

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

THE ROSE FAMILY

The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But the theory now goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.
You, of course, are a rose
But were always a rose.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTION

1. Burns and Frost use the same metaphor in paying tribute to their loved ones; otherwise their methods are opposed. Burns begins with a couple of conventionally poetic similes and proceeds to a series of overstatements. Frost begins with literal and scientific fact (the apple, pear, plum, and rose all belong to the same botanical family, the Rosaceae), and then slips in his metaphor so casually and quietly that the assertion has the effect of understatement. What is the function of "of course" and "but" in the last two lines?

IRONY:

Like paradox, ***irony*** **has meanings that extend beyond its use merely as a figure of speech.**

VERBAL IRONY, **saying the opposite of what one means**.

It is often confused with sarcasm and with satire, and for that reason it may be well to look at the meanings of all three terms. **SARCASM** and **SATIRE** both imply ridicule, one on the colloquial level, the other on the literary level.

If, for instance, one of the members of your class raises his hand on the discussion of this point and says, "I don't understand," and your instructor replies, with a tone of heavy disgust in his voice, "Well, I wouldn't expect *you* to," he is being sarcastic but not ironical; he means exactly what he says. But if, after you have done particularly well on an examination, your instructor brings your test papers into the classroom saying, "Here's some *bad* news for you: you all got A's and B's!" he is being ironical but not sarcastic. Sarcasm, we may say, is cruel, as a bully is cruel: it intends to give hurt. Satire is both cruel and kind, as a *surgeon* is cruel and kind: it *gives* hurt in the interest of the patient or of society. Irony is neither cruel nor kind: it is simply a device, like a surgeon's scalpel, for performing any operation more skillfully.

Though verbal irony always implies the opposite of what is said, it has many gradations, and only in its simplest forms does it mean *only* the opposite of what is said. In more

complex forms it means both what is said and the opposite of what is said, at once, though in different ways and with different degrees of emphasis. When Terence's critic, in "Terence, this is stupid stuff" (page 16) says, *"Pretty* friendship 'tis to rhyme / Your friends to death before their time" (11-12), we may substitute the literal *sorry* for "pretty" with little or no loss of meaning. When Terence speaks in reply, however, of the pleasure of drunkenness — "And down in *lovely* muck I've lain, / Happy till I woke again" (35-36) — we cannot substitute *loathsome* for "lovely" without considerable loss of meaning, for, while muck is actually extremely unpleasant to lie in, it may *seem* lovely to an intoxicated person. Thus two meanings— one the opposite of the other — operate at once.

Like all figures of speech, verbal irony runs the danger of being misunderstood. With irony the risks are perhaps greater than with other figures, for if metaphor is misunderstood, the result may be simply bewilderment; but if irony is misunderstood, the reader goes away with exactly the opposite idea from what the user meant to convey. The results of misunderstanding if, for instance, you ironically called someone a villain, might be calamitous. For this reason the user of irony must be very skillful in its use, conveying by an altered tone or by a wink of the eye or pen, that he is speaking ironically; and the reader of literature

must be always alert to recognize the subtle signs that irony is intended.

No matter how broad or obvious the irony, there will always be in any large audience, a number who will misunderstand. The humorist Artemus Ward used to protect himself against these people by writing at the bottom of his newspaper column, "This is writ ironical." But irony is most delightful and most effective, for the good reader, when it is subtlest. It sets up a special understanding between writer and reader that may add either grace or force. If irony is too obvious, it sometimes seems merely crude. But if effectively used, it, like all figurative language, is capable of adding extra dimensions to meaning.

HEART: WE WILL FORGET HIM!

Heart! We will forget him!
You and I, tonight!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light!

When you have done, pray tell me
That I may straight begin!
Haste! lest while you're lagging
I remember him!

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the speaker? What can we infer about her relationship with "him"?

2. How far does the speaker mean what she is saying? To what extent is she ironical? How do we know?
3. What additional figures of speech are central in the poem?
4. Is this poem sarcastic? Satirical? The term *irony* always implies some sort of discrepancy or incongruity.

In verbal irony the discrepancy is between what is said and what is meant. In other forms the discrepancy may be between appearance and reality or between expectation and fulfillment. These other forms of irony are, on the whole, more important resources for the poet than is verbal irony. Two types, especially, are important for the beginning student to know.

In DRAMATIC IRONY* **the discrepancy is not between what the speaker says and what he means but between what the speaker says and what the author means.**

The speaker's words may be perfectly straightforward, but the author, by putting these words in a particular speaker's mouth, may be indicating to the reader ideas or attitudes quite opposed to those the speaker is voicing. This form of irony is more complex than verbal irony and demands a more complex response from the reader. It may be used not only to convey attitudes but also to illuminate character, for the author who uses it is indirectly commenting not only upon the value of the ideas uttered but also upon the nature of the person who utters them. Such comment may be harsh, gently mocking, or sympathetic.

*The term *dramatic irony,* which stems from Greek tragedy, often connotes some thing more specific and perhaps a little different from what I am developing here. It is used of a speech or an action in a story which has much greater significance to the audience than to the character who speaks or performs it, because of possession by the audience of knowledge the character does not have, as when the enemies of Ulysses, in the *Odyssey,* wish good luck and success to a man who the reader knows is Ulysses himself in disguise, or as when Oedipus, in the play by Sophocles, bends every effort to discover the murderer of Laius so that he may avenge the death, not knowing, as the audience does, that Laius is the man whom he himself once slew. I have appropriated the term for a perhaps slightly different situation, because no other suitable term exists. Both uses have the common characteristic—that the author conveys to the reader something different, or at least something more, than the character himself intends.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,
-"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was asleeping, he had such a sight!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

William Blake (1757-1827)

QUESTIONS

1. In the eighteenth century small boys, sometimes no more than four or five years old, were employed to climb up the narrow chimney flues and clean them, collecting the soot in bags. Such boys, sometimes sold to the master sweepers by their parents, were miserably treated by their masters and often suffered disease and physical deformity. Characterize the boy who speaks in this poem. How do his and the poet's attitudes toward his lot in life differ?

How, especially, are the meanings of the poet and the speaker different in lines 3, 7-8, and 24?

2. The dream in lines 11-20, besides being a happy dream, is capable of symbolic interpretations. Point out possible significances of the sweepers' being "locked up in coffins of black" and the Angel's releasing them with a bright key to play upon green plains.

<u>A third type of irony is IRONY OF SITUATION</u>. This occurs when there is a discrepancy between the actual circumstances and those that would seem appropriate or between what one anticipates and what actually comes to pass.

If a man and his second wife, on the first night of their honeymoon, are accidentally seated at the theater next to the man's first wife, we should call the situation ironical. When, in O. Henry's famous short story "The Gift of the Magi" a poor young husband pawns his most prized possession, a gold watch, in order to buy his wife a set of combs for her hair for Christmas, and his wife sells her most prized possession, her long brown hair, in order to buy a fob for her husband's watch, we call the situation ironical. When King Midas, in the famous fable, is granted his fondest wish, that anything he touch turn to gold, and then finds that he cannot eat because even his food turns to gold, we call the situation ironical. When Coleridge's Ancient Mariner finds himself in the middle of the ocean with "Water, water, everywhere" but not a "drop to drink," we call the situation ironical. In each case the circumstances are not what would seem appropriate or what we would expect.

Dramatic irony and irony of situation are powerful devices for the poet, for, like symbol, they enable him to suggest meanings without stating them—to communicate a great deal more than he

says. We have seen one effective use of irony of situation in "Richard Cory". Another is in "Ozymandias," which follows.

Irony and paradox may be trivial or powerful devices, depending on their use. At their worst they may degenerate into mere mannerism and mental habit. At their best they may greatly extend the dimensions of meaning *in* a work of literature. Because irony and paradox are devices that demand an exercise of critical intelligence, they are particularly valuable as safeguards against sentimentality.

OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

QUESTIONS

1. "Survive" *(7)* is a transitive verb with "hand" and "heart" as direct objects.

Whose hand? Whose heart? What figure of speech is exemplified in "hand" and "heart"?
2. Characterize Ozymandias.
3. Ozymandias was an ancient Egyptian tyrant. This poem was first published in 1817. Of what is Ozymandias a *symbol?* What contemporary reference might the poem have had in Shelley's time?
4. What is the theme of the poem and how is it "stated"?

EXERCISE

1. 'Identify each of the following quotations as literal or figurative. If figurative, identify the figure as paradox, overstatement, understatement, or irony and explain the use to which it is put (emotional emphasis, humor, satire, etc.).

a. Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

b. Have not the Indians been kindly and justly treated?
Have not the temporal things, the vain baubles and
Filthy lucre of this world, which were too apt to engage
Their worldly and selfish thoughts, been benevolently
Taken from them? And have they not instead thereof,
Been taught to set their affections on things above?

Washington Irving

c. A man who could make so vile a pun would not scruple to pick a pocket.

John Dennis

d. Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. *Swift*

e. . . . Where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

Thomas Gray

f. All night I made my bed to swim; with my tears I dissolved my couch.

Psalms 6:6

g. Believe him, he has known the world too long,
And seen the death of much immortal song. *Pope*

h. Give me my Romeo: and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

Juliet, in Shakespeare

i. Immortality will come to such as are fit for it; and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now. *Emerson*

j. Whoe'er their crimes for interest only quit,
Sin on in virtue, and good deeds commit. *Edward Young*

MY HEART LEAPS UP

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

QUESTIONS

1. Why is line 7 paradoxical? Explain the paradox and comment on its significance.
2. What meanings has the word "natural" (9)? What does Wordsworth imply by linking it with "piety"?

General Questions:

Identify the figures of speech in the following lines (two answers are possible for some).

1. The fields at moonrise turn to agate, _____

(Cecil Day Lewis)

2. I looked into your eyes too often, and in the end became hardened; There came a day when Adam turned his back on Eve, and gardened. _____ *(R.P. Lister)*

3. How like a winter hath my absence been from thee, the pleasures of the fleeting year! _____

(Shakespeare, Sonnet XCVII)

4. Thy woods this Autumn day, that ache and sag and all but cry with colour! _____

(Edna St. Vincent Millay)

5. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. _____

(The Bible: Genesis 3:19)

6. When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas, _____ ___*(Alfred Noyes)*

7. Last Week I saw a Woman flay'd, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her Person for the worse.

_____*(Jonathan Swift)*

8. Eloquent silence greeted his return. _____

9. … Nol this my hand will rather The multitudinous seas incarnadine, Making the green one, red.

_____*(Shakespeare, Macbeth)*

10. Swiftly walk o’er the western wave, Spirit of the Night!
_____*(Percy Bysshe Shelley)*

11. Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines.
_____*(Shakespeare, Sonnet XVIII)*

12. It’s the little things in life that are colossal.
_____*(G.K. Chesterton)*

13. A rapier of light pinned him to the wall. _____

14. Beware, O asparagus, you’ve stalked my last meal.
_____*(Wanda Fergus)*

15. As I went down the hill, I cried and cried, The soft little hands of the rain stroking my cheek, _____
(Dora Sigerson Shorter)

16. Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span.
_____*(John Masefield)*

17. I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
_____*(William Wordsworth)*

18. Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
_____*(Carl Sandburg)*

19. There are "none so credulous as infidels."
_____*(Bentley)*

20. All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair – The bees are stirring – birds are on the wing – And Winter slumbering in the open air, Wears on his smiling face, a dream of spring!
_____*(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)*

21. Arthur with a hundred spears Rode far; …

_____*(Tennyson)*

22. Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world with a song, Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.
_____*(John Masefield)*

23. Sweetheart, do not love too long: I loved long and long, And grew to be out of fashion Like an old song.
_____*(W.B. Yeats)*

24. Oscar Peterson is a musician of no little ability. _____

25. Six o'clock. The burnt-out end of smoky days.
_____*(T.S. Eliot)*

26. They went and told the sexton and the sexton tolled the bell.
_____*(Thomas Hood)*

27. Because I could not stop for Death, He kindly stopped for me.
_____*(Emily Dickinson)*

28. Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow.
_____*(Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet)*

29. Do not adultery commit; Advantage rarely comes of it: Thou shalt not steal; an emply feat, When it's so lucrative to cheat:
_____*(Arthur Hugh Clough)*

30. … I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition, which o'er leaps itself And fall on the other –
_____*(Shakespeare, Macbeth)*

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUSICAL DEVICES

Musical Devices

Sound devices are resources used by poets to convey and reinforce the meaning or experience of poetry through the skillful use of sound. After all, poets are trying to use a concentrated blend of sound and imagery to create an emotional response. The words and their order should evoke images, and the words themselves have sounds, which can reinforce or otherwise clarify those images. All in all, the poet is trying to get you, the reader, to sense a particular thing, and the use of sound devices are some of the poet's tools.

"Musical Devices in Poetry English 10. What makes poetry musical? 1. Rhyme 2. Alliteration 3. Consonance 4. Assonance 5. Onomatopoeia 6. Refrain."

ALLITERATION is the repetition of **initial consonant** sounds, as in "tried and true," "safe and sound," "fish or fowl," "rime or reason,"**.**

ASSONANCE is The repetition of **vowel sounds**, as in "mad as a hatter," "time out of mind," "free and easy," "slapdash," **CONSONANCE** is the repetition of **final consonant** sounds, as in. "First and last," "odds and ends," "short and sweet," "a stroke of luck," or Shakespeare's "struts and frets"*

Repetitions may be used alone or in combination. Alliteration and assonance are combined in such phrases as "time

and tide," "thick and thin," "kith and kin," "alas and alack," "fit as a fiddle," and Edgar Allan Poe's famous line, "The viol, the violet, and the vine." Alliteration and consonance are combined in such phrases as "crisscross," "last but not least," "lone and lorn," "good as gold," Housman's "Malt does more than Milton can" (page 17), "strangling in a string" (page 55) and "fleet foot", and e. e. cummings's "blow friend to fiend" and "a doom of a dream" (page 145). The combination of assonance and consonance is rhyme.

*There is no established terminology for these various repetitions. *Alliteration* is used by some writers to mean any repetition of consonant sounds. *Assonance* has been used to mean the similarity as well *as* the identity of vowel sounds, or even the similarity of any sounds whatever. *Consonance has* often been reserved for words in which both the initial *and* final consonant sounds correspond, as in *green* and *groan*, *moon* and *mine*. *Rime* (or rhyme) has been used to mean any sound repetition, including alliteration, assonance, and consonance. In the absence of clear agreement on the meanings of these terms, the terminology chosen here has appeared most useful, with support in usage. Labels are useful in analysis. The student should, however, learn to recognize the devices and, more important, to see their function, without worrying too much over nomenclature.

RHYME is the repetition of the accented vowel sound and all succeeding sounds.

It is called MASCULINE when the rime sounds involve only one syllable, as in *support* and *retort.*

It is FEMININE when the rime sounds involve two or more syllables, as in *turtle* and *fertile* or *spitefully* and *delightfully.*

It is referred to as INTERNAL RIME when one or both riming words are within the line and as END RIME when both riming words are at the *ends* of lines. End rime is probably the most frequently used and most consciously sought-after sound repetition in English poetry.

Because it comes at the end of the line, it receives emphasis as a musical effect and perhaps contributes more than any other musical resource except rhythm and meter to give poetry its musical effect as well as its structure.

There exists, however, a large body of poetry that does not employ rime and for which rime would not be appropriate. Also, there has always been a tendency, especially noticeable in modern poetry, to substitute approximate rimes for perfect rimes at the ends of lines.

APPROXIMATE RIMES include words with any kind of sound similarity, from close to fairly remote. Under approximate rime we include alliteration, assonance, and consonance or their combinations when used at the end of the line; half-rime (feminine

rimes in which only half of the word rimes – the accented half, as in *lightly* and *frightful,* or the unaccented half, as in *yellow* and *willow);* and other similarities too elusive to name. "A narrow fellow in the grass" ,"Dr. Sigmund Freud Discovers the Sea Shell" , "Toads" (page 72) and "Toads Revisited", "Mr. Z" (page 117), "Poem in October", and "Wind", among others, employ various kinds of approximate rime.

THAT NIGHT WHEN JOY BEGAN

That night when joy began
Our narrowest veins to flush,
We waited for the flash
Of morning's levelled gun.

But morning let us pass,
And day by day relief
Outgrew his nervous laugh,
Grows credulous of peace.

As mile by mile is seen
No trespasser's reproach,
And love's best glasses reach
No fields but are his own.

W. H. Auden (1907-1973)

QUESTIONS

1. What has been the past experience with love of the two people in the poem? What is their present experience? What precisely is the tone of the poem?
2. What basic metaphor underlies the poem? Work it out stanza by stanza. What is "the flash of morning's levelled gun"? Does line 10 mean that no trespasser reproaches the *lovers* or that no one reproaches the lovers for being trespassers? Does "glasses" (11)

refer to spectacles, tumblers, or field glasses? Point out three personifications.
3. The rime pattern in this poem is intricate and exact. Work it out, considering alliteration, assonance, and consonance.

The **REFRAIN** consists of at least one word or words that repeat regularly in a poem. It could be just one word that is repeated or as many as an entire phrase or line. These refrains usually comes at the end of a stanza. In a song, we would call the refrain a chorus, since it is the part of the song that repeats itself. One poetic example would be the phrase, "Quoth the raven, Nevermore" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven."

In addition to the repetition of **individual sounds and syllables, the poet may repeat whole words, phrases, lines, or groups of lines. When such repetition is done according to some fixed pattern, it is called a.** The refrain is especially common in songlike poetry. Examples are to be found in Shakespeare's "Winter" (page 6) and "Spring" (page 11). It is not to be thought that we have exhausted the possibilities of sound repetition by giving names to a few of the more prominent kinds.

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EXERCISE

1. Discuss the various ways in which the following poems make use of refrain:
a. "Winter,"
b. "Spring,"
c. "The Pasture,"
d. "Southern Cop,"
e. "in Just-,"
f. "The Shield of Achilles,"
g. "My sweetest Lesbia,"
h. "what if a much of a which of a wind,"
i. "Song: To Cynthia,"
j. "John Gorham,"
k. "Edward,"

1. "Cha Till Maccruimein,"
m. "The Lamb,"
n. "Fear no more the heat o' the sun,"
o. "Do not go gentle into that good night,"

GOD'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of this sonnet?
2. The image in lines 3 – 4 possibly refers to olive oil being collected in great vats from crushed olives, but the image is much disputed. Explain the simile in line 2 and the symbols in lines 7-8 and 11-12.
3. Explain "reck his rod" (4), "spent" (9), "bent" (13).
4. Using different-colored pencils, encircle and connect examples of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and internal rime. Do these help to carry the meaning?

WE REAL COOL

The Pool Players
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. *We*
Left school. We
Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We
Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Gwendolyn Brooks (b. 1917)

QUESTIONS

1. In addition to end rime, what other musical devices does this poem employ?
2. Try reading this poem with the pronouns at the beginning of the lines instead of at the end. What is lost?
3. English teachers in a certain urban school were criticized recently for having their students read this poem: it was said to be immoral. Was the criticism justified? Why or why not?

I HEAR AN ARMY

I hear an army charging upon the land,
And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees:
Arrogant, in black armor, behind them stand,
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.

They cry unto the night their battle-name: **5**
I moan in sleep when I hear afar their whirling laughter.
They cleave the gloom of dreams, a blinding flame,
Clanging, clanging upon the heart as upon an anvil.

They come shaking in triumph their long, green hair:

They come out of the sea and run shouting by the shore.
My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?
My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone?

James Joyce (1882-1941)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the rime scheme of the poem? What kinds of rime does it employ?
2. Find examples of assonance, consonance, and alliteration in the poem: circle similar sounds and connect them. Do any of these sound correspondences seem to you to contribute to the meaning? Are there any other types of sound repetition in the poem?
3. What is the situation in the poem? (Who is the speaker? Where is he? Why is he in despair? What are the army and the charioteers?)
4. What different kinds of imagery are used in the poem? What figures of speech? How do they contribute to the meaning of the poem?

PARTING, WITHOUT A SEQUEL

She has finished and sealed the letter
At last, which he so richly has deserved,
With characters venomous and hatefully curved,
And nothing could be better.

But even *as* she gave it
Saying to the blue-capped functioner of doom,
"Into his hands," she hoped the leering groom
Might somewhere lose and leave it.

Then all the blood
Forsook the face. She was too pale for tears,
Observing the ruin of her younger years.
She went and stood

Under her father's vaunting oak

Who kept his peace in wind and sun and glistened
Stoical in the rain; to whom she listened
If he spoke.

And now the agitation of the rain
Rasped his sere leaves, and he talked low and gentle
Reproaching the wan daughter by the lintel;
Ceasing and beginning again.

Away went the messenger's bicycle,
His serpent's track went up the hill forever,
And all the time she stood there hot *as* fever
And cold as any icicle.

John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974)

QUESTIONS

1. Identify the figures of speech in lines 3 and 22 and discuss their effectiveness. Are there traces of dramatic irony in the poem? Where?
2. Is the oak literal or figurative? Neither? Both? Discuss the meanings of "vaunting" (13), "stoical" (15), "sere" (18), and "lintel" (19).
3. Do you find any trite language in the poem? Where? What does it tell us about the girl's action?
4. W. H. Auden has defined poetry as "the clear expression of mixed feelings."
Discuss the applicability of the definition to this poem. Try it out on other poems.
5. A feminine rime that involves two syllables is known also *as* a DOUBLE RIME. Find examples in the poem of both perfect and approximate double rimes. A feminine rime that involves three syllables is a TRIPLE RIME. Find one example of a triple rime. Which lines employ masculine or SINGLE RIMES, either perfect or approximate?

ON WENLOCK EDGE

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
When Uricon the city stood:
'Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
Today the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

QUESTIONS

1. Vocabulary: *yeoman (11).* "Holt"(5) is a wooded hill: "hanger" (5) is a wood on the side of a steep hill or bank; both words derive from Old English or Anglo-Saxon.
2. Wenlock Edge (1) is a long ridge of hills in county Shropshire, England; the Wrekin (2) (pronounced *reek' in)* is a solitary round-topped hill not far distant, an opposing feature of the landscape;

the river Severn (4) flows through Shropshire; the ruins of the ancient Roman city Uricon (6) have been partially excavated near modern Wroxeter. Who is the speaker? Why does he mention "the Roman" (9)? Compare Housman's strategy in this respect with that in "On Moonlit heath and lonesome bank" (page 54).

3. For what do the trees of the first two stanzas become symbols? For what does the wind? How is "wind" related to *breath* and *spirit* (see dictionary), and what is implied by Housman's choice of it and of "gale" over these more traditional figures? What is implied by the juxtaposition of the "blood that warms" and the "thoughts that hurt" in lines 11-12?

4. What consolation does the speaker offer himself in the final stanza?

5. Discuss the use and effect of alliteration, assonance, consonance, masculine and feminine rime, and other repetitions in the poem.

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the paradoxes in lines 1 and 3.

2. Discuss the poem as a series of symbols. What are the symbolical meanings of "gold" in the final line of the poem?

3. Discuss the contributions of alliteration, assonance, consonance, rime, and other repetitions to the effectiveness of the poem.

THREE GREY GEESE

Three grey geese in a green field grazing,
Grey were the geese and green was the grazing.

Nursery Rhyme

CHAPTER EIGHT

RHYTHM AND METER

The word rhythm refers to any wavelike recurrence of motion or the sound. In speech it is the natural rise and fall of language. All language is to some degree rhythmical, for all language involves some kind of alternation between accented and unaccented syllables.

Meter is the kind of rhythm we can tap our foot to. In language that is metrical the accent are so arranged as to occur at apparently equal intervals of time, and it is this intervals we mark off with the tap of our foot. The word meter comes from a word meaning "measure." For measuring verse we use the foot, the line, and (sometimes) the stanza.

English poetry employs five basic rhythms of varying stressed (/) and unstressed (x) syllables. The meters are iambs, trochees, spondees, anapests and dactyls. In this document the stressed syllables are marked in boldface type rather than the tradition al "/" and "x." Each unit of rhythm is called a "foot" of poetry.

Metrical language is called **VERSE**. Nonemetrical language is called **PROSE**.

FOOT:

The basic metrical unit, the **FOOT**, consists normally of one accented syllable plus one or two accented syllables, though

occasionally there may be no unaccented syllables, and very rarely there may be three.

The basic kinds of feet are thus as follows:

N.	Example	Name of foot	Name of Meter
1	to-***day***	Iamb	Iambic
2	***dai***-ly	Trochee	Trochaic
3	In-ter-***vene***	Anapest	Anapestic
4	***yes***-ter-day	Dactyl	Dactylic
5	***day-break***	Spondee	Spondaic
6	***Day***	Monosyllabic foot	

Line:

The secondary unit of measurement, the ***LINE***, is measured by naming the number of feet in it. The following names are used:

1	**Mono**meter	one foot
2	**Di**meter	two feet
3	**Tri**meter	three feet
4	**Tetra**meter	four feet
5	**Penta**meter	five feet
6	**Hexa**meter	six feet
7	**Hepra**meter	seven feet
8	**Octa**meter	eight feet

STANZA:

The third unit, the **STANZA**, consists of a group of lines whose metrical pattern is repeated throughout the poem.

SCANTION

The process of measuring verse is referred to as

SCANSION.

To scan any specimen of verse, we do three things:

(1) We identify the **prevailing foot**.
(2) We name the **number of feet** in a **line**.
(3) We describe the **stanza pattern**.

Ex:

Tell me not, sweet I am un-kind,

That from the nun-ner-y

Of thy chaste breast and qui-et mind

To war and arms I fly

The poem comes in: **iambic tetrameter four line stanza.**

The meters with two-syllable feet are

- IAMBIC (x /) : That **time** of **year** thou **mayst** in **me** be**hold**
- TROCHAIC (/ x): **Tell** me **not** in **mourn**ful **num**bers
- SPONDAIC (/ /): **Break**, **break**, **break**/ On
  thy **cold gray stones**, O **Sea**!

Meters with three-syllable feet are

- ANAPESTIC (x x /): And the **sound** of a **voice** that is **still**
- DACTYLIC (/ x x): **This** is the **for**est pri**me**val,
  the **mur**muring **pines** and the **hem**lock (a trochee replaces the final dactyl)

Each line of a poem contains a certain number of feet of iambs, trochees, spondees, dactyls or anapests. A line of one foot is a monometer, 2 feet is a dimeter, and so on--trimeter (3), tetrameter (4), pentameter (5), hexameter (6), heptameter (7), and o ctameter (8). The number of syllables in a line varies therefore according to

the meter. A good example of trochaic monometer, for example, is this poem entitled "Fleas":
Adam
Had'em.

Here are some more serious examples of the various meters.

iambic pentameter (5 iambs, 10 syllables)

- That **time** | of **year** | thou **mayst** | in **me** | be**hold**

trochaic tetrameter (4 trochees, 8 syllables)

- **Tell** me | **not** in | **mourn**ful **| num**bers

anapestic trimeter (3 anapests, 9 syllables)

- And the **sound** | of a **voice** | that is **still**

dactylic hexameter (6 dactyls, 17 syllables; a trochee replaces the last dactyl)

- **This** is the | **for**est pri | **me**val, the | **mur**muring | **pine** and the | **hem**locks

Examples of Rhythm

Example #1

So. The SPEAR-danes in DAYS gone BY
And the KINGS who RULED them had COUrage and GREATness.
We have HEARD of those PRINces' herOic camPAIGNS.

(*Beowulf* translated by Seamus Heaney)

Seamus Heaney paid much attention to the rhythm of the original Old English when creating his translation of *Beowulf*. This rhythm example comes from the very opening of the poem, and already it

establishes a very sing-song like pattern. All three lines open with an anapest ("So the SPEAR," "And the KINGS," and "We have HEARD"). The lines generally have two unstressed syllables between stressed syllables, creating a waltz-like rhythm.

Example #2

Shall I comPARE thee TO a SUMmer's DAY?
Thou ART more LOVEly AND more TEMPerATE:
Rough WINDS do SHAKE the DARling BUDS of MAY,
And SUMmer's LEASE hath ALL too SHORT a DATE:
…
So LONG as MEN can BREATHE, or EYES can SEE,
So LONG lives THIS, and THIS gives LIFE to THEE.

("Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare)

William Shakespeare wrote many sonnets, and generally used iambic pentameter in his lines. Arguably his most famous sonnet, "Sonnet 18," indeed follows this rhythm. As explained above, iambic pentameter has ten syllables per line, starting with an unstressed syllable and alternating every other syllable with stress. This means that the lines end on a stressed syllable. This rhythm thus also makes the rhyme scheme more obvious, as Shakespeare's sonnets followed an ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme pattern. For example, in this excerpt Shakespeare rhymes "day" with "May" and "temperate" with "date," and in the couplet he rhymes "see" and "thee." The rhythm helps exaggerate the rhyme.

Example #3

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.

("Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost)

This is an example of iambic tetrameter, which means that there are four iambs per line. The rhythm in this poem can be equated to the sound of the man traveling by horse through the woods. Indeed, Frost is even more faithful to his chosen rhythm than the previous Shakespeare example; the rigidity of Frost's rhythm is reminiscent of footsteps and creates a somewhat soporific effect on the reader.

Example #4

It was MAny and MAny a YEAR ag0,
In a KINGdom BY the SEA,
That a MAIden THERE lived WHOM you may KNOW
By the NAME of ANnabel LEE;
And this MAIden she LIVED with NO other THOUGHT
Than to LOVE and be LOVED by ME.

("Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allen Poe)

The rhythm in Edgar Allen Poe's poem "Annabel Lee" has a singing quality to it, like in Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*. Poe creates this by alternating between anapests and iambs. Every line starts with an anapest ("In a KING…," "By the NAME," and "Than to LOVE," for example) and continues with either another anapest or an iamb. Rather than the up-down rhythm of iambic pentameter, the rhythm in this poem creates a more melodic quality.

Example #5

SUNdays TOO my FAther GOT up EARly
and PUT his CLOTHES on in the BLUEBLACK COLD,
THEN with CRACKED HANDS that ACHED
from LAbor in the WEEKday WEAther made
BANKED FIRES BLAZE. NO one EVer THANKED him.

("Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden)

This is an interesting example of rhythm in that the rhythm varies greatly from line to line. The first line is a very straightforward example of trochaic pentameter. After that line, however, there are many shifts in rhythm. The shifts are even more interesting because the first line seems to set up a very standard rhythm. Yet then we see iambs and an example of a spondee, in "cracked hands," and even sets of three stressed syllables in a row, such as "blueblack cold" and "banked fires blaze" (this more uncommon type of meter is called molossus). The end of this excerpt then returns to a trochaic meter with "No one ever thanked him." The trochaic lines seem plodding in their straightforward meter and indeed refer to the father's relentless work, whereas the spondee and molossus examples correspond to the intensity of his work and indeed the most vivid imagery. Hayden uses rhythm brilliantly to suggest the different aspects of the father's work.

CHAPTER NINE

SOME SELECTED
&
ANALYZED POEMS

"The Road Not Taken"

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Frost:

Frost (1874-1963) was born in San Francisco, California, in America. There, Robert graduated from high school. .Frost attended **Dartmouth** and **Harvard**, married Miss White in 1895. Robert would make several efforts to run farms throughout his life, but rarely with much financial success.

In 1912 Robert travelled to England where he worked as a **full time poet**. He came into contact with other poets such as F.S.Flin, Wilfred Gibson, Edward Thomas and **Erza Pound**. Edward Thomas in particular offered Robert a lot of encouragement, recognising the originality of Frost's poetry. However with the onset of the First World War Robert returned to America, and from 1916 to 1938 he worked as an English professor at Amerherst college.

Robert Frost was awarded four **Pulitzer Prizes**, and received many honourary degrees including two from Oxford and Cambridge University.

Robert Frost passed away in January 1963.

A critical Analysis of the Poem

The theme

The speaker stands in the woods, considering a fork in the road. Both ways are equally worn and equally overlaid with un-trodden leaves. The speaker chooses one, telling himself that he will take the other another day. Yet he knows it is unlikely that he will have the opportunity to do so. And he admits that someday in the future he will recreate the scene with a slight twist: He will claim that he took the less-traveled road. He wanted to explore the both two roads.

"I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence:" Here this man stands in his yellow wood, having just made a decision to travel a road he is compelled to feel may be less traveled and he's already projecting his fate onto the future? Is the sigh one of completion or one of regret? **The future** will answer this question whether it was the right or wrong choice.

Finally, we can say that one of Frost's commonest subjects is the choice the poet is faced with two roads, two ideas, two possibilities of action. "The Road Not Taken" deals with the choice between two roads, and with the results of the choice which the poet makes. It raises the evident question of whether it is better to choose a road in which many travel, or to choose the road less traveled and explore it yourself. The speaker will some day, sighing, tell others that he took the unknown road when faced with a choice.

He knew that the decision he made would determine the outcome of his life, and that he would have to be devoted to the road he chose. " It also shows that the speaker may not want to be like everybody else, a follower, but instead, chose a different road and be himself, a leader. **This poem supports concept of individualism, caution, commitment as the speaker decided not to come back, and accepting the challenges of life.**

I-Sound Techniques:

a-Form:

The poem comes in 4 stanzas, each stanza contains 4 lines.

b-Rhyme scheme:

It is a strict, repeated rhyming **a b a a b**

c-Rhythm and meter:

This poem has an iambic tetrameter base. But, he followed the rules and broke the rules with intention when he felt it

necessary to the work. Using a spondee (two syllables of equal stress) with the words TWO ROADS, he reinforces the equality of the two roads from the get-go. An analysis of his use of iambs and anapests throughout the work helps to reinforce the meanings and layers of the poem.

II- Imagery techniques:

a-symbolism: by the end of the poem we realize that the poet's choice of a road as a symbol of any choice of life between alteratives that appear almost equally attractive but will result through the years in a large difference as one gets experience.

b-images: the pictures of "the yellow woods" and 'the road" are very clear.

b-Personification:

Here, Frost uses personification, saying that the road has a claim and it, (the road) wanted:

And **having** perhaps the better **claim,**
Because it was grassy and **wanted** wear;

III- Language techniques:

a-the tone: the tone of the poem is lightly sad, this feeling iis supported with the poet use of words such as 'black", "sigh"

b- irony: this ironical voice of the poet is inescapable: the poet was hesitant to choose the untrodden, new road at the beginning but" *'and that made all the difference."*

c- Diction: the poet's choice of words is very evocative, words like, 'long", "grassy" and 'doubted" assured the hesitation the poet had.

She Walks in Beauty

By Lord Byron

She Walks in Beauty

1

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes[1] and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed[2] to that tender[3] light
Which heaven to gaudy[4] day denies.

2

One **shade** the more, one **ray** the less,
Had half impaired[5] the nameless grace[6]
Which waves in every raven tress,[7]
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.[8]

3

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,[9]
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Lord Byron in 1814.

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[1] **climes**: atmospheres مناخ
[2] **Mellow**: become more relaxed and calm, pleasant, gentle/ become mature
[3] **Tender:** kind/ lovely
[4] **Gaudy**: showy in a vulgar way/too much colored and bright مبهرج
[5] **Impair**: reduce or damage/ make something less good
[6] **Grace**: elegance/ charm
[7] **Tress**: ponytail / hair tied together to the back of the head
[8] **Dwell**: to live in a place
[9] **Eloquent:** expressive, powerful, articulate

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18)

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,

When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

ON THE SEA

By John Keats

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be moved for days from where it sometime fell.
When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
Oh, ye! who have your eyeballs vexed and tired,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody---
Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth and brood,
Until ye start, as if the sea nymphs quired!

Lines Written in Early Spring

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And ’tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature’s holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

Afterwards

Thomas Hardy, 1840 - 1928

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should
come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at

the door,

Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,

Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,

"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,

And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,

Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,

"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

When We Two Parted

George Gordon Byron, 1788 - 1824

When we two parted

In silence and tears,

Half broken-hearted

To sever for years,

Pale grew thy cheek and cold,

Colder thy kiss;

Truly that hour foretold

Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning

Sunk chill on my brow--

It felt like the warning

Of what I feel now.

Thy vows are all broken,

And light is thy fame;

I hear thy name spoken,

And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,

A knell to mine ear;

A shudder comes o’er me--

Why wert thou so dear?

They know not I knew thee,

Who knew thee too well--

Long, long shall I rue thee,

Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met--

In silence I grieve,

That thy heart could forget,

Thy spirit deceive.

If I should meet thee

After long years,

How should I greet thee?--

With silence and tears.

Next, Please

Always too eager for the future, we
Pick up bad habits of expectancy.
Something is always approaching; every day
Till then we say,

Watching from a bluff the tiny, clear
Sparkling armada of promises draw near.
How slow they are! And how much time they waste,
Refusing to make haste!

Yet still they leave us holding wretched stalks
Of disappointment, for, though nothing balks
Each big approach, leaning with brasswork prinked,
Each rope distinct,

Flagged, and the figurehead wit golden tits
Arching our way, it never anchors; it's
No sooner present than it turns to past.
Right to the last

We think each one will heave to and unload
All good into our lives, all we are owed
For waiting so devoutly and so long.
But we are wrong:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
No waters breed or break.

Love's Secret

William Blake, 1757 - 1827

Never seek to tell thy love,
  Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind doth move
  Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
  I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears.
  Ah! she did depart!

Soon after she was gone from me,
  A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly:
  He took her with a sigh.