

Musical Devices in Poetry

Musical device is a technique for achieving a particular artistic effect.

What makes poetry musical?

1. Rhyme

The repetition of accented vowel sounds and all succeeding sound that appear close together.

“ Come with the rain, O loud southwester
Bring the singer, bring the nester
Give the buried flower a dream
Make the settled snow bank steam”

From “To The Thawing Wind” (Robert Frost)

The Types of Rhyme:

a. End Rhyme (the most common form of rhyme)

Placing the rhyming sound at the end of a line:

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

(Langston Hughes)

b. Internal Rhyme

Repeating sounds within lines

Once upon a midnight **dreary**, while I pondered weak
And **weary**

(Edgar Allan Poe's the Raven)

c. Approximate Rhyme (very popular among more modern poets)

The final rhyming sounds are close, but not exactly the same

All of evening softly lit as an astral hall
“Father” I observed to heaven, “You are punctual!”

2. Alliteration

The repetition of consonant sounds in a group of words close together.

It comes at the beginning of words.

An easy way to remember alliteration:

It uses all the letters except the vowels

Snuffles at my feet for what I might drop or kick up
Suck and **slobbers** the stones **snorts** through its lips
(Ted Hughes' The lake)

3. **Consonance** : half rhyme

It is the repetition of consonant sounds located other than at the beginning of words

In Ted Hughes "The Lake", the consonants are parallel but the vowels change

Blade/blood flash/ flesh

4. **Assonance**

The repetition of vowel sounds close together

The different between rhyme vs. assonance :

Rhyme : the repetition of accented vowel sounds and the sounds that follow them

Assonance is simply the repetition of vowel sounds (not followed by identical consonant sounds)

From the molten	Grave and grain
Golden notes	Shine and bright

5. **Onomatopoeia**

The use of a word whose sound imitates or reinforces its meaning in other words, it seeks to imitate the sound for which it stands.

Example of everyday language : whoosh, tick-tock, zoom, purr

Popcorn : its name imitates its action

6. **Refrain** : chorus (in a song)

One or more words, phrases, or lines that are repeated regularly in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza.

We real cool. We left school. We lurk late. We strike straight.

We sing sin. We thin gin. We jazz June. We die soon.