

from my telling. You wanted
to cage a bird in your hands
and learn to fly. 5

Listen again.
You must not handle birds.
They cannot fly through your fingers.
You are not a nest
and a feather is 10
not made of blood and bone.

Only words
can fly for you like birds
on the wall of the sun. 15
A bird is a poem
that talks of the end of cages.

PATRICK LANE (b. 1939)

Glossary

Alliteration: the repetition of sounds in nearby words, usually involving the first consonant sounds of the words. Often used to reinforce meaning or to imitate a sound relevant to what is being described. For example: fair freedom's flag; the murmuring of innumerable bees.

Allusion: a reference to a famous literary, mythological, Biblical, or historical figure or event. For example: He met his *Waterloo*; *Cupid's* arrows struck them. An allusion adds to the depth of meaning of a poem since it reminds the reader of an entire story which can be applied to the poem.

Anapestic: a metrical foot made up of three syllables: two unstressed followed by one stressed (*u u /*). It is often used in light-hearted or humorous poems. For example: like ^ua ^ugh^ost;
"T^uwas ^uthe ^unigh^t ^ube^fore
Ch^rist^mas and ^uall ^uthrou^gh ^uthe
hou^se.

Apostrophe: directly addressing an abstract quality or a nonexistent person as though it were present; therefore, a form of personification. For example: O Canada; Death, where is thy sting? Often used in patriotic poetry and to express some deep emotion. Also used to satirize or parody such poems.

Assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds in a line or series of lines of poetry. For example:
Our echoes roll from soul to
soul
And grow for ever and ever.
Often used to slow the pace of a poem; that is, the speed at which the reader reads it.

Ballad: a narrative poem, usually containing much repetition and often a repeated refrain. Ballads were originally folk songs passed on from age to age. Ballads often tell of a single dramatic episode such as the sinking of a ship or a fight over a beautiful woman.

For example: see *Frankie and Johnny* (p. 179).

Blank Verse: a form of verse which is written in iambic pentameter and is not rhymed. Most of Shakespeare's plays are in blank verse because it can be used to imitate normal speech patterns in English. For example: see *Ulysses* (p. 51).

Caesura: a significant pause within a line of poetry. Used to make the reader consider an idea or to show a transition in thought. Usually, but not always, occurs at a punctuation mark, but sometimes after a phrase or clause or after an internal rhyme. Shown in scansion by a double slash (/ /), as opposed to the single slash (/) which shows the end of a foot.

For example: Cover her
face://mine eyes
dazzle://she died young.
And priests in black
gowns//were walking their
rounds.

Closed Form: a poem written in a set pattern. For example, the sonnet or the ode, which makes certain demands on the poet regarding structure, metre, rhyme scheme, and sometimes, imagery. Most older poetry is in closed form.

Connotation: the feelings and associations suggested by a word.

For example: note the different associations of the words horse; steed; nag. Skillful use of connotations enables the poet to suggest wide-ranging attitudes for certain words. Connotations play a vital role in setting the feeling and tone of a poem.

Dactylic: a metrical foot made up of three syllables: the first one stressed, the next two unstressed (*˘˘˘*). For example: Lázyly; Táke hër up tëndërly. Often used in comic verse or as a variation from the basic metre of the poem.

Denotation: the literal meaning or dictionary meaning of a word.

For example: horse—a large, four-legged animal with solid hoofs and a mane and tail of long, coarse hair.

Note that many common English words have several denotations and can be used as more than one part of speech—e.g. a run, run home, a run counter.

Didactic: a form of poem which has as its primary intention the teaching of some lesson or moral or the making of some critical statement about society.

An example of a didactic poem is *A Poison Tree* (p. 191).

Double Rhyme: a rhyme of two or more syllables in which rhyming stressed syllables are followed by rhyming unstressed syllables.

For example: fálling—cálling;
síng tǒ hër—clíng tǒ hër.

Often used for comic effect—e.g. platinum—flatten 'em, but occasionally used in serious verse. Also called feminine rhyme.

Dramatic Monologue: a lyric poem in which the speaker addresses his or her words to someone who is present but silent. The speaker becomes a character in a dramatic situation and his or her words, which are spoken at a decisive or revealing moment, give some insight into the speaker, perhaps unwittingly. An example of a dramatic monologue is *Dover Beach* (p. 79).

Elegy: a formal poem, often written as a lament for a departed friend or respected person. The poet usually sets forth his or her ideas about death or some other serious subject.

An example of an elegy is *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (p. 188). Because of the serious nature of elegies, they are often

parodied or satirized—e.g. *An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog* (p. 207).

End-Stopped Line: a full pause at the end of a line of poetry, usually marked by a punctuation mark.

For example:

True wit is nature to
advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but
ne'er so well expressed.

The opposite of a run-on line.

Epic: a long narrative poem which tells of the adventures of heroic characters, covers a long period of time, or describes some monumental task. Often, supernatural forces play a part in the action.

An example of an epic is *The Titanic* (p. 210)

Because epics are often written in elaborate, elevated language, they are frequently parodied, though the parodies are generally much shorter than the originals.

Epigram: a short, concise poem which summarizes some valuable truth. Usually the poem leads up to a sudden twist or witty turn of thought in the last line. Though often humorous, some epigrams are serious. The form is used to make the statement or theme easily memorable. An example of an epigram is *Outwitted* (p. 55).

Exact Rhyme: a rhyme in which the sounds after the vowel sounds are the same. For example: dead—head; slavery—knavery. See also slant rhyme.

End rhyme: rhyme which comes at the end of lines. Most rhyme in poetry is end rhyme. See also internal rhyme.

Feeling: one of the four kinds of meaning; how the speaker of the words of the poem feels about what he or she is discussing.

Figurative Language: variations from the normal order, structure, or meaning of words to gain strength and depth of expression or to create a visual or other sensory effect in the reader's mind. Examples of figurative language are simile, metaphor, and personification. See also literal meaning.

Figures of Speech: the various techniques or devices of figurative language. Thus simile, metaphor and personification are examples of figures of speech.

Foot: a unit of rhythm within a line of poetry. A foot is usually made up of a stressed syllable and one or more unstressed syllables. For example: *U* is an iambic foot; *UUU* is a dactylic foot.

The number of feet in a line is used when describing metre. The pentametre is a five-foot line, the hexametre is a six-foot line, etc. See also p. 157 and *Metrical Feet* (p. 158).

Form: the pattern or structure or organization of a poem; the design of the poem as a whole. Two common poetic forms are the sonnet and the epigram. See also closed form and open form.

Iambic: a metrical foot made up of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable (*uI*). For example: $\overset{u}{A}l\overset{I}{o}ng/\overset{u}{t}he\overset{I}{l}ine/\overset{u}{o}f\overset{I}{s}m\overset{u}{o}k/\overset{u}{y}h\overset{I}{i}lls$. This is the most common metrical foot in English is poetry.

Image: in poetry, a word or sequence of words that refers to a sensory experience. Images may be stated in either figurative language (e.g. The wind roared and struck her as she walked.) or in literal language (e.g. I saw a field of white daisies swaying in the breeze.). Imagery, then, is not a synonym for figurative language. An image always appeals to one or more of the senses. Imagery, in its broad sense, means the pattern or collection of images within a poem or other literary work.

Imagery: the collection or pattern of images within a poem or other artistic work. A study of the imagery of a poem could either be of the physical world presented through the poem or of the devices (figures of speech) which the poet used.

Intention: one of the four kinds of meaning; the poet's apparent purpose in writing the poem or in expressing the ideas presented in it.

Internal Rhyme: rhyme which occurs within lines of poetry.

For example:

Now Sam McGee was from
Tennessee where the cotton
blooms and blows.

Often used to give strength and vigor to a poem since it seems to make the action occur more rapidly.

Irony: in poetry, a difference which the reader senses between the words that are spoken and what is true. Some techniques used to achieve irony are overstatement, understatement, and outright contradiction.

Limerick: a humorous, five-line poem, usually in anapestic rhythm; the first, second, and fifth lines have three feet and rhyme with each other; the third and fourth lines have two feet and rhyme with each other. Limericks usually tell of the actions of a person.

Literal Meaning: the exact meaning of a word or phrase taken without any added exaggeration, imagination, or connotations. Literal meaning, then, is similar to denotation. Literal language is the opposite of figurative language.

Lyric: a short poem expressing the internal and emotional thoughts of a single speaker. Lyrics are usually an expression of the poet's feelings about a person, an object, an event or an idea. The intent is usually to create a single, unified impression on the reader. Lyrics originated as songs, and they retain their melodic patterns through various forms of rhythm and rhyme.

Meaning: four aspects of meaning may be considered: (1) the sense—what the poem is trying to communicate; (2) the feeling—the attitude of the speaker or poet to the subject; (3) the tone—the attitude of the speaker or poet to the reader or audience; (4) the intention—the effect or purpose the poem seems to be trying to achieve. Meanings of words can also be considered as denotation or connotation. The meaning of a poem might also be considered as the statement the poem makes and the emotions it evokes about the subject.

Metaphor: a form of figurative language which makes a comparison by stating that two items are the same—that one is the other.

For example:

He was a roaring lion.

They were falcons in a snare.

Metaphors may be called *extended metaphors* when they are especially drawn out or when they are central to the organization of the poem.

Metaphors may be *implied* when the quality of one item is applied to another although the two are not stated.

For example: He flew to her rescue. (He is given the quality of a bird although a bird is not mentioned.)

Metaphors are used to enrich the connotations of words and to state concisely a variety of meanings. To say a person is a star does not require one to list all the qualities of an actual star.

Metre: the pattern of stressed syllables which occurs at regular intervals and makes up the rhythm of a verse. See also foot, iambic, anapestic, dactylic, and spondaic.

Mood: the attitude or tone which runs through an entire poem; the attitude which the poet takes toward the subject and theme.

Often used with the same meaning as tone. See also tone.

Narrative: a poem that tells a story and organizes its action according to a sequence of time (though not necessarily in chronological order).

Ode: a poem on an exalted theme, expressed in dignified, sincere language, serious in tone, and usually in praise of something or somebody. Because of their serious nature, odes are often parodied or satirized.

Open Form: a poem which follows no set pattern of rhyme or rhythm. The poet uses white space and varying line lengths to achieve emphasis. Most modern poetry is in open form. Sometimes called "free verse". See also closed form.

Overstatement: a figure of speech in which an exaggerated statement is made.

For example: My feet are killing me.

Also called hyperbole. May be used in both serious and humorous verse. Often used in love poems.

Paraphrase: a statement in prose which states the same thing as a given poem, though in different words. That is,

putting into one's own words what one understands the poem is saying. Usually, the first step in interpreting a poem is to write a paraphrase of it or of the difficult passages in it.

Parody: a poem written in humorous imitation of another poem. Usually, the parody imitates the tone, form and imagery of the original, but applies them to some ridiculous object.

Personification: a figure of speech in which a non-human thing is given human attributes.

For example: beauty, honor, death, flowers have all been described as having human emotions or other human characteristics. Flowers may be said to dance in the wind. Death may be said to reach out to someone. Similar in some uses to apostrophe.

Poem: It is not possible to give a definition of a poem that will satisfy all readers. A poem may be described as a composition written for the purpose of giving artistic or emotional pleasure and characterized as having imagination, emotion, truth, sense impressions, concrete language and significant meaning, and being expressed in rhythmic language.

Purpose: the poet's or speaker's apparent reason for expressing the ideas contained in the poem. See also intention.

Pyrrhic: a metric foot made up of two unstressed syllables (*uv*). Rarely found in English poetry.

Rhyme: similarity of vowel sound and all sounds after the vowel in the relevant words. Rhyme is used to give a pleasing sound to a poem, to establish the form of a poem or stanza, and to unify and separate the divisions of a poem. Much modern poetry does not contain rhyme.

Rhyme Scheme: the pattern of rhyme within a stanza or poem. The rhyme scheme is usually shown by applying to each similar rhyme the same letter of the alphabet.

For example:

... steeple	a
... town	b
... people	a
... down	b

Rhythm: in poetry, the pattern of stressed and unstressed sounds in a poem. All spoken language has rhythm; however, it is not as regular as the rhythm of poetry. Rhythm in poetry is analysed by scansion.

Run-On Line: the carrying over of sense and grammatical

structure from one line of poetry to the following line; sometimes from one stanza to the next. Used to affect the rhythm of the poem by causing pauses to fall within lines rather than at the ends.

For example:

At 12, instructed
by the comic books already
latent in my head . . .

Also called enjambement. See also end-stopped line.

Satire: a humorous criticism of a person or persons, or of some aspect of human behavior, or of some human institution or creation. A form of didactic poetry.

Scansion: the analysis of the patterns of stress within a poem. A way to listen to the sound of a poem to hear its effects. Scansion indicates the basic metre of a poem and the variations in it. Often these variations are related to important aspects of meaning, so scansion can also be an aid to interpretation.

Sense: the literal meaning of the poem; one of the four aspects of meaning (along with feeling, tone, intention). The sense of a poem can often be stated in a paraphrase.

Simile: a figure of speech in which there is a direct statement of the similarity

between two items, usually through the use of a word such as *like*, *as*, or *than*, or by a verb such as *resembles*.

For example: My love is like a red, red rose.

Note that the two things being compared are essentially dissimilar. It is not a simile to say, "My car is like your car." See also metaphor.

Single Rhyme: a rhyme of one-syllable words or, in words of more than one syllable, a rhyme of stressed final syllables.

For example: fun—run;
annoy—employ.

Also called masculine rhyme.

Slack Syllable: an unstressed syllable. Slack syllables may be used to gain an effect of hesitation or uncertainty, but when used in pairs as in the anapestic foot (*uuu*) they can give a bouncing rollicking rhythm.

For example: $\overset{u}{A}$ $\overset{u}{bunch}$ / $\overset{u}{o}$ f $\overset{u}{t}$ he
 $\overset{u}{b}$ oys/ $\overset{u}{w}$ ere $\overset{u}{w}$ hoop/ $\overset{u}{i}$ ng it $\overset{u}{u}$ p/ $\overset{u}{i}$ n
the $\overset{u}{M}$ al/ $\overset{u}{a}$ m $\overset{u}{u}$ te/ $\overset{u}{s}$ aloon.

Or, for a serious effect as in
Poe's *Annabel Lee* (p. 68).

Slant Rhyme: A rhyme in which the words have similar but not exactly the same rhyming sounds, or in which the final consonants are the same but the vowels differ.

For example: black—rock; web—step; bend—wand.

When analysing rhyme the reader should consider if the apparent slant rhyme is the result of changes in pronunciation since the poem was written.

For example: say—tea was once an exact rhyme (say—tay).

Slant rhymes in modern poetry are probably intended as such. Also called near rhyme, partial rhyme, and off rhyme.

Sonnet: a lyric poem of fourteen lines in iambic pentameter following one of several possible rhyme schemes. The two main types of sonnet are the Italian (or Petrarchan) and the English (or Shakespearean).

The Italian sonnet is divided into two parts: an eight-line section (octave) rhymed *abba abba*, and a six-line section (sestet) rhymed *cde cde* or *cdc cdc* or *cde cde*. Often the octave states a problem or a question and the sestet offers a solution. The English sonnet usually has three four-line sections, each with its own rhyme scheme, and ends in a two-line rhymed couplet. The rhyme scheme, then, is usually *abab cdcd efef gg*. The final couplet is usually a concluding statement commenting on the preceding thoughts.

The sonnet is an example of closed form.

Speaker: the person or persons who speak the words of the poem. Poets often create a fictional character as playwrights do. The speaker must then speak in a certain way according to the situation presented in the poem. When the author is clearly speaking in his or her own terms, it is acceptable to speak of the poet rather than the speaker; but this is often hard to decide.

Reading several poems by the same author may help a reader to see similarities in tone and feeling which might distinguish speaker from poet.

Also called the persona.

Spondaic: a metrical foot made up of two stressed syllables (*//*). Rare in English poetry and most likely to be found when two one-syllable words are used together.

For example: all joy.

Also occurs in many compound words—e.g. football, heartbreak.

Used to give emphasis, to vary the basic emphasis and to vary the basic metre of the poem.

Stanza: a group of two or more lines in a poem linked on the basis of length, metre, rhyme scheme, or thought (more common in modern poetry). Each stanza is usually set off from the preceding and

following stanzas by space. A traditional stanza form is the ballad. Strictly speaking, a stanza is not the same as a verse. See also verse.

Structure: in poetry, the way a poem is put together. Because poems are unified wholes, structure will be shown in patterns of various kinds within the poem. One kind of structure is syntactic—the sentences that make up the poem. Another kind of structure is the pattern of images that recur throughout the poem or at important points in it. A third kind of structure is found in the pattern of rhythm and/or rhyme. Other kinds of structure may also be found.

For example: a sonnet has fourteen lines divided into two groups, either 12 lines and 2, or 8 lines and 6. Narrative poems usually have a dramatic structure consisting of an introduction, conflict, rising action, climax and conclusion. Structure is most easily discovered through repeated and relatively fast readings of the entire poem. A sense of a poem's structure is an essential step towards more detailed interpretations.

Symbol: a term with many meanings; basically a symbol is something that stands for

something else—e.g. a star, an ocean, a flag, a prison. Symbols depend on the connotations the reader attributes to them; hence they suggest or evoke meanings rather than state them directly.

Theme: in poetry, the central thought of the poem as a whole; the abstract concept which is made concrete through the imagery and other features of the poem. Theme is not the same as the subject or topic of the poem. It may be helpful to think of theme as the statement the poem makes about the topic. A one- or two-sentence paraphrase is a way of clarifying one's thoughts about the theme.

Tone: one of the four aspects of the meaning of a poem; the attitude the poet takes toward the audience. Thus, tone may be any of the normal human attitudes—e.g. angry, serious, mocking, humorous. The reader should be aware of the tone of a poem so that he or she may know the feelings he or she is to share while reading it.

Topic: the subject matter of a poem; also called the subject. For example: death, love, people, war. Most poems make some statement about the topic. See also theme.

Trochaic: a metrical foot made up of two syllables: the first stressed, the second unstressed (*ιυ*).

For example:

Dóublĕ/dóublĕ/tóil
ańd/tróublĕ./

Its most common use is in short songs and lyrics because in longer works the rhythm tends to be too repetitious.

Understatement: a figure of speech in which something is deliberately underrated or said to be less than it is. Understatement has the effect of implying that the thing described is more than it is, allowing the reader to add the significance. Understatement is, therefore, a form of irony. For example: upon winning a

million dollar lottery, you say "That's nice."

Unity: the wholeness of a poem in which the entire poem is seen as being organized around a basic form or idea and to which all the parts are related. A poem has unity when the ideas, the form and the language all seem to contribute to presenting a single meaning or unified impression.

Verse: used with two meanings: first, referring to a line of poetry; second, as a general name given to poetry (e.g. *The Book of Modern Verse*). Sometimes loosely used to refer to a stanza in poetry, though the two terms are better kept distinct.

Questions

1. What kinds of stories usually begin with the words used at the beginning of the poem? How do these connotations affect your reading of the poem?
2. The poem relies on the connotations of words such as *Acadien*, *French*, *Canadien*, *Canadian* and *American*. What connotations of each of these words are important for an understanding of the poem?
3. What do you think is the message or theme of the poem? What was the poet's purpose in writing it?

Poems for Further Study

These poems in Part One are also rich in connotations:

How Do I Love Thee? (p. 24)

Acquainted With the Night (p. 32)

Ulysses (p. 51)

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer (p. 98)

Figurative Language

Poets use more figurative language^o than we do in ordinary speech. Figurative language is simply any change from the normal order, construction or meaning of words. This type of language gives freshness and strength to an expression and can create a pictorial or descriptive effect. Figurative language commonly shows comparisons between two things that we had never before noticed were similar. Four common types of figurative language are simile, metaphor, personification and apostrophe.

SIMILE AND METAPHOR are the most common types of figurative language. In a simile^o, the comparison is indicated by connective words such as "like," "as," and "than," or by verbs such as "seems" and "resembles."

In a metaphor^o, the connective word is omitted, and one thing is said to be another. Some form of the verb "to be" is usually used in a metaphor.

In an implied metaphor^o, neither a connective word nor the verb "to be" is used in the comparison. The reader must be alert to the inferences of the word.

• Being Aware of Simile

What comparisons are made in the similes below? What additional meanings do the similes add to the words?

- a) The poet claims that even if he were a great orator, without charity he would be "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."
- b) The Indian woman abandoned on an island cries, "Like a wild beast, I am left on this island to die."
- c) "I wore my hair like a helmet," says the speaker of her appearance at age sixteen.
- d) Later in the same poem, the speaker says, "I had begun to shed knowledge like petals/or scales."
- e) The poet describes dying soldiers as "These who die as cattle."
- f) Recalling walking with the woman he loves, the speaker says the night "was soft as lips upon our skin."

• Being Aware of Metaphor

What comparisons are made in the metaphors below? What kinds of meanings do the metaphors add to the sense of the words?

- a) Our life is a "play of passion."
- b) Our birth is but "a sleep and a forgetting."
- c) You are the "salt of the earth."
- d) "No man is an island."
- e) "When you are the anvil, bear—
When you are the hammer, strike."

• Being Aware of Implied Metaphor

Find the implied metaphors in these quotations. What two things are compared? What meanings are added by the metaphor?

- a) "I remembered that youth would fly fast."
- b) The soldier's sigh "Runs in blood down palace walls."

PERSONIFICATION AND APOSTROPHE are figures of speech which are closely related to metaphor. In personification^o, a thing, animal or abstract term is given human qualities. That is, a poet compares the non-human to the human. In this way, the abstract quality or idea can be made concrete and, thus, more striking in its meaning.

When poets *address* someone or something either invisible or not ordinarily spoken to, they are using what is called apostrophe^o.

• Being Aware of Personification

What comparisons are made in these excerpts? What is the effect of personifying the object or quality?

- a) "Life must be hastening away."
- b) "The moving finger writes."

- c) "Death lays his icy hands on kings."
 d) "Charity suffereth long, and is kind."
 e) "I hate that drum's discordant sound,
 Parading round, and round, and round."
 f) "The deep moans round with many voices."
 g) "I have a rendezvous with Death."

• Being Aware of Apostrophe

What does a poet gain by using apostrophe in these excerpts?

- a) "Little lamb, who made thee?"
 b) "Break, break, break,
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!"
 c) "O Canada, our home and native land."
 d) "Death, be not proud."

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? 5
 Does it stink like rotten meat?
 Or crust and sugar over—
 like a syrupy sweet?
 Maybe it just sags
 like a heavy load. 10
 Or does it explode?

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

Questions

In this poem, note the connotations suggested by the similes.

1. In what senses could a dream: dry up, fester, stink, crust and sugar over, sag, explode?
2. Do you think the similes in this poem are well-chosen? Give reasons for your opinion.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant, 5
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
 Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad 10
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honor, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice, 15
 In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloons, 20
 With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
 His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, 25
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616)

Notes

All the World's a Stage: this poem is a speech from the play *As You Like It*.

mewling (l.6): crying and whining.

sighing like a furnace (l.10): sighing as a furnace emits smoke.

bearded like the pard (l.12): having long mustaches like the whiskers of a leopard.

jealous in honor (l.13): jealously protective of his honor.

saws (l.18): sayings, proverbs, clichés.

sixt (l.19): sixth.

pantaloons (l.20): foolish old man (from a traditional character in comedy of Shakespeare's time).

Imagery

One of the purposes in writing a poem is to allow the reader to experience what the poet experienced. Part of this may require the reader to see or hear what the poet saw or heard. But the poet has only words to recreate these situations and, therefore, uses words that present a picture or sound which the reader can relate to the sense, feeling, tone and intention of the poem.

Sight and sound are only two of the senses. The poet may appeal to any of our senses: touch, taste, smell, bodily sensation (e.g. pain), etc. Imagery^o is a word or sequence of words that suggest a sensory experience.

An understanding of the imagery in a poem is extremely important because often the interpretation depends on a grasp of the imagery. Some poems have a series of related images (e.g. water, a lark, the sea). Others may have a series of contrasting images (e.g. brightness and darkness, water and desert, birth and death). The feeling, tone and intention of a poem often emerge through the imagery.

When interpreting imagery, it is best to consider the poem as a whole, to think about all of the poem's images taken together. Relate the imagery to the sense of the poem to find deeper meanings.

• Being Aware of Imagery

Find the images in the excerpts below. What senses are appealed to in each? What purposes do the images serve?

- "For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent flooding in, the main."
- "When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air."
- "The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits..."
"Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling"
- "And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe"
- "Far above us where a jay
Screams his matins to the day,
Capped with gold and amethyst,
Like a vapour from the forge
Of a giant somewhere hid."

EROSION

It took the sea a thousand years,
A thousand years to trace
The granite features of this cliff,
In crag and scarp and base.

It took the sea an hour one night,
An hour of storm to place
The sculpture of these granite seams
Upon a woman's face.

E.J. PRATT (1882-1964)

Questions

- What two contrasting images does the poem present?
- How does the poem show a relationship between these two images?
- What two different meanings does the word "granite" have in the poem?
- Note the rhyme^o at the end of lines 2, 4, 6 and 8. How does this give unity^o to the poem?
- Who might the speaker of these words be? What might the situation be in which they are spoken?

THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

—an excerpt

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told 5
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.
His prayer, he saith, this patient, holy man; 10
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meager, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails: 15
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb oratories,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Questions

1. What feelings about the shark does the poem stimulate?
2. What images (words or expressions) create those feelings?

Poems for Further Study

Almost any poem could be used to explore imagery, but these poems in Part One contain especially effective images:

Chronology (p. 4)

The Forsaken (p. 33)

Wabanaki Song (p. 35)

The Lonely Land (p. 37)

Psalm 23 (p. 54)

To Autumn (p. 87)

Symbol and Allusion

Certain objects stand for more than what they are. A flag is more than a colored piece of cloth. A fat, white-bearded man in a red suit is more than just that. The flag represents all our feelings about a country. The jolly fat man represents the meaning of Christmas. Such objects are symbols^o. Symbols are useful for poets because they are rich in connotation.

Allusions^o are closely related to symbols. An allusion is a word or phrase that refers to something or someone in history or in literature. Through the use of allusion, the tales which surround well-known individuals or events are made part of our understanding of the present. To say that a man is old and has suffered much, but has also achieved much, is a fine sentiment. To say he is, or is like, Ulysses states much more for those who know of the celebrated wanderings of the Greek hero.

• Being Aware of Symbols

What symbols are used in these excerpts? What do they symbolize? What meanings do the symbols add to the poems?

- a) "Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

- b) "Does he picture us buzzards
Circling round his bed?"
- c) "One luminary clock against the sky
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right."

• Being Aware of Allusion

What allusions are made in these excerpts? Use a dictionary or other reference book if you are unfamiliar with the person or thing alluded to. What meanings do the allusions add to the poem?

- a) "Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean"
- b) "Then chase itself down the hill
And neigh like Boanerges"
- c) "An angel writing in a book of gold"
- d) "Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred."

THE HOURGLASS

Do but consider this small dust,
Here running in the glass,
By atoms moved;
Could you believe that this,
The body ever was 5
Of one that loved?
And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly,
Turned to cinders by her eye?
Yes; and in death, as life, unblest,
To have't expressed, 10
Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

BEN JONSON (1572-1637)

Note

fly (l.7): any two-winged insect including the moth and the butterfly.

Question

1. What does the hourglass symbolize for the speaker?

Notes

Assyrian (l.6): refers to Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib*.

apoplexy (l.9): a disease which numbs the senses and makes movement impossible.

interpolate (l.19): insert.

Questions

1. What argument does the speaker have with poets who use figurative language?
2. Is the intention of this poem humorous or serious? Give reasons for your opinion.

Poems for Further Study

The following poems in Part One are rich in figurative language:

My Brother Dying (p. 13)

Death, Be Not Proud (p. 13)

L'Envoi: In Beechwood Cemetery (p. 16)

Memory (p. 26)

She's Like the Swallow (p. 36)

I Hate That Drum's Discordant Sound (p. 46)

Anthem For Doomed Youth (p. 47)

I Have a Rendezvous With Death (p. 49)

Song (p. 54)

Unemployment (p. 112)

Irony

Expressions that are rich and full in meaning sometimes distort the words they use, often to the point where the opposite meaning is conveyed. This figure of speech is called irony°. Whenever poets use irony, they always give clues to the reader as to the true meaning of their words.

We also use irony in everyday speech. If someone comes into the house dripping wet, hair in strings and water dribbling from nose and eyebrows, and we say, "You look a little damp," we are using understatement°, one kind of irony. If the person replies, "It's a deluge. I just saw an old guy building an ark," the person is using overstatement°, another kind of irony. The words mean less than what they mean literally.

• Being Aware of Irony

Which of these excerpts are examples of overstatement and which are of understatement? What seems to be the poet's purpose in using each type of irony?

- a) "And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies."
- b) "I am one acquainted with the night."
- c) "When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war,
he went."
- d) "A gown made of the finest wool
With buckles of purest gold."
- e) "I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach."
- f) "But I've a rendezvous with Death. . . .
I shall not fail that rendezvous."

Poems to Study

These poems in Part One contain good examples of irony, overstatement, and understatement:

Ozymandias (p. 14)

The Unknown Citizen (p. 15)

If I Should Die Tonight (p. 17)

First Person Demonstrative (p. 24)

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love (p. 25)

Love Under the Republicans (or Democrats) (p. 26)

Marriage (p. 27)

Lost Jimmy Whelan (p. 28)

The Forsaken (p. 33)

What Do I Remember of the Evacuation (p. 48)

Rose's Mother Was Not Good at Keeping House (p. 62)

Jim Lovenzanna (p. 66)

The Cannibal Flea (p. 69)

Juliette and Her Friends Visit Cherry Beach (p. 94)

South Viewed by North American Eskimo (p. 96)

Rhythm

We usually associate rhythm with music and poetry, but there is rhythm in everyday language too. If you read this sentence aloud, you will notice that some words or parts of words are stressed more than others, and there are pauses of varying lengths between groups of words. These stresses and pauses are the basis for rhythm, but in everyday speech they are usually not organized into any regular pattern. It is the pattern that creates rhythm in poetry.

To create a pattern, poets must select words that are appropriate to the full meaning they want to convey and which also allow for stress in the appropriate places. Poets may also change the order of words. For example, in everyday speech we might say:

I am standing beside my dark house on this long, dull street again.
A poet might say:

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street. . . .

What additional meanings does the poet gain by changing the order of words and by using rhythm?

This regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables is called *metre*.^o *Metre* is all around us in songs, dances, in dripping taps and in the absent-minded finger tapping we do when we are nervous or bored.

Rhythm, then, is created by a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in words and by the pauses between words. The rhythm itself can convey meaning. You yourself use emphasis and pauses to add meaning to the sense of the words you speak.

• Being Aware of Emphasis

Say the sentence below in different ways to convey the meanings listed below it:

"Patti, please close the door."

- a) Several people are present, and Patti is selected.
- b) Patti has just opened the door.
- c) Patti has just closed the window.
- d) Patti has been asked several times, and now the speaker is being sarcastically polite.
- e) The speaker is coaxing Patti.
- f) The speaker is ordering Patti.

What other kinds of meanings can you convey using the same words but changing the emphasis and pauses?

That is one use of rhythm—to convey meanings beyond the sense^o of

the words. These additional meanings contribute to the feeling^o and tone^o of the poem and help to make the poet's intention^o clear.

Rhythm and rhyme have other uses too. For example, a reliable bit of folk wisdom about the weather is that if the sky has a reddish color in the evening, there will be good weather the next day. But if there is a reddish color in the morning, the weather will be bad that day. Most people have trouble remembering which foretells good weather and which predicts bad, unless they remember the rhythmic,

"Red sky at night sailor's delight;

Red sky at morning sailor take warning."

What other verses do you know that help you remember certain facts?

Another use of rhyme and rhythm is suggested by epitaphs—sayings on tombstones. For example,

"Life is a jest; and all things show it.

I thought so once, but now I know it."

Or,

"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay,

Lies Uncle Peter Dan's,

Who early in the month of May

Took off his winter flannels."

Why are these final statements to a person's life often written in verse? Humor aside, rhythm and rhyme can give the words an air of permanence and importance. As Shakespeare states,

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments

Of princes, shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme."

So when writing about important events or expressing ideas of importance, poets often use rhythm (or *metre*) and rhyme. The regular, deliberate patterns show that the language is at a level above the ordinary as befits the content of the poem. You should note, however, that many modern poems do not contain rhyme and may be quite irregular in rhythm. The reason for this is that modern poets often try new forms of expression to give their poems freshness and strength.

When reading a poem, it is important to note the rhythm because it is often a clue to its sense, feeling, tone and intention. Usually, the words are arranged so that the rhythm occurs naturally as we read. When reading aloud, let the words carry the meaning. Do not overstress the rhythm; but be aware of it, and read in a natural manner, trusting the poet to show where the rhythm occurs and why.

2. What is the author's tone in the poem? Give reasons for your opinion.
3. Read the poem aloud, perhaps with other students, to appreciate the rhythm.

PATTERNS OF RHYTHM are found in a poem by means of the technique called scansion.^o In scansion we count the accents and unstressed syllables and divide them into feet.^o Note that scansion is a way to find out the "mechanical" techniques the poet used to achieve certain effects. The meaning of the poem always comes first. We use scansion to dig deeper into the poet's craft, to deepen our appreciation of poetry and to learn methods we can apply in writing poetry.

The unit of rhythm is called a foot.^o There are five common feet in English poetry. Two of these are based on two syllables:

- the iambic (e.g. dēstróy)
- the trochaic (e.g. wánder)

The iambic is by far the most common. Two other feet are based on three syllables:

- the anapestic (e.g. intērvēne)
- the dactylic (e.g. merrily)

The fifth common foot has two stressed syllables:

- the spondaic (e.g. fōotbáall)

You will find many variations on these feet as you read poems, which makes scanning poetry somewhat tricky. Indeed, your scansion may not agree with someone else's. Most poems have one dominant type of rhythm (e.g. iambic), but there will be other feet used occasionally as well. A poem that never varied would become very dull. As you read note the effects certain rhythms have. Note also the variations in the pattern. You may find in some lines unstressed syllables that do not seem to fit the pattern. These are called slack syllables.^o Often the poet varies the rhythm to emphasize important words and ideas.

When you scan whole lines of poetry, you will want to state the number of feet in each line. The terms for counting are from the Latin words:

mono—one	penta—five
di—two	hexa—six
tri—three	hepta—seven
tetra—four	octa—eight.

To each of these is added the word metre, giving us:

monometre—one foot	pentametre—five feet
dimetre—two feet	hexametre—six feet
trimetre—three feet	heptametre—seven feet
tetrametre—four feet	octametre—eight feet.

Now we are ready to describe the rhythm of a line of poetry. If, for example, the line is iambic and has five feet, it is called iambic pentametre:

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments"

Here is another common rhythm:

"Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb."

Describe the rhythm of that line.

THE EFFECTS OF RHYTHM are most clearly seen in the emotional meanings conveyed in a poem. For example, feelings of sadness or joy are often partly the result of the flow or movement of the words in a poem.

Iambic^o (*υι*) is the most common English foot, perhaps because there is a tendency in English for words to be accented on the second syllable and because many function words have one syllable and the more substantive words which follow them are stressed (e.g. the dog has run to school). Therefore iambic rhythm seems most natural and most like ordinary speech. The trochaic^o (*ιυ*) rhythm reverses the natural flow and makes a line seem to move more roughly. The anapestic^o foot (*υυι*) with the two light beats before the accent gives a leaping motion often used in humorous verse or in descriptions of swift action. The dactylic^o (*ιιυ*) begins with an accent and therefore often gives a thrusting, driving movement.

The poet varies the motion in a poem by changing the metre at times or by using more accented one-syllable words. In general, many unaccented syllables quicken the pace, while many accented syllables slow it.

Read and discuss the poems that follow. To deepen your appreciation, note how poets use rhythm, and note the effects they gain by using certain kinds of rhythm and by varying the regular pattern.

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

She Walks in Beauty refers to Lady Wilmot Horton, whom Byron had seen at a ball, attired in mourning with spangles on her dress.

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