ADVANCED PLACEMENT**ENGLISH**

Glossary of Poetic Terms

ALLEGORY

A figurative illustration of truths or generalizations about human conduct or experience in a narrative or description by the use of symbolic fictional figures and actions which resemble the subject’s properties and circumstances.

•  Sidelight: Though similar to both a series of symbols and an extended metaphor, the meaning of an allegory is more direct and less subject to ambiguity than a symbol; it is distinguishable from an extended metaphor in that the literal equivalent of an allegory’s figurative comparison is not usually expressed.

•  Sidelight: Probably the best-known allegory in English literature is Edmund Spencer’s The Faerie Queene.

(Compare Aphorism, Apologue, Didactic Poetry, Epigram, Fable, Gnome, Proverb) (See also Metaphor, Personification)

ALLITERATION

Also called head rhyme or initial rhyme, the repetition of the initial sounds (usually consonants) of stressed syllables in neighboring words or at short intervals within a line or passage, usually at word beginnings, as in “wild and woolly” or the line from the poem, Darkness Lost:

 From somewhere far beyond, the flag of fate’s caprice unfurled,

•  Sidelight: The sounds of alliteration produce a gratifying effect to the ear and can also serve as a subtle connection or emphasis of key words in the line, but should not “call attention” to themselves by strained usage.

(See also Euphony, Modulation, Resonance, Sound Devices)

(Compare Assonance, Consonance, Rhyme, Sigmatism)

ALLITERATIVE VERSE

Poetry in which alliteration is a formal structural element in place of rhyme; it was prevalent in a number of old literatures prior to the 14th century, including Anglo-Saxon. In alliterative verse, the first half-line is united with the second half by alliterating stressed syllables; in the first half-line generally two (but sometimes three) syllables alliterate, while in the second half usually only one. Sometimes one alliterating sound is carried through successive lines:

In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne, I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were, In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes, Wente wide in this world wondres to here.

--The Vision of Piers Plowman, by William Langland, 1330?-1400?

•  Sidelight: To facilitate maintaining the alliterative pattern, poets made frequent use of a specialized vocabulary, consisting of many synonymous words seldom encountered outside of alliterative verse.

•  Sidelight: By the 14th century, rhyme and meter displaced alliteration as a formal element, although alliterative verse continued to be written into the 16th century and alliteration retains an important function as one of a poet’s sound devices.

ALLUSION

An implied or indirect reference to something assumed to be known, such as an historical event or personage or a well-known quotation from literature.

•  Sidelight: An allusion can be used by the poet as a means of imagery, since, like a symbol, it can suggest ideas by connotation; its effectiveness, of course, depends upon the reader’s acquaintance with the reference alluded to.

ANALOGY

An agreement or similarity in some particulars between things otherwise different; sleep and death, for example, are analogous in that they both share a lack of animation and a recumbent posture.

•  Sidelight: Prevelant in literature, the use of an analogy carries the inference that if things agree in some respects, it’s likely that they will agree in others.

ANAPEST, ANAPESTIC

A metrical foot with two short or unaccented syllables followed by a long or accented syllable, as in intervene or for a while. (See an example of anapestic trimeter under Scan)

ANAPHORA

The repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases for rhetorical or poetic effect, as in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address:

 We cannot dedicate-we cannot consecrate-we cannot hallow this ground.

(See also Epistrophe) (Compare Anadiplosis, Echo, Epizeuxis, Incremental Repetition, Parallelism, Polysyndeton, Refrain, Stornello Verses)

ANASTROPHE (uh-NAS-truh-fee)

The inversion of the natural or usual syntactical order of words for rhetorical or poetic effect, as “inspired he was” for “he was inspired.” (Compare Antistrophe, Chiasmus, Hypallage)

ANTITHESIS

A figure of speech in which a thought is balanced with a contrasting thought in parallel arrangements of words and phrases, such as “He promised wealth and provided poverty,” or “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . .” or “Give me performance, not promises.” Also, the second of two contrasting or opposing constituents, following the thesis.

APOSTROPHE (uh-PAHS-truh-fee)

A figure of speech in which an address is made to an absent person or a personified thing rhetorically, as in, “O death, where is thy sting?” An apostrophe is also a punctuation mark used to indicate the omission of letter(s) in an elision, aphaeresis or syncope. (Compare Prosopopeia)

ASSONANCE

The relatively close juxtaposition of the same or similar vowel sounds, but with different end consonants in a line or passage, thus a vowel rhyme, as in the words, date and fade. (See also Euphony, Near Rhyme, Resonance, Sound Devices) (Compare Alliteration, Consonance, Modulation, Rhyme)

ASYNDETON (uh-SIN-duh-tahn)

The omission of conjunctions that ordinarily join coordinate words and phrases, as in “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.”

(Contrast Polysyndeton)

CACOPHONY (cack-AH-fun-ee)

Discordant sounds in the jarring juxtaposition of harsh letters or syllables, sometimes used in poetry for effect, as in the opening line of Fences:

*Crawling, sprawling, breaching spokes of stone,*

•  Sidelight: Sound devices are important to poetic effects; to create sounds appropriate to the content, the poet may sometimes prefer to achieve a cacophonous effect instead of the more commonly sought-for euphony. The use of words with the consonants b, k and p, for example, produce harsher sounds than the soft f and v or the liquid l, m and n.

(See also Dissonance) (Contrast Euphony)

CAESURA (siz-YUR-uh)

A rhythmic break or pause in the flow of sound which is commonly introduced in about the middle of a line of verse, but may be varied for different effects. Usually placed between syllables rhythmically connected in order to aid the recital as well as to convey the meaning more clearly, it is a pause dictated by the sense of the content or by natural speech patterns, rather than by metrics. It may coincide with conventional punctuation marks, but not necessarily. A caesura within a line is indicated in scanning by the symbol (||), as in the first line of Emily Dickinson’s, I’m Nobody:

*I’m no | body- || who are | you?*

•  Sidelight: A caesura occurring at the end of a line is not marked in the scanning process.

•  Sidelight: The classical caesura was a break caused by the ending of a word within a foot.

(See Diaeresis) (See also Alexandrine, Hemistich) (Compare Accent, Cadence, Rhythm)

CHIASMUS (kye-AZ-mus)

An inverted relationship between the syntactic elements of parallel phrases, as in “do not eat to live, but live to eat”, or Goldsmith’s “to stop too fearful, and too faint to go.”

(Compare Anastrophe, Hypallage)

CONCEIT

An elaborate metaphor, often strained or far-fetched, in which the subject is compared with a simpler analogue usually chosen from nature or a familiar context. An excellent example of a conceit is Sir Thomas Wyatt’s My Galley, Charged with Forgetfulness, an adaptation of Petrarch’s Sonnet 159. (See also Euphuism, Gongorism, Marinism, Melic Verse, Metaphysical)

CONNOTATION

The suggestion of a meaning by a word beyond what it explicitely denotes or describes. The word, home, for example, means the place where one lives, but by connotation, also suggests security, family, love and comfort.

•  Sidelight: Sometimes one of the connotations of a word gains enough widespread acceptance to become a denotation.

(See also Allusion, Symbol)

CONSONANCE

A pleasing combination of sounds; sounds in agreement with tone. Also, the repetition of the same end consonants of words at the end of or within a line, such as boat and night.

(See also Euphony, Modulation, Resonance, Sound Devices) (Compare Alliteration, Assonance, Rhyme)

COUPLET

Two successive lines of poetry, usually of equal length and rhythmic correspondence, with end-words that rhyme. The couplet, for practical purposes, is the shortest stanza form, but is frequently joined with other couplets to form a poem with no stanzaic divisions.

•  Sidelight: If the couplet is written in iambic pentameter, it is called an heroic couplet.

(See also Closed Couplet, Open Couplet, Distich, Elegiac)

DENOTATION

The literal dictionary meaning(s) of a word as distinct from an associated idea or connotation.

•  Sidelight: Many words have more than one denotation, such as the multiple meanings of fair or spring. In ordinary language, we strive for a single precise meaning of words to avoid ambiguity, but poets often take advantage of words with more than one meaning to suggest more than one idea with the same word. A pun also utilizes multiple meanings as a play on words.

DICTION

The choice of words; the manner or mode of verbal expression, particularly with regard to clarity and accuracy. (Compare Content, Form, Motif, Persona, Style, Texture, Tone)

DIDACTIC POETRY

Poetry which uses the beauty of expression, imagination, sentiment, etc., for the purpose of instruction, teaching a moral lesson, or explaining the principles of some art or science, as Virgil’s Georgics. Didactic verse is considered by some as a main group of poetry, along with lyric, narrative and dramatic poetry.

•  Sidelight: The inclusion of didactic poetry among the main groups is arbitrary. In classical times, it was a minor variation of the epic and later categorized as a branch of lyric verse. Subsequently, however, it has been so largely developed by modern poets that many believe it should constitute a fourth main group,

(Compare Allegory, Aphorism, Apologue, Catalog Verse, Epigram, Fable, Gnome, Proverb)

END RHYME

A rhyme occurring in the terminating word or syllable of one line of poetry with that of another line, as opposed to internal rhyme. (See also Feminine Rhyme, Masculine Rhyme, Perfect Rhyme)

END-STOPPED

Denoting a line of verse in which a logical or rhetorical pause occurs at the end of the line. (Contrast Enjambment, Open Couplet, Run-On Lines)

ENJAMBMENT

The continuation of the sense and therefore the grammatical construction beyond the end of a line of verse or the end of a couplet.

•  Sidelight: This run-on device, contrasted with end-stopped, can be very effective as a variation to avoid monotony, but should not be used as a mere mannerism.

(See also Open Couplet)

EPITHET

A descriptive word or phrase, usually referring to an outstanding quality of a person or thing, such as “Richard the Lion-Hearted” or Homer’s description of a “rosy-fingered dawn.”

•  Sidelight: An epithet may be either positive or negative in connotation and may also be freshly coined for a particular circumstance or occasion.

(Compare Antonomasia, Kenning, Periphrasis)

EULOGY

A speech or writing in praise of the character or accomplishments of a person. (See also Encomium)

EUPHEMISM (YOO-fuh-mizm)

The substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression to replace one that might offend or suggest something unpleasant, for example, “he is at rest” is a euphemism for “he is dead.” (Contrast Dysphemism)

EUPHONY (YOO-fuh-nee)

Harmony or beauty of sound which provides a pleasing effect to the ear, usually sought-for in poetry for effect.

•  Sidelight: Vowel sounds are generally more pleasing to the ear than the consonants, so a line with a higher ratio of vowel sounds will produce a more agreeable effect; also, the long vowels in words like moon and fate are more melodious than the short vowels in cat and bed.

(See also Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance, Modulation, Sound Devices) (Compare Resonance) (Contrast Cacophony, Dissonance)

EXTENDED METAPHOR

A metaphor which is drawn-out beyond the usual word or phrase to extend throughout a stanza or an entire poem, usually by using multiple comparisons between the unlike objects or ideas. (See also Conceit)

EYE RHYME

See Sight Rhyme

Whoever can endure unmixed delight, whoever can tolerate music and painting and
poetry all in one, whoever wishes to be rid of thought and to let the busy anvils of the
brain be silent for a time, let him read the “Faery Queen.”
---James Russell Lowell

Read Homer once, and you can read no more
For all books else appear so mean, so poor
Verse will seem prose, but still persist to read
And Homer will be all the books you need.
---Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire

FEMININE RHYME

A [rhyme](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhyme#rhyme) occurring on an unaccented final syllable, as in *dining* and *shining* or *motion* and *ocean.* Feminine rhymes are double or [disyllabic rhymes](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#disyllabic_rhyme#disyllabic_rhyme) and are common in the [heroic couplet](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#heroic_couplet#heroic_couplet), as in the opening lines of Goldsmith’s “[Retaliation: A Poem](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xgoldsmi.htm#retaliation),”

Of old, when Scarron his companions invited

Each guest brought his dish, and the feast was united,

(Contrast [*Masculine Rhyme*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#masculine_rhyme#masculine_rhyme))

FOOT

A unit of [rhythm](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhythm#rhythm) or [meter](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meter#meter), the division in verse of a group of [syllables](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#syllable#syllable), one of which is long or [accented](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#accent#accent). For example, the line, “The boy | stood on | the burn | ing deck,” has four iambic metrical feet. The fundamental components of the foot are the [*arsis*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#arsis#arsis) and the [*thesis*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#thesis#thesis)*.* The most common poetic feet used in English verse are the [*iamb*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#iamb#iamb)*,* [*anapest*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#anapest#anapest)*,* [*trochee*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#trochee#trochee)*,* [*dactyl*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#dactyl#dactyl) and [*spondee*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#spondee#spondee), while in classical verse there are 28 different feet.

The other metrical feet are the [*amphibrach*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#amphibrach#amphibrach)*,* [*antibacchius*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#antibacchius#antibacchius)*,* [*antispast*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#antispast#antispast)*,* [*bacchius*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#bacchius#bacchius)*,* [*choriamb*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#choriamb#choriamb)*,* [*cretic*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#cretic#cretic)*,* [*diiamb*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#diiamb#diiamb)*,* [*dispondee*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#dispondee#dispondee)*,* [*dochmius*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#dochmius#dochmius)*,* [*molossus*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#molossus#molossus)*,* [*proceleusmatic*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#proceleusmatic#proceleusmatic)*,* [*pyrrhic*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#pyrrhic#pyrrhic) and [*tribrach*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#tribrach#tribrach), plus two variations of the [*ionic*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#ionic#ionic)*,* four variations of the [*epitrite*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#epitrite#epitrite)*,* and four variations of the [*paeon*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#paeon#paeon)*.* The structure of a poetic foot does not necessarily correspond to word divisions, but is determined in context by the feet which surround it.

FREE VERSE

A fluid [form](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#form#form) which conforms to no set rules of traditional [versification](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#versification#versification). The *free* in free verse refers to the freedom from fixed patterns of [meter](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meter#meter) and [rhyme](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhyme#rhyme), but writers of free verse employ familiar poetic devices such as [assonance](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#assonance#assonance), [alliteration](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#alliteration#alliteration), [imagery](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#imagery#imagery), [caesura](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#caesura#caesura), [figures of speech](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#figure_of_speech#figure_of_speech) etc., and their [rhythmic](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhythm#rhythm) effects are dependent on the syllabic [cadences](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#cadence#cadence) emerging from the context . The term is often used in its French language form, *vers libre*. Walt Whitman’s “[By the Bivouac’s Fitful Flame](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xwhitman.htm#bivouac)“ is an example of a poem written in free verse.

•  Sidelight: Although as ancient as Anglo-Saxon verse, free verse was first employed “officially” by French poets of the [Symbolistic](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#symbolism#symbolism) movement and became the prevailing poetic form at the climax of [Romanticism](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#romanticism#romanticism). In the 20th century it was the chosen medium of the [Imagists](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#imagism#imagism) and was widely adopted by American and English poets.

•  Sidelight: The one characteristic that distinguishes free verse from rhythmical [prose](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#prose#prose) is that free verse has line breaks which divide the content into uneven rhythmical units.

(See also [*Polyphonic Prose*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#polyphonic_prose#polyphonic_prose)*,* [*Polyrhythmic Verse*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#polyrhythmic_verse#polyrhythmic_verse))

•  Sidelight: A line of verse may or may not be written in identical feet; variations within a line are common. Consequently, the classification of verse as iambic, anapestic, trochaic, etc., is determined by the foot which is dominant in the line.

•  Sidelight: To help his young son remember them, Coleridge wrote the poem, “[Metrical Feet](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xcolerid.htm#metrical).”

(See [*Dipody*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#dipody#dipody))

(See also [*Scan*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#scan#scan)*,* [*Scansion*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#scansion#scansion))

HEROIC COUPLET

Two successive lines of rhymed poetry in [iambic](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#iamb#iamb) [pentameter](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#pentameter#pentameter), so called for its use in the composition of [epic](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#epic#epic) poetry in the 17th and 18th centuries. In neo-classical usage the two lines were required to express a complete thought, thus a [closed couplet](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#closed_couplet#closed_couplet), with a subordinate pause at the end of the first line. Heroic couplets, which are well-suited to [antithesis](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#antithesis#antithesis) and [parallelism](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#parallelism#parallelism), are also often used for [epigrams](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#epigram#epigram), such as Pope’s:

       You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come.

       Knock as you please--there’s nobody at home.

•  Sidelight: Poems written in heroic couplets, such as Pope’s [*The Rape of the Lock*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xpope.htm#the_rape)*,* are especially subject to the danger of [metrical](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meter#meter) monotony, which poets avoid by variations in their placement of [caesuras](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#caesura#caesura).

(See also [*Couplet*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#couplet#couplet)*,* [*Distich*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#distich#distich)*,* [*Open Couplet*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#open_couplet#open_couplet))

HYPERBOLE (hi-PER-buh-lee)

A bold, deliberate overstatement, e.g., “I’d give my right arm for a piece of pizza.” Not intended to be taken literally, it is used as a means of emphasizing the truth of a statement.

•  Sidelight: A type of hyperbole in which the exaggeration magnified so greatly that it refers to an impossibility is called an [*adynaton*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#adynaton#adynaton)*.*

(Contrast [*Litotes*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#litotes#litotes)*,* [*Meiosis*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meiosis#meiosis))

IAMB (EYE-am) or IAMBUS, IAMBIC

The most common metrical [foot](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#foot#foot) in English, German and Russian verse, and many other languages as well; it consists of two syllables, a short or unaccented [syllable](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#syllable#syllable) followed by a long or accented syllable, as in *a-VOID* or *the RUSH,* or from the opening line of John Keats’ “[Ode to a Nightingale](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xkeats.htm#nightingale),”

a DROW | -sy NUMB | -ness PAINS

•  Sidelight: The name of the *iambic* foot derives from the Greek *iambos, a* [genre](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#genre#genre) of invective poetry (now termed [lampoon](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#lampoon#lampoon)) with which it was originally associated.

(See also [*Meter*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meter#meter)*,* [*Rhythm*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhythm#rhythm))

INTERNAL RHYME

Also called *middle rhyme, a* [rhyme](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#rhyme#rhyme) occurring *within* the line. The rhyme may be with words within the line but not at the line end, or with a word at the line end and a word within the line, as in Shelley’s “[The Cloud](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xshelley.htm#cloud),”

I bring fresh showers, for the thirsting flowers

LITOTES (LIH-tuh-teez, pl. LIH-toh-teez)

A type of [meiosis](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#meiosis#meiosis) (understatement) in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary, as in “not unhappy” or “a poet of no small stature.”

(Compare [*Irony*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#irony#irony))

(Contrast [*Hyperbole*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#hyperbole#hyperbole))

MASCULINE RHYME

A rhyme occurring in words of one syllable or in an accented final syllable, such as *light* and *sight* or *arise* and *surprise.*

(Contrast [*Feminine Rhyme*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#feminine_rhyme#feminine_rhyme))

METAPHOR

A [figure of speech](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#figure_of_speech#figure_of_speech) in which a word or phrase literally denoting one object or idea is applied to another, thereby suggesting a likeness or [analogy](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#analogy#analogy) between them, as:

The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

--- Edward Fitzgerald, [*The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xfitzger.htm#the_rubaiyat)

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

--- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “[Ode to the West Wind](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xshelley.htm#odewest)“

.   .   . The cherished fields

Put on their winter robe of purest white.

--- James Thomson, [*The Seasons*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xthomson.htm#seasons)

•  Sidelight: While most metaphors are nouns, verbs can be used as well:

Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,

Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,

Are each paved with the moon and these.

--- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “[The Cloud](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xshelley.htm#cloud)“

•  Sidelight: The poetic metaphor can be thought of as having two basic components: (1) what is meant, and (2) what is said. The thing meant is called the *tenor,* while the thing said, which embodies the analogy brought to the subject, is called the *vehicle.*

•  Sidelight: Both and [similes](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#simile#simile) are comparisons between things which are unlike, but a simile expresses the comparison directly, while a metaphor is an *implied* comparison that gains emphatic force by its [connotative](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#connotation#connotation) value.

•  Sidelight: A word or expression like “the leg of the table,” which originally was a metaphor but which has now been assimilated into common usage, has lost its figuative value and is called a *dead metaphor.*

•  Sidelight: Frequently, the term *metaphor,* as opposed to *a metaphor,* is used to include all figures of speech, so the expression, “metaphorically speaking,” refers to speaking figuratively rather than literally.

(See also [*Allegory*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#allegory#allegory)*,* [*Conceit*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#conceit#conceit)*,* [*Extended Metaphor*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#extended_metaphor#extended_metaphor)*,* [*Mixed Metaphor*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#mixed_metaphor#mixed_metaphor)*,* [*Kenning*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#kenning#kenning)*,* [*Personification*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#personification#personification)*,* [*Synesthetic Metaphor*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#synesthetic_metaphor#synesthetic_metaphor))

(Compare [*Analogy*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#analogy#analogy)*,* [*Metonymy*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#metonymy#metonymy)*,* [*Symbol*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#symbol#symbol)*,* [*Synecdoche*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#synecdoche#synecdoche))

ONOMATOPOEIA (ahn-uh-mah-tuh-PEE-uh)

Strictly speaking, the formation or use of words which imitate sounds, like *whispering,* *clang* and *sizzle,* but the term is generally expanded to refer to any word whose sound is suggestive of its meaning.

•  Sidelight: Because [sound](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#sound_devices#sound_devices) is an important part of poetry, the use of onomatopoeia is another subtle weapon in the poet’s arsenal for the transfer of sense impressions through [imagery](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#imagery#imagery), as in Keats’ “The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves,” in “[Ode to a Nightingale](http://www.poeticbyway.com/xkeats.htm#nightingale).”

•  Sidelight: Though impossible to prove, some philologists (linguistic scientists) believe that all language originated through the onomatopoeic formation of words.

(See also [*Mimesis*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#mimesis#mimesis)*,* [*Phonetic Symbolism*](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary2.html#phonetic_symbolism#phonetic_symbolism))