



The Poetry Corner



Scansion Definitions

ANAPESTIC FOOT (noun form: ANAPEST)

Consists of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable. Anapestic foot is usually depicted with these symbols:

● Example:

u u /

u u / u u / u u / u u /
For the moon ne ver beams without bringing me

/ u u / u u / u u /
dreams of the beautiful Annabel Lee --Pope

BALLAD STANZA

One of the oldest forms of a stanza. It consists of four lines, the second and fourth of which are iambic trimeter and rhyme with each other. The first and third lines are iambic tetrameter and do not rhyme.

● An example of a stanza pattern would be: a b c b

BLANK VERSE

Any unrhyming verse (hence the name "blank"). Blank verse usually consists of lines of iambic pentameter. Of all the English verse forms, it is the closest to the natural rhythms of English speech. (Most of Shakespeare's plays are in blank verse).

CAESURA

A significant pause, usually grammatical, within a line. In scansion a caesura is indicated by a double virgule (/ /).

COUPLET

A pair of rhymed lines (of any specificable length or rhythm).

DACTYLIC FOOT (noun form: DACTYL)

Consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. A dactylic foot is usually depicted with these symbols: ● Example:

/ u u

/ u u / u u / u u /
Make no deep scruti ny

/ u u / u u /
Into her matiny -- Hood

END RHYME

The near duplication of sounds that takes place at the ends of lines. End rhyme is the most common type of rhyme.

END STOPPED LINES

A line in which a grammatical pause - such as the end of a phrase, clause or sentence - coincides with the end of the line.

● Example:

Meanwhile, declining from the noon of the day, The Sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;

The hungry Judges soon sentence sign,

And wretches hang that jurymen may dine. -- "The Rape of the Lock," Pope

ENJAMBMENT

The continuation of the sense of one line to the next without any grammatical pause.

Enjambment is also referred to as a run-on line. The opposite of enjambment is an end-stopped line.

● Example:

his fingers leaned

forcefully against the neck

--Haki Madhubuti, "Sun House," Lines 1-2

EYE RHYME

Rhyme in which the ending of words are spelled alike; in most instances were pronounced alike.

EXPLICATION

A detailed analysis of a passage of prose or poetry. An explication would strive to explain how all the elements in an individual poem or passage work; a critic would analyze the various parts in order to interpret the poem. An explication goes one step beyond paraphrase because it attempts to discover the meaning of the work.

FOOT

Is the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables, which make up the metric unit of a line. The most commonly used feet are as follows: [ANAPESTIC](#), [DACTYLIC](#), [IAMBIC](#), and [TROCHAIC](#).

FORCED RHYME

Occurs when the poet gives the effect of seeming to surrender helplessly to the exigencies of a difficult rhyme.

● Example: Farewell, Farewell, you old rhinoceros

I'll stare at something less prepoceros. - Ogden Nash

FREE VERSE

Refers to poetry that does not follow a prescribed form but is characterized by the irregularity in the length of lines and the lack of a regular metrical pattern and rhyme. Free verse may use other repetitive patterns instead (like words, phrases, structures).

● Note: Free verse should not be confused with [BLANK VERSE](#).

IAMBIC FOOT (noun form: IAMB)

Consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Iambic foot is usually depicted with these symbols:

● Example:

u /

When I consider how my light is spent

- Milton

IMPERFECT RHYME (also known as PARTIAL, NEAR or SLANT RHYME)

Rhyme in which the vowels are either approximate or different; and occasionally, even the rhymed consonants are similar rather than identical.

INTERNAL RHYME

Involves rhyming sounds within the same line.

● Example: "Sister, my sister, O fleet, sweet, swallow." --Swinburne

LINE

The sequence of words printed as a separate entity on the page.

METER

The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables or the units of stress pattern.

METRIC LINE

A line named according to the number of feet composing it:

MONOMETER:	one foot
DIMETER:	two feet
TRIMETER:	three feet
TETRAMETER:	four feet
PENTAMETER:	five feet
HEXAMETER:	six feet (See also ALEXANDRINE)
HEPTAMETER:	seven feet
OCTAMETER:	eight feet

OTTAVA RIMA

An Italian stanza form adapted to English as an eight-line stanza with the rhyme scheme:

a b a b a b c c

PARAPHRASE

The restatement of a poem using words that are different but as equivalent as possible.

Here is a sample paraphrase:

*Moving th'earth brings harms and fears; Men reckon what it did and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.* -Donne, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"

"An earthquake causes a great deal of destruction and arouses fear. Men assess the damage it did and speculate about its significance. However, a movement of the heavenly bodies, though a phenomenon far more vast, does not show itself so directly or appear to have such terrible consequences."

PERFECT RHYME (also known as FULL or TRUE RHYME)

Rhyme in which the final accented vowels of the rhyming words and all succeeding sounds are identical while preceding sounds are different. In perfect rhyme, the correspondence of rhymed sounds is exact.

QUATRAIN

A four line stanza. Quatrains are most commonly seen in English verse.

● See Also: [BALLAD STANZA](#), HEROIC STANZA

QUINTET or QUINTAIN

A five line stanza.

RHYME

Refers to the repetition of similar sounds occurring at determined, or regular, intervals .

● See Also: [END RHYME](#), [EYE RHYME](#), [FORCED RHYME](#), [IMPERFECT RHYME](#), [INTERNAL RHYME](#), and [PERFECT RHYME](#).

RHYME ROYAL (or RIME ROYAL)

A seven line, iambic pentameter stanza with the rhyme scheme a b a b b c c.

RHYME SCHEME

The pattern of rhymed words. Stanzas are often linked by their rhyme scheme. Rhyme scheme is lacking in some modern poetry.

RHYTHM

A variable pattern in the beat of stresses in the stream of sound. Rhythm can also be defined as the sense of movement attributable to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Although rhythm is sometimes used to signify meter, it includes tempo and the natural fluctuations of movement.

RUN ON LINES

See [ENJAMBMENT](#)

SCANSION

The systematic analysis of metrical patterns of stress, syllable by syllable, sound unit by sound unit.

SESTET or SEXTAIN

A six line stanza.

SPENSARIAN STANZA

The Spensarian stanza was revised by Edmund Spenser for The Fairie Queene. It consists of nine lines, in which the first eight are iambic pentameter; the last line is an iambic hexameter (an ALEXANDRINE) rhyming a b a b b c b c c.

STANZA

A group of lines which form a division of a poem. Stanzas are usually set off from one another by a space. The distinguishing characteristics of stanzas are the number of lines, the number of feet in each line and the rhyme scheme. However, some unrhymed poems are divided into stanzas.

● For some definitions of some of the most common forms of stanzas see: [ALEXANDRINE](#), [BALLAD STANZA](#), [OTTAVA RIMA](#), [RHYME ROYAL](#), [SPENSARIAN STANZA](#), [TERZA RIMA](#),

● Also see stanzas with no official names that are designated by the number of lines: [TRIPLET](#), [QUATRAIN](#), [QUINTET](#), [SESTET](#)

STRESS

A term applied to the emphasis placed on a syllable in a word. A synonym for stress is "accent."

TRIPLET

A stanza of three lines usually with a single rhyme.

TROCHAIC FOOT (noun form: TROCHEE)

Consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable. Trochaic foot is usually depicted with these symbols:

● Example:

/ u

/ u / u / u / u / u
There they are, my fifty men and women

- Robert Browning

VERSE

Refers to either a single line of poetry or to metrical poetry in general.

● Note: Verse is not to be confused with a stanza.