

SMART™ Lesson

Analyzing Sound Devices in Poetry

Poetry is a form of literature that uses language in a way that is both musical and visual. Poets use a variety of sound devices to create patterns of sound that are appealing to the ear and that help to emphasize the meaning of the poem. In this lesson, we will explore some of the most common sound devices used in poetry and learn how to analyze them.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of initial sounds in two or more words that are next to each other. For example:

The fuzzy, furry feline sat on the windowsill.

This line of poetry uses alliteration because each of the three words that begin with the letter "f" have the same initial sound. Alliteration is used to create a pleasing rhythm in the poem that is easy to remember.

Question: Identify the sound devices used in the following lines of poetry:

Tiny tigers tip-toe through the tall, tangled trees.

Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of sounds at the end of two or more words in a line of poetry. For example:

I will not eat them with a fox,
I will not eat them in a box,
I will not eat them here or there,
I will not eat them anywhere.

In this poem, the words "fox" and "box" rhyme, as do "there" and "anywhere." Rhyme is used to create a musical quality in the poem that makes it fun to listen to.

Question: Identify the rhyming words in the following lines of poetry:

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor.

Repetition

Repetition is the use of the same word or phrase multiple times in a poem. For example:

Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

In this poem, the phrase "rage, rage against the dying of the light" is repeated twice. Repetition is used to emphasize the importance of the phrase and to create a sense of urgency in the poem.

Question: Identify the repeated word in the following lines of poetry:

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from far away.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that imitate the sound they describe. For example:

Buzz, buzz, buzz went the bee,
Butterfly, butterfly, float on by me.

In this poem, the word "buzz" imitates the sound of the bee's buzzing wings. Onomatopoeia is used to create a vivid, sensory experience for the reader.

Question: Identify the onomatopoeic word in the following lines of poetry:

The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

Now that you have learned about some common sound devices used in poetry, try analyzing the sound devices in your favorite poem.