

## Did You Know (or Do You Care?): Poetry Edition, Part 1

### Diction

The writer's selection, or *choice of words*. The diction of the author's writing often determines their writing "style".

Example:

"His body was tubular  
And tapered  
And smoke-blue,  
And as he passed the wharf"  
- "The Shark" by Edwin John Pratt

### Syntax

The *order* the words are in; sentence structure. Often in poetry, the *syntax may be changed for dramatic effect*.

Example:

"But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun."  
- William Shakespeare

### Denotation/Connotation

Denotation refers to the "*dictionary meaning*" of a word. It could also be viewed as the "standard" version of a word. Connotation is the *implied meaning of a word*. Since most words change over time, their meanings can also be altered.

Example:

A person could be referred to as childish, or childlike. Both have very similar meanings in the dictionary. But, the connotation of the words suggest that childish refers to someone who is bratty, stubborn, immature, and petulant. Childlike suggests that a person may be innocent, charming, and unaffected.

### Jargon

*Specialized* words and expressions that are usually employed by members of specific professions or trades.

Example:

"Of Van Wettering I speak, and Averill,  
Names on a list, whose faces I do not recall  
But they are gone to early death, who late in school  
Distinguished the belt feed lever from the belt holding pawl"  
- "Fury of Aerial Bombardment" by Richard Eberhart

## Figures of Speech and Metaphorical Language

### Metaphor

A metaphor *equates* known objects or actions with something that is unknown or to be explained.

Example:

"Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words  
And never stops at all."

- Emily Dickinson

This metaphor equates the sense of hope with a bird that sings

### Simile

Illustrates the *similarity* or comparability of the known to something unknown or to be explained.  
It uses the words "like" or "as" to create the similarity.

Example:

"Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion  
Like gold to airy thinness beat."

- John Donne

This simile compares the souls of the speaker and his loved one to gold (which is both valuable and malleable)

### Paradox

A figurative device through which something *apparently wrong or contradictory* is shown to be truthful and non-contradictory.

Example:

"My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began;  
So is it now I am a man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!  
The Child is father of the Man."

- William Wordsworth

### Anaphora

Is the *repetition of the same word or phrase* throughout a work or a section of a work in order to lend weight and emphasis.

Example:

"**Some feel** rain. **Some feel** the beetle startle  
in its ghost-part when the bark  
slips. **Some feel** musk. Asleep against  
each other in the whiskey dark, scarcely there."

- Joanna Klink

### **Apostrophe**

When the speaker *addresses a real or imagined listener* who is not present. It helps make the poem more dramatic.

Example:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky."

- Jane Taylor

### **Personification**

Similar to Apostrophe, Personification *treats an inanimate object or animal as if it were human*. It uses human qualities to describe something not human.

Example:

"The wind stood up and gave a shout.  
He whistled on his fingers and  
Kicked the withered leaves about  
And thumped the branches with his hand  
And said that he'd kill and kill,  
And so he will and so he will."

- James Stephens

### **Synecdoche/Metonymy**

*Synecdoche* is where a part stands for the whole, or the whole for a part. Similarly, *Metonymy* substitutes one thing for another with which it is closely identified.

Synecdoche Example:

"The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –  
And Breaths were gathering firm  
For that last Onset – when the King  
Be witnessed – in the Room –"

- Emily Dickinson

Metonymy Example:

"The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,  
As he swung toward them holding up the hand  
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
The life from spilling."

- Robert Frost

### **Pun**

Wordplay where words with *different meanings* have *similar or identical sounds*.

Example:

"Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

- Dylan Thomas