Poetic Literary Terms can often be divided into three sections:

1. Form
2. Sound
3. Meaning

1. FORM

1. Acrostic Verse – a poem which spells out a message with the first letter or first word of each line, or through some other similar pattern.

2. Ballad – a narrative song, or a poem written like a narrative song, that tells a story and has a repeating chorus.

3. Blank verse – poetry with no rhyme, but with a beat or rhythm (usually iambic pentameter).

4. Concrete (shape) – A poem with a shape that reflects its content or theme in some way.

5. Elegy – a poem written with a mournful tone which serves as a memorial to honour of a person or a group of people who have died (note this is related to the word eulogy).

6. Eulogy - a speech or essay with a mournful tone that serves the same purpose as an elegy; that is, it is a memorial to honour of a person or a group of people who have died.

7. English sonnet – a 14-line poem that uses iambic pentameter. The English sonnet is the more modern of the two kinds you must learn. Some people call it the Shakespearean Sonnet. The Shakespearean sonnet is divided into 4 stanzas. Stanzas 1, 2 and 3 are quatrains. That means that they have 4 lines each. The rhyme scheme of the 3 quatrains is ABAB CDCD EFEF. The fourth stanza has 2 lines and is called a couplet. Its rhyme scheme is GG. The three quatrains are three observations. The couplet is a conclusion, based on the three observations.

8. Free verse - poetry that is totally free: it has no rhyme, and no beat/rhythm.

9. Haiku – Japanese form, 3 lines with 5-7-5 syllables, usually with contrasting images.

10. Italian sonnet – a 14-line poem that uses iambic pentameter. The Italian sonnet is the older of the two kinds that you must learn. The Italian sonnet is divided into two parts: the octave and the sestet. The first 8 lines are called the octave. This stanza’s rhyme scheme is ABBA ABBA. The octave poses a problem, question, or complaint. The second stanza is made of 6 lines and is called a sestet. The sestet’s rhyme scheme is either CDECDE or CDCDCD. The sestet answers the question or proposes a solution to the problem in the octave.

11. Limerick – a funny five-line poem, often noughty.

12. Narrative – any kind of writing that tells a story.

13. Ode - a poem with a joyous tone that is written to honour and celebrate someone, some group, or something.

14. Sonnet – a poem with 14 lines, a specific rhyme scheme, a specific rhythm, and specific divisions. The word sonnet means “little song.”

15. Stanza – a section of a poem, like a verse.
2. SOUND

1. Alliteration – repetition of the same beginning SOUND

2. Assonance – repetition of the same vowel (a, e, i, o, u, y) sound, wherever it occurs in a word. For example – lament, defense, mental, illness, envy

3. Cacophony – harsh, ugly sounding words (ex. hiss)

4. Consonance – repetition of the same consonant sound, wherever it occurs in a word. For example: scorpions, snakes, hiss, smoothies,

5. Euphony – pleasant, pretty sounding words (ex. lullaby)

6. Eye rhyme – words that look like they should rhyme, but they don’t (ex. wood and food)

7. Iambic pentameter – lamb = 2 syllables, with stress on the second syllable. For example: to-DAY which is an iamb. TUES-day is not an iamb, because the stress is on the first syllable. In iambic pentameter, there are 5 iambons on a line (for a total of 10 syllables, with stress on every second). The result: ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM (a heartbeat!) Consider this example, from John Milton’s, “On his Blindness”:

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When I / consider how my light / is spent
Ere half / my time / in this dark world / and wide
And that / one talent / which is death / to hide
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8. Onomatopoeia – words that are sounds

9. Rhyme – repetition of the same ending SOUND

10. Rhythm – a beat or pattern of syllables which are stressed and unstressed
### 3. MEANING

1. **Allusion** – a reference to previous art, literature, or history
2. **Apostrophe** – speaking (or writing) to someone who is dead, to someone who is obviously not within hearing distance, or to something that is not a human as though you could be heard and understood
3. **Atmosphere** – overall mood associated with a piece of literature
4. **Characterization** – we can reliably learn about characters chiefly through what a character says, through what a character does, and through what other characters say about him or her. A character’s appearance, name, or other superficial features may sometimes be used to help us understand about him or her, but they may also be used for irony, so be careful!
5. **Connotation** – The implied meaning of a word. The connotation of HOUND, for example, is loyalty.
6. **Denotation** – the dictionary definition of a word.
7. **Diction** – word choice
8. **Dramatic Irony** - When the audience is aware of facts that some or all of the characters do not know. For example, we know Juliet is not dead, but Romeo does not know. Dramatic irony can be used to add suspense or humour to literature.
9. **Extended metaphor** – a metaphor (comparison that does not use like or as) which is introduced and then continues through all or part of a single literary work. For example, consider the road metaphor in Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road not Taken.”
10. **Figurative Meaning** – the deeper meaning, the implied meaning, that includes all forms of figurative language, such as symbolism, etc. EXAMPLE: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN by Robert Frost is figuratively making choices in life.
11. **Hyperbole** – exaggeration, a form of irony
12. **Imagery** – writing that appeals to the 5 senses (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory)
13. **Irony** - The difference between what is expected and what occurs. Expressed as a mathematical equation:

   \[
   \text{Ironicity equals what is } E \text{ potential minus what actually occurs} \\
   \text{or} \\
   I = E - O
   \]

14. **Juxtaposition** – placing similar ideas or images next to each other in a piece of writing or art, so that the audience may see how they are different. Alternatively, placing different ideas or images next to each other so that the audience may see how they are similar.
15. **Literal Meaning** – the surface meaning of a poem. There is no consideration of symbols, etc. EXAMPLE: THE ROAD NOT TAKEN by Robert Frost is literally about choosing a path.
16. **Metaphor** – a comparison that does not use like or as, but says one thing IS another. (stronger than simile)
17. **Monologue** – occurs when one character speaks. A monologue can also be a recitation. Note that a dramatic monologue is a poem in which one person is speaking to another person who is silent, such as “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning.

18. **Mood** – the mood associated with a PORTION of a piece of literature

19. **Oxymoron** – seemingly contradictory words and phrases that make sense together. Examples include *jumbo shrimp* and *old news*.

20. **Parody** – the comic imitation of the style of a writer or other artist, or a particular genre of art. The Scary Movie series are parodies of horror films.

21. **Personification** – gives human qualities to non-humans/animation – gives living qualities to non-living things

22. **Point of View** - 1st - When the narrative voice is “I”

23. **Point of View** - 2nd – When the narrative voice is a list of commands or otherwise uses the word “You”

24. **Point of View** - 3rd Limited – Uses “he” “she” or “it” to tell the story, but focuses on one character

25. **Point of View** - 3rd Omniscient – Uses “he” “she” or “it” to tell the story, and is able to jump from character to character in a god-like, all knowing, all seeing way (OMNI = all + SCIENT = knowing)

26. **Point of View** – The perspective from which stories are told

27. **Pun** – a wordplay joke that relies on the different meanings of the same word, or on words that sound the same but have different meanings (called homonyms) For example, the different meanings of the words “flies” and “likes” in the following: “Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.” - Groucho Marx

28. **Refrain** – a repeated line or group of lines in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza

29. **Setting** – the time and place where a narrative is set.

30. **Simile** – a comparison that uses like or as

31. **Situational Irony** - Pretty much the same definition as for irony in general, except it is the situation itself that is ironic, rather than a multitude of other factors.

32. **Speaker** – the person who speaks in a poem. Note that this is not necessarily the poet. The poet may present the poem through the perspective of another person, or even as an animal or something else that is not human.

33. **Symbol** – a concrete object that represents something abstract, such as a set of scales which is a symbol of justice, or a heart which is a symbol of love.

34. **Understatement** - Understating the truth. Understatement is the polar opposite of hyperbole. During a hurricane, you would be using understatement if you say “It is a bit breezy outside.”

35. **Verbal Irony** - When what someone says is the opposite of what someone means.