

Poetry Terms
Vocabulary Needed to “Torture a Confession” Out of a Poem

Narrator: the person or “voice” telling the story or relating the description; the “speaker”

Point of view: the perspective from which the poem is presented

- **First person:** The speaker is a character in the poem and tells it from his/her own point of view.
- **Third person:** The speaker is not a character in the poem and tells of other characters or events from a separate (or omniscient) point of view.

Tone: the author’s (or narrator’s) feelings about the subject matter

Mood: the feeling the poem creates in the reader

Imagery: description that appeals to any of the five senses

Figurative Language: language that uses comparisons and non-literal meanings

- **Simile:** comparison that uses a specific word of comparison: *like, as, than*
- **Metaphor:** a comparison in which one thing is said to be another thing
- **Extended Metaphor:** a comparison that is carried throughout the poem as a unifying element
- **Personification:** a metaphor in which a non-human thing is given human characteristics
- **Symbol:** a thing that represents or suggests something besides or beyond itself
- **Irony:** incongruity between expectation and outcome
 - **Verbal:** words that suggest the opposite of their literal meaning (e.g., sarcasm)
 - **Situational:** when the opposite of what is expected happens
 - **Dramatic:** when the audience (reader, listener, viewer) knows something a character in work doesn’t know
- **Allusion:** implied or indirect reference (to an historical event or character, a work of art or literature, or anything supposed to be generally understood)

Poetic Devices

- **Alliteration:** repetition of initial consonant sounds
- **Assonance:** repetition of vowel sounds in lines of poetry
- **Repetition:** words, phrases, or ideas in a poem that are repeated
 - **Refrain:** a regularly recurring phrase or verse in a poem
- **Parallel Structure:** phrases or lines of similar construction found at various points in a poem
- **Rhyme:** two or more lines of poetry that have the same ending sounds
- **Rhetorical Question:** a question that does not require an answer; the effect is achieved just by asking the question
- **Analogy:** illustrating one idea through a more well-known idea, which has similarities to the first

Stanza: a group of lines in poetry that appear together, separated from other lines

Free Verse: poetry with no regular meter, rhyme, or line length

Cross-reference: a reference made in one literary work to an element that appears in another literary work. (Poems in *Spoon River Anthology*, for example, cross-reference each other.)

Theme: A general statement about life that is illustrated by a poem or story

- not a moral
- not a piece of advice or a warning
- not an expression of right/wrong, good/bad
- must be stated as a complete sentence