

Here are some **specific terms** for poetry analysis you can use to explain your ideas precisely.

## Structure

Term	Example
<b>Line:</b> One unbroken string of words in a poem.	Visible, invisible      ← first line A fluctuating charm      ← second line (Moore)
<b>Stanza:</b> A “paragraph” in a poem; a collection of lines without a blank line in between.	and both girls and boys should feel free to dream.      ] one stanza (Engle)
<b>Line break:</b> Where one line ends and the next begins.	Between the woods and frozen lake      line break The darkest evening of the year.      ← end-stopped line (Frost)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>End-stopped lines</b> break off where a reader would normally pause, often with a period or a comma.</li><li>• <b>Enjambed lines</b> break off in a surprising place where a reader would not normally pause.</li></ul>	It opens, and it      ↘ Closes and you      ↘ enjambed lines break in surprising place Reach for it— (Moore)

## Sounds

Term	Example
<b>Assonance:</b> Repeating vowel sounds in words close together, like “beat” and “team.”	Cross the line, they <b>count</b> you <b>out</b> .      assonance in “ou” That’s what hopping’s all <b>about</b> .      rhyming with “out” (Angelou)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Rhyming</b> words have assonance and also the same ending sounds, like “beat” and “meet.”</li></ul>	
<b>Consonance:</b> Repeating consonant sounds in words close together	as they <b>rippled</b> <b>rapped</b> and <b>pounded</b> consonance with “p” all the rhythms of her <b>drum dreams</b> .      alliteration with “dr” (Engle)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Alliteration</b> is a kind of consonance where consonants repeat at the beginning of words.</li></ul>	
<b>Onomatopoeia:</b> Using words that, when read aloud, sound like the sound they describe.	she heard the <b>whir</b> of parrot wings the <b>clack</b> of woodpecker beaks (Engle)      words like bird
<b>Rhythm:</b> The beat of a poem; the steady pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables	The <b>woods</b> are <b>lovely</b> , <b>dark</b> and <b>deep</b> . But <b>I</b> have <b>promises</b> to <b>keep</b> . (Frost)      alternating stressed

Angelou, Maya. “Harlem Hopscotch.” *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ‘fore I Diiie*, Random House, 1971.

Engle, Margarita. “Drum Dream Girl.” Poetry Foundation, poetryfoundation.org/poems/141837/drum-dream-girl. Originally published in *Drum Dream Girl*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.

Frost, Robert. “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” Poets.org. American Academy of Poets, poets.org/poem/stopping-woods-snowy-evening. Originally published in *New Hampshire*, Henry Holt, 1923.

Moore, Marianne. “A Jelly-Fish.” Poets.org. American Academy of Poets, 30 Aug. 2015, poets.org/poem/jelly-fish. Originally published in *The Lantern*, Spring 1909.



# Descriptive Language

## Term

## Example

**Simile:** Comparing one object to another using “like” or “as” in order to create a striking description.

I am offering this poem to you,  
since I have nothing else to give.  
**Keep it like a warm coat.** simile compares with “like”  
(Baca)

**Metaphor:** Comparing one object to another without using “like” or “as” in order to create a striking description.

I have nothing else to give you,  
so **it is a pot of yellow corn.** metaphor without “like”  
(Baca)

**Personification:** Giving human qualities to objects, animals, or concepts to help readers understand them in a new way.

When the doctor cut off my son’s cast the  
high **scream of the saw** filled the room  
(Olds)  
the **saw** is described **like a person** as screaming

**Imagery:** A description that is so vivid, readers can almost see, smell, taste, or hear it as if they are there.

**golden goo** of artificial delicious,  
what probably lines  
my stomach with **sunlike grease** for weeks  
(Olivarez)  
nacho cheese is **pictured** as **golden** and **sunny**



# Mood and Tone

## Term

## Example

**Speaker:** The person whose voice is narrating the poem.

**I** am offering this poem to you,  
since **I** have nothing else to give you.  
(Baca)  
the **first-person speaker** addresses the poem to “you”

**Tone:** How the poem’s speaker feels about the poem’s subject.

I like to see it **lap the Miles** –  
And **lick the Valleys** up –  
And stop to **feed itself at Tanks** –  
(Dickinson)  
the **speaker** feels **excited** as she describes a train

**Mood:** How the poem makes the reader feel.

And **bats with baby faces** in the **violet light**  
**Whistled**, and **beat their wings**  
And **crawled** head downward down a  
**blackened wall**  
(Eliot)  
creepy images and sounds make the **reader** feel **uneasy**

Baca, Jimmy Santiago. “I Am Offering this Poem.” *Immigrants in Our Own Land and Selected Early Poems*. New Directions, 1990. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Dickinson, Emily. “I Like to See It Lap the Miles.” *Poetry Foundation*, poetryfoundation.org/poems/56019/i-like-to-see-it-lap-the-miles-383. First published 1891.

Eliot, T. S. “The Waste Land.” *Poets.org*. American Academy of Poets, poets.org/poem/waste-land. Originally published in *The Criterion*, Oct. 1922.

Olds, Sharon. “The Cast.” *Poetry*, The Poetry Foundation, Aug. 1985.

Olivarez, José. “Ode to Cheese Fries.” *Citizen Illegal*, Haymarket Books, 2018. Originally published by Red Beard Press.