of each of the poems enable you to draw your conclusions? What differences do you find in the ways the poets either control or do not control tone?

2. Consider these same poems (from question 1) from a feminist viewpoint (see Chapter 28). What importance and value do the poems give to women? How do they view women's actions? Write an essay arguing that any of these poems deserve praise or blame because of their treatment of women?
3. What judgments about modern city life do you think Léger conveys in his painting *The City* (p. I-8)? If the tone of paintings can be considered similar to poetic tone, write an essay in which you consider in what ways *The City* is comparable to the presentation of detail in Eliot's "Preludes" (Chapter 14), Blake's "London" (Chapter 13), Sandburg's "Chicago" (Chapter 22), and Swift's "A Description of the Morning" (p. 859)—together with any other poems you wish to include?
4. Write an essay that explains how the details and ideas in Ridler's "Nothing Is Lost" (p. 855) shape the poem's tone. What is the effect of the stanzaic pattern and the rhymes on your understanding and on your responses to the poem's ideas? In terms of ideas and tone, how does this poem compare with Pinsky's "Dying" (p. 851)?
5. Quasímodo's "Auschwitz" (p. 853) concerns one of the twentieth century's central evils, the most abhorrent of the Nazi death camps, about which people have expressed anger, horror, indignation, outrage, disgust, hatred, and vengefulness. Write an essay in which you discuss to what degree you find these attitudes in Quasímodo's poem. How do such attitudes, or others, govern the poem's tone?

Creative Writing Assignment

1. Write a poem about a person or occasion that has made you either glad or angry. Try to create the same feelings in your reader, but create these feelings through your rendering of situation and your choices of the right words. (*Possible topics:* a social injustice; an unfair grade; a compliment you have received on a task well done; the landing of a good job; the winning of a game; a rise in the price of gasoline; a good book or movie.)

Library Assignment

1. From resources in your library or online, find two critical biographies about Theodore Roethke published by university presses. What do these works disclose about Roethke's childhood and his family, particularly his father? On the basis of what you learn, should your interpretation of the tone of "My Papa's Waltz" be changed or unchanged? Why?

Chapter 17

Prosody: Sound, Rhythm, and Rhyme in Poetry

Prosody (the pronunciation or accent of a song or poem, a song set to music) is the general word describing the study of poetic sounds and rhythms. Common alternative words are **metrics, versification, mechanics of verse,** and the **music of poetry.** Most readers, when reading poetry aloud, interpret the lines and develop an appropriate speed and expressiveness of delivery—a proper *rhythm.* Indeed, some people think of rhythm and sound as the *music* of poetry because they convey musical rhythms and tempos. Like music, poetry often requires a regular beat. The tempo and loudness of poetry may vary freely, however, and a reader may stop at any time to repeat the sounds and to think about the words and ideas. It is the music of poetry that makes the speaking and hearing of poetry dramatic, exciting, and inspiring.

In considering prosody, we should recognize that poets, being especially attuned to language, blend words and ideas together so that "the *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the sense" (Pope, *An Essay on Criticism,* line 365. The spelling of "eccho" is authentic; don't be alarmed.). The consequence of this idea is that *prosodic technique cannot be separated from a poem's content.* For this reason, the study of prosody aims to determine how poets control their words so that the sound of a poem complements its expression of emotions and ideas.

Important Definitions for Studying Prosody

To understand and discuss prosody, you need to be able to explain the various sounds of both speech and poetry. Let us grant that the subject is technical, detailed, and also subtle, and as a result, the study of vocal production can take, and has taken, entire careers. A basic knowledge of spoken sound, however, will enable you to analyze that aspect of the poet's craft that pertains to qualities of pronunciation and rhythm.

Vowel Sounds Create the Flow of Poetic Speech

The continuous stream of speech, whether conversation, oratory, or poetry, is provided mainly by **vowel sounds.** A vowel (from the Latin word *vox,* or "voice") results from vibrations resonating in the space between the tongue and the top of the mouth. As our tongues go up or down or forward or backward, or as they curl or flatten out, and as our lips move synchronously with our tongues, we form vowels. Some vowels are "long," such as the *ee* sound in "flee," the *ay* sound in "pay," the *oh* sound in "open," and the *oo* sound in "food" and "fruit." Others are "short," such as the *ih* sound in "fit" and "sit," the *uh* sound in "fun" and "done,"

and the *eh* sound in "set" and "debt." Some vowels are called "front" (e.g., *see, play*) and some are called "back" (kn*ow*ing, m*oo*n), depending on the position of the tongue in the production of the sound. Some are rounded (h*o*pe, h*oo*p) because their production requires pursed lips, but more are unrounded (gr*ee*n, sw*i*m).

Many of our English vowel sounds are pronounced as a **schwa,** or minimal vowel sound, despite their spellings (e.g., the *e* in "th*e* boy," the *a* in "*a*lone"). Thus, "*a*bout," "stag*e*s," "rap*i*d," "nati*o*n," and "circ*u*s" contain the vowels *a, e, i, o,* and *u,* but all the italicized letters make the same *schwa* sound in these words.

Of special importance is the **diphthong** (two voices, two sounds)—a meaningful sound that begins with one vowel sound and then is completed by the movement to another vowel sound. The three English diphthongs are the *aye* as in "tr*y*" and "appl*i*ance," the *ow* sound in "h*ou*se" and " sh*ou*t," and the *oy* sound in "f*oi*l" and "empl*oy*."

Consonant Sounds Are Meaningful Sounds Produced through the Creation of Vocal Obstructions in the Mouth

Consonant sounds ("sounds made at the same time [as vowels]") result from the touching and near touching of various parts of the mouth (lips, tongue, teeth, hard palate, soft palate), thus producing meaningful sounds obstructing the flow of vowel sounds. Some consonants might theoretically be prolonged (e.g., *m, h, sh*), while others are by nature no more than momentary (*t, k*). In combination, consonants and vowels make for understandable speech. The consonants are classified into three major groups:

1. *Stop sounds, also called* plosives, *are percussive and abrupt.* There are six **stop sounds,** which are made by the momentary stoppage and release of breath either when the lips touch each other (*p* and *b*), or when the tongue touches the hard palate (the *k* and *g* in *keep* and *gear*) or soft palate (the *k* and *g* in *cool* and *goal*), or when the tongue touches the alveolar ridge immediately above the teeth (*t* and *d*).

2. *Continuant sounds are smooth and flowing.* **Continuant sounds** are consonants produced by the steady release of the breath in conjunction with various positions of the tongue in relation to the lips, teeth, and palate, as in *n, ng, l, r, th* (as in *th*orn), *th* (as in *th*e), *f, v, s, z, sh* (as in *sh*arp), and *zh* (as in plea*s*ure); or with the touching of the lower lip and upper teeth for the sounds *f* and *v*; or with the touching of both lips for the sound *m*. Two special sounds called **affricates** begin with the stops *t* and *d* and then become the continuants *sh* and *zh* (as in *ch*ew and *j*udge).

3. *Semivowel sounds are more like consonants than vowels.* **Semivowel sounds** are midway between vowels and consonants, and they have in common that they move from an originating sound and then move to another vowel sound. They are *w* (as in *w*agon, *w*in, *w*eather), *y* (as in *y*es, *y*oung, *u*nion), and *h* (*h*ope, *h*eap).

Consonants may be either **voiced** *or* **voiceless.** Voiced consonants are produced with the vibration of the vocal chords (e.g., *b, d, g, v, z, zh*), whereas voiceless consonants are produced by the breath alone, for this reason being whispered sounds (e.g., *p, t, k, f, s, sh*). Among the semivowels, *w* and *y* are voiced, but *h* is voiceless. Any singer can sing the sound *z,* which is voiced; but not even the greatest singers, such as the late opera stars Beverly Sills and Luciano Pavarotti, could ever have sung an *s* sound, which is voiceless.

Nasal consonants require the stoppage of the breath in the mouth so that the sound can be released through the nose. The consonants, also called **nasals,** are *n, m,* and *ng* (as in su*n*, su*m*, and su*ng*). In English, the *n* and *m* sounds may begin and end words or may appear in the middle of a word, whereas the *ng* sound may appear in the middle or end but may not begin a word. The nasals affect the pronunciation of adjoining consonants, as in words like *mountain* and *student,* in which the *t* and *d* sounds are released nasally by many if not most speakers of English. Adjoining consonants also affect the pronunciation of the nasal, as in words like *sink* and *Thanksgiving,* in which the palatal *k* sound causes the preceding nasal to be an *ng* sound, as in *sing* and *thing,* even though the sound is spelled with an *n* alone.

Segments: Individually Meaningful Sounds

Individual sounds in combination make up syllables and words, and separate words in combination make up lines of poetry. Syllables and words are made up of **segments,** or individually meaningful sounds (which linguists call **segmental phonemes**). In the word *tape,* there are three segments: *t, ay,* and *p.* When you hear these three sounds in order, you recognize the word *tape,* as distinguished from, say, *top* and *type.* It takes four alphabetical letters—*t, a,* and *pe*—to spell (or **graph**) *tape,* because the *t, a,* and *pe* create the three meaningful segments making up the word. Quite often, as with the final *pe* spelling of "tape," English uses more than one letter to spell or graph a segment. This happens all the time—so often, in fact, that we hardly notice the connection between sound and spelling. For example, in the word *enough,* there are four segments (*ee, n, uh, f*), although six letters are required for the correct spelling: *e, n, ou,* and *gh.* The last two segments (*u* and *f*) require two letters each (two letters forming one segment are called a *digraph*). In the word *through,* there are three segments but *seven* letters. In order for the *oo* segment in this word to be spelled correctly, it must have four letters (*ough*). Note, however, that in the word *flute,* the *oo* segment requires only one letter, *u.* When we study the effects of various segments in relation to poetic rhythm, we deal with **sound;** usually our concern is with prosodic devices, such as **alliteration, assonance,** and **rhyme.**

When segments are meaningfully combined, they make up syllables and words. A **syllable,** in both prose and poetry, consists of a single meaningful strand of sound, such as the article *a* in "*a* table," the stem *lin* in "*lin*en," and the entire word *screech.* The article *a,* which is both a syllable and a word, has only one segment; *lin,* the first syllable of the two-syllable word "linen," contains three segments (*lin* does not occur alone in English except as an abbreviation, but it is used in combinations such as *lingerie, poplin,* and *linoleum*); *screech* is a complete word of one syllable consisting of the five segments *s, k, r, ee,* and *tch.* The past tense of *screech* (*screeched*) adds one meaningful sound at the end—*t*—and two letters, *ed,* but this additional sound does not create a new syllable. The understanding of what constitutes syllables is important because poetic rhythm is determined by the positions of heavily stressed and less heavily stressed syllables.

Distinguish Between Spellings and the Actual Sounds of Words

It is important—vital—to understand the differences between spelling, or **graphics**, and pronunciation, or **phonetics.** Not all English sounds are spelled and pronounced in the same way, as we can see with the *p* sound in *tape* and *top.* Thus the letter s has three very different sounds in the words *sweet, sugar,* and *flows: s, sh* ("*sh*arp"), and z. On the other hand, the words *shape, ocean, nation, sure, fissure, Eschscholtzia,* and *machine* use different combinations of letters to spell the *sh* sound.

Vowel sounds may also be spelled in different ways. The *ee* sound, for example, can be spelled *i* in *machine, ee* in *speed, ea* in *eat, e* in *even,* and *y* in *funny,* yet the vowel sounds in *eat, break,* and *bear* are not the same even though they are spelled the same. The *z* sound has an interesting variety of spellings, as in the *ss* in *business* (among many speakers of English), the *z* alone in *zinc,* and the *sth* in *asthma,* not to mention other various spellings. Remember this: With both consonants and vowel sounds, *do not mistake the spelling of a sound with the sound itself.*

Poetic Rhythm

Rhythm in speech is a combination of vocal speeds, rises and falls, starts and stops, vigor and slackness, and relaxation and tension. In ordinary speech and in prose, rhythm—as important as it is—is not as important as the flow of ideas. In poetry, rhythm is significant because poetry is emotionally charged, compact, and intense. Poets invite us to change speeds while reading—to slow down and linger over some words and sounds and to pass rapidly over others. They also invite us to give more-than-ordinary vocal stress or emphasis to certain syllables and less stress to others. The more intense syllables are called **heavy stress** syllables, and it is the heavy stresses that determine the **accent** or **beat** of a poetic line. The less intense syllables receive **light stress.** In traditional verse, poets select patterns called **feet,** which consist of a regularized relationship of heavy stresses to light stresses.

Scansion Is the Systematic Study of Poetic Rhythm

To study the patterns of versification in any poem, you **scan** the poem. The act of scanning—**scansion**—enables you to discover how the poem establishes a prevailing metrical pattern, and also how and why there are variations in the pattern.

DETERMINE STRESSES, OR BEATS. In the scansion of a poem, it is important to use a commonly recognized notational system to record stresses or accents. A **heavy stress** or **primary stress** (also called an **accented syllable**) is indicated by a prime mark or acute accent (ʹ), or it may be indicated by capital letters, as in "To BE or NOT to BE." A **light stress** (also called an **unaccented syllable**) is indicated by a bowl-like half circle called a **breve** (˘) or sometimes by a raised circle or degree sign (°). If you are using capital letters to indicate a heavy stress, use lowercase letters to indicate the light stress, as in "When I con-SID-er HOW my LIGHT is SPENT."

Because the capital-lowercase system is somewhat less difficult to manage than the accent system, we will use the capital letter system for illustrative purposes in this chapter, and recommend it for your use. To separate one foot from another, a **virgule** or **slash** (/) is used. Thus, the following line, from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," may be schematized formally in this way:

> WA – ter, / WA - ter, / EV - ery WHERE,

Here the virgules or slashes show that the line contains two two-syllable feet followed by a single three-syllable foot.

DETERMINE THE METER OR MEASURE. A major part of scansion is the determination of a poem's **meter,** or the number of feet in its lines. Lines containing five feet are **pentameter,** four are **tetrameter,** three are **trimeter,** two are **dimeter,** and one is **monometer.** To these may be added the less common line lengths **hexameter,** a six-foot line; **heptameter** or **septenarius,** seven feet; and **octameter,** eight feet. In terms of accent or beat, a trimeter line has three beats (heavy stresses), a pentameter line five beats, and so on.

The Major Metrical Feet

You are now ready to scan poems and to determine the patterns of metrical feet, which measure the relationships of syllables and stresses. In English the names of the feet are derived from Greek poetry. We may classify them as feet of two syllables, three syllables, and one syllable (or imperfect).

The Two-Syllable Foot

1. *Iamb (Light/Heavy).* The most important poetic foot in English is the **iamb** (a word of unknown origin), which contains a light stress followed by a heavy stress:

> the WINDS

The iamb is the most important and most common foot, because it most nearly duplicates natural speech and at the same time elevates speech to poetry. It is the most versatile of English poetic feet, and it is capable of great variation. Even within the same line, iambic feet vary in intensity, thus supporting the shades of meaning designed by the poet. For example, in this line of iambic pentameter from Wordsworth's sonnet "The World Is Too Much with Us," each foot is unique:

> The WINDS / that WILL / be HOWL - / ing AT / all HOURS, /

Even though "will" and "at" are both in normally heavy-stress positions in this line, they are not as strongly emphasized as "winds," "howl -," and "hours" (indeed, they are also less strong than "all," which is in the light-stress position in the concluding iamb). Such variability, approximating the stresses and rhythms

of actual speech, makes the iamb suitable for both serious and light verse, and it therefore helps poets to focus attention on ideas and emotions. If they use iambic meter with skill, it never becomes monotonous, for it does not distract readers by drawing attention to its own rhythm.

2. *Trochee (Heavy/Light)*. The **trochee** (*running*), sometimes called the **choree** (*dancing*), consists of a heavy accent followed by a light stress:

FLOW - er

Rhythmically, most two-syllable English words are **trochaic** (tro-KAY-ick), as may be seen in words like *author, early, follow, major, morning, often, singing, snowfall, something, story, water, walking, willow,* and *window*. A major exception is seen in many two-syllable words beginning with prefixes, such as *sublime, because,* and *impel*. Another exception is found in two-syllable words that are borrowed from another language but are still pronounced as in the original language, as with *machine, technique, garage,* and *chemise*, all of which are recent importations from French, in which iambic accentuation prevails. Illustrating the strength of trochaic rhythm in English, however, the final stresses in many French words borrowed hundreds of years ago now regularly accent the next-to-last syllable, as with *apartment, cherry, expression, language, lesson, nation,* and *very*.

Because trochaic rhythm has often been called *falling, dying, light,* or *anticlimactic,* and because iambic rhythm has been called *rising, elevating, serious,* and *climactic,* poets have preferred the iambic foot. They therefore have arranged various placements of single- and multiple-syllable words, and have also used a variety of other means, so that the heavy-stress syllable is at the end of the foot, as in Shakespeare's

With - IN / his BEND - / ing SICK - / le's COM - / pass COME, /

in which three successive trochaic words (*bending, sickle's,* and *compass*) are arranged to match the iambic meter.

3. *Spondee (Heavy/Heavy)*. The **spondee** (originally the prevailing accent of music that was characteristically played during the pouring of libations or offerings)—also called a **hovering accent**—consists of two successive, equally heavy accents, as in "men's eyes" in Shakespeare's line

When IN / dis - GRACE / with FOR - /tune AND / MEN'S EYES

The spondee is mainly a substitute foot in English verse, because successive spondees inevitably become iambs or trochees. An entire poem written in spondees would be unlikely within traditional metrical patterns and ordinary English syntax (but see Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool"). As a substitute foot, however, the spondee creates emphasis. A way that is often used to indicate the **spondaic foot** is to link the two syllables together with chevronlike marks like this:

MEN'S EYES

4. *Pyrrhic (Light/Light)*. The **pyrrhic** (a foot, a war dance) consists of two unstressed syllables, even though one of them may be in a normally stressed position, as in "on their" in this line from Alexander Pope's *Pastorals* (4.5):

Now SLEEP - / ing FLOCKS / on their / SOFT FLEE - / ces LIE. /

The pyrrhic is made up of weakly accented words, such as prepositions (e.g., *on, to*) and articles (*the, a*). Like the spondee, it is a substitute foot for an iamb or a trochee. An entire poem could not be in pyrrhics because most pyrrhics, like spondees, would be resolved as trochees and iambs. As a substitute foot, however, the pyrrhic acts as a rhythmic catapult to move the reader swiftly to the next heavy-stress syllable, and therefore it undergirds the ideas conveyed by more important words.

The Three-Syllable Foot

1. *Dactyl (Heavy/Light/Light)*. The **dactyl** (after the shape of a finger, which has a long joint and two shorter joints) has a heavy stress followed by two lights, as in this line from Swinburne's "Song of the Standard":

GREEN as our / HOPE in it, / WHITE as our / FAITH in it. /

2. *Anapest (Light/Light/Heavy)*. The **anapest** ("beaten back," *or* "turned around"; the reverse of a dactyl) consists of two light accents followed by a heavy accent, as in this line from Francis Scott Key:

by the DAWN'S / ear - ly LIGHT. /

The Imperfect Foot

A single stressed syllable (´) by itself, or an unstressed syllable (˘) by itself, creates an **imperfect foot.** There is nothing "imperfect" about an imperfect foot. Instead, the imperfect foot is a variant or substitute occurring in a poem in which one of the major feet forms the metrical pattern. The second line of Key's "The Star-Spangled Banner," for example, is anapestic, but it contains an imperfect foot at the end:

What so PROUD - / ly we HAILED / at the TWI- /light's last GLEAM- / ing. /

Some analysts of prosody would claim that the final syllable here is **catalectic** ("left off"). That is, the final foot, which consists of only one syllable, is missing a syllable.

You can see that there is nothing absolutely open and shut about prosodic analysis. What counts is that you make correct observations about poetic rhythms, not that you always perfectly use the language of prosodic analysis.

SPECIAL METERS

In many poems you will find meters other than those described above. Poets like Browning, Tennyson, Poe, and Swinburne introduce special or unusual meters. Other poets manipulate pauses or **caesurae** (discussed later) to create the effects of unusual meters. For these reasons, you should know about metrical feet, such as the following:

1. **Amphibrach** (short at both ends). A light, heavy, and light:

   Ah FEED me / and FILL me / with PLEAS - ure / (Swinburne)

2. **Amphimacer** (long at both ends) or **cretic** (originally, apparently, a song from the island of Crete). A heavy, light, and heavy:

   LOVE is BEST. / (Browning)

3. **Bacchius** or **Bacchic** (pertaining to Bacchus, the god of wine and conviviality). A light stress followed by two heavy stresses, as in the word "singing" in the following line:

   Some LATE LARK / [SING - ing] / (W. E. Henley)

4. **Dipodic Measure** (literally, "two feet" combining to make one) or **syzygy** (a yoking together), or **double duple** meter. Dipodic measure develops in longer lines when a poet submerges two regular feet under a stronger beat, so that a "galloping" or "rollicking" rhythm results. For example, the following line from Masefield's "Cargoes" (Chapter 14) may be scanned as trochaic hexameter, with the concluding foot being an iamb:

   QUIN - que / REME of / NIN- e- / VEH from / DIS-tant / o - PHIR, /

In reading, however, a stronger beat is superimposed, which makes one foot out of two—dipodic measure or syzygy:

QUIN - quer - eme of / NIN - e - veh from / DIS – tant o –PHIR,

Substitution

Most regular poems (i.e., poems written according to the traditional rhythms of prosody) follow a formal pattern that may be analyzed according to the feet we have been describing here. Too much formal regularity, however, sometimes makes for monotony, and so for interest and emphasis (and also, especially, because of the natural rhythms of English speech), poets frequently alter and enlarge the regular patterns through the **substitution** of a dominant foot by a variant foot. Thus in an iambic line the poet may insert a spondee or an anapest and by this means may provide a wider and more conversational rhythmical range than the unvarying use of the poem's chosen pattern can achieve. As an example, the pattern of Jonathan Swift's "A Description of the Morning" (Chapter 16) is iambic pentameter (i.e., five iambs per line). However, Swift introduces a formal substitution at the beginning

of the following line, describing how a group of creditors gathers at the door of an aristocrat who has not been paying his debts:

DUNS at / his LORD- / ship's GATE / be - GAN / to MEET;

The first foot is a trochee, and the strong accent on *Duns* enables Swift to stress his comic assertion about His Lordship's financial embarrassment. Note also that the light accent on *at* enables the voice to move rapidly through *at his lord*. Thus, although the first two feet are a trochee and an iamb, the rhythmical effect is that of an imperfect foot followed by an anapest. This simple substitution helps Swift to emphasize and satirize the unglamorous side of London life early in the eighteenth century.

When studying rhythm, your main concern in noting substitutions is to determine the formal metrical pattern and then to analyze the variations on this pattern and their principal techniques and effects. Always try to show how these variations have enabled the poet to get points across and to achieve emphasis.

Accentual, Strong-Stress, and "Sprung" Rhythms

The foregoing descriptions of poetic feet will enable the analysis of most so-called traditional poetry. A number of poets, however, stretch the bounds of traditional feet, and use generally unmeasured rhythms derived from accentual or strong stresses. Such lines are historically linked to the poetry of Old English (see Chapter 11). At that time, each line was divided in two, with two major stresses, also alliterated, occurring in each half. In the nineteenth century, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) developed what he called **sprung rhythm,** a rhythm in which the major stresses would be released or "sprung" from the line. The method is complex, but a primary characteristic is the placement together of one-syllable stressed words combined with alliteration (see below), as in this line from "Pied Beauty"(Chapter 22).

With SWIFT, SLOW; SWEET, SOUR; a - DAZZ - le, DIM;

Here a number of single-syllable words create five major stresses, while one word (a–DAZZ –le) contributes a central stress together with a strong "d" alliteration to match the "d" of "dim." Many of Hopkins's lines combine alliteration and strong stresses in this way to create the same "springing" effect, or heavy emphasis.

A parallel instance of strongly stressed lines is seen in "We Real Cool" by Brooks. In this poem the effect is achieved by the exclusive use of monosyllabic stressed words combined with internal rhyme, repetition, and alliteration.

The Caesura: The Pause Creating Variety and Natural Rhythms in Poetry

Whenever we speak, we run words together rapidly, without apparent pauses. We do, however, stop briefly and almost unnoticeably between significant units or phrases. Intelligible conversation could not take place without these pauses,

which, both grammatically and rhythmically, create separate units of meaning called **cadence groups.** In poetry using a regular meter, the cadence groups operate just as they do in prose to make ideas clear. That is, while we follow the poetic measures. we also pause briefly at the ends of phrases, and we pause longer, for emphasis. at the ends of sentences. In scansion, the name of these pauses, which linguists call *junctures,* is **caesura** (a "cutting off"), pluralized as **caesurae.** When writing out our scansion of a line, we use two diagonal slashes or **virgules** (//) to indicate a caesura, so that the caesura can be distinguished from the single virgule separating feet. Often the caesura coincides with the end of a foot, as at the end of the second iamb in this line by William Blake ("To Mrs. Anna Flaxman").

> With HANDS / di - VINE // he MOV'D / the GEN - / tle SOD. /

The caesura, however, may fall within a foot, and there may be more than one in a line, as within the second and third iambs in this line by Ben Jonson (from a poem of praise about "Penshurst," an English country estate):

> Thou ART / not, //PENS - / hurst, // BUILT / to EN - / vious SHOW. /

When a caesura ends a line, usually marked by a comma, semicolon, or period, that line is **end-stopped,** as in this famous line opening Keats's "Endymion":

> A THING / of BEAU - / ty // IS / a JOY / for - EV - er. /

If a line has no punctuation at the end and the thought carries over to the next line, it is called **run-on.** A term also used to indicate run-on lines is **enjambment** (a straddling). The following passage, a continuation of the line from Keats, contains three run-on lines:

> Its loveliness increases; // it will never
> Pass into nothingness; // but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, // and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, // . . .

It is important to recognize that the formal rhythms of poetry are superimposed on the rhythms of natural speech, creating a tension between the two. By manipulating the placement of caesurae—the pauses that develop naturally in speech—poets create many of the variant rhythms that are provided by formal substitution. If the poet ends a cadence group within a foot, the pause, or caesura, may cause us actually to *hear* trochees, amphibrachs, and other variant feet even though the line may scan correctly and regularly in the established meter. This type of *de facto* variation is **rhetorical substitution.** A noteworthy example in an iambic pentameter line is this one from the first epistle of Pope's *Essay on Man* (1.66):

> His AC- / tions', // PAS-/sions', // BE-/ing's, // USE /and END. /

This is the second line in a "heroic" couplet, which theoretically requires that there should be only a single caesura following the fourth syllable. In this line, however, Pope provides us with great rhythmical variety. He uses not one but rather three caesurae, each of them producing an emphatic pause or juncture. Pope's line is regularly iambic, but the effect is different in actual reading or speaking. Because of the caesurae after the third, fifth, and seventh syllables, the rhythm produces an amphibrach, a trochee, another trochee, and an amphimacer. The effect is a skillful line containing two inner two-syllable feet, framed by two three-syllable feet, thus:

> His AC-tions', // PAS-sions', // BE-ing's, // USE and END.
> AMPHIBRACH TROCHEE TROCHEE AMPHIMACER

The spoken substitutions caused by the caesurae in this regular line produce the effect of substitution—rhetorical substitution—and therefore tension and interest. Never believe that Pope did not know what he was doing with words and rhythms.

Segmental Poetic Devices

Once you have completed your analysis of rhythms, you should consider the segmental poetic devices in the poem. Usually these devices are used to create emphasis, but sometimes in context they may echo or imitate actions and objects. The segmental devices most common in poetry are *assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia,* and *euphony and cacophony.*

Identical Vowel Sounds Create *Assonance*

Assonance is the repetition of identical *vowel* sounds in different words—for example, the short *i* in "sw*i*ft Cam*i*lla sk*i*ms" (Pope). It is a strong means of emphasis, as in the following line, where the *u* sound connects the two words *lull* and *slumber,* and the short *i* connects *him, in,* and *his:*

> And more, to l*u*ll h*i*m *i*n h*i*s sl*u*mber soft. (Spenser)

Identical Consonant Sounds Create Alliteration

Like assonance, **alliteration** is a means of highlighting ideas by words containing the same consonant sound—for example, the repeated *m* in Spenser's "Mixed with a *m*ur*m*uring wind," or the *s* sound in Edmund Waller's praise of Oliver Cromwell, "Your never-failing sword made war to cease," which emphasizes the connection between the words *sword* and *cease.*

There are two kinds of alliteration. Most commonly, alliteration is regarded as the repetition of identical consonant sounds that begin syllables in close patterns—for example, in Pope's lines "Laborious, heavy, *b*usy, *b*old, and *b*lind," "While pensive poets painful vigils keep," and "*b*razen *b*rainless *b*rothers." When used judiciously, alliteration gives strength to ideas by emphasizing key words, but too much can cause comic and catastrophic consequences.

The second form of alliteration occurs when a poet repeats identical or similar consonant sounds that do not begin syllables but nevertheless create a pattern—for

example, the *z* segment in the line "In these places freezing breezes easily cause sneezes," or the *m*, *b*, and *p* segments (all of which are made *bilabially*—that is, with both lips) in "The *m*iserably *m*um*b*ling and *m*omentously *m*ur*m*uring *b*owler *p*ro*p*els *p*egs and *p*e*bb*les in the *b*u*bb*ling *p*ool." Such clearly designed patterns are hard to overlook.

Verbal Imitation of Real Sounds Is Onomatopoeia, or "Poetic Sound Effects"

Onomatopoeia is a blend of consonant and vowel sounds designed to *imitate* or *suggest* a situation or an action. It is made possible in poetry because many English words are **echoic** in origin; that is, they are verbal echoes of the actions they describe, such as *buzz, bump, slap*, and so on. In "The Bells," Poe uses such words to create onomatopoeia. Through the combined use of assonance and alliteration, he imitates the kinds of bells that he celebrates. Thus, wedding bells sound softly with "molten golden notes" (*o*), while alarm bells "clang and clash and roar" (*kl*). David Wagoner includes imitative words like *tweedledy, thump*, and *wheeze* to suggest the sounds of the music produced by the protagonist of his "March for a One-Man Band" (this chapter).

Pleasing Sounds Create Euphony, and Harsh Sounds Create Cacophony

Words describing smooth or jarring sounds, particularly those resulting from consonants, are euphony and cacophony. **Euphony** ("good sound") refers to words containing consonants that permit an easy and smooth flow of spoken sound. Although there is no rule that some consonants are inherently more pleasant than others, students of poetry often cite sounds like *m, n, ng, l, v*, and *z*, together with *w* and *y*, as being especially easy on the ears. The opposite of euphony is **cacophony** ("bad sound"), in which percussive and choppy sounds make for vigorous and noisy pronunciation, as in tongue twisters like "black bug's blood" and "shuffling shellfish fashioned by a selfish sushi chef." Obviously, unintentional cacophony is a mark of imperfect control. When a poet uses it and controls it for effect, however, as in Pope's "The *hoarse, rough verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar" (*An Essay on Criticism*, line 369), and in Coleridge's "Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail, / Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail" ("Kubla Khan"), cacophony is a mark of poetic skill. Although poets generally aim at easily flowing, euphonious lines, cacophony does have a place, always depending on the poet's intention and subject matter.

Rhyme: The Duplication and Similarity of Sounds

Rhyme refers to words containing identical final syllables. One type of rhyme involves words with identical concluding vowel sounds, or assonance, as in *day, weigh, hey, bouquet, fiancé*, and *matinee*. A second type of rhyme is created by assonance combined with identical consonant sounds, as in *ache, bake, break*, and *opaque*; or *turn, yearn, fern, spurn*, and *adjourn*; or *apple* and *dapple*, or *fantastic, drastic*, and *elastic*. Rhymes like these, because their rhyming sounds are identical, are called **exact rhymes.** It is important to note that rhymes result from *sound* rather than from spelling; words do not have to be spelled the same way or look alike to rhyme. All the words rhyming with *day*, for example, are spelled differently, but because they all contain the same *long a* sound, they rhyme.

Rhyme, above all, gives delight and sustains interest, and it strengthens a poem's psychological impact. Through its network of similar sounds that echo and resonate in our minds, it promotes memory by clinching feelings and ideas. It has been an important aspect of poetry for hundreds of years, and, although many poets have shunned it because they find it restrictive and artificial, it is closely connected with how well particular poems move us or leave us flat. There are few restrictions on the types of words that poets may choose in making rhymes. Nouns may be rhymed with verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other nouns or with any other rhyming word, regardless of part of speech.

Most often, rhymes are placed at the ends of lines. Two successive lines may rhyme, for example, or rhymes may appear in alternating lines. It is also possible to introduce rhyming words at intervals of four, five, or more lines. If rhyming sounds are too far away from each other, however, it is difficult for readers to recall them and they therefore lose their effectiveness. Sometimes poets use rhyme within individual lines—**internal rhyme.** Poe uses internal rhyme effectively in the concluding stanzas of "Annabel Lee," where he rhymes the words *ever dissever; beams, dreams; rise, eyes*; and *tide side*. Internal rhyme is not common, but you should be alert for it and make note of it when it occurs.

Poets who are skillful and original rhymers are able to create fresh, unusual, and surprising turns of thought. We can therefore judge poets on their use of rhyme. Often poets become quite creative rhymers, putting together words like *tent 'em* and *Tarentem* or *masterly* and *dastardly*. Some rhymers, whom an anonymous sixteenth-century critic called a "rakehelly rout of ragged rhymers," are satisfied with easy rhymes, or **cliché rhymes,** like *trees* and *breeze* (a rhyme that Alexander Pope criticized in 1711 in *An Essay on Criticism*, lines 350–51). But good rhymes and good poets go together, in creative cooperation. The seventeenth-century poet John Dryden, who wrote volumes of rhyming couplets, acknowledged that the need to find rhyming words inspired ideas he had not anticipated. In this sense, rhyme has been—and still is—a vital element of poetic creativity.

Rhyme and Meter

The effects of rhyme are closely bound to rhythm and meter. There is general agreement that rhymes coinciding with a strong accent are conducive to serious subjects. Commensurately, rhymes coinciding with syllables of light stress are appropriate for light and comic subject matter. There is no hard-and-fast rule about such matters, for the effects of rhyme always result from the poet's skill, regardless of rhymes. There is enough truth in the observations, however, to warrant considering the relationship of rhyme and accent.

Rising Rhymes Form the Climaxing Syllables of Iambs and Anapests

The most significant type of **rising rhyme** is **iambic rhyme,** which utilizes one-syllable words in an iambic foot (like *the west* and *in rest, more strong* and *ere long*) and two-syllable words in which the accent falls on the second syllable (like *away* and *today, demand* and *command*). Such rhymes are also called **heavy-stress rhyme** or **accented rhyme.** Iambic rhyme is illustrated in the opening lines of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (Chapter 11; italics added):

> Whose woods / these are / I think / I *KNOW.* //
> His house / is in / the vil - / lage *THOUGH;* //

Here, the rhyming sounds are produced by one-syllable words—*know* and *though*—that occur in the final heavy-stress positions of the lines. The rhyme climaxing a final syllable can also involve spondees, as in lines 9–12 of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18: Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?" (Chapter 15; italics added):

> But thy eternal summer shall *not fade,*
> Nor lose possession of that fair *thou ow'st;*
> Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in *his shade,*
> When in eternal lines to time *thou grow'st:*

Falling Rhymes Conclude with One or Two or More Lightly Stressed Syllables

Rhymes using words of two or more syllables, in which the heavy stress is followed by light syllables, are **trochaic rhyme** or **double rhyme** for two-syllable rhymes, and **dactylic rhyme** or **triple rhyme** for three-syllable rhymes. Less technically, these types of rhymes are also called **falling rhymes** or **dying rhymes,** because the intensity of pronunciation decreases on the light accent or accents following the heavy accent. Falling rhyme is seen in lines 2 and 4 of "Miniver Cheevy" by Edwin Arlington Robinson (italics added):

> Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn
> Grew lean while he assailed the *seasons;*
> He wept that he was ever born,
> And he had *reasons.*

Here the double rhyme reinforces the humor of the passage, thus helping to make Miniver Cheevy seem self-centered and pathetic.

Double rhymes can also be used to bring out irony or anticlimax, as in "a-dying" and "flying" in Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (Chapter 22):

> If I trip him just *a-dying,*
> Sure of heaven as sure can be,
> Spin him round and send him *flying*
> Off to hell, a Manichee?

Browning uses trochaic rhymes freely throughout this poem, including the rhyming of English and Latin words (e.g., "rose-acacia" and "*Plena gratiâ*"). The effect of such rhymes is to complement Browning's exposé of the anger and hypocrisy of the speaker, a monk, who condemns no one but himself as he inveighs against a saintly fellow monk.

Dactylic or **triple rhyme,** even more than trochaic rhyme, is light and often humorous, because it tends to minimize the subject matter and maximize the rhythm, as in Ogden Nash's "Very Like a Whale." There, among other ingenious and amusing rhymes, we see *better for* rhymed with *metaphor,* and *experience* with *Assyrians.* How many of us could be clever enough to create rhymes like these?

Variations in Rhyme Extend the Boundaries of Rhyming Poetry

Unlike poets writing in other languages (such as Italian, which offers virtually endless rhyming possibilities because most Italian words end in vowel sounds), English poets are limited in selecting rhymes because our language is short in identical word terminations. To compensate for this shortfall of English rhymes, a tradition has grown that many English words may be rhymed even if their sounds do not duplicate each other exactly.

Rhymes may therefore be created out of words with similar but not identical sounds—**inexact rhyme.** In most inexact rhymes, either the vowel segments are different while the consonants are the same, or vice versa. In addition to *inexact rhyme,* this type of rhyme is variously called **slant rhyme, near rhyme, half rhyme, off rhyme, analyzed rhyme,** or **suspended rhyme.** In employing slant rhyme, a poet can pair *bleak* with *broke* or *could* with *solitude.* Emily Dickinson uses slant rhyme extensively in "To Hear an Oriole Sing" (p. 889); in the second stanza of the poem she rhymes *bird, unheard,* and *crowd. Bird* and *unheard* form an exact rhyme, but the vowel and consonant shift in *crowd* produces a slant rhyme.

Another common variation is **eye rhyme** or **sight rhyme.** In eye rhyme, the sounds to be eye-rhymed are *identical in spelling* but *different in pronunciation.* Entire words may be eye-rhymed, so that *wind* (verb) may be joined to *wind* (noun), and *cóntest* (noun) may be used with *contést* (verb). In most eye rhymes, however, it is only the relevant parts of words that must be spelled identically. Thus *stove* may pair with *prove* and *above,* and *bough* may match *cough, dough, enough,* and *through,* despite all the differing pronunciations. The following lines contain eye rhyme:

> Although his claim was not to praise but *bury,*
> His speech for Caesar roused the crowd to *fury.*

The different pronunciations of *bury* and *fury* make clear the contrast between exact rhyme and eye rhyme. In exact rhyme, identical sound is crucial; spelling is usually the same but may be different as long as the sounds remain identical. In eye rhyme, the eye-rhyming patterns must be spelled identically but the sounds must be different.

An additional variation is **identical rhyme** (noted earlier); that is, the same words are placed into rhyming positions, such as *veil* and *veil* or *stone* and *stone*. Perhaps the most extreme variation is **vowel rhyme,** in which poets put words ending in vowels into rhyming positions, as in *day* and *sky* or *key* and *play*.

Rhyme Schemes

A **rhyme scheme** refers to a poem's pattern of rhyming sounds, which can be schematized by alphabetical letters. The first rhyming sounds, such as *love* and *dove*, are marked with an *a*; the next rhyming sounds, such as *swell* and *fell*, receive a *b*; the next sounds, such as *first* and *burst*, receive a *c*; and so on. Thus, a pattern of lines ending with the words *love, moon, thicket; dove, June, picket;* and *above, croon, wicket* can be schematized as *abc abc abc*.

To formulate a rhyme scheme or pattern, you include the meter and the number of feet in each line as well as the letters indicating rhymes. Here is such a formulation for a Shakespearean sonnet:

Iambic pentameter: *abab cdcd efef gg*

This scheme shows that all the lines in the poem are iambic, with five feet in each line. Spaces are used here to mark a stanzaic pattern of three 4-line units, or **quatrains,** and to separate this pattern with the concluding **couplet.** In each quatrain, the rhymes fall on the first and third, and the second and fourth, lines.

Should the number of feet in the lines of a poem or **stanza** vary, as in odes and songs, you need to show this fact by using a number in front of each letter:

Iambic: *4a3b4a3b5a5a4b*

This formulation shows an intricate pattern of rhymes and line lengths in a stanza of seven lines. The first, third, fifth, and sixth lines rhyme and vary from four to five feet. The second, fourth, and seventh lines also rhyme and vary from three to four feet.

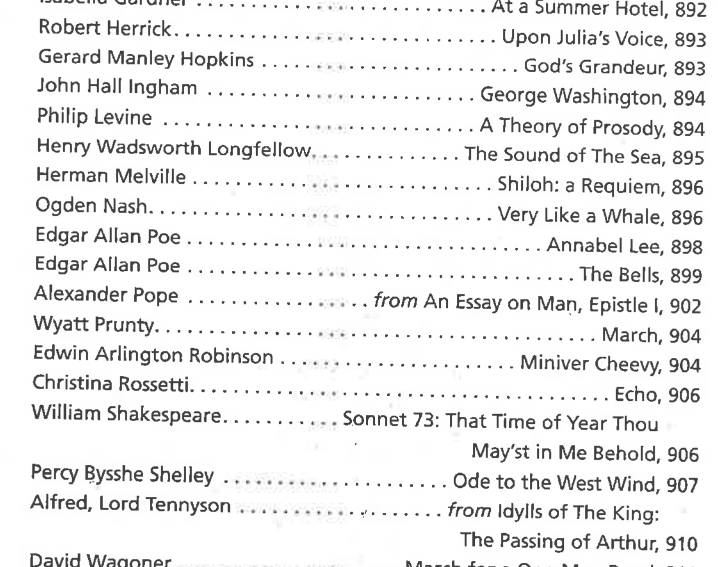
The absence of a rhyme sound is indicated by an *x*. Thus, you formulate the rhyme scheme of **ballad measure** like this:

Iambic: *4x3a4x3a*

The formulation shows that the quatrain alternates iambic tetrameter (four feet) with iambic trimeter (three feet). In this ballad quatrain, only lines 2 and 4 rhyme; there is no end rhyme in lines 1 and 3.

Poems for Study

Gwendolyn Brooks . . . . We Real Cool, 887
Robert Browning . . . . Porphyria's Lover, 888
Emily Dickinson . . . . To Hear an Oriole Sing, 889
John Donne . . . . The Sun Rising, 890
Ralph Waldo Emerson . . . . Concord Hymn, 891



Isabella Gardner . . . . At a Summer Hotel, 892
Robert Herrick . . . . Upon Julia's Voice, 893
Gerard Manley Hopkins . . . . God's Grandeur, 893
John Hall Ingham . . . . George Washington, 894
Philip Levine . . . . A Theory of Prosody, 894
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow . . . . The Sound of The Sea, 895
Herman Melville . . . . Shiloh: a Requiem, 896
Ogden Nash . . . . Very Like a Whale, 896
Edgar Allan Poe . . . . Annabel Lee, 898
Edgar Allan Poe . . . . The Bells, 899
Alexander Pope . . . . *from* An Essay on Man, Epistle I, 902
Wyatt Prunty . . . . March, 904
Edwin Arlington Robinson . . . . Miniver Cheevy, 904
Christina Rossetti . . . . Echo, 906
William Shakespeare . . . . Sonnet 73: That Time of Year Thou May'st in Me Behold, 906
Percy Bysshe Shelley . . . . Ode to the West Wind, 907
Alfred, Lord Tennyson . . . . *from* Idylls of The King: The Passing of Arthur, 910
David Wagoner . . . . March for a One-Man Band, 911

GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917–2000)

We Real Cool (1959)

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We 5

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the major idea of the poem? Who is the speaker? How is the last sentence a climax? How is this sentence consistent with the declarations in lines 1–7? How is the poet's attitude made clear?
2. Describe the patterning of stresses in the poem. Explain the absence of light stresses. What method is employed to achieve the constant strong stresses?

ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889)

For a photo, see Chapter 13, page 720.

Porphyria's Lover° (1836)

The Rain set early in to-night,
  The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
  And did its worst to vex the lake:
  I listened with heart fit to break. 5
When glided in Porphyria; straight
  She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
  Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
  Which done, she rose, and from her form 10
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
  And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
  And, last, she sat down by my side
  And called me. When no voice replied, 15
She put my arm about her waist,
  And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
  And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
  And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair. 20
Murmuring how she loved me—she
  Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
  From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
  And give herself to me forever, 25
But passion sometimes would prevail,
  Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
  For love of her, and all in vain:
  So, she was come through wind and rain. 30
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
  Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me: surprise
  Made my heart swell, and still it grew
  While I debated what to do. 35
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
  Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
  In one long yellow string I wound
  Three times her little throat around 40
And strangled her. No pain felt she;

°*Porphyria's Lover*: When Browning published "Porphyria's Lover" in his *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842, he grouped it with another poem under the title "Madhouse Cells."

  I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
  I warily oped her lids: again
  Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress 45
  About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
  I propped her head up as before
  Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still: 50
  The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
  That all it scorned at once is fled,
  And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how 55
  Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
  And all night long we have not stirred,
  And yet God has not said a word! 60

QUESTIONS

1. What is the situation in this poem? Who is the speaker? Where is he at the time he is speaking? To whom is he speaking?
2. Who is Porphyria? What has happened after her meeting with the speaker?
3. Explain the speaker's mental state. What evidence do you find for asserting that he is unstable? What is his justification for strangling Porphyria?
4. Describe the pattern of rhymes in the poem. What is the prevailing metrical pattern? What variations seem consistent with the speaker's mental condition?
5. Why do you suppose Browning chose circumstances like these for the subject of a poem?

EMILY DICKINSON (1830–1886)

For a photo, see Chapter 21, page 1052.

To Hear an Oriole Sing (F402, J526) (1891; c. 1862)

To hear an Oriole sing
May be a common thing–
Or only a divine.

It is not of the Bird
Who sings the same, unheard,
As unto Crowd– 5

The Fashion of the Ear
Attireth that it hear
In Dun, or fair–

10 So whether it be Rune,
Or whether it be none
Is of within.

The "Tune is in the Tree–"
The Skeptic–showeth me—
15 "No Sir! In Thee!"

QUESTIONS

1. What can you deduce about the speaker? The listener? Who speaks in line 13? To whom is line 15 addressed?
2. Formulate the rhyme scheme of this poem. How does it help subdivide the poem into cohesive units of thought? To what extent does it unify the poem?
3. Locate all the slant rhymes in this poem. What effect do these have on your reading and perception? How is the rhyme here like the oriole's song?
4. To what degree does rhyme reinforce meaning? Note especially the rhyme words in the final stanza.

JOHN DONNE (1572–1631)

For a portrait, see Chapter 12, page 687.

The Sun Rising (1633)

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
5 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,° *apprentices*
Go tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices;° *duties*
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,° *climate*
10 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend, and strong
Why shouldst thou think?°
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
15 If her eyes have not blinded thine,

°8 *Call . . . offices:* i.e., Notify the country's ants to carry out the duty of eating the harvest of grain and produce. 11, 12 *Thy beams . . . think?:* i.e., why shouldst thou think that thy beams are so reverend and strong?

Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both the Indias of spice and Mine°
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay. 20

She'is° all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic; all wealth alchemy.°
Thou, sun, art half as happy'as° we, 25
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center° is, these walls, thy sphere. 30

°17 *Indias of spice and Mine:* The India of "spice" is the East Indies; the India of "Mine" (gold) is the West Indies. 21 *She'is:* For scansion, these two words are to be considered one syllable ("she's"). 24 *all wealth alchemy:* i.e., all wealth is false because it has been created by alchemists. 25 *happy'as:* to be scanned as a trochee ("hap-pyaz"). 30 *center:* the earth, around which the sun revolves (according to the Ptolemaic view of the solar system).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the speaker like? How deeply does he seem to be in love? How does he feel about love? What evidence do you find that the speaker has a good sense of humor?
2. To whom is the poem addressed? What is the speaker's attitude toward this listener?
3. What solar, seasonal, geographical, and political metaphors are developed in the poem?
4. What is the poem's rhyme scheme? What is the metrical norm of the lines? What variations on this norm do you find in the poem?

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803–1882)

Concord Hymn (1837)

Sung at the completion of the Battle Monument, July 4, 1837

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps; 5
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On the green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone; 10

That memory may their deed redeem,
  When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those spirits dare
  To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare 15
  The shaft we raise to them and thee.

QUESTIONS

1. Line 4 is one of the best-known lines of American poetry. Why is it so well-known? Discuss the rhythm of the line. Where are the heavy accents? What complication occurs in the phrase "heard round"?
2. Discuss line 7. What does Emerson do grammatically to get his idea across and also to create the verbal "swept" to rhyme with "slept"?
3. Describe Emerson's use of alliteration and assonance in the poem.

ISABELLA GARDNER (1915–1981)

At a Summer Hotel (1979)

I am here with my bountiful womanful child
to be soothed by the sea not roused by these roses roving wild.
My girl is gold in the sun and bold in the dazzling water,
She drowses on the blond sand and in the daisy fields my daughter
dreams. Uneasy in the drafty shade I rock on the veranda 5
reminded of Europa Persephone Miranda.°

°6 *Europa Persephone Miranda*: Europa was a princess in Greek mythology who attracted the attention of Zeus, the king of the gods. He took the form of a bull and carried her over the sea to Crete. She bore him three sons. Persephone, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, the goddess of fertility. She attracted the attention of Hades, the god of the underworld, who forcibly carried her off and married her. Miranda is an innocent young woman in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* who was exiled on an island for twelve years with her father, Prospero. One of his servants, the beastlike Caliban, attempted to rape her.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the speaker "uneasy" (line 5)? How do the references to Europa, Persephone, and Miranda help define this uneasiness?
2. To what extent do alliteration and repetition unify the lines and make the sound echo sense? Note especially the *ful* sounds in line 1, the *s* and *r* sounds in line 2, and the *d* and *dr* sounds in lines 4–5.
3. What is the effect of internal rhyme in this poem?
4. What kind of rhyme (rising or falling, exact or slant) is in lines 1–2? To what extent does this rhyme highlight the poem's central idea? What rhyme is in lines 3–6? How does this rhyme affect the poem's tone and impact?

ROBERT HERRICK (1591–1674)

Upon Julia's Voice (1648)

So smooth, so sweet, so silv'ry is thy voice,
As, could they hear, the damned would make no noise,
But listen to thee (walking in thy chamber)
Melting melodious words, to lutes of amber.

QUESTIONS

1. How do the words "silv'ry" and "amber" contribute to the praise of Julia's voice? How powerful does the speaker claim her voice is?
2. What is the "joke" of the poem? How can the praise of Julia's voice be interpreted as general praise for Julia herself?
3. How and where is alliteration used in the poem? Which of the alliterative sounds best complement the words praising the sweetness of Julia's voice?

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844–1889)

For a photo, see Chapter 14, page 767.

God's Grandeur (1877)

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
  It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
  It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?°
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod; 5
  And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
  And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
  There lives the dearest freshness deep down things; 10
And though the last lights off the black West went
  Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
  World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

°4 *reck his rod*: God as king holds a scepter, making official laws through scriptures which people ("men") disobey.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the contrast between the assertions in lines 1–4 and 5–8 (the octave)? How do lines 9–14 (the sestet) develop out of this contrast?
2. Analyze Hopkins's use of alliteration. What alliterative patterns occur? How do these affect meter and emphasis? On the basis of your analysis, describe "sprung rhythm" as used by Hopkins.
3. What instances of assonance, repetitions, and internal rhyme do you find?

JOHN HALL INGHAM (1860–c.1931)

George Washington (1900)

This was the man God gave us when the hour
Proclaimed the dawn of Liberty begun;
Who dared a deed and died when it was done
Patient in triumph, temperate in power,—
5 Not striving like the Corsican° to tower
To heaven, nor like great Philip's greater son°
To win the world and weep for worlds unwon,
Or lose the star to revel in the flower.
The lives that serve the eternal verities
10 Alone do mold mankind. Pleasure and pride
Sparkle awhile and perish, as the spray
Smoking across the crests of cavernous seas
Is impotent to hasten or delay
The everlasting surges of the tide.

°5 *Corsican:* Napoleon I (1769–1821), General and Emperor of France from 1804–1814. 7 *great Philip's greater son:* Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia (356–323 BCE.), who conquered all the known world in the short years of his reign. There was a tradition, derived from Plutarch's *Lives*, that Alexander wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer.

QUESTIONS

1. For what reasons does the poet extol Washington? Explain the symbolism of line 8, "Or lose the star to revel in the flower." What is the sense of the simile in the last five lines of the poem?
2. Trace the patterning of alliteration and assonance in the poem. How effectively does the poet use these devices? Are they appropriate, or might some think they are overly obvious?
3. In line 3 there occurs a pattern called *consonance*, in which words have the same beginning and ending consonant sounds ("*dared* a *deed* and *died*"). Why do you think the poet includes this pattern here?

PHILIP LEVINE (b. 1928)

A Theory of Prosody (1988)

When Nellie, my old pussy
cat, was still in her prime,
she would sit behind me
as I wrote, and when the line
5 got too long she'd reach
one sudden black foreleg down
and paw at the moving hand,
the offensive one. The first
time she drew blood I learned
10 it was poetic to end

a line anywhere to keep her
quiet. After all, many morn-
ings she'd gotten to the chair
long before I was even up.
15 Those nights I couldn't sleep
she'd come and sit in my lap
to calm me. So I figured
I owed her the short cat line.
She's dead now almost nine years,
20 and before that there was one
during which she faked attention
and I faked obedience.
Isn't that what it's about—
pretending there's an alert cat
25 who leaves nothing to chance.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is this poem comic? How effective a "theory of prosody" is contained in the poem? What is suggested by the syllable break in line 12? How seriously are we to take the final lines?
2. What is the relationship between the speaker and his cat, Nellie? How true is it that cats sitting at a table with their masters and mistresses sometimes take a swipe at what they are writing?
3. Compare this poem with Robert Frost's "A Considerable Speck" (Chapter 21). In what ways do the poets seem to be having a good time? Nevertheless, what truths about writing are they advancing in the poems?

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807–1882)

The Sound of the Sea (1875)

The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,
And round the pebbly beaches far and wide
I heard the first wave of the rising tide
Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;
5 A voice out of the silence of the deep,
A sound mysteriously multiplied
As of a cataract from the mountain's side,
Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.
So comes to us at times, from the unknown
10 And inaccessible solitudes of being,
The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;
And inspirations, that we deem our own,
Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing
Of things beyond our reason or control.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the analogy on which this poem is based? How does the form of the poem follow this analogy? Is the poem to be considered philosophical, mystical, or

religious? Why does the poet conclude with the idea of "things beyond our reason or control"?
2. Describe the form of this poem, its rhyme scheme, and its use of rhyme.
3. What is the basic meter of the poem? Describe variations gained through substitution.
4. Describe the effects of alliteration and assonance in the poem. How do these prosodic devices complement the meanings of the affected words?

HERMAN MELVILLE (1819–1891)

Shiloh: A Requiem° (1862)

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
  The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
  The forest field of Shiloh—
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched one stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
  Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
    And natural prayer
  Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
  Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
  But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
  And all is hushed at Shiloh.

°One of the earliest major battles of the Civil War, the Battle of Shiloh, in southwestern Tennessee, also called the Battle of Pittsburg Landing, took place in April 1862. It was a remarkably bloody but substantially indecisive conflict, with 10,000 casualties on each side.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it difficult to determine the dominant meter in this poem? What do you think the dominant meter is? What types of metrical feet can you find here?
2. What connection can you make between the indeterminate meter and Melville's subject?
3. What rhymes does Melville create for "Shiloh"? What is the effect of these rhymes? What other rhymes does Melville introduce? How do these rhymes link together his ideas?
4. What irony is expressed in line 14: "Foemen at morn, but friends at eve"?

OGDEN NASH (1902–1971)

Very Like a Whale° 1934

One thing that literature would be greatly the better for
Would be a more restricted employment by authors of simile and metaphor.

Authors of all races, be they Greeks, Romans, Teutons or Celts,
Can't seem just to say that anything is the thing it is but have to go out of their
    way to say that it is like something else.
What does it mean when we are told
That the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold?
In the first place, George Gordon Byron° had had enough experience
To know that it probably wasn't just one Assyrian, it was a lot of Assyrians.
However, as too many arguments are apt to induce apoplexy and thus hinder longevity,
We'll let it pass as one Assyrian for the sake of brevity.
Now then, this particular Assyrian; the one whose cohorts were gleaming in purple
    and gold,
Just what does the poet mean when he says he came down like a wolf on the fold?
In heaven and earth more than is dreamed of in our philosophy there are a great
    many things,
But I don't imagine that among them there is a wolf with purple and gold cohorts
    or purple and gold anythings.
No, no, Lord Byron, before I'll believe that this Assyrian was actually like a wolf
    I must have some kind of proof;
Did he run on all fours and did he have a hairy tail and a big red mouth and big
    white teeth and did he say Woof woof woof?
Frankly I think it very unlikely, and all you were entitled to say, at the very most,
Was that the Assyrian cohorts came down like a lot of Assyrian cohorts about to
    destroy the Hebrew host.
But that wasn't fancy enough for Lord Byron, oh dear me no, he had to invent a lot of
    figures of speech and then interpolate them.
With the result that whenever you mention Old Testament soldiers to people they say Oh
    yes, they're the ones that a lot of wolves dressed up in gold and purple ate them.
That's the kind of thing that's being done all the time by poets, from Homer to
    Tennyson;
They're always comparing ladies to lilies° and veal to venison.
How about the man who wrote,
Her little feet stole in and out like mice beneath her petticoat?°
Wouldn't anybody but a poet think twice
Before stating that his girl's feet were mice?
Then they always say things like that after a winter storm
The snow is a white blanket. Oh it is, is it, all right then, you sleep under a six-inch
    blanket of snow and I'll sleep under a half-inch blanket of unpoetical blanket
    material and we'll see which one keeps warm.
And after that maybe you'll begin to comprehend dimly
What I meant by too much metaphor and simile.

°See *Hamlet*, 3.2.358. 7 *George Gordon Byron:* See Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib" (Chapter 22), which Nash is satirizing in this poem. 22 *ladies to lilies:* See Burns, "A Red, Red Rose" (Chapter 15). 24 *little feet . . . petticoat:* In Sir John Suckling's "A Ballad upon a Wedding" (1641), the following lines appear: "Her feet beneath her petticoat / Like little mice stole in and out." Also in a poem by Robert Herrick complimenting the feet of Susanna Southwell (1648), he wrote: "Her pretty feet / Like snails did creep."

QUESTIONS

1. How serious is Nash when he states that literature would be improved if poets would remove simile and metaphor from their works? How just is his "criticism" of metaphor in line 4?

2. Explain how Nash achieves humor in this poem. How does the ending of the first line indicate that the subject matter is to be considered with a smile?
3. Describe Nash's rhymes in this poem. What types of rhymes do you find here? In what ways are some of the rhymes comic? How original are Nash's rhymes?

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809–1849)

For a portrait, see Chapter 9, page 499. The following two poems are by Edgar Allan Poe.

Annabel Lee (1849)

It was many and many a year ago,
  In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
  By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought 5
  Than to love and be loved by me.

She was a child and *I* was a child,
  In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than love—
  I and my Annabel Lee— 10
With a love that the wingéd seraphs of Heaven
  Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
  In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud by night 15
  Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her high-born kinsmen came
  And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
  In this kingdom by the sea. 20

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
  Went envying her and me:—
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
  In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud chilling 25
  And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
  Of those who were older than we—
  Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in Heaven above 30
  Nor the demons down under the sea
  Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
  Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:—

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
  Of the beautiful Annabel Lee; 35
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
  Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:
And so all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride
  In her sepulchre there by the sea— 40
  In her tomb by the side of the sea.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the speaker explain the death of Annabel Lee? What is his attitude about the cause of her death? How does this judgment explain the actions he describes at the poem's end?
2. What basic meter does the poet establish in the poem? What variations do you find on this pattern?
3. Why do stanzas 3, 5, and 6 contain more lines than stanzas 1, 2, and 4? Why does stanza 5 contain seven lines, concluding with a dash?
4. Describe the poem's internal rhymes, repetitions, assonances, and alliterations. What is their effect? Why did Poe include them?

The Bells (1849)

1

Hear the sledges with the bells—
    Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
  In the icy air of night! 5
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
  With a crystalline delight;
    Keeping time, time, time,
    In a sort of Runic rhyme, 10
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
    From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
      Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

2

Hear the mellow wedding bells— 15
    Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
  Through the balmy air of night
  How they ring out their delight!—
    From the molten-golden notes, 20
    And all in tune,

What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
25 Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells
On the Future!—how it tells
30 Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
35 To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

3

Hear the loud alarum bells—
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
In the startled ear of night
40 How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
45 In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavor
Now—now to sit, or never,
50 By the side of the pale-faced moon,
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair!
How they clang, and clash, and roar!
55 What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear, it fully knows,
By the twanging
And the clanging,
60 How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
In the jangling
And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells,
65 By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells—
Of the bells-
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

4

Hear the tolling of the bells—
70 Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
75 For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people—ah, the people—
They that dwell up in the steeple,
80 All alone,
And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone—
85 They are neither man nor woman—
They are neither brute nor human—
They are Ghouls:—
And their king it is who tolls:-
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
90 Rolls
A paean from the bells!
And his merry bosom swells
With the paean of the bells!
And he dances, and he yells;
95 Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the paean of the bells—
Of the bells:
Keeping time, time, time,
100 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells—
To the sobbing of the bells;
Keeping time, time, time,
105 As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells:—
To the tolling of the bells—
110 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of bells does Poe extol in each of the stanzas? What metals and images does he associate with each type of bell? How appropriate are these? Why do you think the stanzas become progressively longer?

2. What segmental sounds does Poe utilize as imitative of the various bells? What differences in vowels are observable between the silver sledge bells, for example, and the brass ("brazen") alarum bells? Between the vowels describing the iron bells and the golden bells?
3. What is the effect of the repetition of the word "bells" throughout? What onomatopoeic effect is created by these repetitions?
4. Describe the pattern of rhymes in this poem.

ALEXANDER POPE (1685–1744)

For a portrait, see Chapter 16, page 852.

from An Essay on Man, Epistle I, lines 17–90 (1734)

I. Say first, of God above, or man.° below,
What can we reason but from what we know?
Of man, what see we but his station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer? 20
Through worlds unnumbered though the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him° only in our own.
He who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs, 25
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied being peoples every star,
May tell why Heaven has made us as we are.
But of this frame the bearings and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies, 30
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Looked through? or can a part contain the whole?
Is the great chain that draws all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee?
II. Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find, 35
Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less!
Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade! 40
Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove!
Of systems possible, if 'tis confessed
That wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must full or not coherent be, 45
And all that rises, rise in due degree;
Then, in the scale of reasoning life, 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong. 50
Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,

man: humanity
him: God

May, must be right, as relative to all.
In human works, though labored on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce; 55
Yet serves to second too some other use.
So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole. 60
When the proud steed shall know why man restrains.
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains:
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god:
Then shall man's pride and dullness comprehend 65
His actions', passions', being's, use and end;
Why doing, suffering, checked, impelled; and why
This hour a slave, the next a deity.
Then say not man's imperfect, Heaven in fault;
Say rather, man's as perfect as he ought: 70
His knowledge measured to his state and place;
His time a moment, and a point his space.
If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or here or there?
The blessed today is as completely so, 75
As who began a thousand years ago.
III. Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state;
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know,
Or who could suffer being here below? 80
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed today,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh blindness to the future! kindly given, 85
That each may fill the circle marked by Heaven:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world. 90

QUESTIONS

1. What is the topic of the passage? How appropriate is it to present such material in the form of couplets? How does Pope use the couplet to develop his thought in the poem?
2. Analyze five or six of the couplets. On the basis of your study, what principles of the couplet does Pope follow? You might consider the average lengths of words and the use of iambs, caesurae, and end-stopped lines.
3. Describe Pope's use of rhyme. What types of words does he rhyme? How helpful are the rhymes in the emphasis of Pope's ideas?

WYATT PRUNTY (b. 1947)

March (1998)

Seeing the March rain flood a field
Then runnel from sight, as the wind
Kicks up a bare-limbed fury of trees
And a single crow flies north-northeast
5 Into gray distances from which
One bruised cloud goes driven grimly
After another so the whole sky
Blunders in a stampede of shapes
So changeable they disprove shape,
10 And then the rain again, in which
The clouds come down but differently
This time, driven like nails blunted
And lost with hitting the ground
Till how many will it take
15 To fill the field then disappear,
As what we call a change in season
Blusters, or storms, or goes dead still
With us left standing underneath
To wonder or ignore such change
20 From overhead to sometimes underfoot
And going on regardless where we go,
Who we were, what we ever said or did.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the grammatical structure of this poem. Why do you think the poet leaves the poem as a very long "sentence fragment" and does not create individual sentences as units? What is the relationship between this use of grammar and the poem's topic?
2. Consider the poem's last five lines. What point does the poet make about the world of rain and nature, on the one hand, and the world of human beings, on the other?
3. Describe the poet's use of alliteration (e.g., "flood a field") and assonance ("wind . . . kicks . . . limbed . . . single . . . Into . . . distances . . . which" etc.). How do these devices contribute to the energy of the poem?

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1869–1935)

For a photo, see Chapter 12, page 696.

Miniver Cheevy (1910)

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
When swords were bright and steeds were prancing; 5
The vision of a warrior bold
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes° and Camelot,° 10
And Priam's° neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,
And Art, a vagrant. 15

Miniver loved the Medici,°
Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
Could he have been one. 20

Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
But sore annoyed was he without it; 25
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate, 30
And kept on drinking.

°11 *Thebes:* a city in Greece prominent in Greek legend and mythology in connection with Cadmus and Oedipus. *Camelot:* legendary seat of the Round Table and capital of Britain during the reign of King Arthur. 12 *Priam's:* Priam was the king of Troy during the Trojan War. 17 *Medici:* wealthy Italian family that ruled Florence from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. During the Renaissance, Lorenzo de'Medici was an important patron of the arts.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the speaker's attitude toward the central character? How does rhyme help define this attitude?
2. How does repetition reinforce the image of the central character and the speaker's attitude? Consider the beginning of each stanza and lines 27–28.
3. What rhyme predominates in lines 2 and 4 of each stanza? How does this rhyme help make sound echo sense?

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830–1894)

For a portrait, see Chapter 13, page 736.

Echo (1854)

Come to me in the silence of the night
  Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
    As sunlight on a stream;
      Come back in tears. 5
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
  Whose wakening should have been in paradise,
Where souls brimful of love abide and meet;
    Where thirsty longing eyes 10
      Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
  My very life again though cold in death;
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give 15
    Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
      Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is this poem titled "Echo"? What kind of echoed experience does the speaker describe? What has happened that causes the speaker to state that past love is now a part of "finished years"? How does she suggest that she might relive this experience?
2. What words are echoed throughout the poem? Follow the patterning of the word "dream," for example, or "Come," or "love."
3. Describe the pattern of the poem's rhymes. What words are rhymed? What more can you say about them in terms of content, syllabication, and parts of speech?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

For a portrait, see Chapter 24, page 1354.

Sonnet 73: That Time of Year Thou May'st in Me Behold (1609)

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs,° where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day 5
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self,° that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his° youth doth lie, *its* 10
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.°
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

4 *choirs:* the part of a church just in front of the altar. 8 *Death's . . . self:* That is, night is a mirror image of death inasmuch as it brings the sleep of rest just as death brings the sleep of actual death. 12 *Consumed . . . by:* That is, the ashes of the fuel burned at the fire's height now prevent the fire from continuing, and in fact extinguish it.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the content of lines 1–4, 5–8, and 9–12. What connects these three sections? How does the concluding couplet relate to the first twelve lines?
2. Analyze the iambic pentameter of the poem. Consider the spondees in lines 2 ("do hang"), 4 ("bare ru-" and "birds sang"), 5 ("such day"), 7 ("black night"), 8 ("death's sec-"), 9 ("such fire"), 10 ("doth lie"), 11 ("death-bed"), 13 ("more strong"), and 14 ("ere long"). What is the effect of these substitutions on the poem's ideas?
3. How does the enjambment of lines 1–3 and 5–6 permit these lines to seem to conclude *as lines* even though grammatically they carry over to form sentences?
4. In lines 2, 5, 6, and 9, where does Shakespeare place the caesurae? What relationship is there between the rhythms produced by these caesurae and the content of lines 1–12? In lines 13 and 14, how do the rising stressed caesurae relate to the content?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822)

Ode to the West Wind (1820)

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic° red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O Thou, 5
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring° shall blow

4 *hectic:* a tubercular fever that produced flushed cheeks. 9 *Spring:* the wind that will blow in the spring.

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill 10
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion, 15
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

Of some fierce Maenad,° even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou Dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre, 25
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours,° from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain and fire and hail will burst: O hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, 30
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,°
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers 35
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know 40

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

°21 *Maenad:* a frenzied female worshipper of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility in Greek mythology. 32 *Baiae's bay:* a bay of the Mediterranean Sea west of Naples, famous for the elaborate villas built on the shore by Roman emperors.

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share 45

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed 50
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud. 55

V

Make me thy lyre,° even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce, 60
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse, 65

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? 70

°57 *lyre:* an Aeolian harp, a musical device that is sounded by the wind blowing across strings.

QUESTIONS

1. To what extent are the speaker's thoughts and feelings organized by the poem's five sections? What is the logical progression from section to section?
2. What aspect of the natural world does the wind affect in the first section of the poem? The second stanza? The third? What does the West Wind symbolize? Why does the speaker state, "Make me thy lyre"?

3. Formulate the structure (meter and rhyme scheme) of the stanzas. How many times (and where) is the *e* rhyme of the first stanza repeated as a rhyming sound? What is the effect of this repetition?
4. Describe Shelley's use of alliteration and assonance in the poem.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809–1892)

from Idylls of the King: The Passing of Arthur, Lines 344–93 (1869; 1842)

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
345 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
350 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
355 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armèd heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
360 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware° *aware*
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
365 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold; and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
370 All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
375 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque,° and chafed his hands, *helmet*
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
380 Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white

And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses° dashed with drops *pieces of armor*
Of onset;° and the light and lustrous curls— *blood*
385 That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais—throne-were parched with dust:
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the King:
390 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Tennyson develop the mood of depression and loss associated with the dying of Arthur? What is the effect of the concluding simile?
2. Analyze the patterns of assonance and alliteration in the passage. What patterns are developed most extensively? What effects are thus achieved?
3. Describe Tennyson's use of onomatopoeia in lines 349–60, 369–71, and 380–83. What segments contribute to this effect?

DAVID WAGONER (b. 1926)

March for a One-Man Band (1983)

He's *a boom a blat* in the uniform
Of an army *tweedledy* band *a toot*
Complete with medals *a honk* cornet
Against *a thump* one side of his lips
5 And the other stuck with *a sloop a tweet*
A whistle *a crash* on top of *a crash*
A helmet *a crash* a cymbal a drum
At his *bumbledy* knee and a *rimshot* flag
A click he stands at attention *a wheeze*
10 And plays the Irrational Anthem *bang.*

QUESTIONS

1. What attitude does the speaker convey about the one-man band? Why is the Anthem "Irrational" rather than "National"?
2. Describe the onomatopoeic effect of the italicized percussive words. What is the purpose of the rhythms that these words cause?
3. What ambiguity is suggested by the *bang* of line 10? How does this ambiguity make the poem seem more than simply an entertaining display of sounds?

WRITING ABOUT PROSODY

Because studying prosody requires a good deal of specific detail and description, it is best to limit your study to a short poem or to a short passage from a long poem (as with the following illustrative paragraph and essay). A sonnet, a stanza of a lyric poem, or a fragment from a long poem will often be sufficient. If you choose a short passage, it should be self-contained, such as an episode or scene from a long poem, or a particular speech from a poetic drama.

The analysis of even a short poem, however, can grow long because of the need to describe word positions and stresses and also to determine the various effects. For this reason you do not have to exhaust your topic. Try to make your discussion representative of the prosody of your poem or passage.

Your first reading in preparation for your essay should be for comprehension. On second and third readings, make notes of sounds, accents, and rhymes by reading the poem aloud. To perceive sounds, one student helped herself by reading aloud in an exaggerated way in front of a mirror. If you have privacy or are not self-conscious, you might do the same. Let yourself go a bit. As you dramatize your reading (maybe even in front of fellow students), you will find that heightened levels of reading also accompany the poet's expression of important ideas. Mark these spots for later analysis and discussion so that you will be able to make assertions about the relationship of sound to sense.

As a goal, you might try to determine whether and how the prosody of a poem may be used as an organizational element. In an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, for example, the rhymes are important in tying together the development of ideas, from the first eight lines to the concluding six lines. In a Shakespearean sonnet there are three 4-line groups (quatrains), each containing the development of a particular idea or image or symbol. The concluding two lines of this type of sonnet rhyme, and at the same time create a "cap" or idea tying the previous ideas together.

Carry out your study of the passage in the following way. What counts in this preliminary study of prosody is that your analyses be clear enough to provide help in developing your actual discussion.

- Prepare a working copy of the poem or passage, and duplicate it three or four times. Triple space your copy so that you will have plenty of room to mark your observations.
- Determine the formal pattern of metrical feet. You may wish to use lowercase letters for light stresses, and capital letters for heavy stresses, as in Tennyson's "And ON / a SUD - /den, LO! / the LEV - / el LAKE." Capital letters bring out the strong accents, and are especially graphic in the indication of spondees. If your poem is spoken by an "I," for analytical purposes you may write the capital I as a small letter, as in "i SAID." (There are other ways to mark the feet. A traditional way is to use a short acute accent or stress mark for heavily stressed syllables ['prime;] and either a breve or a degree sign for unaccented or lightly stressed syllables [or °], as in "And ón / a súd / den ló! / the lév - / el láke." Capital letters, however, are more noticeable and more easily managed.)
- Indicate the separate feet by a slash or virgule (/). Indicate caesurae, both within lines and at the ends of lines, by double virgules (/ -+/).
- Use colored pencils, or some other clear system of marking, to underline, circle, make boxes, or otherwise mark the formal and rhetorical substitutions that you discover. Students have actually enjoyed the discovery of metrics and versification that the colored pencil system brings out.
- Do the same for alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, and rhyme. The use of a separate color for each separate effect is helpful, for different colors make prosodic distinctions stand out clearly. Any easily recognized system that is convenient for you is acceptable. It is also a good idea to circle clear variations in regular and substitute metrical patterns. (Thus, anapests and trochees might be circled or underlined to help you in identifying them when you begin writing your essay.)
- It is good to use a standard pronunciation guide for your discussion of sounds. You may employ one of the standard collegiate dictionaries, which always show current pronunciations. If you have had formal linguistic study, by all means use the phonetic or phonemic systems if you have these as symbols or special characters on your computer. If you have difficulty in using these systems when you are typing your essay or preparing it on the computer, you may wish to create your own method of indicating sounds, but try the computer first. That may not be an easy task, and if you still have trouble, you might use any workable system. Thus, to indicate the vowel sound in "yes," you might use *eh*; or *sh* for the first consonant sound in "shake" or the second consonant sound in "nation"; or *uh* for the vowel sound in "up," and so on.

Once you have analyzed the various effects in your poem and have recorded these on your work sheets and in your notes, you will be ready to formulate a central idea and organization. The focus of your essay should reflect the most significant features of prosody in relationship to some other element of the poem, such as speaker, tone, or ideas.

Ideas to Consider for an Essay or Paragraph About Prosody

A SINGLE PARAGRAPH ABOUT A PARTICULAR PROSODIC TOPIC. One of the options in the discussion of prosody is a single paragraph. It is of course obvious that for a paragraph, you must choose no more than one topic alone. Thus, for example, you might wish to deal with topics like rhyme, alliteration, assonance, iambic rhythm, or alternating rhythmic feet, depending on the poem you are analyzing. The idea in a single paragraph is to exclude other possible topics of prosodic interest that would more properly fit into a full-scale essay. Thus, let us suppose that you have chosen to write about rhyme, one of the most obvious characteristics of traditional poetry. It is thus essential, in a paragraph, to narrow your focus, and zero in on just a poem's rhymes, or on the rhymes in a particular stanza of your chosen poem. Let us suppose that you are writing about Christina Rossetti's poignant poem "Echo" (p. 906), which is about the topic of love that has been lost and that will never be regained. The idea in

developing a paragraph about the rhymes in this poem is to work out a topic sentence—to be placed at the beginning of the paragraph—and then to include exemplifying details that support the argument that you introduce in the topic sentence. Here is an illustrative example of such a paragraph. It deals with the poem's title, "Echo," and Rossetti's use of rhyme to illustrate present echoes of past experience.

Illustrative Student Paragraph

Echoing Sounds in Christina Rosetti's Poem "Echo"

Rossetti creates a special use of rhyming words to emphasize how memory enables a person to re-experience the past. She ingeniously repeats a number of words, and these repetitions may be taken as the poem's "echoes." The major echoing word is the verb "come," which appears as an identical internal rhyme six times at the beginnings of lines in stanzas 1 and 3. Some of the other rhyming words are also repeated. The most notable is "dream," the rhyming word in line 2. Rossetti repeats "dream" in line 7, and uses the plural, "dreams," in lines 13 and 15. Also in line 7 she introduces the word "sweet," and repeats it twice more: "O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet." Concluding the poem, Rossetti uses "breath" twice (16), "low" twice (17), and the phrase "long ago" twice (18). These repeating identical rhymes actually illustrate the title "Echo," and they also stress the major idea that it is only in memory and recollection that experience has reality, even if dreams are no more than echoes.

Commentary on the Paragraph

The details of this paragraph are all directly related to the argument in the topic sentence that in "Echo," Christina Rossetti makes "a special use" of rhyme to illustrate, and support, the idea that memory is a way of re-experiencing the past, no matter how sad it might be. The paragraph does not deal with the other rhymes and echoing sounds in the poem, but it is confined to the repeating words. It would be possible, of course, to consider Rossetti's rhymes more fully in an entire essay, in which this paragraph would certainly have a place. But as a paragraph-length assignment, this example illustrates how the topic of prosody might be used as a short assignment.

A Complete Essay on a Topic about Prosody

Strategies for Organizing Ideas. In preparing for your essay, try to establish ideas about the following. Above all, it is important to keep foremost the connections of prosody to the subject of the poem or passage you are studying. Is there any characteristic, any particular rhythm, that might help to establish a character, as in Browning's "Porphyria's Lover"? Are there varying rhythmic lengths that might create particular emphases on visual or auditory images, as Poe does in "The Bells"? Does the poet include, say, a number of monosyllabic words in close order to create an imitation of special speech patterns, as Gwendolyn Brooks does in "We Real Cool"?

Can you find evidence that prosody is being used as an organizing principle? In an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, for example, the rhymes are important in tying together the development of ideas. In a Shakespearean sonnet there are three 4-line groups (quatrains), each containing the development of a particular idea or image or symbol, and the concluding two lines rhyme and at the same time create a "cap" or idea tying the previous ideas together. (This aspect of prosody is also important in the consideration of poetic form, discussed in Chapter 18, pages 926–36.) Can you show that the variation of dominant poetic feet is done in such a way that strong stresses fall on words that are therefore made especially important? This characteristic is of course a major aspect of poetry. In "The Sun Rising," for example, Donne begins with a trochaic substitution: "Busy old fool, . . . " This trochee creates what is in effect an opening outburst against the sun, as though it is a meddling Peeping Tom. It makes for humor at the beginning, and it also makes the poem dramatic and conversational—all of which Donne clearly intended.

In rhyming poems, what is the effect of the rhyme? What is the pattern of the rhymes? What is their effect on your perception of the merging of sound and idea? What sorts of words are rhymed—nouns, verbs, adjectives, a combination of these? Are the rhymes unusual, as in Gardner's "At a Summer Hotel," or particularly clever, as in Ogden Nash's "Very Like a Whale"? Generally, what are the rhymes like? How do they "clinch" or connect ideas? What part does rhyme play in the poem's development? Try to describe the poet's use of segmental (sound) devices, specifically assonance and alliteration. Hopkins uses alliteration powerfully in "God's Grandeur." One can find this device everywhere in the poem, but in line 2 it is especially noteworthy: "It will flame out, like shining from shook foil," in which the predominant *f* and *sh* continuant consonants enable Hopkins to stress his simile about the grandeur of divine creation. A few lines later Hopkins uses assonance with similar power: "Why do men then now not reck his rod?" Alliteration aside, the *eh* sounds in "*men*," "*then*," and "*reck*" make the poem exemplary in the connections of prosody and topic.

What connection can you make between the general prosodic characteristics of the poem and the dominant mood or manner? The percussiveness of Wagoner's "March for a One-Man Band" is integral to his comic view of his boisterous subject. Much the same is true of Nash's "Very Like a Whale," in

which the rhythm is a major element in the comic tone, together with lines of varying length. The truncated line lengths of Levine's "A Theory of Prosody" are essential in the poem's comic minimization of some aspects of poetic theory.

What significance can you find in the ways in which the poet has put together elements like euphony, cacophony, and onomatopoeia? For example, it is difficult to overlook Tennyson's euphonious line "And the long glories of the winter moon." Tennyson also introduces onomatopoeia when he describes a noble warrior climbing down a precipitous hill, in the line, "The bare black cliff clanged round him, . . . " Shelley in "Ode to the West Wind" creates cacophony in describing "old palaces and towers / Quivering within the wave's intenser day." In short, how do the poets create and control such effects?

After a brief description of the poem (perhaps saying that it is a sonnet, a two-stanza lyric, a stanzaic poem with varying line lengths, and so on), establish the scope of your essay. Your central idea will outline the thought that you wish to carry out through your prosodic analysis—for example that regularity of meter is consistent with a happy, firm vision of love or life; or that frequent spondees emphasize the solidity of the speaker's wish to love; or that particular sounds echo some of the poem's actions.

Depending on your assignment, you should state in your introduction, beyond the essential details about the poem or passage, those aspects of prosody you plan to discuss. You might want to deal with all aspects of rhythm or sound, or (as with a single paragraph) perhaps just one. It is possible, for example, to devote an entire essay to (1) regular meter; (2) one particular variation in meter, such as the anapest or spondee; (3) the caesura; (4) assonance; (5) alliteration; (6) onomatopoeia; or (7) rhyme. Your central idea will outline the thought that you wish to carry out through your prosodic analysis, such as that regularity of meter is consistent with a happy, firm vision of love or life, or that frequent spondees emphasize the solidity of the speaker's wish to love, or that particular sounds echo some of the poem's actions.

The body of your essay may include all the following elements, or just one, depending on your instructor's assignment.

1. *Rhythm.* Establish the formal metrical pattern. What is the dominant metrical foot and line length? Are some lines shorter than the pattern? What relationship do the variable lengths have with the subject matter? If the poem is a lyric or a sonnet, are important words and syllables successfully placed in stressed positions in order to achieve emphasis? Try to relate line lengths to exposition, development of ideas, and rising or falling emotions. It is also important to look for either repeating or varying metrical patterns as the subject matter reaches peaks or climaxes. Generally, deal with the relationship between the formal rhythmical pattern and the poet's ideas and attitudes.

When noting substitutions, analyze the formal variations and the principal effects of these. If you concentrate on only one substitution, describe any apparent pattern in its use—that is, its locations, recurrences, and effects on meaning.

For caesurae, treat the effectiveness of the poet's control. Can you see any pattern of use? Are the pauses regular or random? Describe noticeable principles of placement, such as (1) the creation of rhythmical similarities in various parts of the poem, (2) the development of particular rhetorical effects, or (3) the creation of interest through rhythmical variety. Do the caesurae lead to important ideas and attitudes? Are the lines all end-stopped, or do you discover enjambment? How do these rhythmical characteristics aid in descriptions and in the expressions of ideas?

2. *Segmental effects.* Here you might be discussing, collectively or separately, the use and effects of assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and cacophony and euphony. Be sure to establish that the instances you choose have really occurred systematically enough within the poem to form a pattern. Illustrate sounds by some means of highlighting, circling, italicizing, or otherwise noting relevant words. You might plan to make separate paragraphs on alliteration, assonance, and any other seemingly important pattern. Also, depending on the length of your assignment, you might concentrate on only one noteworthy effect, like a representative pattern of assonance, rather than on everything. Throughout your discussion, always keep foremost the relationship between content and sound.

REFERRING TO SOUNDS IN POETRY

To make illustrations clear, emphasize the sounds to which you are calling attention. If you use an entire word to illustrate a sound, underline or italicize only the sound, not the entire word, and put the word within quotation marks (for example, "The poet uses a t sound ['tip,' 'top,' and 'terrific,' or '*t*ip,' '*t*op,' and '*t*errific']"). When you refer to entire words containing particular segments, however, underline or italicize these words (for example, "The poet uses a t in tip, top, and terrific," or "The poet uses a *t* in *tip, top,* and *terrific*). Refer all questions to your instructor.

3. *Rhyme.* Your discussion of rhyme should describe the major features of the poem's rhymes—the basic scheme, the variants, the lengths and rhythms of the rhyming words, and anything else that is noteworthy. If you can discuss the grammar of the rhymes, note the kinds of words (verbs, nouns, etc.) used for rhymes: Are they all the same? Does one form predominate? Is there variety? Can you determine the grammatical positions of the rhyming words? How may these characteristics be related to the idea or theme of the poem?

Another avenue of exploration might be to study the qualities of the rhyming words. Are the words specific? Concrete? Abstract? Are there any striking rhymes? Any surprises? Any rhymes that are particularly clever and witty? Do any rhymes give unique comparisons or contrasts? How?

Generally, note any striking or unique rhyming effects. Without becoming overly subtle or far-fetched, you can make valid and interesting conclusions. Do any sounds in the rhyming words appear in patterns of assonance or

alliteration elsewhere in the poem? Do the rhymes enter into any onomatopoeic effects? Broadly, what aspects of rhyme are uniquely effective because they blend so fully with the poem's thought and mood?

In the conclusion of your essay, try to develop a short evaluation of the poet's prosodic performance. If we accept the premise that poetry is designed not only to stimulate emotions but also to provide information and transfer attitudes, to what degree do the prosodic techniques of your poem contribute to these goals? Without going into excessive detail (and writing another essay), what more can you say here? What has been the value of your study to your understanding and appreciating the poem? If you think your analysis has helped you to develop new awareness of the poet's craft, it would be appropriate to state what you have learned.

Illustrative Student Essay

Although underlined sentences are not recommended by MLA style, they are used in this illustrative essay as teaching tools to emphasize the central idea, thesis sentence, and topic sentences.

Note: For illustration, this essay analyzes a passage from Tennyson's "The Passing of Arthur," which is part of *Idylls of the King*. Containing 469 lines, "The Passing of Arthur" describes the last battle and death of Arthur, legendary king of early Britain. After the fight, in which Arthur has been mortally wounded by the traitor Mordred, only Arthur and his follower Sir Bedivere remain alive. Arthur commands Bedivere to throw the royal sword *Excalibur* into the lake from which Arthur had originally received it. After great hesitation and false claims, Bedivere does throw the sword into the lake, and a hand rises out of the water to catch it. Bedivere then carries Arthur to the lake shore, where the dying king is taken aboard a mysterious funeral barge. In the passage selected for analysis (lines 349–360), Tennyson describes Bedivere carrying Arthur down the hills and cliffs from the battlefield to the lake below. For convenience, the lines duplicated here are numbered from one through twelve.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Passing of Arthur,"
lines 349–360 [numbered here as 1 to 12]

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag than rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 10
And on a sudden, lo! The level lake, 11
And the long glories of the winter moon. 12

Vomero 1

Heather Vomero

Professor Garcia

English 220

3 December 2010

Tennyson's Control of Rhythm and Segments in
"The Passing of Arthur," Lines 349–360

[1] In this twelve-line selection, Tennyson describes the ordeal of Sir Bedivere as he carries the dying King Arthur down from the mountainous heights, where he was wounded, to the lake, where he will be sent to his final rest. Tennyson emphasizes the bleakness and hostility of this ghostly and deserted landscape. The metrical pattern he uses is unrhymed iambic pentameter—blank verse—which is suitable for lengthy narrative poetry. Appropriately, the verse augments the natural descriptions and echoes, first, Bedivere's tenseness, and then his relaxation.* Tennyson's control enables a true blending of sound and sense, as may be seen in his use of rhythm and in his manipulation of segmental devices, including onomatopoeia.†

[2] Tennyson controls his meter to emphasize exertions and moods. In line 1 the meter is regular, except for an anapæst in the first foot. This regularity may be interpreted as emphasizing the swiftness and surefootedness of Bedivere. However, Bedivere is about to undergo a severe test, and Tennyson's rhythm quickly becomes irregular, as though to strain the pentameter verse in illustration of the knight's exertions. Tennyson therefore uses variations to highlight key words. For example, he uses the effect of

*Central idea.
†Thesis sentence.

Vomero 2

anapests in a number of lines. In line 2 he emphasizes the chill air and Bedivere's vitality in the following way:

CLOTHED with/ his BREATH,

The image is one of being surrounded by one's own breath, which vaporizes on hitting cold air; and the rhythmical variation—a trochaic substitution in the first foot—enables the voice to build up to the word *breath*, a most effective internal climax.

[3] Tennyson uses the same kind of rhythmical effect in line 3. He emphasizes the "frozen hills" in the line "Larger than human on the frozen hills" by creating a caesura after the fifth syllable. The heavy stress of the third foot falls on the preposition *on*, usually a lightly-stressed word, which with the article *the* creates the effect of an anapest consisting of two unstressed syllables leading up to the first, stressed, syllable of *frozen*. The effect is that the voice builds up to the word and thus emphasizes the extreme conditions in which Bedivere is walking:

on / the FRO - / zen HILLS.//

Tennyson uses this rhythmical effect twelve times in the passage. It is one of his major means of rhetorical emphasis.

[4] Tennyson's most effective metrical variation is the spondee, which appears in lines 5, 6, 8 (twice), 10, and 12. These substitutions, occurring mainly in the section describing how Bedivere forces his way down the frozen hills, permits the descriptive lines to ring out, as in:

The BARE / BLACK CLIFF/ CLANGED ROUND /

and

DRY CLASHED / his HAR - / ness

These substitutions are so strong that they seem deliberately designed to remind readers of the actual sounds of Bedivere's exertions. In addition to this use of the spondee as a sound effect, a remarkable use of the spondee for

Vomero 3

psychological effect occurs in line 5, where there are, in effect, three successive heavy stresses. These internalize Bedivere's efforts and determination, reaching a high point on the word *drove*:

His OWN / THOUGHT DROVE / him //

[5] There is other substitution, too, both formal and rhetorical, and the tension that these variations create keeps the responsive reader alert to Bedivere's tasks. One type of variation is the appearance of amphibrachic rhythm, which is produced in lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 11. The effect is achieved by a pattern that complements the rhetorical anapests. A caesura in the middle of a foot leaves the three preceding syllables as a light, heavy, and light, the rhythmical form of the amphibrach. In line 2, for example, it appears thus:

// and LOOK - / ing //

In line 6 it takes this form:

/ his HAR - / ness //

[6] Still another related variation is that of the apparently imperfect feet in lines 5, 8, 11, and 12. These imperfect feet are produced by a caesura, which isolates the syllable, as *him* is in line 8:

The bare / black cliff / clang'd round / him. //

It is not stretching the quality of Tennyson's poetic skill to suggest that the word *him* in solitude at the end of this line may be designed to emphasize Bedivere's isolation in the midst of the lonely landscape through which he is walking. An additional imperfect foot occurs in line 11, where the syllable (on the word *lo!*) is surrounded by two caesurae and is therefore thrust into a position of great stress:

And on / a sud - / den // LO! // the lev - / el lake

Other, less significant substitutions are the trochees in lines 3 and 7, and the pyrrhic in line 12. All the described variations suggest the energy that Bedivere expends during his heroic action.

Vomero 4

[7] Many of the variations are produced by Tennyson's sentence structure, which results in a free placement of the caesurae and in a free use of end-stopping and enjambment. Four of the first five lines are end-stopped (two by commas, two by periods). Bedivere is exerting himself during these lines, and he is making short tests to gather strength. His dangerous descent is described during the next four lines, and none of these lines is end-stopped. Bedivere is disturbed (being goaded by "his own thought"), but he must keep going; and the free sentence structure and free metrical variation underscore his physical and mental difficulties. In the last two lines, however, when he has reached the lake, the lines "relax" with the caesurae falling exactly after the fifth syllable. In other words, the sentence structure of the last two lines is regular, an effect suggesting the return to order and beauty after the previous, rugged chaos.

[8] This rhythmical virtuosity is accompanied by a similarly brilliant control over segmental devices. Alliteration is the most obvious, permitting Tennyson to tie key words and their signifying actions together, as in the *s*'s in *swiftly strode* in line 1, or the *b*'s in *barren, bare, black*, and *based* in lines 7 and 8. Other notable examples are the aspirated *h*'s in lines 2–6 (*he, human, hills, heard, behind, him, hs, harness*); the *k*'s in lines 6–9 (*clashed, caves, chasms, cliff, clanged, crag*); and the *l*'s in lines 11 and 12 (*lo, level, lake, long, glories*). One might compare these *l*'s with the *l*'s in the more anguished context of lines 8 and 9, where the sounds appear as the second segment in the heavy, ringing words there (*black, cliff, clanged, slippery*). The sounds are the same, and the emphasis is similar, but the effects are different.

[9] Tennyson also skillfully uses assonance throughout the passage. In the first five lines, for example, the long *o* appears in six words. The first three *o*'s are in descriptive or metaphoric words (*strode, clothed, frozen*), and the last three are in words suggesting Bedivere's pain and anguish (*own, drove, goad*). These assonantal *o* sounds tie the physical to the psychological. Other patterns of assonance are the short *a* in lines 7, 8, and 9 (*chasms, clanged, black, crag, rang*), the *ä* of line 10 (*shärp, ärmed*), the long *i* of lines 4–7 (*behind, cry, like, dry, icy, right*), and the short *i* of lines 1 and 2, and 9 and

Vomero 4

10 (*swiftly, ridge, with, his, slippery, smitten, with, dint*). One might remark also that in the last two lines, which describe the level lake and the moon, Tennyson introduces a number of comparatively less strenuous vowel sounds on words like *on, sudden, lo, level, long, glories*, and *moon*. The sounds of these words complement the tranquility of the lakeside scene.

> And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
> And the long glories of the winter moon.

[10] The last two lines are examples of onomatopoeia, since the liquid *l* sounds recall the gentle lapping of waves on a lake shore. There are other examples of onomatopoeia, too. The explosive stop sounds *b, k, d*, and *t* in lines 6–10 are like the sounds of Sir Bedivere's feet on the "juts of slippery crag." In line 2 Tennyson describes Bedivere in the cold air as being "Clothed with his breath," and in the entire passage Tennyson employs many words with the aspirate *h* (*he, his, he, human, hills, He heard, behind, his harness, him*). In the descriptive context, the sounds of such words skillfully complement the exertions that Bedivere makes as he carries King Arthur from the heights to the level lake.

[11] This short passage is filled with many examples of Tennyson's technical poetic skill. His sounds and rhythms bring the language alive to speak along with the meaning. They emphasize the grandeur of Arthur and his faithful follower, and for one brief moment they bear out the vitality that Tennyson associated with the heroic past.

Vomero 6

Work Cited

Tennyson, Alfred, Lord. Fragment from *Idylls of the King: The Passing of Arthur. Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Ed Edgar V. Roberts and Robert Zweig. 10th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2012: 910–11. Print.

Commentary on the Essay

This essay presents a full treatment of the prosody of the passage from Tennyson. Paragraphs 2 through 7 deal with the relationship of the rhythm to the content. Note that prosody is not discussed in isolation, but primarily as it augments Tennyson's descriptions of action and scenes. Thus, paragraph 4 refers to the use of the spondee as a substitute foot to reinforce ideas. Also in this paragraph, there is a short comparison of alternative ways of saying what Tennyson says so well. While such a speculative comparison should not be attempted often, it is effective here in bringing out the quality of Tennyson's use of the spondee as a means of emphasis.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 present a discussion of the alliteration and assonance of the passage, and paragraph 10 considers onomatopoeia.

Of greatest importance for the clarity of the essay, there are many supporting examples, spaced, centered, accurately marked, and numbered by line. In any essay about prosody, readers are likely to be unsure of the validity of the writer's observation unless such examples are provided and located within the poem.

Writing Topics About Rhythm and Rhyme in Poetry

Writing Paragraphs

1. Compare one of the rhyming poems with one of the nonrhyming poems included in this chapter. In a paragraph discuss the following questions. What differences in reading and sound can you discover as a result of the use or nonuse of rhyme? What benefits does rhyme give to the poem? What benefits does nonrhyme give?
2. Analyze Hardy's use of rhymes in "Channel Firing" (Chapter 14). In a paragraph discuss the following questions. What effects does Hardy create by using trochaic rhyme, like *hatters* and *matters*, and also by using dactylic rhyme, like *saner be* and *century*? What is the relationship of such rhymes to the heavy-stress rhymes in the poem?

Writing Essays

1. For Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, "That Time of Year Thou May'st in Me Behold," describe in an essay how Shakespeare creates iambics. What is the relationship of lightly accented syllables to the heavily accented ones? Where does Shakespeare use articles (*the*), pronouns (*this, his*), prepositions (*upon, against, of*), relative clause markers (*which, that*), and adverb clause markers (*as, when*) in relation to syllables of heavy stress? On the basis of this study, how would you characterize Shakespeare's control of the iambic foot?
2. Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy," Poe's "The Bells," and Nash's "Very Like a Whale," all include "falling" rhymes. In an essay, discuss what the effect of this rhyming pattern in the poems is. To what degree do the poems achieve seriousness despite the fact that falling rhyme is often used generally to complement humorous and light verse?

3. In an essay, compare the sounds used in Poe's "The Bells" with those of Wagoner's "March for a One-Man Band." What effects are achieved by each poet? What is the relationship in each poem between sound and content? Which poem do you prefer on the basis of sound? Why?
4. In an essay, analyze the rhymes in two of the following poems: Shakespeare's "Sonnet No. 73," Hopkins's "God's Grandeur," Poe's "Annabel Lee," Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," or the passage from Pope's "Essay on Man." What is interesting or unique about the various rhyming words? What relationships can you discover between the rhymes and the topics of the poems?

Creative Writing Assignment

1. Write a short poem of your own, using rhymes with trochaic words or dactylic words such as *computer, hermetic, scholastic, remarkable, along with me, inedible, moron, anxiously, emotion,* and *fishing*. If you have trouble with exact rhymes, see what you can do with slant rhymes and eye rhymes. The idea is to use your ingenuity.

Library Assignment

1. Using the topical index in your library or online, take out a book on prosody, such as Harvey Gross's *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (1968) or *The Structure of Verse* (1966), or Gay Wilson Allen's *American Prosody* (1935, reprinted 1966). Select a topic (e.g., formal or experimental prosody) or a poet (e.g., Arnold, Blake, Browning, Frost, Shakespeare), and write a summary of the ideas and observations that the writers make on your subject. What relationship do the writers make about prosody and the poet's ideas? How does prosody enter into the writer's thought and into the ways in which the poets emphasize ideas and images?