

GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

Alliteration - repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, e.g. 'Funny face' or 'cowardly custard'. Note that sound, not spelling, is what matters: 'philosophical fish' is still an example of alliteration. The similar sounds do not have to be right next to each other.

Assonance - repetition of the similar vowel sounds. These could be the same vowel sounds with different consonants, e.g. 'blue moon', 'funny tummy', or the same consonants with different vowel sounds, e.g. 'black block', 'Sad Sid'.

Enjambment / enjambment - when a sentence runs over from one line of verse into the next. The word comes from the French word for leg: 'la jambe'. This is a poem about a line of ants running along one twig and then another twig and the enjambment reflects the unending movement of the ants until one of them stops.

Free verse - a poem with no regular rhythm or line length.

Hyperbole - deliberate exaggeration for effect. 'I've told you a thousand times!' is one example.

Imagery - language that describes something using at least one of the five senses. Often this will be a mental image, but imagery can also describe a sound, a smell, a taste etc. It is a very broad term indeed, and is also applied to figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Metaphor - an image which implies a comparison by stating that something is the thing it resembles.

Non-standard English - a variety of English other than standard.

Onomatopoeia - when the words sound like what they mean, e.g. 'buzz,' 'crash'. Movement may also be imitated, e.g. 'splishy-splashy fish'.

Personification - describing something non-human as if it has human characteristics such as feelings. This could be an inanimate (non-living) object: 'The broken toaster spat crumbs at me'. Or it could be an abstract idea, like love or truth, given a human form, e.g. 'I laugh in the face of danger.'

Rhythm - the arrangement of words to form a regular beat through a pattern of stresses.

Sibilance - alliteration of the 's' sound, e.g. 'serious snakes stay snarling'.

Simile - a comparison between two things, using 'like' or 'as'.

Stanza - a clearly demarcated part of a poem. Another word for 'verse', really!