**ANALYSIS OF POEMS – General Terminology**

Poem analysis based on two common areas; which are,

1. Form and
2. Content

**FORM**

Form is the external pattern of a poem

It refers to different ways and methods used by a poet or writer to convey his or her intended ideas or message to his or her readers or audience.

Or it is a techniques employed in any work of art to deliver the message intended.

Form can either be open or closed,

* **Open form** allows a poet to compose his or her work without following the traditional rules of composing a poem
* **Closed form** does not allow a poet to compose his or her work without following the traditional rules of composing poems.

The following are some of the techniques (form) which used by a poet to compose his or her work.

1. **STRUCTURE** of poetry (poems)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

This refers to the way in which the different parts of a poem arranged or organised.

For example, the structure of a poem is its organization of images, ideas, words, and lines.

1. **VERSE**

Verse is a single line in a poem. Verse in poems can be found in different forms as follows.

* Closed verse forms

These are verse forms which have a fixed structure and follow strictly rules and principles (such as meter and rhyme scheme) of composing traditional poems

* Open verse form

These are verse forms which have no a fixed structure and do not follow strictly rules and principles (such as meter and rhyme scheme) of composing traditional poems

* Blank verse

It is type of verse which is written in **unrhymed iambic pentameter** lines.  This verse form was widely used by Elizabethan dramatists like **William Shakespeare**.

1. **STANZA**

A stanza is a formal division of lines in a poem, considered as a unit.

Most poems are divided into stanzas—the “paragraphs” of poetry.

Each stanza contains a prescribed number of lines—rows of words that may or may not form sentences.

Some poems have regular stanzas. However, a poem can have stanzas of different lengths.

Often the stanzas in a poem are separated by spaces.

Stanzas are sometimes named according to the number of lines found in them.

1. 2 lines ---- couplet
2. 3 lines ---- tercet
3. 4 lines ---- quatrain
4. 5 lines ---- cinquain
5. 6 lines ---- sestet
6. 7 lines ---- heptastich
7. 8 lines ---- octave
8. **REFRAIN**

A line, group of lines, or part of a line repeated at **regular** or **irregular** *intervals* in a poem, usually at the end of each stanza.

A good example; two **stanzas** from a poem, *A freedom Song* by **Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye**

*Atieno washes dishes,*

*Atieno plucks the chicken,*

*Atieno gets up early,*

*Beds her sacks down in the kitchen,*

*Atieno eight years old*

***Atieno yo***.

*Since she is my sister’s child*

*Atieno needs no pay*

*While she works my wife can sit*

*Sewing every sunny day,*

*With her earnings I support*

***Atieno yo***.

Hence, **“Atieno yo”** is a **refrain** repeated at the end each stanza.

1. **METER**

In verse and poetry, **meter** is a recurring pattern of **stressed** (accented, or long) and **unstressed** (unaccented, or short) syllables in lines of **a set length.**

Each pair of **unstressed** and **stressed** syllables makes up a **unit** called a **foot**, the following is an example from a line in a poem called, *Let me not to the marriage of true minds* written by **William Shakespeare**,

1 2 3 4 5

Let **ME** not **TO** the **MARR** iage **OF** true MINDS

Syllables which are in ***small letters*** indicate **unstressed** syllables, and those which are in ***capital letters*** indicate **STRESSED** syllables, hence, the line contains **five feet** in all.

A **foot** containing an **unstressed** syllable **followed** by a **stressed** syllable (as above) is called an **iamb.**

Therefore, because there are **five feet** in the line, all iambic (**unstressed** followed by **stressed**), the **meter** of the line is **iambic pentameter**.

The prefix ***pent*** in ***pent****ameter* means ***five.*** (**Greek**: *penta*, *five*). Pent is joined to words or word roots to form new words indicating **five.**

There are lots of other metres, but **Iamb** **pentameter** is the most **common** for poetry in English.

Commonly, there are six types of **FEET**

* **Iamb** (Iambic), is made up with;

Unstressed + Stressed (2 Syllables )

* **Trochee** (Trochaic), is made up with;

Stressed + Unstressed (2 Syllables)

* **Spondee** (Spondaic), is made up with;

Stressed + Stressed (2 Syllables

* **Anapaest** (Anapaestic), is made up with;

Unstressed + Unstressed + Stressed (3 Syllables)

* **Dactyl** (Dactylic), is made up with;

Stressed + Unstressed + Unstressed (3 Syllables

* **Pyrrhic**, is made up with;

Unstressed + Unstressed (2 Syllables)

The **LENGTH of lines**—and thus the **meter**—can also vary.

**Common Types** of **meter** and the **line length.**

* Monometer (One Foot )
* Dimeter (Two Feet )
* Trimeter (Three Feet)
* Tetrameter (Four Feet )
* Pentameter (Five Feet)
* Hexameter (Six Feet)
* Heptameter (Seven Feet)
* Octameter (Eight Feet)

Therefore, Meter is **determined** by the **type of foot** and the **number of feet** in a **line**.

* Thus, a line with **three iambic feet** is known as **iambic trimeter**.
* A line with **six dactylic feet** is known as **dactylic hexameter**

1. *Note;* *A poet can* ***mix*** *the types of meter (set of line length) with only one* ***type*** *of* ***feet****,*

***1 2 3 4***

*There* ***WAS****..|..a* ***TIME****..|..when* ***MEAD****..|..ow,* ***GROVE****,..|*

***5***

*..and* ***STREAM****, (Iambic Pentameter )*

***1 2 3 4***

*The* ***EARTH****,..|..and* ***EV****..|..ry* ***COM****..|..mon* ***SIGHT****, (Iambic Tetrameter)*

***1 2***

*To* ***ME****..|..did* ***SEEM*** *(Iambic Dimeter)*

1. **Monometers** are rarely used as the basis for whole poems
2. **POETIC DEVICES**

Poetic devices are **tools** which used to **make up** a poem

The ***most*** **common** poetic devices are;

**Literal** devices and **sound** devices

**Literal devices**

**Use of language** in making or composing a poem

Language can be used by a poet in **two** ways

* **Literal** language
* **Figurative** language/figures of speech

1. **Literal language**

Language which has **direct** **meaning**

For example,

* **Juma** is a **baby.**

**Baby** means Juma is **really** a baby, he is very young.

A good example of a poem which composed by literal language which is **simple** and **direct** is, **Lament for the dead mother** by EWE

*Mother dear,*

*Mother you freely give of what you have*

*fresh food and cooked meals alike.*

*Mother, listen to me!*

*The crying child will call after its mother.*

*Why don’t you answer, mother, when I call?*

*Are we quarrelling?*

Literal language used by a poet can either be;

* Simple, Normal or complex
* Formal (acceptable official language) or informal (non-official language)

1. Figurative language/figures of speech

It is a language in which words are used differently from their ordinary, literal meaning.

It is a language which **makes** a **reader** or ***audience*** to see the world in a **new perspective.**

It lifts readers **out of reality.**

It is a language that **arouse** reader or audience **feelings**

For example,

* Oh! My **baby**, will you come to my office today?

Here, **Baby** means **adults** who are ***lovers*** call each other babies to show how they **care each other**

Some examples of figurative language or Figures **of speech**

1. **Metaphor**

It is a **comparison** of ***one thing with another one*** which is **different** from the first one

The comparison is made **without** the **use** of ***introductory*** words such as; **“as”**, **“like”** and **“though”**

Example of Metaphor

* Juma is a snake.

Simply, means makes **comparison** by telling that, **one thing** ***is another***

Comparison is made by telling that;

Juma (**one thing**) is a snake (**is another**).

Here, reader or audience may see the world into different perspective out of reality.

A good example of metaphor is found in a poem called,

**Old Granny** written by Bonus Zimunya

*A little freezing* ***Spide****r*

*Legs and arms gathered in her chest*

*Rocking with flu,*

*I saw* ***old Granny***

*At Harare Market;*

*It was past nine of the night*

*When I saw the dusty crumpled Spider –*

***A torn little blanket***

*Was* ***her web****.*

**Metaphors** are found when **Old Granny** is ***compared*** with **a spider,** and **spider web** is ***compared*** with **a torn blanket.**

1. **Simile**

It is a **comparison** of ***one thing*** ***with another*** different one ***by using*** **introductory** words such as; **“as”**, **“like” “resemble”** and **“though”**

Example of Simile,

* Juma is **like** a snake

Simply, means makes **comparison** ***by telling*** that, ***one thing is like or as another***

Comparison is made by telling that;

Juma (**one thing**) is **like** a snake (**is like another**)

Here also a reader or an audience may see the world into different perspective out of reality.

A good example of **Simile** is found from an **extract** in a poem called,

**The beloved** written by Fulani

*Her teeth are white*

***her eyes*** *are* **like**

***those of a******new born fawn***

*that delights in the milk*

*that flows for the first time*

*from the antelope’s udder.*

**Simile** is found when **her eyes** are ***compared*** with **those of a new born fawn** by using introductory word **“like”.**

1. **Personification**

It is a figure of speech that **assigns** **human qualities** or characteristics to ***something*** that in ***reality*** **does not** has these qualities or characteristics

For example,

* The **trees cry** with fear when the fire roars with furious
* The **dog tells** the cat to be aware with human.

A good example of personification is found in an extract from a poem called; **let me not the marriage of true minds** by **William Shakespeare**

***Love's not Time's fool****, though rosy lips and cheeks   
 Within his bending sickle's compass come:* ***Love alters*** *not with his brief hours and weeks,   
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.*

Love is given the quality of feeling or doing like human being; *“****Love's not Time's fool****”*

**Hyperbole**

Is an exaggeration or overstatement of something or to say something is more important than it really is

For example,

* She is **taller than** ***giraffe.***
* He is **stronger than** ***an ox***.

1. **Irony**

It is the use of words that say the **opposite** of what ***really mean***, often as a joke and with a tone of voice that show this.

For example,

Ashura ***runs away*** from a **hen**, but Jacob tell us;

* Ashura is **brave**

Benson is a ***corrupt leader*** and he made many enemies, but some people called him

* Benson is a **man of the people.**

A good example of irony is found in a poem Building the nation by **Henry Barlow** (the following are first and second stanzas)

*Today I did my share*

*In* ***building the nation***

***I drove******a Permanent Secretary***

*To an important urgent function*

*In fact to a* ***luncheon at the Vic****.*

*The menu reflected its importance*

*Cold bell* ***beer*** *with* ***small talk****,*

*Then* ***fried chicken*** *with niceties*

***Wine*** *to fill the hollowness of the laughs*

***Ice – cream*** *to cover the stereotype* ***jokes***

***Coffee*** *to keep the PS awake on return journey.*

The driver says he does his share in building the nation together with Permanent Secretary, but actually **ironically** they are not building the nation because they are at enjoyment at the Vic.

1. **Euphemism**

Refers to **an indirect word** or phrase that people often use to refer to something *embarrassing* or *unpleasant*, sometimes to make it seem more acceptable than it really is,

For example,

* She has **passed** away yesterday (she is dead)
* Juma told me a **fairy tale** (told me a lie)

A good example of Euphemism is found from extract in a poem called, **There is no going back** by Kajubi

*When a teenager* ***kissed dust***

*on the Soweto road*

*I saw someone on Robben Island swear*

*never to bow.*

A poet use word*s “****kissed* *dust****”* as a euphemism to mean teenager “***dead****”* probably in SOWETO massacre.

1. **Metonym**

Refers to the act of **referring to something** ***by the name of something else*** that is *closely connected* with it,

Simply, the use of **objects** to *represent* **people.**

For example;

* Using ***the White House***for the***US president***.
* Using ***the crown*** and ***sceptre*** for ***the King.***

A good example of **metonym** is found in a stanza of a poem called, **Death the leveller** written by **James Shirley**

*The glories of our blood and state*

*Are shadows, not substantial things;*

*There is no armour against Fate;*

*Death lays his icy hand on kings:*

***Sceptr****e and* ***Crown***

*Must tumble down,*

*And in the dust be equal made*

*With the poor crooked scythe and spade.*

**Sceptre** (a decorated rod carried by a king or queen at ceremonies as a symbol of their power) and **Crow**n represent **kings,** because kings carry these as symbols of their power.

1. **Symbolism**

Using of ***something*** that **represents** ***something else*** through association, resemblance or convention

Simply, using of an object to suggest an idea, rather than expressing the idea directly

For example;

Use of **Snake** as a symbol of ***evil***

A good example of **symbolism** is found in a poem called, **The flywhisk** by John Ruganda

*Fling it sharply, and growl:*

*Rebels hide their heads*

*Wave it gently and smile:*

*Flies flit from pus drooping eyes*

*Sling it on the arm, finally:*

*Empty stomach will drum for you.*

**Flywhisk is a *traditional symbol* of power and authority of African leaders and rulers.**

**Generally**, all elaboration made are for ***some of language devices*** which are used by poets to compose different poems.

However, on the use of language devices a poet has **poetic licence** which ***allows*** him or her ***to violet*** the rules and principles of **grammar** in language so as to make some effect to the readers or audience.

**Musical/sound devices**

1. **Repetition**

It is the use, more than once, of any element of language – a sound, a word, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence.

Poets use many kinds of repetition.  Alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm are repetitions of certain sounds and sound patterns.

1. **Rhyme**

Repetition of the **same sound**, usually at the **end of verses** in a poem

For example, extract from the poem called, **The Serf** by **Roy Campbell**

*His naked skin clothed in the torrid m****ist***

*That puffs in smoke around the patient h****ooves****,*

*The ploughman drives, a slow somnambul****ist****,*

*And through the green his crimson furrow gr****ooves***

Hence, the **bolded** part of the word “ist” and “ooves” are the sound forming **End-rhymes.**

Some kinds of rhymes

* **End-rhyme**

Rhyme occurring at the **ends** of verse lines

For example, extract from **The Serf** by Roy Campbell

*His naked skin clothed in the torrid m****ist***

*That puffs in smoke around the patient h****ooves****,*

*The ploughman drives, a slow somnambul****ist****,*

*And through the green his crimson furrow gr****ooves****.*

Hence, the **bolded** part of the word “***ist***” and “***ooves***” are the sound forming **End-rhymes.**

* **Internal rhyme**

Refers to two or more words rhyme within the same line of verse

Example from a line of a poem;

Of the tr***ibe*** which descr***ibe*** with a j***ibe*** the perversions of Justice—

Hence, the **bolded** part of the words “***ibe***” in tr***ibe***, descr***ibe*** and j***ibe*** forming **internal rhyme.**

* **Half-rhyme**

Other names; near rhyme, pararhyme or slant rhyme

Half-rhyme is an imperfect rhyme in which the final syllable agree but the vowel sounds do not match; thus a form of consonance.

For example, cape **/ keɪp / ,** deep **/ diːp /**

**“P” s’ sound** are agreed**/ the same**

But **differ in vowels “eɪ*”*** and **“iː*”***

1. **Alliteration**

ALLITERATION is the repetition of initial consonant sounds.

For example, in a line

***P***eter ***P***iper ***p***icked a ***p***eck of ***p***ickled ***p***eppers

The **P**s consonant sound is alliteration.

A good example of alliterations can be found in;

**The flywhisk** by John Ruganda

*Fling it sharply, and growl:*

*Rebels* ***h****ide their* ***h****eads*

*Wave it gently and smile:*

F*lies* ***f****lit* ***f****rom pus drooping eyes*

*Sling it on the arm, finally:*

*Empty stomach will drum for you.*

The words hide and heads have identical “**h**” sound at the beginning of each word and also the words **f**lies, **f**lit and **f**rom have identical “**f**” sound at the beginning of each word.

1. **Consonance**

CONSONANCE is the **repetition** in two or more words of **final consonants.**

For example, cape **/ keɪp /,** deep **/ diːp /**

**“P” s’ sound** are **the same, “P” s’ sound are Consonance**

1. **Assonance**

ASSONANCE is the repetition of **vowel sounds** followed by **different consonants** in two or more syllables.

For example: in a line of a poem

*The t****u****ndra left the man h****u****ngry for b****u****ns*

Hence, the **bolded** part of the word “**u**” is a vowel sound in the word t**u**ndra, h**u**ngry and b**u**ns which form **assonance.**

a good example of alliteration, consonance and assonance can be found in a poem called, *Lament for the dead mother* written by **Ewe**

*Mother dear,*

*Mother you freely give of what you have*

***f****resh* ***f*oo***d and c***oo***ked meals alike.*

*Mother, listen to me!*

*The crying child will call after its mother.*

*Why don’t you answer, mother, when I call?*

*Are we quarrelling?*

The words **f**resh and **f**ood **“f”** sound makes **Alliteration**

The words f**oo**d and c**oo**ked “**u**” sound makes **Assonance**

The words wi**ll** and ca**ll** “l” sound makes **Consonance**

1. **Onomatopoeia**

ONOMATOPOEIA is the use of words that imitate sounds

Whirr, thud, sizzle, buzz, and hiss are typical examples

1. **Rhythm**

RHYTHM is the pattern of beats, or **stresses** (stressed and unstressed syllables), in spoken or written language.

It is a natural rhythm of every day speech, that is to say, it is just found in normal conversations of everyday life. The one who is speaking is natural rises the sound or lower it down.

Rhythm is mostly found in free verse poems which have no a very specific pattern or **meter** which bound a poet.

A good example of rhythm is found from stanza in a poem called; My will by **Lorna Goodison**

*Son, my will,*

*albeit premature*

*when the palm readers*

*divine*

*for me an extended*

*life line*

It has natural **rhythm**, it is not restrict someone to raise or lower his or her voice like those which have specific meter which force someone to raise or lower their sound.

1. **Refrain**

A line, group of lines, or part of a line repeated at regular or irregular intervals in a poem, usually at the end of each stanza.

* Refrain **usually** found **at the end** of stanzas

A good example is in a poem called, A freedom Song by **Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye** (*look at refrain example in the elaboration* ***of Structure*** *of poem)*

* However, refrain sometimes found at the **beginning** of stanzas. When it appers at the beginning it is called a “**Burden**” refrain.
* Also, sometimes refrain can be found with **slight** **changes** in part of the line or sentences or words. When it appears with slightly changes it is called “**Incremental”** refrain

A good example of Incremental and Burden refrains found in the following first and second stanza extracts in a poem called, Letter from a contract worker by **Antonio Jacinto**

**I wanted to write a letter**

*my love,*

*a letter that would tell*

*of this desire*

*to see you*

*of this fear*

*of losing you*

**I wanted to write *you* a letter**

*my love*

*a letter of intimate secrets,*

*a letter of memories of you,*

*of you*

I wanted to write a letter in first extract and I wanted to write you a letter in second extract made a **burden** *refrain* because both repeated lines found at the beginning of each extract.

However, I wanted to write a letter in first extract and I wanted to write you a letter in second can also be regarded as **Incremental** *refrain* because there is a slightly change in the line “**I wanted to write *you* a letter**” in second extract, there is an addition of the word “**you**” while in the line “**I wanted to write a letter**” in first extract, there is no “you”

* Refrain may recur in exactly the same form

A good example is in a poem called, A freedom Song by **Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye** (*look at refrain example in the elaboration* ***of Structure*** *of poem)*

* Sometimes it is **found** within the **same stanza**

A good example is in a poem called, ***Lullaby*** by **Akan**

*Someone would like to have you for her child*

***but your mine.***

*Someone would like to rear you on a costly mat*

***but your mine.***

*Someone would like to place you on a camel blanket*

***but your mine.***

*I have you to rear on a torn old mat.*

*Someone would like to have you as her child*

***but your mine.***

“**but your mine**” is a **refrain** found in the same stanza

However, whatever **position** or **form** it appears, it stills called **REFRAIN**

1. **Other poetic devices**
2. ATTITUDE

**Attitude** is the **feeling the speaker** holds toward the **characters**, **events**, or **situation** he is relating to the ***audience***.

With few exceptions and for most practical purposes ATTITUDE = TONE

1. TONE

Tone is what the **author/narrator's attitude** is towards the **text** or

Tone is the **author's attitude** toward a **literary work.**

Hence, the tone of a piece of literature **is what the speaker or narrator feels** towards **the subject**, rather than what the **reader feels.**

Example of Some of the **POSITIVE** TONES WORDS

Admiring, adoring, appreciative, calm, casual, celebratory, cheerful, comforting, confident, encouraging, excited, exhilarated, expectant, friendly, funny, happy,hopeful, humorous, interested, joyful,optimistic, passionate, playful, proud, reassuring, reflective, relaxed, respectful, reverent, romantic, sentimental, serene, silly, straightforward, sympathetic, tender, tranquil etc.

Example of Some of the **NEUTRAL** TONES WORDS

Commanding, direct, impartial, indirect, meditative, objective, questioning, speculative, unambiguous, unconcerned, understated etc

Example of Some of the **NEGATIVE** TONES WORDS

angry, annoyed, antagonistic, anxious, apathetic, apprehensive, bewildered , biting, bitter, bossy, cold, confused, cynical, demanding, depressed, evasive, despairing, desperate, detached, disappointed, disliking, disrespectful, doubtful, embarrassed, enraged, hopeless, fearful, forceful, frightened, frustrated, furious, greedy, harsh, hostile, impatient, indifferent, indignant, insecure, irreverent, mischievous, miserable, mocking, mournful, nervous, outraged, paranoid, pathetic, patronizing, pessimistic, pretentious, resigned, sarcastic, self-deprecating, selfish, serious, severe, sceptical, sly, solemn, stressful, suspicious, tense, threatening, tragic, uncertain, uneasy, unfriendly, unsympathetic, upset, violent

Poet/Authors **create the tone** of their poems/piece of writing through the **use** of various other literary elements, such as;

* **Diction**
* **Syntax**
* **Imagery**
* **Details**
* **Extended Metaphor**

1. **MOOD**

Mood is the **general** **feeling or atmosphere** that a **piece of writing creates** within the reader.

Mood is the **reader's attitude** toward the **text**

Hence, Mood is the **feeling** the **reader** takes away from a **piece of literature.**

Mood in a poem can be recognized by a reader or listener through the various other literary elements, such as;

* **Diction**
* **Setting**
* **Events**
* **Themes**
* **Characters**
* **Voice and Tone**