Literary Focus

Objectives

Students will study different types and forms of poetry and the elements that make poetry unique.

Preteach

Build Background Tell students that if they listen to music, they may already be familiar with many elements of poetry. Ask them to think of songs they know that use rhyme or repetition. Then, point out that many people bob their heads or tap their feet while listening to music. Explain that this is one way of analyzing rhythm and meter.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

Word Choice

- Help students understand word choice by sharing this paraphrase of the first three lines of "Paul Revere's Ride": "Listen to this story of Paul Revere and the ride he took on April 18, 1775."
- Point out that the paraphrase expresses the same main idea as the original; however, it lacks the rhythm and rhyme of the original. Explain that word choice also involves the poet's decision about the order in which to place words.

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 670–673

Literary Skills

- Understand and analyze types and forms of poetry and elements of poetry.

Literary Focus

by **Sara Kajder**

What Do You Need to Know About Poetry?

Did you ever read the song lyrics before playing a new CD? Sometimes the words don't seem all that special. It takes music to bring them to life. Poetry is different. Poets use words to create music. To learn how poets do this, read on!

Sounds of Poetry

Word Choice One way poets create music in their poems is through the words they choose. The English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge once defined poetry as "the best words in their best order." Listen to to these opening lines from a famous poem:

> Listen my children, and you shall hear
> Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
> On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
> Hardly a man is now alive
> Who remembers that famous day and year.
>
> from "Paul Revere's Ride"
> by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

All Longfellow gave us were words on a page, and yet more than a century after he wrote them down, the music still comes through.



"I think that I shall never see, a poem as lovely as a bee, flea, sea, ski, plea, key . . ."

Rhythm If words can create the haunting music of a poem, **rhythm**—the repetition of stressed and unstressed syllables—provides the poem's beat. Like many other languages, English is accented. Certain syllables get a stronger beat then other syllables. The beat of a poem comes from the patterns made by the stressed and unstressed syllables. If you say a few English words aloud, you'll hear the beat built into them: MOUN-tain, be-CAUSE, Cin-cin-NAT-i.

Read aloud this little **elegy**—a poem for someone who has died. Listen to the way your voice rises and falls as you read.

> This lovely flower fell to seed;
> Work gently, sun and rain;
> She held it as her dying creed
> That she would grow again.
>
> "For My Grandmother"
> by Countee Cullen

A regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables is called **meter.** Cullen's simple meter, along with the short, plain words and few, short lines, helps us share the simple loveliness and faith Cullen saw in his grandmother.

Resources

Collection 7 Resources, Literary Focus Skill Builder, p. 4

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentations with activities go.hrw.com

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Help students understand the vocabulary used in the Literary Focus by introducing them to multiple-meaning words.

- Write on the board the following words: *stressed, unstressed, beat,* and *meter*. Tell students that these words have more than one meaning.
- Point to *stressed* and *unstressed*. Tell students that these words can be used to describe both people and syllables. When a person is stressed, he or she is feeling pressure. When a syllable

Rhyme The chiming effect of **rhyme** adds to the music of a poem. Most rhymes in poetry are **end rhymes.** In "For My Grandmother" the end rhymes are *seed* and *creed,* and *rain* and *again* (pronounced the old-fashioned way: uh GAYN). When the two rhyming lines are consecutive, they're called a **couplet.** Here is a couplet with end rhymes that are spelled differently—*moan* and *bone*—but they rhyme:

> Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no; then he says with a sort of moan:
> "It's the cursèd cold, and it's got right hold till I'm chilled clean through to the bone."
>
> from "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert W. Service

Rhymes can also occur within lines; these are called **internal rhymes.** In the two lines above, *low* and *no*, and *cold* and *hold* are internal rhymes.

These rhymes are all **exact rhymes.** Many modern poets prefer **approximate rhymes** (also called *near rhymes, off rhymes, imperfect rhymes,* or *slant rhymes*). Approximate rhymes are sounds that are similar but not exactly the same, like *fellow* and *follow* or *cat* and *catch*. In this example, *staff* and *scarf* are approximate rhymes:

> Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
> Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.
>
> from "Barbara Frietchie" by John Greenleaf Whittier

Some people think approximate rhymes sound less artificial than exact rhymes, more like everyday speech. Some poets use approximate rhymes because they feel that all the good exact rhymes have already been used too many times.

Repetition Poets also make music in their poems by using repetition. The repeated beginnings and structures of the lines create the rhythm in the following example.

> oh mother you plunged me sobbing and laughing
> into our past
> into the river crossing at five
> into the spinach fields
> into the plainview cotton rows
> into tuberculosis wards
> into braids and muslin dresses
>
> from "My Mother Pieced Quilts" by Teresa Palomo Acosta

Poets also use repetition of sounds. Note all the *s* sounds as you read aloud these lines:

> and weightless suspended on a line
> in space
>
> from "The Word" by Manuel Ulacia

This is **alliteration** (uh lit uhr AY shun), the repetition of consonant sounds in several words that are close together. Repeated vowel sounds, as in *weightless* and *space*, are called **assonance** (AS uh nuhns).

Onomatopoeia The line from Service's poem, quoted in the first column, also includes an example of **onomatopoeia** (ahn oh maht oh PEE uh), which is the use of words with sounds that imitate or suggest their meaning—such as *moan.* Doesn't *sizzle* sound like bacon frying on the grill? How about *snap, crackle, pop*? Words like these help poets bring sound and sense together.

Guided Practice

Rhyme

Have each student create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting exact rhyme and approximate rhyme. Tell them to include examples of each type of rhyme, such as *meet* and *greet* (exact) or *reap* and *ripe* (approximate).

Repetition

- Model for students how to analyze repetition using the excerpt from "My Mother Pieced Quilts." Read the lines aloud. Explain to students that the poet repeats the word *into* at the beginning of almost every line. This creates a steady rhythm and emphasizes the effect the mother has on the speaker.
- Help students understand assonance by writing the following on the board: "The goose and the moose were on the loose." Underline the words *goose, moose,* and *loose*.
- Tell students that in these three words, the long *o* sound is repeated. This is an example of assonance.
- Point out that vowel sounds that sound the same are not always spelled the same, as in the words *boat* and *wrote*. Tell students that reading aloud is the best way to recognize assonance and other poetic elements.

is stressed, it is said with more force than the other, unstressed syllables in a word.

- Point to *beat* and *meter.* Tell students that *beat* can be a verb that means "to defeat," as in "I beat my sister at checkers." A meter can be a unit of measurement, as in "The tree is three meters tall." In poetry, *beat* and *meter* are nouns used to describe patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Have students take turns saying their full names aloud, tapping or clapping to identify each syllable. Then, tell students to write their names in their **Reader/Writer Notebooks**, underlining the syllables that are stressed.

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Have students choose a poem from the textbook that they have never read before. Tell them to read the poem silently and then respond to it in a brief journal entry. Then, have them read the poem aloud and respond to it in a second journal entry. How was the second reading different from the first? Discuss students' responses as a class.

Guided Practice

Imagery

- Explain how to analyze imagery using the excerpt from "The Cremation of Sam McGee." Tell students that the imagery in the first two lines helps readers picture how the cold air froze the people's lashes.
- Point out that the imagery of Sam McGee "whimper[ing]" appeals to readers' sense of hearing. They can guess that Sam McGee is upset or in pain.

Figures of Speech

- Help students understand the difference between similes and metaphors using the excerpt from "The Cremation of Sam McGee" and the poem by Dickinson.
- Read both poems and then explain that Service uses a simile to compare a piercing cold with a "driven nail." Dickinson uses a metaphor to compare a spoken word with death. Students can distinguish between the two by determining whether each comparison uses the words *like* or *as*. Service's comparison uses the word *like,* so it is a simile; Dickinson's comparison does not include the words *like* or *as*, so it is a metaphor.
- Then, ask students how Service's simile could be changed into a metaphor and how Dickinson's metaphor could be changed into a simile. ***Possible response:*** *"The cold is a driven nail." "A word dies once it is spoken, like a flower plucked from a bush."*

Literary Focus

Poetic Devices

Poems appeal to our emotions and imagination as well as to our sense of reason. Very often, poets use poetic devices such as these:

Imagery We are drawn into the experience of the poem through the poet's use of **imagery,** or language that appeals to our senses. The following example appeals to our senses of touch, sight, and hearing:

> If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze
> till sometimes we couldn't see;
> It wasn't much fun, but the only one to
> whimper was Sam McGee.
>
> from "The Cremation of Sam McGee"
> by Robert W. Service

Symbols A **symbol** is something that has meaning in itself and also stands for something else. In "For My Grandmother," the flower has meaning as a plant that blooms and produces seed, but it also represents Countee Cullen's grandmother. Some symbols in literature are obvious, and some are fresh and subtle. Here are some common, or universal, symbols you will probably recognize:



flag / country



dove / peace



4-leaf clover / good luck

Figures of Speech **Figures of speech** are words or phrases that describe one thing in terms of another and are not meant literally. **Similes** compare two unlike things using words such as *like, as, than,* and *resembles.* When you say, "He is as stubborn as a mule," you are using a simile. In this simile, the cold weather is compared to a nail:

> Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold
> it stabbed like a driven nail.
>
> from "The Cremation of Sam McGee"
> by Robert W. Service

A **metaphor** makes a comparison without using a connecting word. If you said, "He is such a stubborn mule," you'd be using a metaphor. When poets carry a metaphor over several lines, it is called an **extended metaphor.** Here's an example:

> A word is dead
> When it is said,
> Some say.
>
> I say it just
> Begins to live
> That day.
>
> by Emily Dickinson

A special kind of metaphor in which a nonhuman or inanimate thing is described as if it had human or lifelike qualities is called **personification**. In this example, grim melancholy, or sadness, sits on a large group of people watching a ballgame.

> So upon that stricken multitude grim
> melancholy sat,
>
> from "Casey at the Bat"
> by Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Help students understand the vocabulary used in the Literary Focus by breaking the terms into their word parts.

- Write on the board the words *imagery, figurative, literal,* and *personification.*
- Tell students that the word imagery contains the root word *image,* which means "picture." Explain that imagery is writing that helps students make pictures in their minds as they read.
- Tell students that the word *figurative* contains the root word *figure,* which means "symbol." Like a symbol, figurative language contains a larger meaning than its literal one.
- Tell students that the word *literal* contains a Latin root word that means "of letters." The literal meaning of a word is its dictionary definition. The words *literal* and *figurative* are opposites.
- Tell students that the word *personification* contains the root word *person,* which means "human." A poet

Types of Poetry

Most people can recognize a poem when they see it. Poems usually come in **lines** instead of sentences and present ideas in **stanzas** instead of paragraphs. But there are exceptions to every rule, and poems come in many varieties.

Narrative Poems Simply put, **narrative poems** tell stories. "Paul Revere's Ride" tells of a famous incident that took place during the American Revolution. "Barbara Frietchie" tells of a woman's courageous actions during the Civil War.

Ballads A **ballad** is a song or songlike poem that tells a story. The story is often about love, betrayal, or death. Ballads usually have a regular, steady rhythm, a simple rhyme pattern, and a refrain, all of which make them easy to memorize. "The Dying Cowboy" is a traditional ballad.

Epics **Epics** are long narrative poems, originally passed down by word of mouth, that tell about heroes who embody the values of the culture recounting the tale. *Beowulf* is an ancient epic from England. "Casey at the Bat" is a humorous poem that imitates the epic form.

Lyric Poems **Lyric poems** usually do not tell a story. Instead, they express personal thoughts and feelings of the poet or the **speaker** (the poem's narrator). "Birdfoot's Grampa" expresses feelings about people and nature.

Sonnets A **sonnet** is a specific type of lyric poem that is always fourteen lines long and usually has a particular type of meter. There are two main forms of sonnets: Elizabethan and Italian. "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" is written in the Italian form by a famous English poet.

Odes **Odes** are long, lyric poems that were traditionally written to celebrate a famous person or a lofty idea. Today many odes, such as "Ode to Thanks," are written to celebrate ordinary things.

Elegies An **elegy** is a poem of mourning, usually for someone who has died. "O Captain! My Captain!" is an elegy for the slain president Abraham Lincoln.

Free-Verse Poems **Free-verse poems** do not follow a regular meter or rhyme scheme, but they do include other elements of poetry, such as rhythm, imagery, figures of speech, and alliteration. The free-verse poem "I Hear America Singing" is answered by another free-verse poem, "I, Too."

Your Turn Analyze Poetry

Read this little poem by W. S. Merwin, and answer the questions below.

> Your absence has gone through me
> Like thread through a needle.
> Everything I do is stitched with its color.
>
> "Separation" by W. S. Merwin

1. What type of poem is "Separation"?
2. What figures of speech does it contain?
3. What examples of alliteration can you find in the poem?

Learn It Online
To find out more about poetic devices and types of poetry, use *PowerNotes* at:
go.hrw.com L8-673 Go

Guided Practice

Types of Poetry

- Use the poem by Dickinson to model for students how to identify types of poetry. Read the poem aloud, and then point out that it does not tell a story, so it cannot be a narrative poem, a ballad, or an epic.
- Explain that the poem does not have fourteen lines, so it cannot be a sonnet. It does not celebrate a famous person or mourn the loss of a loved one, so it cannot be an ode or an elegy. Since Dickinson uses end rhyme, the poem is not written in free verse.
- Then, read aloud the definition of *lyric poem* and tell students that since the poem expresses thoughts about words, it is a lyric poem.

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Possible responses:

1. *This poem is free verse.*
2. *The poem contains a simile ("Your absence has gone through me like thread through a needle") and personification (absence is personified as going through a person).*
3. *Examples include* thread/through *and the repeated* s *sound* (absence, is, stitched, its).

uses personification to give human qualities to something that is not human.

Then, write on the board the following sentences and have students match each to one or more of the terms just discussed.

1. The wind pulled at my hat. [*personification, imagery*]
2. I live at 34 Main Street. [*literal*]
3. Her hair was as white as snow. [*figurative language, imagery*]

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Provide students with an example of a sonnet, such as "Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?" by William Shakespeare. Have students work in groups to identify elements of poetry such as rhyme and rhythm in the sonnet. Challenge students to identify as many poetic devices as they can.

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