

The Poetry Analysis Workbook

Every device, every move — practised on the Romantic set poems. Use beside the Poetry Lab app.

THE HABIT *SPOT* the choice → name it precisely → *SAY HOW* it works → argue *SO WHAT* (effect on meaning)

The three-layer reading model

1 • WORDS

What does the poem literally say? Summarise in one sentence before analysing anything.

2 • DEVICES

Which choices shape the saying? Name form, sound, image, voice and structural moves precisely.

3 • MEANING / EFFECT

So what? What does each choice DO to a reader's understanding or feeling? This layer carries the marks.

GOLDEN RULE

A device named without an effect claim earns nothing. Effect-first sentences always win.

Your tracker

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ I can define every device in the reference tables without looking | ☐ I have annotated Ozymandias line-by-line unaided |
| ☐ I can quote one Romantic exemplar per family | ☐ I scored 5+ on the Spot-the-Device quiz |
| ☐ I can write an effect-first sentence in under 60 seconds | ☐ I completed two poem hunts in the grid |

Reference tables — all devices with Romantic exemplars

I • Form & Structure

Device	Definition	Romantic exemplar	Effect-first thinking
Lyric poem	A short, musical poem in a single voice, expressing feeling rather than telling a story.	<i>"She walks in beauty, like the night"</i> Byron, <i>She Walks in Beauty</i>	Feeling is compressed into song: short lines, chime-rich rhymes and one sustained mood make the poem behave like music, asking us to share a perceptio...
Ode	An elevated lyric addressed to its subject; long stanzas let a mind think aloud through problem, turn and attempted resolution.	<i>"Away! away! for I will fly to thee,"</i> Keats, <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i>	The ode's expanding stanzas stage thought in motion: wine fails, imagination briefly works, the word 'forlorn' recalls him. We watch a mind argue with...
Literary ballad	A narrative poem imitating folk song: story-driven quatrains rhyming ABCB, often with archaic words and a refrain.	<i>"It is an ancient Mariner,"</i> Coleridge, <i>The Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i>	The fake age of the form casts a spell before any content arrives: quatrains march like footsteps, the trimmed fourth line falls like a held breath, a...
Sonnet & the volta	Fourteen lines in a fixed pattern whose built-in turn (volta) forces the thought to pivot - octave to sestet, or couplet slam.	<i>"Never did sun more beautifully steep"</i> Wordsworth, <i>Composed upon Westminster Bridge</i>	Eight lines of hushed observation pivot at line nine into personal exclamation. The form guarantees the shift, so the emotion lands as earned, not sud...
Blank verse	Unrhymed iambic pentameter: the heartbeat of English speech disciplined into poetry.	<i>"These beauteous forms,"</i> Wordsworth, <i>Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey</i>	Without rhyme, sentences can outlast lines, tumbling forward like meditation itself - yet the steady five-beat pulse keeps reverie from dissolving int...
Terza rima	Interlocking triplets (aba bcb cdc): each section's middle rhyme becomes the next section's frame.	<i>"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"</i> Shelley, <i>Ode to the West Wind</i>	The chained rhyme gives the poem no place to rest - each triplet hands momentum to the next like successive gusts, enacting the

			wind's own drive until...
Frame narrative	A story inside a storyteller: we receive events second-hand through a listener or witness.	<i>"I met a traveller from an antique land,"</i> Shelley, Ozymandias	Two removes from the monument, power arrives already dissolving in retelling. The frame creates ironic distance - we judge what the narrator merely re...

II · Sound & Rhythm

Device	Definition	Romantic exemplar	Effect-first thinking
Alliteration	Repeated initial consonant sounds in nearby words.	<i>"The lone and level sands stretch far away."</i> Shelley, Ozymandias	Three l's stretch the line into monotonous emptiness - sound performs meaning as the desert erases everything except its own flatness....
Assonance	Repeated vowel sounds within nearby words.	<i>"Beside the lake, beneath the trees,"</i> Wordsworth, I wandered lonely as a Cloud	Long ee-sounds hush the line into a breeze-like murmur; vowel music does quietly what dancing does visibly....
Sibilance	A hissing cluster of s/sh sounds.	<i>"And all her silken flanks with garlands drest"</i> Keats, Ode on a Grecian Urn	The sibilants whisper like fabric moving - we hear garlands brushing heifer-hide, sound becoming touch....
Internal rhyme	Rhyme inside a single line rather than at line-ends.	<i>"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,"</i> Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner	Mid-line chimes double the pace - the verse itself catches wind, speed made audible as the ship breaks free....
Onomatopoeia	Words whose sound imitates their sense.	<i>"It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,"</i> Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner	Four animal verbs give the ice a throat: landscape becomes monster, and the reader hears the polar night close in....
Metre & its break	The measured beat of stressed/unstressed syllables - and the expressive jolt when it switches.	<i>"Tyger Tyger, burning bright,"</i> Blake, The Tyger	Hammering trochaic feet open on the stress - an anvil rhythm against the iambic norm - so the very beat forges the creature it questions....

Caesura	A strong pause inside a line, usually punctuated.	<i>"It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be"</i> Wordsworth, The World Is Too Much with Us	The dash slams the argument shut and tears straight into prayer-outburst: feeling ruptures the syntax exactly where patience ends....
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III • Image & Figure

Device	Definition	Romantic exemplar	Effect-first thinking
Personification	Giving human form or action to non-human things.	<i>"This City now doth, like a garment, wear"</i> Wordsworth, Composed upon Westminster Bridge	London becomes a wearer of clothes - alive but asleep. The city is only beautiful while it mimics a person at rest; when it wakes, industry returns....
Pathetic fallacy	Nature charged with human emotion - weather and landscape feeling with us.	<i>"The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear"</i> Shelley, Ode to the West Wind	Even plants dread the wind: fear floods downward through creation, making the speaker's own terror part of a universal response....
Apostrophe	Direct address to an absent thing, force or idea as if it could listen.	<i>"O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,"</i> Shelley, Ode to the West Wind	Addressing the wind conjures presence: the poem becomes an incantation, and by speaking TO the wind the speaker hopes to be spoken THROUGH....
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration for intensity.	<i>"Ten thousand saw I at a glance,"</i> Wordsworth, I wandered lonely as a Cloud	Impossible counting conveys impossible joy - accuracy would shrink the moment; excess is the honest measure of delight....
Symbol	A concrete object that gathers meanings beyond itself as the text unfolds.	<i>"Instead of the cross, the Albatross"</i> Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner	Bird, burden, guilt, lesson: the albatross accretes senses until killing one unknowable creature can stand for every irreverence. Symbols demand we we...
Synaesthesia	Senses deliberately crossed - taste heard, colour tasted.	<i>"O for a beaker full of the warm South,"</i> Keats, Ode to a Nightingale	Wine becomes geography and blush at once: sensation overflows its channels exactly as longing overflows discipline -

			intoxication performed in languag...
Paradox & oxymoron	Truth expressed through apparent self-contradiction; oxymoron compresses it into two words.	<i>"What immortal hand or eye,"</i> Blake, The Tyger	Beauty and terror share one outline: the contradiction refuses resolution because Blake wants awe, not answers - the reader must hold both at once....

IV • Voice & Tone

Device	Definition	Romantic exemplar	Effect-first thinking
Speaker ≠ poet	The invented voice within the poem - never automatically the author.	<i>"In every cry of every Man,"</i> Blake, London	A prophetic walker, not mild Mr Blake, speaks here - and in Songs, children themselves. Asking WHO is granted sight (and who is denied it) unlocks the...
Archaism & register	Deliberately old-fashioned diction that sets the poem's time-frame and tone.	<i>"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"</i> Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner	'Eftsoons' drops us outside modern time: register performs enchantment before content confirms it, and the Wedding Guest's slangy protest makes the sp...
Repetition & anaphora	Recurrent words or openings that accumulate force.	<i>"In every cry of every Man,"</i> Blake, London	Anaphora turns survey into indictment: each repetition widens the net until no voice in the city escapes it - rhythm itself becomes oppression....
Rhetorical question	A question posed for effect, not answer.	<i>"Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"</i> Blake, The Tyger	Thirteen questions, zero answers: the poem's engine is productive uncertainty. Interrogation enacts negative capability - awe sustained by refusing cl...

V • Moves & Turns

Device	Definition	Romantic exemplar	Effect-first thinking
Irony (three kinds)	Gap between what is said and what is meant (verbal), expected and delivered (situational), or known and told (dramatic).	<i>“Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!”</i> Shelley, Ozymandias	All three operate at once: the boast says one thing amid ruins (verbal), command meets sand (situational), the traveller sees what Ozymandias cannot (...)
Juxtaposition & contrast	Placing opposites side by side so each defines the other.	<i>“Little Lamb, who made thee?”</i> Blake, The Lamb / The Tyger (paired)	Neither poem completes alone: meekness throws burning into relief, terror deepens tenderness. Blake's 'contraries' require reading the pair as one arg...
Climax → anticlimax	Building expectation then puncturing it - deflation as device.	<i>“My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;”</i> Shelley, Ozymandias	Imperative grandeur is answered within a single line and a half by flat erasure: syntax itself topples the colossus before the desert finishes the job...
Fragment & ellipsis	Deliberate incompleteness - broken forms, trailing silences, interrupted vision.	<i>“Could I revive within me”</i> Coleridge, Kubla Khan	Conditional mood confesses failure inside the vision-poem: imagination's limit becomes the subject. The fragment is not damage - it is the point....
Allusion	A pointed reference to myth, scripture or earlier literature.	<i>“Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,”</i> Keats, Ode to a Nightingale	One name imports an entire scripture of exile and comfort: the nightingale's song joins all homesickness across millennia - allusion is compression pl...
Ambiguity	Language held open between meanings on purpose.	<i>“Was it a vision, or a waking dream?”</i> Keats, Ode to a Nightingale	The ending declines to choose: perception itself is left uncertain, enacting negative capability. Ambiguity here is not vagueness but disciplined open...

From device to sentence — the effect bank

“The [device] in “[quote]” ([poet]) invites the reader to...”

“Through [device], X becomes Y, so that...”

“While [device] suggests A, [second device] complicates it with B...”

“Had [poet] chosen plain statement here, the loss would be...”

Weak → strong rewrites

Weak (feature-spotting)	Strong (effect-first)
~~Shelley uses irony in “Ozymandias”.~~	Shelley’s traveller-frame ironises the boast before we reach it — by the time we read “Look on my Works” we already inhabit a world where such Works are sand.
~~Blake repeats “In every” a lot.~~	Anaphora turns survey into indictment: each repetition widens the net until no city voice escapes it.
~~Keats uses synaesthesia in the ode.~~	Fusing taste, warmth and place in “the warm South” enacts intoxication itself — sensation overflows its channels as longing overflows discipline.
~~The Tyger has rhetorical questions.~~	Thirteen unanswered questions make awe structural: Blake engineers productive uncertainty rather than doctrine.

Self-test: take any row above, cover the strong column, and rebuild it from memory — then compare wording.

Device hunt grid

Rules: choose a poem column. Find each device, quote it in the box, and add a three-to-six-word effect note. Two completed columns = homework credit. Star any cell where the poet pointedly AVOIDS the device — absence is evidence too.

Device	London	The Tyger	Ozymandias	Westminster Bridge	Nightingale	Kubla Khan	Mariner	La Belle Dame
Alliteration								
Assonance								
Sibilance								
Internal rhyme								
Onomatopoeia								
Metre & its break								
Caesura								
Lyric poem								
Personification								
Pathetic fallacy								
Apostrophe								
Hyperbole								
Symbol								
Synaesthesia								
Paradox & oxymoron								
Irony (three kinds)								

Extension: which device does your chosen poem refuse, and what does that refusal achieve? Write three sentences below.

Guided close-read — any poem, five moves

Step	Your notes
Poem + paratexts title, date, form guess	
First response mood + one-sentence summary	
Structure map where thought turns (volta), repetitions, breaks	
Language zoom two strongest devices + quotes	
Thesis draft THROUGH x reveals y WHILE z	

Worked micro-model — Ozymandias

“Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair! / Nothing beside remains.”

Spot: imperative boast + immediate anticlimax. **How:** the flat clause answers within a line-and-a-half; capitalised grandeur meets five syllables of sand. **So what:** syntax topples the empire before the desert finishes it — power self-refutes inside its own inscription.

Self-marking rubric (analysis paragraph)

Criterion	Looks like	Score /5
Precise naming	Devices named accurately (not “language techniques”); attribution correct	
Evidence discipline	Quotes ≤8 words, embedded grammatically, sharpest phrase chosen	
Effect analysis	Every device answers SO WHAT; reader/meaning/context linked	
Complexity	Tension, alternative reading, or formal irony acknowledged	
Craft of prose	Effect-first sentences; no retelling; academic present tense	

Quiz answer key (from the Lab)

1. “Ten thousand saw I at a glance,” — **Hyperbole**. Impossible arithmetic = deliberate exaggeration conveying overwhelming abundance.
2. “And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;” — **Simile**. ‘like’ signals simile - winds tamed into sleep image our dulled response to nature.
3. “The mind-forg’d manacles I hear.” — **Symbolic metaphor**. Chains forged by no state but the mind: metaphor diagnosing internalised oppression.
4. “O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being,” — **Apostrophe**. Direct address to an absent force - the poem’s incantation begins.
5. “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” — **Rhetorical question**. Posed for awe, not answer - productive uncertainty is the point.
6. “The frost performs its secret ministry” opens which device-rich mode? — **Conversation poem**. Frost at Midnight: quiet blank verse addressed to a listener - scene to meditation to blessing.

Revision rhythm: 10 min flashcards daily · one hunt-grid column weekly · one timed close-read fortnightly. The Lab saves your streak locally.

Romantic Visions unit · companion to The Poet’s Toolbox deck and the Poetry Lab interactive app. Poems public domain.