

## 43. TROPE REVIEW

When a general reviews his troops, he is simply making sure they are in good working condition: that, if needed, they will be alert, prepared, and ready to spring into action. This is precisely the purpose of this chapter: to give you a chance to review your *tropes* (troops) so that they will be there, waiting, when you need them.

You are already familiar with most of these tropes; you have both played and worked with them. The few new ones are marked with an asterisk (\*). So assume a military bearing, straighten your poet's cap, and pass in leisurely fashion before the ranks. After each trope, a small lighthearted example (in verse) is given. Respond with one of your own. Restrict yourself to nonsense verse; it's more fun and less blasphemous. For greater challenge (but this is optional) try to use the metrical foot-metrical line pattern illustrated in each example.

### Alliteration

Alliteration is the recurring of initial sounds.

EXAMPLE (anapestic tetrameter)

When two-timing Tessie trips to town,  
She wears grim, grey gloves and a gossamer gown.

YOUR TURN \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Review pages 71-73.

### \*Antithesis

Antithesis is the deliberate contrasting of two terms for effect. A well-known example is Alexander Pope's "Man proposes, God disposes." "Proposes" (offers) and "disposes" (settles) are opposites, placed together; because they rhyme, they are doubly effective. But rhyme isn't necessary as you can see in Shakespeare's "Fair is foul and foul is fair"—another example of antithesis.

EXAMPLE (iambic dimeter)

When credit's *high*  
And debts are *low*  
From *work* to *play*  
We're apt to go.

When credit's *low*  
And debts are *high*,  
From *play* to *work*  
We're apt to fly.

It is this rhythm you will find in the finest poems—sometimes with, sometimes without metrical rhythm. If you hope to acquire it, you will have to learn to listen to your heartbeat, to the movement of ocean and wind, to the cadence of birdsong and cicada, to the inaudible rhythm of sun, moon, and stars. And after you have listened, and absorbed, you may (and only *may*) be able to get that rhythm into your own writing.

Meanwhile—while you are listening and absorbing—play with metrical rhythm. Before you can fly, you must run; and before you can run, you must toddle. So “toddle” with iambic monometer or anapestic dimeter. You did—when you were a baby, with nonsense sounds. Do it again, delight in it and in yourself, and feel rhythm grow in your blood and bones.

YOUR TURN

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### \*Apostrophe

Apostrophe occurs when we address the dead (as if they were living), the inanimate (as if they were capable of understanding), the absent (as if they were present). Shakespeare used it when Macbeth, after killing King Duncan, heard a bell and said mournfully: "Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell/That summons thee to heaven or to hell." John Donne used it memorably when he wrote "Death, be not proud . . ." And children use it when they chant tearfully: "Rain, rain, go away/Come again another day."

EXAMPLE (iambic trimeter)

O *Rain*, withhold your tears!  
Shine gently, gentle *Sun*!  
Dear *Wind*, try not to blow!  
(I just had my hair done.)

YOUR TURN

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### Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an exaggeration so wild that no one is expected to believe it.

Review pages 193-194.

EXAMPLE (alternating lines of anapestic tetrameter and trimeter)

She appeared in a hat, such a glorious hat  
That the passersby fainted in awe.  
Made of satin and steel, trimmed with bright  
orange peel,  
It drooped past her brow to her jaw.

YOUR TURN

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## Litotes

Litotes is understatement whereby you convey what you mean by saying the opposite . . . as when you call the 6'10" basketball player "Shorty" or the two-month-old infant "Tiger."

Review pages 199-200.

EXAMPLE (anapestic dimeter and trimeter)

"How lovely!" she thumped,  
As she glanced at the dump,  
"So fragrant, so neat, and so—nice.  
I hadn't realized before  
That they had a free store  
And a luxury home for the mice."

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## Metaphor

A metaphor is an implied comparison. It does not use *like* or *as*. "He's a lion in a fight" we say admiringly; or "he's chicken" we say un-admiringly.

Review pages 119-121.

EXAMPLE (iambic tetrameter)

The world's a stage; the people in it  
Are actors who have muffed their lines.  
The set's collapsed, the costumes rotted.  
Close the curtain. (Tea at nine?)

YOUR TURN

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## Metonymy

Metonymy occurs when you substitute the name of one object for the name of another closely associated with it. It's metonymy when you whisper softly, "The kettle is boiling" when you really mean that the water in the kettle is boiling.

Review pages 68-70.

EXAMPLE (iambic tetrameter and trimeter)

The White House called, the Senate sat,  
The House refused to vote.  
The Capitol is seeking funds.  
(Construction crews, please note.)

YOUR TURN

## Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia occurs when a word sounds like its meaning: *pop* or *crackle* or *hiss*.

Review pages 49-51.

EXAMPLE (trochaic tetrameter)

Siren-like, she booms and buzzes,  
(Boo or whistle when you see 'er.)  
Sizzling, munching, hissing, crunching . . .  
That is ono-mato-poeia.

YOUR TURN

## Oxymoron

Oxymoron occurs when two apparently contradictory terms are brought together to form a sharper perception. You know all about it—why falling in love is "bitter-sweet."

Review pages 73-74.

EXAMPLE (anapestic dimeter and tetrameter)

"Run slowly," she warned,  
"Or you'll fall up the hill,  
And make a nice mess of your face!"  
So like a wise fool,  
I rushed snail-like to school,  
Displaying rhinoceros grace.

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## Personification

Personification occurs when you attribute human characteristics to ideas, or to inanimate objects, or to animals. Wordsworth used it when he talked about “wander[ing] lonely as a cloud,” and again, when he suggested that waves “danced.”

Review page 121.

EXAMPLE (anapestic tetrameter and trimeter)

The “call of the wild” is to stillness, you say?  
Then what of the brooklets that babble in May?  
And what of the north winds that whistle and neigh?  
That roar? It’s the surf, in the bay.

What of the pine trees that murmur in aisles?  
What of the ice that crackles when riled?  
And what of the whispering flowers so mild?  
*These* are the “call of the wild”!

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## Simile

A simile, as you already know, is a comparison using *like* or *as*. "Like a rose," we say—or "swift as a deer."

Review pages 117-119.

EXAMPLE (anapestic trimeter and tetrameter)

She runs like a deer, swift and sure,  
She plays, like a kitten with thread;  
She yelps like a puppy when she bruises her knee,  
She coos, like a dove, in bed.

She dives like a swan, deep and true,  
She eats like a bird (all day).  
She cries like a banshee, and sings like a lark,  
But she's really a Ms. in May.

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## Synecdoche

Synecdoche results when you let a part of something represent the whole. Remember? . . . all *hands* on deck.

Review pages 67-68.

EXAMPLE (iambic tetrameter)

I do not like sy nec do che:  
A part is not enough for me.

"Give us this day our daily bread—"  
No—make that hot roast beef instead.

"A sail! a sail!" the drowning gloat.  
When drowning, *I* prefer a boat.

"All hands on deck!" Nightmarish yen . . .  
I like the hands attached to men.

I do not like sy nec do che:  
The whole—not just the part—'s for me!

