

**Literary Criticism**  
**UIL Student Activity Conference**  
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**Explicating Poetry**

**Rattler, Alert**

Slowly he sways that head that cannot hear,	a	direct address
Two-leveled cone of horn the yellow rust,	b	rhyme scheme
Polled on the current of his listening fear.	a	scansion
His length is on the tympanum of earth,	c	meter
And by his tendril tongue's tasting the air	a	imagery: visual, auditory
He sips, perhaps, a secret of his race	d	alliteration and imagery
Or feels for the known vibrations, heat, or trace	d	sigmatism
Of smoother satin than the hillwind's thrust	b	imagery: auditory, tactile
Through grass: the aspirate of half-held breath,	c	imagery: tactile, auditory; simile
The crushing of my weight upon the dust,	b	sigmatism and alliteration
My foamless heart, the bloodleap at my wrist.	b	imagery: auditory, olfaction (kenning)

Brewster Ghiselin

**Mother, among the Dustbins**

Mother, among the dustbins and the manure	a	apostrophe
I feel the measure of my humanity, an allure	a	run-on
As of the presence of God, I am sure	a	simile
In the dustbins, in the manure, in the cat at play,	b	internal rhyme
Is the presence of God, in a sure way	b	sigmatism
He moves there. Mother, what do you say?	b	rhetorical question
I too have felt the presence of God in the broom	c	anaphora
I hold, in the cobwebs in the room,	c	imagery: visual, tactile
But most of all in the silence of the tomb.	c	sigmatism
Ah! but that thought that informs the hope of our kind	d	masculine rhyme
Is but an empty thing, what lies behind?—	d	true rhyme
Naught but the vanity of a protesting mind	d	enjambment
That would not die. This is the thought that bounces	e	feminine ending
Within a conceited head and trounces	e	feminine rhyme
Inquiry. Man is most frivolous when he pronounces.	e	tercets, not villanelle
Well Mother, I shall continue to think as I do,	f	emphatic spondees
And I think you would be wise to do so too,	f	assonance
Can you question the folly of man in the creation of God?	g	theme
Who are you?	f	truncation

Stevie Smith

**The Destruction of Sennacherib** *excerpted*

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

a anapestic tetrameter; simile  
a anaphora; visual imagery  
b alliteration and simile  
b alliteration; wrenched accent

*from* **Don Juan**

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed  
With persons of no sort of education,  
Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,  
Grow tired of scientific conversation:  
I don't choose to say much upon this head,  
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,  
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,  
Inform us truly, have they not henpeck'd you all?

George Gordon, Lord Byron

a iambic pentameter  
b feminine ending and rhyme  
a masculine ending and rhyme  
b alliteration  
a sigmatism  
b aporia  
c apostrophe  
c heteromorous/mosaic rhyme

**Song [Fish in the unruffled lakes]**

Fish in the unruffled lakes  
Their swarming colours wear,  
Swans in the winter air  
A white perfection have,  
And the great lion walks  
Through his innocent grove;  
Lion, fish and swan  
Act, and are gone  
Upon Time's toppling wave.

We, till shadowed days are done,  
We must weep and sing  
Duty's conscious wrong,  
The Devil in the clock,  
The goodness carefully worn  
For atonement or for luck;  
We must lose our loves,  
On each beast and bird that moves  
Turn an envious look.

Sighs for folly done and said  
Twist our narrow days,  
But I must bless, I must praise  
That you, my swan, who have  
All gifts that to the swan  
Impulsive Nature gave,  
The majesty and pride,  
Last night should add  
Your voluntary love.

W. H. Auden 1939

a assonance, alliteration  
b masculine rhyme  
b consonance  
c inversion  
a visual imagery  
c pathetic fallacy  
d run-on  
d true rhyme  
c personification, imagery: visual, auditory  
  
a sigmatism and alliteration  
b internal rhyme  
b reification  
c metaphor  
a contrast  
c consonance  
d alliteration  
d eye rhyme  
c anthropomorphism  
  
a alliteration  
b metaphor  
b asyndeton  
c apostrophe  
d emphasis through absent rhyme  
c pathetic fallacy  
a anthropomorphism  
a consonance  
c vocalic quality