Since poetry existed before writing was invented, the way a poem sounds has always been very important. Most poets still expect that their poetry will be heard with ears in addition to being read with eyes.

Because of this, poets focus on both what their words mean and what their words sound like. You've learned about some of the literary techniques that help emphasize a poem's meaning. There are also techniques that emphasize what a poem sounds like when it's read out loud.

LINE BREAKS AND STANZAS

You've learned that shape poems make certain shapes on the page. But what about other forms of poems? What shape does an epic poem or a haiku make?

Their shapes may not have a name, but the way the words are grouped together affect the way we read and hear the poem. A **line break** is one way that a poet lets us know how to read the poem. A line break happens when the poet moves the words from one line to another.

Words to Know

line break: the point at which two lines of text are split.

pause: a brief stop or rest.

punctuation mark: a **symbol** such as a period or a question mark that is used to make writing clear and understandable.

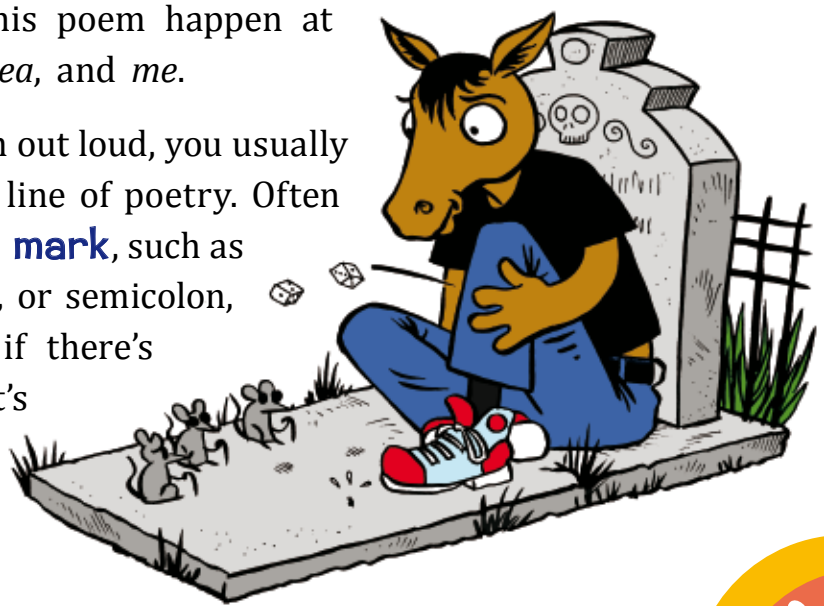
symbol: an image that stands for something else.

POEM!

Boom, Boom, Ain't It Great To Be Crazy?
A horse and a flea and three blind mice
Sat on a tombstone shooting dice.
The horse slipped and fell on the flea—
"Whoops!" said the flea. "There's a horse on me!"

The line breaks in this poem happen at the words *mice*, *dice*, *flea*, and *me*.

When you read a poem out loud, you usually **pause** at the end of a line of poetry. Often there is a **punctuation mark**, such as a period, comma, colon, or semicolon, but not always! Even if there's no punctuation mark, it's still a good idea to pause your voice at the end of a line break.



BOOM BOOM!

Poetry can be sung out loud! Listen to a song version of *Boom, Boom, Ain't It Great To Be Crazy?* How does the music add to the rhythm of the words? Is it easier to remember as a song?

Stanzas are groups of lines that go together. There are three common types of stanzas:

- couplets have two lines that usually rhyme
- tercets have three lines that might or might not rhyme
- quatrains have four lines that might or might not rhyme

American poet Emily Dickinson often wrote in quatrains.

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all . . .

Some poets put more or fewer lines in their stanzas, depending on what they feel the poem needs. Stanzas are useful for grouping ideas together in a poem. They are also good for breaking up the sounds and keeping rhymes together to make them more effective.

Words to Know

stanza: a group of lines that form a part of a poem.

Why did the poet go to the hospital?

JUST 4 FUN

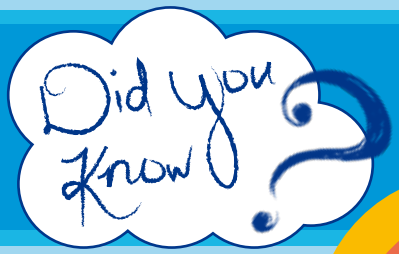
Because he couldn't stanza!

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is important in any kind of writing, even poetry. This chart will help you remember what marks to use—and where to use them—in your poetry, stories, essays, and letters.

What it looks like	What it's called	What it means	Example
.	period	ends a sentence	The fox and bear are friends.
?	question mark	ends a question	Are the fox and giraffe friends?
,	comma	pauses a sentence	The fox, bear, and giraffe are going to have a party.
!	exclamation point	ends a sentence with excitement	The fox and bear are excited!
;	semicolon	joins two separate sentences about the same subject	The fox is excited; the giraffe is calm.
—	em dash	adds a longer pause	The fox is happy—it's his birthday!
:	colon	starts a list	The fox thinks of friends to invite: the porcupine, the mole, and the chicken.

In the 1400s, periods were used to mark both the end of a sentence and a pause—even in the middle of a sentence! It took about 60 years before periods were used only to end sentences, and commas and semicolons became the marks for pauses.



ALLITERATION

Alliteration happens when the poet uses words together that have the same sounds or that start with the same letter.

POEM!

The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I
pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly
there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my
chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

This famous poem uses several examples of alliteration: *weak and weary*, *quaint and curious*, *nodded nearly napping*, and *rapping rapping*. The way these words sound alike, rhyme, and reflect each other make the poem very easy and fun to read out loud. They also make it easier to memorize the poem.

Alliteration makes a poem sound interesting to a reader's or listener's ears. Human brains like it when words that sound alike are paired together and spoken out loud. That's why you can find lots of alliteration in advertising or in the names of stores, such as Dunkin' Donuts, Best Buy, and Chuck E. Cheese.

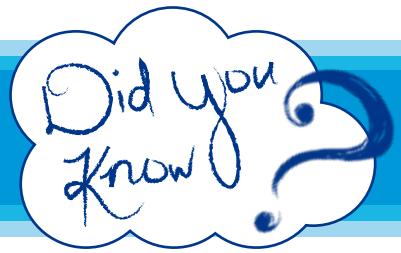
POEM!

Another form of writing that's based on alliteration is a tongue twister.

How much wood
Would a woodchuck chuck
If a woodchuck
Could chuck
Wood?

This tongue twister uses lots of alliteration to make it hard for people to speak the words quickly. How many words can you find that start with *w*? How many words rhyme? How many start with or have the *ch* sound? What happens when you try to say these words very quickly?

Sometimes alliteration makes a line easier to say, and sometimes alliteration makes a line harder to say!



ONOMATOPOEIA

Thunk. *Boink*. *Meow*. Each of these words is an example of **onomatopoeia**. Pronounce it like this: ON-oh-MA-toh-PEE-ya. An onomatopoeia is a word that sounds just like the sound it's describing. Say the word *meow* out loud. Now try *hiss*. Now try *desk*. Does *desk* sound like a desk? Some people might think so, but in general, desk is not considered to be an onomatopoeia because the word *desk* doesn't sound like an actual desk.

Words to Know

onomatopoeia: a word that sounds like its meaning.

Think of a rubber ball bouncing off your forehead. *Boink* is a word someone watching you might say out loud. *Boink* might be very similar to the sound you heard when the ball made contact with your head!

An onomatopoeia is a fun word to use in poetry. It makes readers experience the poem beyond simply reading the words on the page, even if the reader doesn't realize it. When a word such as *meow* appears in a poem, you may not consciously think of a cat, but your brain automatically gives you the picture of a cat.

KNOW YOUR POETS: SHEL SILVERSTEIN

Shel Silverstein was born in 1930 and first wrote cartoons and songs for adults. Eventually he discovered his audience of children, and became famous for lots of poems and picture books. Perhaps his most famous book is a poem called *The Giving Tree*, which is about a tree that gives up her apples, branches, and trunk for the little boy she loves.

PS

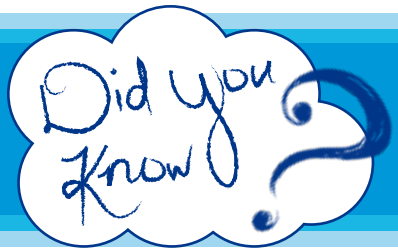
Read Shel Silverstein's poems and watch short animations based on his work.

TRY THIS! WATER ONOMATOPOEIA

Sometimes lots of different words can describe the sound of one thing using onomatopoeia. How many words can you think of that describe the action of water? Here are a couple to start you off: glug, gush, flow.

This works for words you don't know as well, too. What about this phrase from a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson: "And the murmuring of innumerable bees." What does it make you think of? Even if you don't know what murmuring is, or what it means to be innumerable, you might still get a sense of what Alfred Lord Tennyson is writing about. Still curious? Look in the glossary for these definitions.

An onomatopoeia can be different in each language, even when it's describing the same sound. For example, the sound of a clock is "tick tock" in English and "katchin katchin" in Japanese.



ASSONANCE AND CONSONANCE

You've learned about rhyming words, but did you know that sounds within words can make rhymes, too? When these sounds are vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y), the rhyme is called **assonance**. When the sounds are from consonants (all the other letters), the rhyme is called **consonance**.

Words to Know

assonance: the repetition of a vowel sound.

consonance: the repetition of a consonant sound.

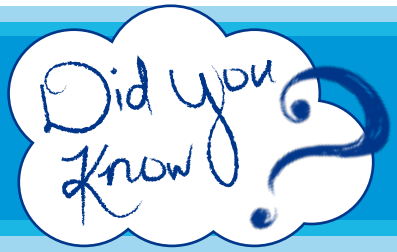
This poem contains examples of assonance and consonance. Examples of assonance are underlined and examples of consonance are in bold.

POEM!

Fire and Ice by Robert Frost

Some **s**ay the world
will end in fire,
Some **s**ay in **i**ce.
From what I've
ta**s**ted of de**s**ire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To **s**ay that for destruction **i**ce
I**s** al**s**o great
And would suffice.

The *s* and *ay* sounds keep repeating. What other sounds repeat? How do these repeating sounds contribute to the way you hear the poem? When you read the poem out loud, do these sounds make it easier or harder to say?



Robert Frost asked an astronomer named Harlow Shapley, "How is the world going to end?" Shapley answered it would either be burnt by the sun or plunged into a permanent ice age. Frost was inspired to write this poem.

When you write poetry, you have to think about what the words mean. But you also have to think about what the words sound like when strung together. Finding the balance between meaning and sound is a large part of a poet's job.

ACTIVITY

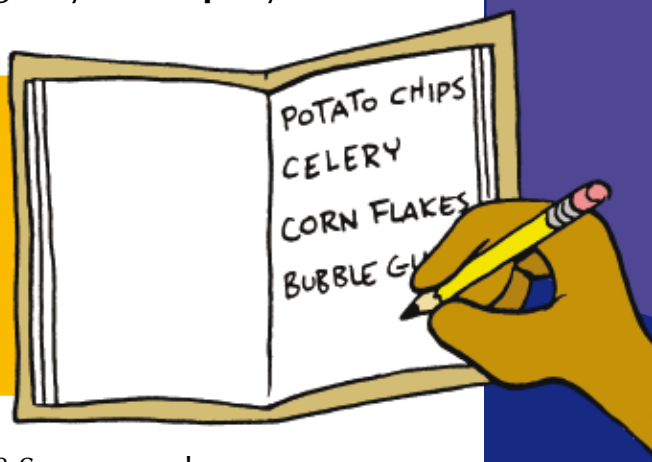
SUPPLIES

- paper
- pencil
- markers
- Poetry Journal

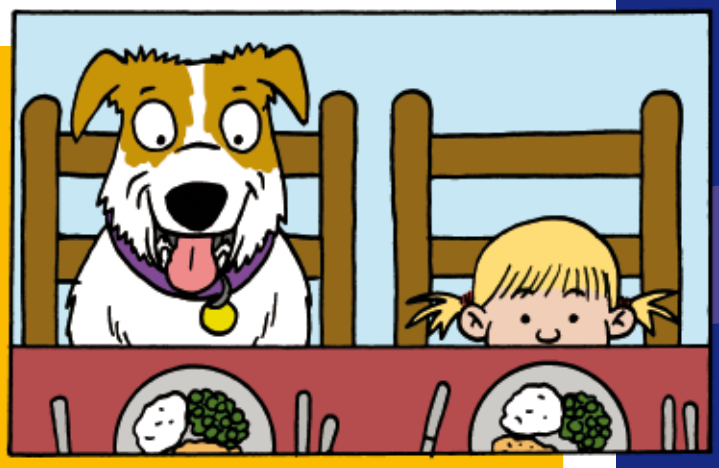
ONOMATOPOEIA FOR DINNER

Once you learn about onomatopoeia, these words start showing up everywhere! One place these words really like to hang out is the dinner table. Especially when there is fried chicken! Throw an imaginary dinner party for some of the noisiest people you can think of.

1 Make your menu! What food offers lots of opportunity for words that are onomatopoeia? Remember, these words sound like the things they're describing. Write a list of foods that are noisy to eat in your Poetry Journal.



2 Who are you going to invite for dinner? Some people are more likely to make noise while they eat than others! Consider inviting babies, dogs, people with no teeth, people who talk while they eat, and people who like to burp. At this dinner table, manners are less important than onomatopoeia.



3 Now draw your collection of noisy eaters at your dinner table! Don't forget to put food on their plates. Above your figures, write the onomatopoeia that goes with each person in a word bubble. A person with no teeth might be saying "Glump, glump, glump." The baby might be saying "Yam, yam, yam." Keep your drawing in your Poetry Journal.

ACTIVITY

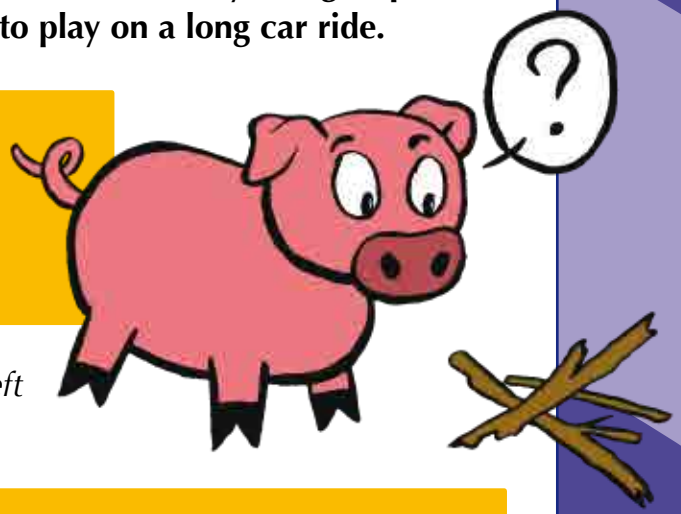
SUPPLIES

- 3 or 4 friends

RHYME TIME

Rhyming is one of the hardest things to do in a poem. Sometimes, the poet concentrates so hard on the rhyme that he or she forgets to make sure the meaning, tone, and sound of the words are right. Rhyming can be fun, too. It's especially fun to work with rhyming words out loud instead of writing them down. You can do this activity in a group or on your own. This can be a fun game to play on a long car ride.

1 Choose a familiar fairy tale, such as *The Three Little Pigs*. Say the first line of the fairy tale as well as you can remember it.



Once upon a time, three little pigs left home to find their way in the world.

2 The next person says the next line and makes it rhyme with the first line. Then he or she adds a new line that doesn't rhyme.

The first little pig, his tail was curled.
He walked for a while, then found some sticks.

3 The next person says the next line and makes a rhyme with the one before, and then adds a new line.

He built his house in tall grass and worried about ticks.
But the big bad wolf came along and scared him even more.

There is no perfect rhyme in the English language for *month*.

Did you Know?

4 Keep going until everyone has had a chance to make a rhyme. Don't be worried about following the original fairy tale, or even about trying to get your rhyming poem to make sense. This is a fun exercise for your brain to practice rhyming!

KNOW YOUR POETS: GERTRUDE STEIN

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) was born in the United States but moved to France when she was 29 years old. She was known for being good friends with many different artists and writers of that time period, and had a large collection of art. Most of what she wrote was for adults, but some of her poetry is great for kids! Read Gertrude Stein's poem *A Very Valentine* to yourself, and then listen to Gertrude Stein read it aloud. Does the poem sound different when she reads it? In what ways?

POEM!

A Very Valentine

Very fine is my valentine.

Very fine and very mine.

Very mine is my valentine very mine and very fine.

Very fine is my valentine and mine, very fine
very mine and mine is my valentine.

PS

Listen to Gertrude Stein reading *A Very Valentine*.

ACTIVITY

SNOWMAN STANZA

SUPPLIES

- pencil
- Poetry Journal

Using stanzas is a useful way to organize your poems. Write a poem about winter with a snowman stanza!

1 Trace or copy the snowman template on the next page onto a blank page in your Poetry Journal.

2 Draw a snowman's face on the top snowball so he can watch you write his poem.

3 In the middle snowball, write five lines of poetry that start with these phrases. The lines are fill-in-the-blank.

Winter is _____ and _____.

I like to _____ and _____.

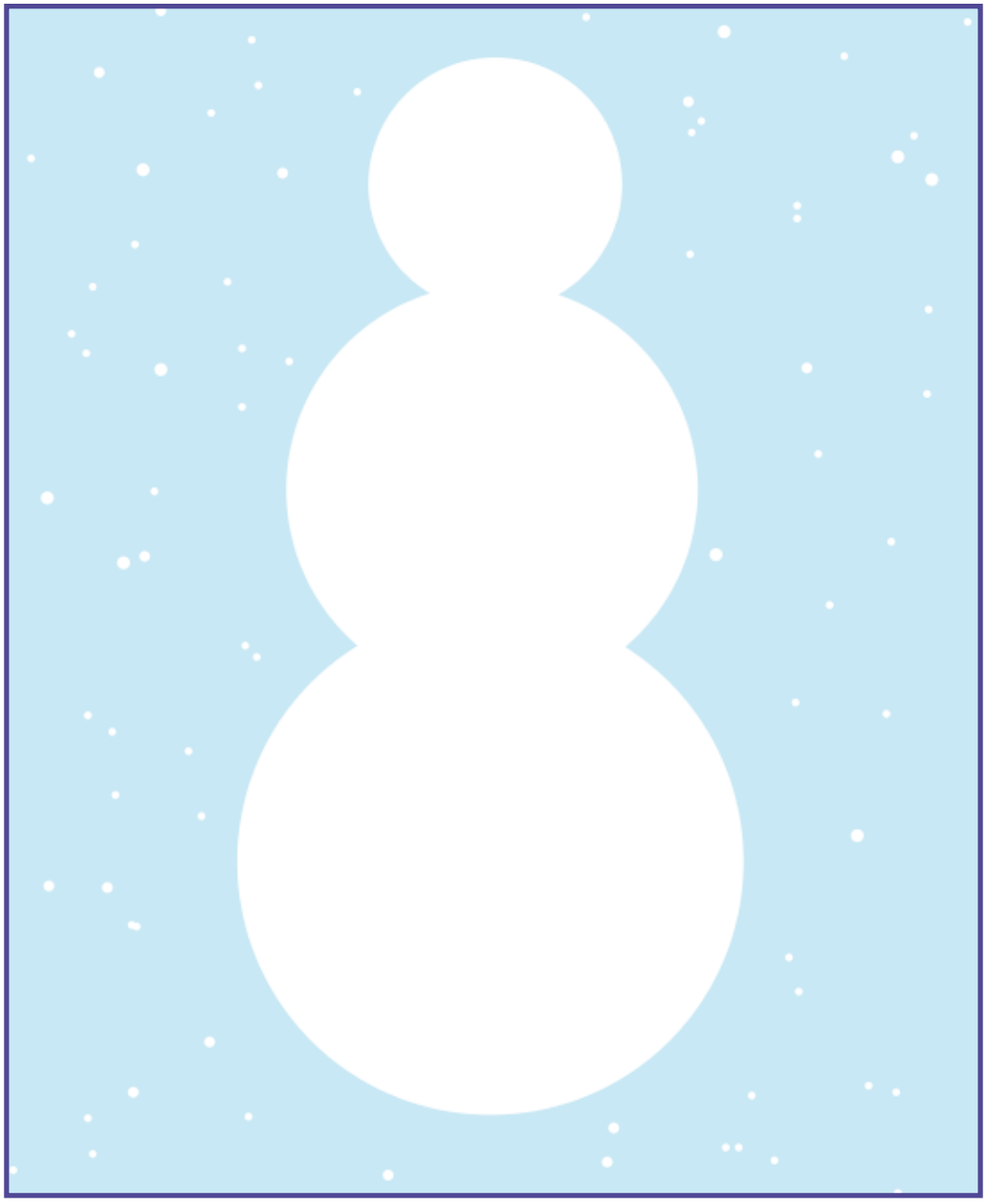
I feel _____ and _____.

I smell _____ and _____.

Winter is _____ and _____.

4 In the bottom snowball, write five lines of poetry about the snowman. You can use the same lines and replace *I* with *Snowman*, or you can make up your own. Be sure to keep in mind that you are writing about wintery things, so your images should be cold ones!

TRY MORE! Make up your own poem about another season, choosing a different drawing and different phrases.



SNOWMAN TEMPLATE:

TRACE OR COPY THIS INTO YOUR POETRY JOURNAL

A COUPLE OF RHYMING COUPLETS

SUPPLIES

- pencil
- paper
- Poetry Journal

You can write a rhyming poem by stringing together a series of rhyming couplets. A couplet is two lines of poetry. It's easier to start with two rhyming words than several rhyming words! Here's an example of a poem made from couplets.

Lunch Bunch

The bear woke up and wanted berries for lunch,
So he headed to the woods because he had a hunch
There'd be blueberries there, and strawberries, too.
And if any people came 'round he'd scare them away, "Shoo!"
A little girl walked up as he was sitting down to eat
And calmly spread her own lunch on a sheet
And asked the bear, "Would you like to share?"
The bear was frightened and bolted out of there!

1 Think of something to write about. You may have an idea, or you can choose one from your idea rocks bag from page 24.

2 Write a list of things about your topic. These can be descriptions of characters, events, actions, or the setting. Choose the item on your list that you find the most interesting and create your first line. Don't make this line a complete sentence—instead, make it the introductory phrase, the first part of what you want to say.

3 For your next line, finish the thought you started in the first line. Make it rhyme. You might need to write down lots of words that rhyme with the last word of your first line before you find one that works.

4 Write as many couplets as you need to tell the story of your poem. You'll want to make revisions to your poem until you feel it's just right. Then copy your final draft in your Poetry Journal. Don't forget a title!

KNOW YOUR POETS: EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950) was an American poet who also wrote plays. She was the third woman to ever win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, one of the highest poetry honors. She often wrote poems in iambic pentameter. Lines of iambic pentameter contain 10 syllables, or five pairs of syllables, in a certain rhythm. Say the words, "I am" out loud five times. You're speaking in iambic pentameter! The first syllable is not stressed and the second syllable is stressed, so it sounds like this: da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM** da **DUM**. Listen for iambic pentameter in these lines by Millay.

I know I am but summer to your heart,
And not the full four seasons of the year;
And you must welcome from another part
Such noble moods as are not mine, my dear.

ACTIVITY

A GLASS OF WATER IS A DROP OF RELIEF

SUPPLIES

- pencil
- Poetry Journal

Remember, an onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like its meaning. A metaphor describes something by saying it is something else. A simile compares one thing to another using the words *like* or *as*. And hyperbole is an exaggerated description of something.

1 What does each of the following activities look, sound, taste, hear, or feel like? Give your answers as an onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile, or hyperbole. Write your answers in your Poetry Journal.

Activity	Your Answer
A train wreck . . .	is a box of Legos thrown down the stairs.
A day at the beach . . .	tastes like a sandy coconut popsicle.
A fight at the playground . . .	
Getting an A on a test you studied hard for . . .	
Losing the championship game . . .	
Forgetting to take out the trash and getting in trouble . . .	
Arguing with your brother or sister . . .	
When your best friend moves away . . .	
Winning the school spelling bee . . .	