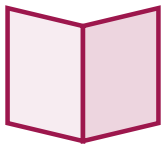


Poetry I

AP English Literature ■ Unit 2

AP English Literature



What we will cover

- 1 What Textual Details Reveal About a Character
- 2 The Function of Structure in a Text
- 3 The Function of Contrasts Within a Text
- 4 The Function of Specific Words and Phrases
- 5 The Function of a Simile
- 6 The Function of a Metaphor



What Textual Details Reveal About a Character

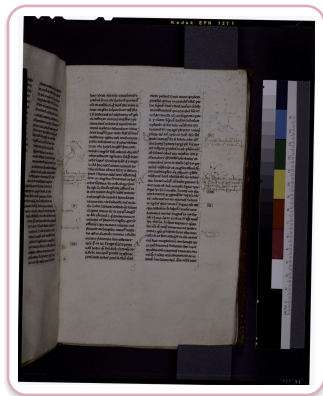
Unit 2 is the course's first poetry unit, and it adds two things to Unit 1's toolkit: **structure** as an object of analysis, and **figurative language** handled precisely rather than by name-dropping.

One addition on character first: **characters reveal their perspectives and biases** through the words they use, the details they provide, and the details they omit .



The Function of Structure in a Text

- **Line and stanza breaks** contribute to the development and relationship of ideas in a poem.
- The arrangement of lines and stanzas contributes to that development.
- A text's structure **affects readers' reactions and expectations** by presenting the relationships among ideas.



a page with its own marginal commentary

Structure, by what it does to a reader

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Structure, by what it does to a reader, in detail

THE CHOICE	WHAT IT DOES	WHERE TO LOOK
a break — stanza, chapter, section	forces a pause, and separates what it divides	the line either side of the gap
a turn	revalues everything already read	a conjunction, a shift of tense or address
a frame — a story inside a story	puts a teller between you and the events	the return to the outer voice
repetition with a difference	makes the difference the meaning	the second and third occurrences

A text's structure **affects readers' reactions and expectations** by presenting the relationships among ideas.



The Function of Contrasts Within a Text

This is the most reliable route into an unseen poem. Find the shift – a *but*, a stanza break, a change of tense or address – and the poem divides into a before and an after. What changed, and what the change costs or gains, is very often the poem's argument.

- **Contrast** can be introduced through *focus, tone, point of view, character or speaker perspective, and dramatic situation*.
- Contrasts are the result of **shifts or juxtapositions or both** .
- Shifts may be signalled by a word, a structural convention, or punctuation.
- Shifts may *emphasise contrasts between particular segments* of a text.

Four places contrast lives

BETWEEN CHARACTERS — a foil,
showing what the other is by not being it

INSIDE ONE CHARACTER —
what they say against what they do

BETWEEN SETTING AND FEELING
— a cheerful room and a grief in it

BETWEEN PARTS OF THE TEXT
— a scene that answers an earlier one

Four places to look, not one. The contrast **inside** a character is usually the one that carries a complexity question

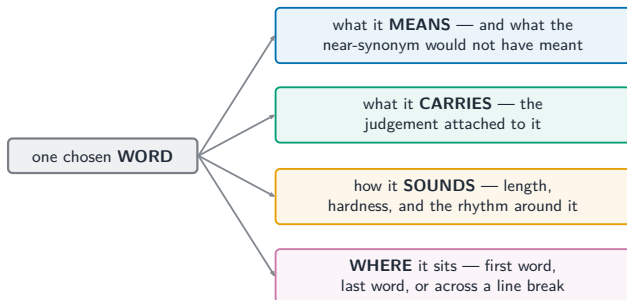


The Function of Specific Words and Phrases

Ambiguous reference is worth special attention. In prose it is usually a fault; in poetry it is often a device, and a pronoun that could point two ways may be holding both meanings deliberately.

- An **antecedent** is a word, phrase, or clause that precedes its referent.
- Referents are ambiguous if they can refer to more than one antecedent, which affects interpretation .
- Words or phrases may be repeated to emphasise ideas or associations.
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of the same initial sound in adjacent or nearby words, emphasising those words.

One word, four jobs



- An **antecedent** is a word, phrase, or clause that precedes its referent.
- **Referents are ambiguous if they can refer to more than one antecedent, which affects interpretation .**
- **Words or phrases may be repeated** to emphasise ideas or associations.
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of the same initial



The transfer only runs one way

- A **simile** uses “**like**” or “**as**” to liken two objects or concepts.
- Similes liken two different things **to transfer the traits or qualities of one to the other** .
- In a simile, the thing **being compared** is the **main subject**; the thing **to which it is compared** is the **comparison subject**.

The transfer only runs one way, in detail

Simile and metaphor have the same parts



WHICH quality? The text decides - not the dictionary.

shelter? · confinement? · something one must live inside?

the poem says the house has "rooms she no longer enters" - so: confinement

The sentence that scores: main subject + comparison
subject + the quality transferred.

A **simile** likens two different things with **like** or **as**, to transfer the qualities of one onto the other.

The Function of a Simile

Those two terms are the whole method. A scoring answer names the main subject, names the comparison subject, and then says **which quality was transferred** – because that quality is the claim the poem is making.

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The Function of a Metaphor

That last point protects you from the commonest error, which is importing every association a word has. If a poem calls grief *a house*, the relevant quality might be shelter, or confinement, or the fact that one must live inside it. The text decides which.

- A **metaphor** implies similarities between two usually unrelated concepts to reveal or emphasise qualities of the main subject.
- The same main-subject and comparison-subject structure applies.

Metaphor: the limits of the transfer

- Comparisons draw on the experiences and associations readers already have with the comparison subject – which is why a metaphor can fail with an audience that lacks those associations.
- Interpretation of a metaphor may depend on the context of its use: what is happening in the text may determine which of the comparison subject's qualities is meant.



Developing a Paragraph with Claim and Evidence

Same three components as Unit 1: a **claim** requiring textual defence, the **textual evidence**, and details identified **in combination**.

Worked example – reading a comparison

A poetry-analysis prompt asks how the speaker's use of comparison conveys their attitude.

- **Weak:** *"The poet uses a metaphor comparing memory to a house, which is effective."*
- **Scoring:** *"The main subject is memory and the comparison subject a house, but the poem withholds warmth from it: the house has 'rooms she no longer enters'. The quality transferred is not shelter but confinement by a structure one built oneself."*

Main subject, comparison subject, and the quality actually transferred – read from the poem's own words, not from what a house usually means.

Exam tips

- What a speaker **omits** is evidence. In a poem, everything present was chosen.
- **Find the shift** first. A *but*, a stanza break, a change of tense – the poem divides there.
- **Line endings are the emphatic position.** Say which words the poet put there.
- An **ambiguous referent** in poetry is usually a device, not an error.
- Always name **main subject and comparison subject**, then the **quality transferred**. That quality is the claim.
- **Context decides which quality** a metaphor imports. Do not list every association the word has.



Unit 2 – key takeaways

1

Omit

what a speaker leaves out is evidence

2

Shift

find it first – but, stanza break, tense

3

Line endings

the emphatic position – name the words

4

Metaphor

main subject, comparison subject, quality transferred

Check yourself

- 1 In a poem, everything present was what?
- 2 What should you find first?
- 3 Which position is emphatic?
- 4 Name the three parts of a comparison.

Answers: chosen ▪ the shift ▪ line endings ▪ main subject, comparison, quality