

Name  
Date  
Subject  
Teacher

English 11  
Snow Day Packet  
Day 6  
**Onomatopoeia in Poetry**

*Objective: Students will demonstrate an understanding of figurative language, and nuances in word meanings.*

**Directions:** Read the lesson, make five annotations using the annotation guide. After, answer the questions that follow. You may circle or highlight the correct answers.

Discuss the effects of onomatopoeia on poetry

When a poet uses onomatopoeia, the word, itself, looks like the sound it makes, and somehow we 'hear' it as we read.

### **Definition of Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia is one way a poet can create sounds in a poem. An **onomatopoeia** is a word that actually looks like the sound it makes, and we can almost hear those sounds as we read.

Here are some words that are used as examples of onomatopoeia: slam, splash, bam, babble, warble, gurgle, mumble, and belch. But there are hundreds of such words!

### **Examples**

We'll take a look at how onomatopoeia is actually used in poems. The first poem is 'The Bells,' by Edgar Allen Poe. Poe begins the poem with a benign look at bells and how sweetly they can sound, but in Poe fashion, he moves to a darker, more sinister role that bells play in life. Here is one stanza from the poem:

'How they clang, and clash, and roar!

What a horror they outpour

On the bosom of the palpitating air!

Yet the ear it fully knows,

By the twanging

And the clanging,  
How the danger ebbs and flows;  
Yet the ear distinctly tells,  
In the jangling  
And the wrangling,  
How the danger sinks and swells, -  
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells,  
Of the bells,  
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells -  
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!'

Let's look at the onomatopoeia in the poem. When Poe uses words like, clang, clash, roar, jangling, clamor and clangor, we hear the discordant noise of the bells, not a sweet sound. It reminds us of a fire alarm - something that jars the senses. This is the exact effect that Poe is hoping to produce. Also, even though the word 'bells,' itself, is not usually considered onomatopoeia, by repeating it as he does, we hear the consistent ringing. By choosing these types of words, Poe creates a dark, frightening mood.

For another example, here is a poem called 'Storm' by Olisha Starr that gives us another excellent example of onomatopoeia.

'Booming and Banging thunder in the air  
Crashing and Rumbling waves against wet rock  
Bombing and scraping, lighting the sky  
Swishing and Sloshing rain on a windscreen  
Metallic thuds on a tin roof  
Swishing and Swooshing the flooding roads  
Howling and Moaning, wind attacking

Wavering, Crashing and Sizzling

Power everywhere

Thudding and Banging hail on every window

Slamming and Echoing

doors in the house.'

We have all experienced a storm at one time or another, and the wind does howl! Here is the onomatopoeia that we see in this poem: booming, banging, crashing, rumbling, bombing, scraping, swishing, sloshing, swooshing, howling, moaning, sizzling, thudding, banging and slamming. Depending on the fierceness of the storm, we may hear these sounds to a greater or lesser degree, but didn't this poet do a stellar job at giving us the sounds of a storm? This is onomatopoeia!

### Lesson Summary

An **onomatopoeia** is a word that actually looks like the sound it makes, and we can almost hear those sounds as we read. It can be difficult to communicate the sense of sound in imagery, and onomatopoeia is an excellent word tool to achieve this purpose. This use of figurative language can increase the dramatic effect and emotional appeal of the poem.

### Assessment

1. By using onomatopoeia, the readers can almost \_\_\_\_\_ what the poet intends.

- see
- understand
- hear
- write

2. In Poe's poem, 'The Bells,' we see an example of how onomatopoeia can effect the \_\_\_\_\_ of a poem.

- mood
- meaning
- appeal

- length

**3. Onomatopoeia conveys which one of the five senses?**

- touch
- sound
- smell
- sight

**4. Onomatopoeia is a type of \_\_\_\_\_ language.**

- archaic
- expressive
- figurative
- bland

**5. In the poem 'Storm,' we get the idea that the poet is experiencing a:**

- misty rain
- quiet night
- spring shower
- a fierce storm