

Alliteration Effects

Alliteration is the repetition of initial (usually) consonant sounds. It would be convenient if a simple rule could be given for how and why to use certain sounds, but no such general rule exists. However, poets will use certain letters or sounds to bring about cultural connotations in their readers' minds – this relies on sound symbolism. Sometimes, the alliteration can serve simply as a means of emphasizing the dominate image in the piece. Remember, no sound in itself has any exact meaning or even implication, but there are some general rules of thumb for alliteration. All of that said, this list is a starting point for your understanding of the effects of certain letter-sounds, culturally, and should be used as a **general guide – not as something that is carved in stone** (look at topic of the poem to make a determination).

Letter	Type of Sound	Example	Effect
B	Hard / plosive (makes an explosive sound when pronounced)	The foul fiend <u>b</u> ites my <u>b</u> ack Oh, the whiteness of her breasts: poreless, flawless, of breathless beauty, white blossoms tipped with divine blush among the fat, overripe, icy, black blackberries to eat blackberries for breakfast , / the stalks very prickly, a penalty	percussive sounds (like beating / sound made by banging things together) / harsh physical sound / adds to sinister nature / creates a sense of abruptness or authority
C – hard (like K)	Hard / guttural / plosive	Carries cat clawed her couch, creating chaos.	harsher sounds create a feeling of hardness / too many create cacophony and can reinforce the action in the poem/ give a sense of abruptness or authority
C – soft (like S)	Sibilant	Words like city (can also include “S” words to create the alliteration)	Sibilants bring to mind snakes, a common image for evil as with the biblical serpent; the sound of the wind in trees or to create a hushed reverential tone.
D	Hard / plosive	1. "... his appearance: something <u>d</u> ispleasing, something <u>d</u> own-right <u>d</u> etestable. I never saw a man I so <u>d</u> isliked and yet I scarce know why. He must be <u>d</u> eformed somewhere ..." (11). 2. <u>D</u>uring the whole of a <u>d</u>ull, <u>d</u>ark , and soundless <u>d</u>ay in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly <u>d</u>reary tract	give a sense of abruptness or authority elicits visceral reactions 1. In the example, the D produces a revolting effect in the reader, every time he mentions Mr. Hyde. 2. produces a revolting and dismal effect on the reader.
F	Hard	The <u>f</u> oul <u>f</u> iend bites my back	harsh physical sound / adds to sinister nature
FL	—	fly, flee, flow, flimsy, flicker, and fluid	suggestive of lightness and quickness
G	Hard / guttural / plosive	Great Granny grab it from Gale's Grandpa	harsher sounds create a feeling of hardness
GL	—	gleam, glisten, glow, glint, glitter, and glimmer	refer to brightness
H	Soft / breathy	Health, happiness and hope for the New Year!	Suggests breathlessness / Has soothing effect
J	Gliding (sound created while breathing out)	Jesse's jaguar is jumping and jiggling jauntily	
K	Hard / guttural	Kim's kid's kept kiting	harsher sounds create a feeling of hardness / give a sense of abruptness or authority
L	Soft / liquid consonant	Larry's lizard likes leaping over leopards.	Used in lullabies / soothing sound / produces an effect of lightness.

M	Soft	Melodies' melodic microphone made beautiful music But could also indicate frustration or anger depending on context of piece	used in lullabies / soothing sound
N	Hard	Noise, nausea, and loneliness-but that's nothing really new	Adds a halting cadence to the grim, negative text.
P	Hard / plosive (makes an explosive sound when pronounced)	"From pillar to post, a pantomime of damp, forgotten washing" among the fat, overripe, icy, black blackberries to eat blackberries for breakfast, / the stalks very <u>prickly</u> , a <u>penalty</u> ...	This recreates the puffs of wind blowing the washing about. Can also give a sense of abruptness or authority depending on context of the poem
Q	SEE "K"	Quincy's quilters quit quilting quickly	
R	Liquid consonant / rolling	Stuttering rifles rapid rattle The rapidly rising river rushed rampantly	Can reflect the movement of the object being described with it
S	Sibilant	"The snake spat and hissed, striking viciously at the soft and supple mouse." Examples: 1. Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain 2. Of these the false Achitophel was first; A name to all succeeding ages cursed. 3. close the serpent sly, Insinuating, wove the Gordian twine. 4. I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet	Sibilants bring to mind snakes, a common image for evil as with the biblical serpent; the sound of the wind in trees or to create a hushed reverential tone. Suggests smoothness, slyness, or controlled anger Examples explained: 1. the s is used to create a sense of quickness and smoothness. 2. the s sound hisses with controlled anger 3. the s suggests the malice and slyness of the serpent, and of course the serpent's hiss as well. 4. The repetition of the s sound creates a sense of quiet, reinforcing the meaning of the line
T	Hard / plosive	Tim took tons of tools to make toys for tots	give a sense of abruptness or authority
V	SEE "F"	Vivien's very vixen-like and vexing	
W	Gliding / wispy and airy	The whispering winds swirled the mists of memory, wandering over the moors,"	hushed feeling which is reinforced by the resemblance of the sound to the actual sound of wind
Z	Sibilant	Zachary zeroed in on zoo keeping.	

Assonance and consonance follow similar principles. For example, O and oo sounds are often used to create a sense of the ghostly.