

What does the rhyme scheme of “O Captain! My Captain!” reveal about its structure and meaning?

In this lesson you will learn
how to analyze the impact the
structure of a text has on its
meaning by looking at its
rhyme scheme.

Let's Review

O Captain! My Captain!

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O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman

Authors carefully choose what to include in a text

Hmmm... I will use
rhyme to draw attention
to this section.

Please reader!
Come and notice!
There's more here!



Core Lesson

- 1 Identify the rhyme scheme of a poem
- 2 Look for breaks in the rhyme scheme
- 3 Ask, “How does the rhyme scheme enhance the author’s message?”

Core Lesson

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5

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10
15

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20
25

Walt Whitman

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Core Lesson

1) Identify the rhyme scheme

Rhyme scheme means
looking at end rhyme

There once was a cat A
who sat on a mat A
He took a nap B
until he heard a snap! B
It was a man in a hat A
saying, "That's not a mat, A
it's my map!" B

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A
A
B
B
C
D
E
D

Rhyme
Scheme=
AABBCCDED



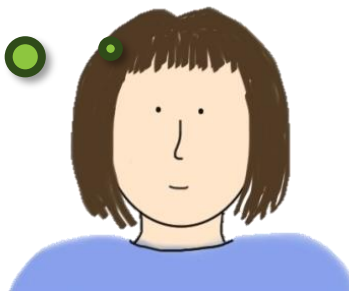
Core Lesson

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A
A
B
B
C
D
E
D

Rhyme
Scheme=
AABBCDED



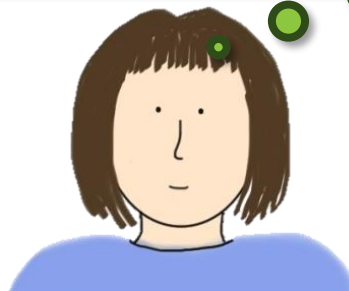
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A
A
B
B
C
D
E
D

Rhyme
Scheme=
AABBCEDE



Core Lesson

2) Look for breaks in the rhyme scheme

O Captain! My Captain!

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A
A
B
B
5 C ←
D
E
D

A
10 A
B
B
C ←
D
15 E
D

A
A
B
20 B
C ←
D
E
25 D



Core Lesson

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3) Ask, “How does the rhyme scheme enhance the author’s message?”

- Jolts us and draws attention to the shifting theme: joy/ sorrow.
- Pattern continues to solidify meaning



A
A
B
B
5 C
D
E
D

A
10 A
B
B
C
D
15 E
D

A
A
B
20 B
C
D
E
25 D

Core Lesson

What does the rhyme scheme of “O Captain! My Captain!” reveal about its structure and meaning?

The rhyme scheme in each stanza is AABBCDED. The first four lines begins what appears to be a regular pattern, but then it breaks and is interrupted in the last four lines. It jolts us as readers and emphasizes those lines, which also reveal a change in the theme, from excitement to mourning. It also creates a wave effect for the reader, further emphasizing the dual theme of joy and sorrow.

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