# Grade 8: Reading Benchmark

## Poetry

8.R.1.4: Analyze structure, sound, imagery, and figurative language in poetry.

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# Benchmark Introduction



## Benchmark:

Examine the structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in a poem.

# Definition of Poetry

“The best words in the best order.”

*—Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

# Elements of Poetry

Poets use structure, sound play, imagery, and figurative language to support their meaning and to create an impact.

# Definition of Structure

The **structure** of a poem is the way the poem is arranged on the page, and includes:

- How the lines are arranged and grouped
- The patterns of meter, rhyme, and repetition

# Definition of Sound Play

Poets choose and arrange words to create an impact with **sound.**

- Rhyming words arranged in a pattern
- Specific sounds or patterns of sound within and between words
- The rhythm created by stressed and unstressed syllables

# Sound Play: Rhyme Scheme

The pattern of rhyming words within a poem is called its **rhyme scheme.** Common types of rhyme include:

- **end rhyme**: rhyme at the end of a line
- **slant rhyme**: two words similar in sound and appearance as to almost rhyme
- **internal rhyme**: rhyming of words within one line

# Sound Play: Word Sounds

Poets often emphasize individual sounds between and within words. Common types of sound play include:

- **onomatopoeia**: A word that imitates a sound (as “buzz” or “hiss”).
- **alliteration**: The repetition of beginning consonant sounds.
- **assonance**: The repetition of vowel sounds.
- **repetition**: Words, phrases, lines, or stanzas that are repeated.

# Definition of Imagery

**Imagery** is descriptive language that helps a reader imagine how something looks, sounds, smells, feels, tastes, and/or conveys a certain emotion.

# Definition of Figurative Language

**Figurative language** expresses something other than the literal, or actual, meaning of the words. Some common types of figurative language are:

- **personification**: giving human qualities to something that isn't human
- **allusion**: a reference to a well-known real or fictional event, person, place, or thing.
- **metaphor**: a comparison between two different things to express a quality they have in common

# “Carrying a Ladder”: Example of analyzing structure, sound, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

We are always
really carrying
a ladder, but it’s
invisible. We
only know
something’s
the matter:
something precious
crashes; easy doors
prove impassable.
Or, in the body,
there’s too much
swing or off-
center gravity.
And, in the mind,
a drunken capacity,
access to out-of-range
apples. As though
one had a way to climb
out of the damage
and apology.

by Kay Ryan

- **Structure:** The poem is arranged in one long stack of short lines to form a long, narrow shape, like a ladder. But the lines are irregular in length, creating a feeling of swaying.
- **Sound:** Notice how the repetition of the vowel sound (assonance) in “ladder” weaves and sways through the poem, rather than landing in one particular location, like the movement of an unsteady ladder.
- **Imagery:** The phrase “something precious crashes” is auditory imagery, or something we can hear.
- **Figurative language:** The ladder is “invisible” so the phrase “carrying a ladder” takes on a figurative meaning. “Easy doors prove impassable” suggests missing an opportunity.

# Benchmark Skill Routine



# How to analyze structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

Read the poem aloud. Then read closely, highlight, and annotate details that help you identify the poem's topic or themes.

- What words or phrases catch your eye? Why?
- Does the poem tell a story, or is it more like a picture?
- Annotate details that reveal something about the speaker, setting, and events in the poem (*who, what, where, when*).

# How to analyze structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

Make observations about the **structure** of the poem.
How does the structure support the poem's topic or themes?

- Notice how lines are arranged on the page: length, stanza groupings, line breaks, and stanza breaks.
- Can you identify a **rhyme scheme** or **meter** (pattern of rhythm)?
- Does the poem follow an established poetic form?

# How to analyze structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

Make observations about the **sound play** you **hear** in the poem. How do the sounds support the poem's topic or themes?

- Look for particular sound devices and their placement, and what words or phrases they connect or emphasize (onomatopoeia, assonance, repetition, alliteration).
- Listen for the rhythm of lines and what words are stressed by the rhythm.

# How to analyze structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

Make observations about the **types of language** in the poem. How does this language support the poem's topic or themes?

- Notice the **imagery** in the poem. What images or scenes does the writer want you to see?
- Identify uses of **figurative language**. What types of comparisons are made to the poem's topic?
- Is there other specialized language, such as jargon or slang?

# Remember

1. Read the poem aloud. Then read closely, highlight, and annotate details that help you identify the poem's topic or themes.
2. Make observations about the structure of the poem. Does it have an established form? How does the structure support the poem's topic or themes?
3. Make observations about the sound play you hear in the poem. How do the sounds support the poem's topic or themes?
4. Make observations about the types of language in the poem. How does this language support the poem's topic or themes?

**Benchmark in Action:** Example of how to analyze structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry



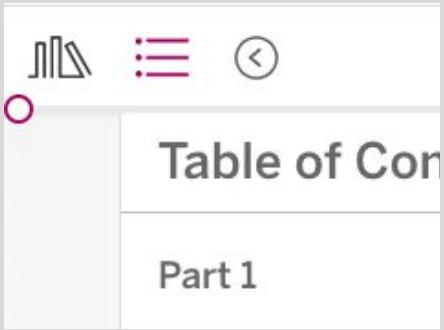
# Get ready to read “The Bells” by Edgar Allan Poe.



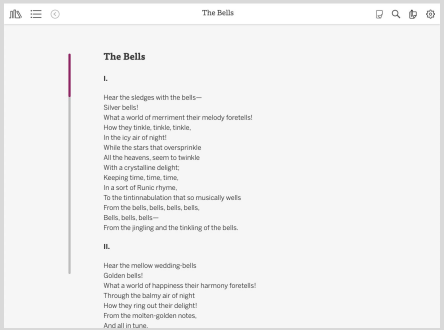

1. Open the Library app.




2. Type “The Bells” into the search bar.




3. Click on the title of the poem to open it.




4. Read the first stanza of “The Bells.”

# Read the first stanza of “The Bells.”

As you read...

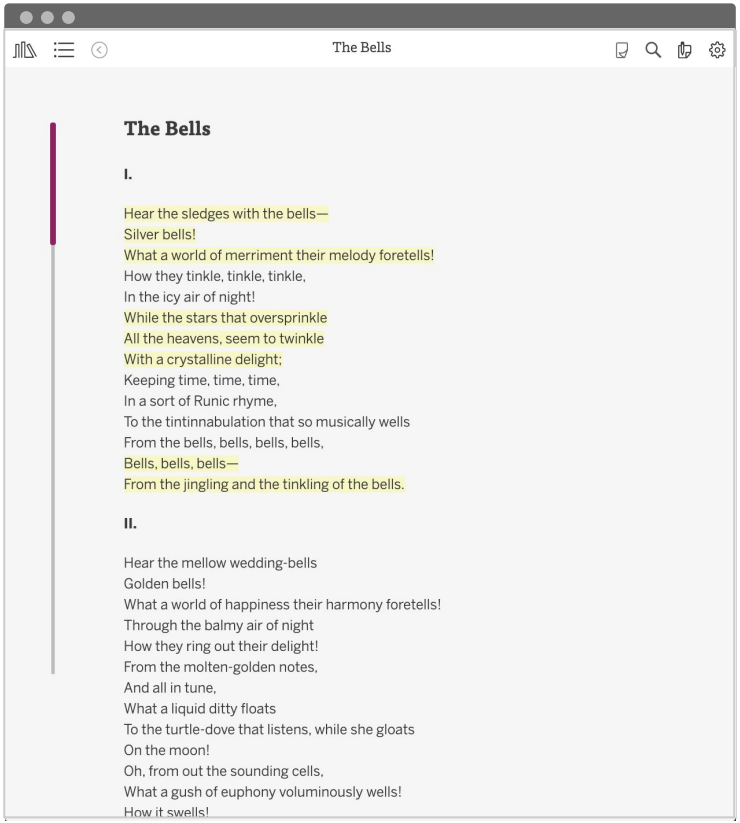
- highlight and annotate details that help you identify the poem’s topic or themes.
- make observations about the structure of the poem.
- make observations about the sound play you hear in the poem.
- notice the imagery in the poem and identify uses of figurative language.

# Practice Step 1

Read the poem aloud. Then read closely, highlight, and annotate details that help you identify the poem's topic or themes.

- What words or phrases catch your eye? Why?
- Does the poem tell a story, or is it more like a picture?
- Annotate details that reveal something about the speaker, setting, and events in the poem (*who, what, where, when*).

# Practice Step 1



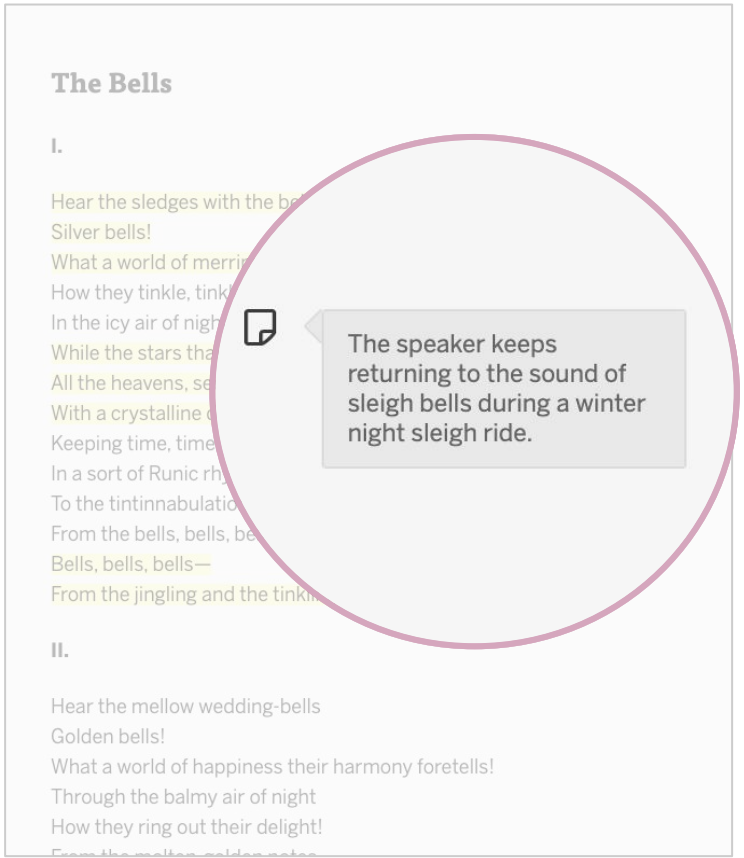

## Highlight details that reveal the poem's topic or themes.

"Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!"

"While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;"

"Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells."

# Practice Step 1




## Annotate details that reveal the poem's topic or themes.

- The speaker keeps returning to the sound of sleigh bells during a winter night sleigh ride.
- The setting is wintertime. It is cold and icy. The sky is filled with stars.

# Practice Step 2

Make observations about the **structure** of the poem. How does the structure support the poem's topic or themes?

- Notice how lines are arranged on the page: length, stanza groupings, line breaks, and stanza breaks.
- Can you identify a **rhyme scheme** or **meter** (pattern of rhythm)?
- Does the poem follow an established poetic form?

# Practice Step 2 Examples:

The lines of the poem are various lengths, but the line breaks all occur at the end of a sentence or phrase which supports a "smooth" reading of the poem.

There is not a consistent rhyme scheme.

The rhythm (meter) of the poem often follows a regular pattern (a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: "**In** the icy **air** of **night**!"), underscoring the idea of horses trotting with a sleigh.

# Practice Step 3

Make observations about the **sound play** you **hear** in the poem. How do the sounds support the poem's topic or themes?

- Look for particular sound devices and their placement, and what words or phrases they connect or emphasize (onomatopoeia, assonance, repetition, alliteration).
- Listen for the rhythm of lines and what words are stressed by the rhythm.

# Practice Step 3 Examples:

1. The poem uses both word sounds and onomatopoeia to suggest the sounds of snow and ice (lots of hard 'k' sounds) and the sounds of bells: tinkle; sprinkle; twinkle; crystalline.

2. The poet uses repetition to create a rhythm that perhaps suggests both the sound of the sleigh bells and the rhythm of the horses pulling the sleigh.
   a. "How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle"
   b. "Keeping time, time, time"
   c. "From the bells, bells, bells, bells, / Bells, bells, bells—"

# Practice Step 4

Make observations about the **types of language** in the poem.
How does this language support the poem's topic or themes?
Notice the **imagery** in the poem.

- What senses does the language appeal to?
- What images or scenes does the language help you see?
  Highlight **figurative language** in the poem.
- What do any comparisons suggest about the poem's topic?
  Is there other language used to convey a feeling or idea?

# Practice Step 4 Example:

The language and imagery stays focused on recreating the sensation of a nighttime sleigh ride. The visual imagery focuses on the night sky. The auditory imagery focuses on the sound and rhythm of the sleigh bells. And the reader can feel the rhythm of the sleigh and sounds of winter when reading the poem out loud. Even the use of personification—the bell "foretells," or talks about, "a world of merriment"—focuses on animating the bells: making them the most "living" thing in the stanza.

# Remember

1. Read the poem aloud. Then read closely, highlight, and annotate details that help you identify the poem's topic or themes.
2. Make observations about the structure of the poem. Does it have an established form? How does the structure support the poem's topic or themes?
3. Make observations about the sound play you hear in the poem. How do the sounds support the poem's topic or themes?
4. Make observations about the types of language in the poem. How does this language support the poem's topic or themes?

# Independent Practice



## Benchmark:

Examine the structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in a poem.

# Navigate to “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks.

**Search** for this poem on a poetry website such as poets.org.

# Practice analyzing structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

## Step 1

Read the poem aloud. Then read closely, highlight, and annotate details that help you identify the poem's topic or themes.

## Step 2

Make observations about the structure of the poem. How does the structure support the poem's topic or themes?

# Practice analyzing structure, sounds, imagery, and figurative language in poetry

### Step 3

Make observations about the sound play you hear in the poem.
How do the sounds support the poem's topic or themes?

### Step 4

Make observations about the types of language in the poem.
How does this language support the poem's topic or themes?

# Check for Understanding



# Share and Discuss

1. What are two or three details that help you identify the poem’s topic or themes?

# Share and Discuss

2. How does the structure of the poem support the poem’s topic or themes?

# Share and Discuss

3. What sound play do you hear in the poem? How do the sounds support the poem’s topic or themes?

# Share and Discuss

4. Notice the imagery in the poem. What images or scenes does the writer want you to see?