

Selected Readings in English Literature

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Classical (Classic) English Poetry: Meter and Rhyme

WALTER SCOTT
1771-1832
The Lady of the Lake
1802

Harp of the North! that mouldering long has hung
On the withelm that shades Saint Fillan's spring,
And [on] the fitful breeze thy numbers flung,
Till envious ivy [with her] verdant ring
Mantled and muffled each [musical] string.—
O [wiseard] harp, still must thine accents keep,
Mid rustling leaves & fountain's murmuring;
Still must thy sweeter sounds their silence keep,
Nor bid a warrior smile, nor teach a maid to weep?

Nor thus, in ancient days of Caledon,
Was thy voice mute amid the festal crowd,
When lay of hopeless love, or glory won,
Aroused the fearful, or subdued the proud.
At each according pause, thou spoken aloud
Thine ardent [sympathy] sublime & high,
Fair dames & crested chiefs attentive bow'd;
For still the burthen of thy minstrelsy
Was knighthoods dauntless deed, & beauty's matchless eye

O wake once more! how rude so e'er the hand
That ventures [on] thy magic maze to stray;
O wake once more! [although] [he] [but] command
Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay:
Though harsh & faint, & soon to be forgot,
And all uncertainty of the noble strain.

The Lady of the Lake
1802

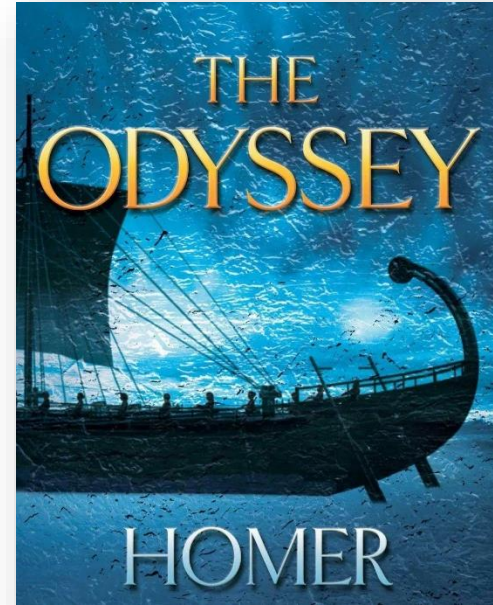
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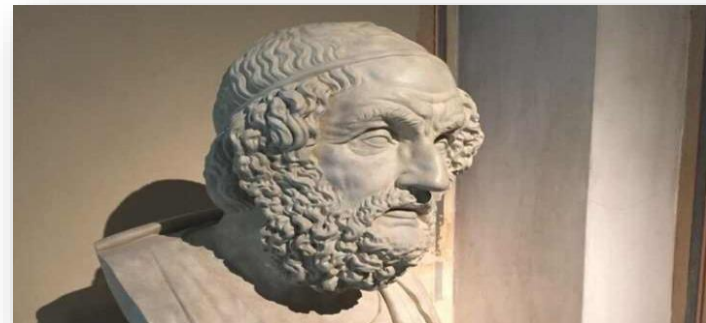
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1. classical vs. classic

- The classical world gave us many things, from philosophy to democracy to clean drains (e.g. The comedy movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* cues what the Romans have ever done for the British's routine).
- The ancient world gave us poetry: finest examples of classical poetry from ancient times, ranging from Middle Eastern epics to Roman lyrics.
- The word *classical* properly refers in the Western academic tradition to the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome.



- **Homer** (9th or 8th century BCE?), ***Odyssey***: One of the first, and greatest, epic poems in all of Western literature.
- The *Odyssey* has had an greater impact on subsequent literature, and remains one of the greatest epic poems ever written. **The character of Odysseus, or Ulysses in his Roman incarnation, looms large in modern literature.**
- **Alfred lord Tennyson** (1809-1892) wrote a dramatic monologue *Ulysses* (1833) about his twilight years.
- **James Joyce** (1882-1941) used the narrative structure of the *Odyssey* as the rough basis for his modernist novel *Ulysses* (1922), which covers the events of one day in Dublin in 1904.
- The thing which makes Odysseus such a distinctive character, and the *Odyssey* such fun to read, is his cunning: known as the “man of many wiles”, he outwits the Cyclops Polyphemus (古希腊神话中的独眼巨人), finds a way of hearing the Sirens’ song (古希腊神话中半人半鸟或半人半鱼的女海妖, 以美妙歌声诱使航海者驶向礁石或进入危险水域) and living to tell the tale, and manages to make his way home to his wife, Penelope. (古罗马神话中战神奥德修斯(即尤利塞斯)的妻子, 她为了等候丈夫凯旋, 坚守贞节20年, 于是后人将这个名字引申为“忠贞”的代名词。)



2. Factors battling for poets' attention : chaos and control

- A poem uses the formal (**sound and visual**) aspects of language to control the chaotic (**meaningful and expressive**) aspects of language.
- Form is used to control and curb language to make it digestible, more powerful and contained for the reader.
- A poem is a structured thing, but a heavy-handed structure can ruin a poem.



3. “Classic” patterns of English poetry: aural and visual

- How can the classic patterns help poets make sense of verse?

- ❑ In the making of a poem, pattern is one of the most important ways of building form and structure.
- ❑ In classical verse, pattern was established by using a traditional form and meter, where lines had set numbers of beats(scansion and prosody), and rhymes.
- ❑ Pattern and variation are general categories that include the more traditional subjects of scansion and prosody that deal with the sound of the poem (what we call aural pattern) but also the matters of how the poem looks on the page (what we call visual pattern).
- ❑ Nowadays, most poetry written in English is free verse, rather than in traditional forms.

4. Elements of poetry

● Sound, Form, Sense, and Imagery

- stanza (strophe)
- line (verse)
- foot
- syllable
- arsis (stressed syllable)
- thesis (unstressed syllable)
- meter (measure)
- rhyme: assonance, consonance, alliteration
- rhyme scheme
- end-stopped line vs run-on line (enjambment)
- rhetoric devices



5. Tips on reading poetry

- Read aloud, listening for **rhythms and rhyme**.
- Recognize the plain sense of the words before looking for hidden meanings. (**poetic devices**)
- Who talks to whom about what? Clearly seeing this dynamic can open many poems.
- Track **themes** and patterns of meaning that flow from the above.

6. Meter and metrical patterns

6.1 What is Syllable?

- Syllable is a very small unit of speech sound. Every word is made up of one or more syllables. E.g. “Cat” contains one syllable. “Monkey” contains two syllables.

6.2 What is Foot?

- Each pair of unstressed and stressed syllables make up a bigger unit of sound is called “foot”. A foot refers to a unit of meter in poetry. (metrical patterns)

6.3 What is Meter?

- In poetry, meter is the basic rhythmic structure of a verse. It refers to the recurring patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. The number and order of “feet” in a poem determine the meter.

6.4 How many syllabic patterns/feet? →prosody(节奏)

English poets use only seven kinds of metrical feet. The names of these feet and the patterns of accented and unaccented syllables they represent are as follows:

- ◆ **iamb:** defeat, return
- ◆ **trochee:** listen, double
- ◆ **dactyl:** Here we go, merrily
- ◆ **anapest:** contravene, with a leap
- ◆ **spondee:** football, three men
- ◆ **pyrrhic:** the season of mists
- ◆ **amphibrach:** tomorrow



6.5 How many Feet / numbers of feet? →scansion (律度)

Each line of a poem contains a certain number of feet of iambs, trochees, spondees, dactyls or anapests. A line of one foot is a monometer, 2 feet is a diameter, and so on.

- ◆ monometer
- ◆ diameter
- ◆ trimeter
- ◆ tetrameter
- ◆ pentameter
- ◆ hexameter
- ◆ heptameter
- ◆ octameter



Poetic Meter

These terms show number of stresses or **feet** to a line:

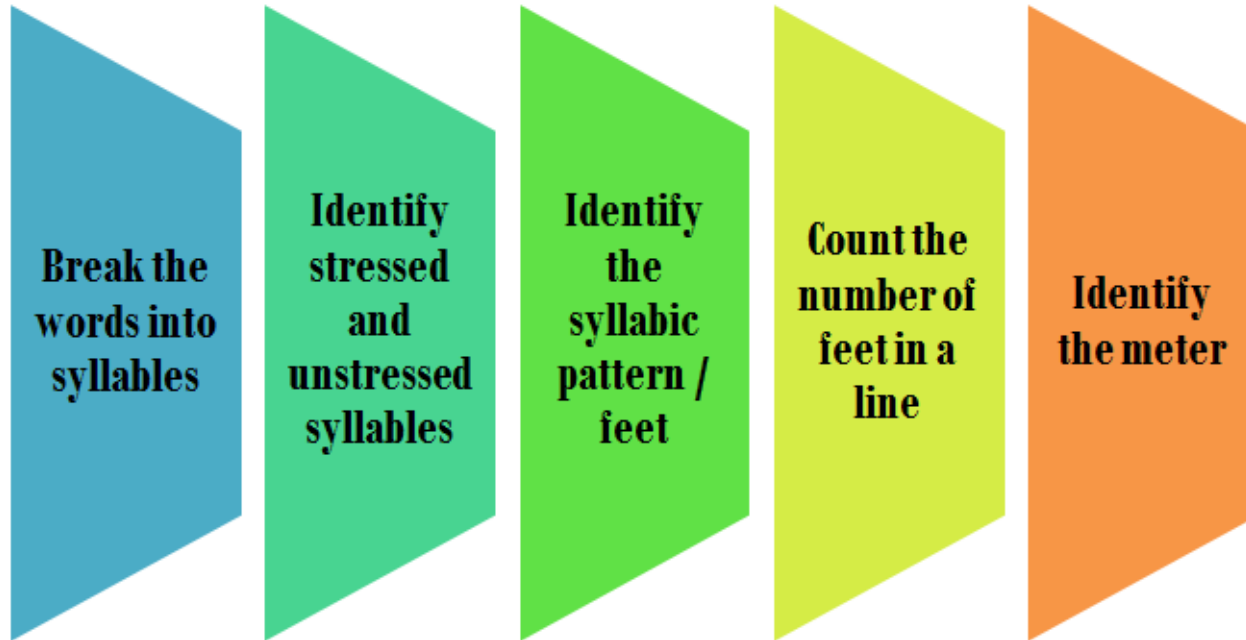
- ◆ One stress (**foot**) per line = mono + meter = monometer
- ◆ Two = di + meter = dimeter
- ◆ Three = tri + meter = trimeter
- ◆ Four = tetra + meter = tetrameter
- ◆ Five = penta + meter = pentameter
- ◆ Six = hex + a + meter = hexameter
- ◆ Seven = hep + a + meter = heptameter
- ◆ Eight = oct + a + meter = octameter

6.6 What is the Meter Type/Metrical Pattern?

- The meter type is based on how many feet are put together in one line.
- A line consisting of one iambic foot is an iambic monometer; of two trochaic feet, trochaic dimeter; of three anapaestic feet, anapaestic trimeter;...
- The meter types include iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter, dactylic hexameter, and more.
- Two meter types may occur in the same line.



6.7 How to find a meter type in a poem? Step by step process:





Examples of Meter in Poetry

➤ **iambic pentameter**

And swims | or sinks, | or wades, | or
creeps, | or flies

➤ **iambic tetrameter**

Tyger! | Tyger! | burning | bright

Examples
of
Meter
in Poetry.



Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Shall I | compare | thee to | a sum- | mer's day?

In the forests of the night

In the | forests | of the | night

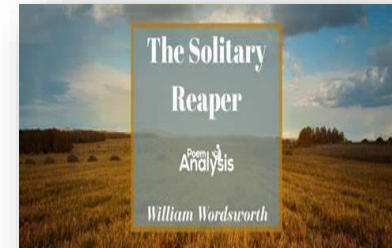
Thou art more lovely and more temperate

Thou art | more love- | ly and | more tem- | perate

6.8 end-stopped line vs. run-on line: (two contrasting poetic devices)

- **An end-stopped line** is a line of poetry in which a sentence or phrase comes to a conclusion at the end of the line.

*Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!*



- **A run-on line:** In poetry, a run-on line means moving over from one line to another without a terminating punctuation mark. It is also known as **enjambment**.

*O Listen! For the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.*



7. Rhyme and rhyme schemes

- Sound devices that add to the aural appeal in poetry include assonance (元韵), consonance (和韵/谐韵), and alliteration (头韵), etc.

7.1 Assonance: repetition of internal **vowel** sounds of words close together in poetry

- Example-1: *I made my way to the lake.*
- Example-2: *The large black cat jumped onto the table.*
- Example-3: *The kind guide said aside he would chop the way for us.*
- Example-4: *One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace.* (Lord Byron)

She Walks in Beauty

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

她走在美的光影里

拜伦

她走在美的光影里，像夜晚
皎洁无云且漫天繁星；
明与暗的最美妙的色泽
在她的容颜和秋波里呈现：
柔和成一片恬淡的清光
浓艳的白天得不到的恩泽。

多一道影太浓，少一缕光太暗，
都会损害这难言的美
美在她的每一缕黑发间涌动，
也在她的脸庞洒满柔辉；
恬静的思绪指明
它的来处是多么纯洁而珍贵。

呵，那面颊，那额际
如此温和，如此娴静，楚楚动人。
迷人的笑容，照人的光彩，
都在说明一个善良的生命，
恬静的，涵容一切的胸怀，
蕴蓄着纯真爱情的心田！



A stylized signature of George Gordon Byron.

7.2 Consonance: repetition of internal or ending **consonant** sounds of words close together in poetry as in “*pitter patter*” (噼啪噼啪[雨声]) or in “*all mammals named Sam are clammy*” (所有叫山姆的哺乳动物都是湿漉漉的)

- ❑ Example-5: *I dropped the locket in the thick mud.*
- ❑ Example-6: “*O where are you going?*” *said reader to rider.* (W. H. Auden)



(1907-1973)

7.3 Sibilance (齿擦音) : another special case of consonance, the use of several sibilant sounds such as /s/ and /sh/.

□ Example-7: (W. H. Auden's *O Where Are You Going?*)

*Behind you swiftly the figure comes softly,
The spot on your skin is a shocking disease?*

- The repeating 's' sound gives the impression that death is creeping up on the reader and the rider with death being disease.

□ Example-8: (Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*)

*And the silken sad unscertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before*

那柔软、暗淡、飒飒飘动的每一块紫色窗布
使我心中充满前所未有的恐惧，我毛骨悚然

- This example also contains assonance around the “ur” sound.

□ Example-9:

Another example of consonance is the word “sibilans” itself.

7.4 Alliteration: the repetition of **consonant sounds** at **the beginning of words** or stressed syllables. Sometimes the repetition of initial vowel sounds is also referred to as alliteration.

- ❑ Example-10: *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.* 笛手彼得拿起一配克腌制的胡椒。(tongue twister)
- ❑ Example-11: *When I do count the clock that tells the time.* 当我细数报时的钟声敲响。(William Shakespeare's line from Sonnet 12)
- ❑ Example-12: *Fair is foul and foul is fair.* (William Shakespeare's line from *Macbeth*)

美即丑恶丑即美。(朱生豪 译)

美即丑，丑即是美。(卞之琳 译)

祸即是福，福即是祸。(方平 译)

Alliteration vs. Consonance: Difference and Comparison

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ① Alliteration is a literary device that involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words close.
- ② Consonance is a similar device but includes repeated consonant sounds in any position within nearby words.
- ③ Both alliteration and consonance are used to create rhythm, musicality, and emphasis in poetry and prose.

O Where Are You Going?

W.H. Auden

“O where are you going?” said reader to rider,
“That valley is fatal when furnaces burn,
Yonder’s the midden whose odors will madden,
That gap is the grave where the tall return.”

“O do you imagine,” said fearer to farer,
“That dusk will delay on your path to the pass,
Your diligent looking discover the lacking
Your footsteps feel from granite to grass?”

“O what was that bird,” said horror to hearer,
Did you see that shape in the twisted trees?
Behind you swiftly the figure comes softly,
The spot on your skin is a shocking disease?”

“Out of this house” — said rider to reader,
“Yours never will” — said farer to fearer,
“They’re looking for you” — said hearer to horror,
As he left them there, as he left them there.

哦，你将去往何处？

W.H.奥登

“哦，你将去往何处？”读书人向骑马人问道，
“那火焰滚滚的峡谷是致命的，
远方都是粪秽，散发癫狂气味，
那谷口是坟墓，只待高傲回程。”

“哦，你能够想象吗，”忧惧者向旅行者问道，
“黄昏将拖延你前行的步伐，
你的孜孜以求将绝少收获，
你的脚踪将从岩冈迈向草场？”

“哦，那是只什么鸟？”讨厌鬼向旁听者问道，
“你看见那棵歪树上的东西了吗？
就在我身后那形影轻捷地飞来，
把你吓起一身鸡皮疙瘩？”

“离开这屋子”——骑马人对读书人说，
“而你绝不会”——旅行者对忧惧者说，
“都是来找你的”——旁听者对讨厌鬼说，
他就离他们而去了，他就离他们而去了。

- In poetry, “O” is used at the beginning of a line to show a direct address to a person, object, or idea. It’s what we call **a poetic apostrophe**.(顿呼)
- ✓ The use of “O” in poetry is **an interjection** (感叹词) that is used before a name in direct address, especially in solemn or poetic language, in order to lend earnestness to an appeal.
- ✓ The word “O” is used in the vocative (呼格), that is, as **an invocation** (祈祷), in order to address something or someone.
- ✓ The word “O” serves as **a signifier of the self-consciously poetic**.
- ✓ **ironic uses**
- The structure adopts quatrain stanzas and **iambic tetrameter rhyming**. This is old fashioned adding to the archaic quality.
- The whole poem is deliberately archaic and vague (like many of Auden’s poems) to help make his ideology echo throughout time and apply to all time periods.
- In this poem, the poet has skillfully created a scene and dialogue between two imaginary persons. The poet has used various situations where these two imaginary characters talk to each other. One is the symbol of hope and courage and the other represents frustration and negativity. Through this poem, the poet tells us that the way to success is not clear and easy.
- The notion of poetry as a kind of therapy, performing a function somehow similar to the psychoanalytical (精神分析), remains fundamental in Auden.

7.5 Other types of rhyme

- Divided from the syllabic number with the same vowel and consonant
(从出现的同音的音节数量来划分)

7.5.1 Masculine rhyme /Single rhyme (阳韵/单韵): A masculine rhyme occurs when a single syllable at the end of the word, which is stressed, such as *claims, flames ; rare, despair; flight, sight; days, plays*.

□ Example-13:

*This is the Hour of **lead***

*Remembered if **outlived**,*

*As Freezing persons recollect the **Snow**—*

*First Chill, then Stupor, then the letting **go**.*

(Emily Dickinson)

这是如铅的时刻

存入记忆，虽然已是过往，

正如挨冻的人，想起雪——

先是觉得冷，其次麻木，然后任其飘落。

7.5.2 Feminine rhyme/ Double rhyme (阴韵/双韵): A feminine rhyme matches two or more syllables, with the last syllable being unstressed.

- words that sound the same in *both* syllables of words, for example, *habit*, *rabbit* and *grab it*, rhyme on the first syllable /ab/ and on the second syllable /it/
- also consider words such as *field*, *sealed* and *repealed* and notice how these words have a double rhyme on the /e/ sound and the /ld/ sound

□ Example-14: *Here lie I and my four daughters,*
Killed by drinking Cheltenham waters.

□ Example-15:

<i>A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted</i>	你有上苍亲手绘制的女人般的面庞
<i>Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;</i>	又是主宰我激情的霸王;
<i>A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted</i>	你的心如女人般温雅, 但莫测高深难亲近
<i>With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;</i>	多愁善感, 就像女人虚幻的容妆;

(William Shakespeare's lines from Sonnet 20)

7.6 Onomatopoeia (拟声): the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named, or a word that imitates the natural sound of a thing(e.g. cuckoo, sizzle, buzz, hiss)

- For example, a bee's buzz. Here, the spoken word sounds like the bee itself.
 - Other examples include snap, crack and whack which are often seen in cartoons where the word is the sound itself.
- Example-16: (*The Bells* by Edgar Allan Poe)

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** [...]*

它们发着铿锵声，碰撞声和咆哮声！

连空气都吓得瑟瑟发抖

耳朵洞察了这一切

通过那叮叮当当的铃声

.....

- In this section of the poem, the poet uses words like “twanging” and “clanging” to describe one of the four types of bells he's interested in. These words contrast to those used to describe the silver bells, “jingle” and “tinkle,” as well as those which describe the iron bells like “toll.” This choice allows the reader to imagine exactly what these bells sound like.

7.7 Rhyme Schemes: the ordered pattern of those rhyming arrangements from line to line in a poem. This pattern is labeled using capital letters, such as the common **ABAB** rhyme scheme, or **ABA BCB CDC DED EE** for a terza rima(三行隔句押韵), or **ABABBCBC** for a ballade.

Rhyme Schemes		
Type	Rhyme Structure	Details
Alternate Rhyme 隔行韵	ABAB	Alternating the rhyming pattern throughout (ABAB CDCD EFEF GHGHG)
Ballade 三节联韵诗	ABABBCBC BCBC	Typically comprised of three, eight-line stanzas (ABABBCBC) followed by a four-line stanza (BCBC).
Coupled Rhyme 偶韵	AA BB	Pairs the rhymes into couples with new sounds (AA BB CC DD) or dueling sounds (AA BB AA BB)
Enclosed Rhyme 抱韵	ABBA	The first line and fourth line rhyme and enclose a pair of new rhymes in the middle. Also called an internal rhyme scheme.
Limerick 五行打油诗	AABBA	A five-line poem that starts with a coupled rhyme scheme but finishes by enclosing lines three and four with a rhyme matching lines one and two.
Simple four-line rhyme	ABCB	Simple pattern that is used throughout the entire poem.
Terza rima 三行隔句押韵	ABA BCB	Italian poetry made of tercets that use a chain rhyme, where the first and third line of a stanza rhyme with the second line of the previous stanza.
Triplet 三连韵	AAA	Set of three lines in a stanza (a tercet) that share the same rhyme

8. Other poetry tools



Imagery

Imagery: language that (normally, though not always) evokes the senses.

- Visual: relating to sight. (The most frequent type of imagery.)
 - Aural or auditory imagery: relating to sound.
 - Olfactory imagery: relating to smell.
 - Gustatory imagery: relating to taste.
 - Tactile imagery: relating to touch.
 - Kinaesthetic imagery: relating to movement and bodily effort.
 - Abstract imagery: appealing to the intellect or a concept.
- Images are often not exclusive to one type – they often overlap.

Examples of Imagery

Sight!

The razor sharp teeth of the huge dinosaur, now inches from me, made me want to be a dentist.

Sound!

Raindrops first ping and then clang on the metal roof when a storm approaches.

Touch!

“I love soft, chilly raindrops on a hot summer day!” said the pumpkin’s hand.



Smell!

In the garden, the fresh scent of rain mingles with the earthy smell of the damp soil.

Taste!

Too thirsty to drink only raindrops, we gulped glasses of tart, sweet, and lemony lemonade.

SNOW

Snow is white
It tastes like white chocolate melting
It sounds like rain falling quietly
It smells like a coconut freshener
It looks like a white coat on the ground
It makes me feel cold

By Brenda Martinez