Handout # 6  Rhyme Scheme

**Definition:** The way in which a poet arranges rhymes throughout a poem is called a rhyme scheme. It is customary to show the pattern of a rhyme scheme by using the letters of the alphabet, attaching the same letter to words that rhyme together.

The rhyme scheme for Tennyson’s “The Eagle” would be indicated this way: aaa / bbb.

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  (a)
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  (a)
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.  (a)

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  (b)
He watches from his mountain walls,  (b)
And like a thunderbolt he falls.  (b)

**Assignment:** Complete the rhyme scheme for Robert Frost’s “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening.”

Whose woods these are I think I know, __ __ __ __ __ __
His house is in the village though __ __ __ __ __ __
He will not see me stopping here __ __ __ __ __ __
To watch his woods fill up with snow __ __ __ __ __ __

My little horse must think it queer __ __ __ __ __ __
To stop without a farmhouse near __ __ __ __ __ __
Between the woods and frozen lake __ __ __ __ __ __
The darkest evening of the year. __ __ __ __ __ __

He gives his harness bells a shake __ __ __ __ __ __
To ask if there is some mistake. __ __ __ __ __ __
The only other sound’s the sweep __ __ __ __ __ __
Of easy wind and downy flake __ __ __ __ __ __

The woods are lovely, dark and deep, __ __ __ __ __ __
But I have promises to keep, __ __ __ __ __ __
And miles to go before I sleep, __ __ __ __ __ __
And miles to go before I sleep. __ __ __ __ __ __

1. What do you notice about the rhyme scheme? ____________________________________________________

2. Why does Frost choose to repeat the final rhyme in the last stanza? ________________________________

3. On a separate sheet of paper, analyze the poem using the TP-CASTT method.
Rhyme

Poetry appeals to the senses. Chief among them? Sound. Good poetry pleases the ear. Remember, poetry was for many years an oral tradition. No -- not all poetry rhymes. Rhyming poetry did not even appear regularly in the English language until sometime after the Norman conquest (1066). And, yes, poetry is decorative. However, used skillfully, rhyme can contribute significantly to the following:

1. rhythm
2. mood
3. meaning

Definition: **Rhyme** usually means end rhyme -- that is, words at the end of one line having the same vowel (or consonant) sound as words at the end of one or more other lines. However, other forms of rhyme include **internal rhyme**, **sight rhyme**, and **half rhymes**.

“A Psalm of Life” by Longfellow illustrates **end rhyme**.

> Life is real! Life is earnest!
> And the grave is not its goal;
> Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
> Was not spoken of the soul.

Poe’s “The Raven” is an example of **internal rhyme**.

> Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
> Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore --
> While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
> As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
> “Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door --
> Only this and nothing more.”

This excerpt from a poem by John Milton shows **sight rhyme**.

> Had not his weekly course of carriage failed.
> But lately finding him so long at home,
> And thinking how his journey’s end was come,
> And that he had tane up his latest inn . . .

**Half rhyme** is used by George Herbert in “The Collar.”

> While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
> Away! Take heed;
> I will abroad.
> Call in thy death’s head there; tie up thy fears.
> He that forbears