GLOSSARY OF POETRY TECHNIQUES AND THEIR EFFECT ON MEANING

Allegory
A narrative in which another story or meaning is embedded - may be philosophical, historical, theological or moral.
Effect: To make a subject easier to understand; to entertain and teach simultaneously.

Alliteration
Repetition of consonant sounds in words with close association
Effect: Appeals to our sense of sound; gains attention; can create a particular mood

Allusion
A reference to another story or text within a text – either directly or by implication.
Effect: Enriches writing and meaning; a few words can create a large image.

Analogy
An extended simile or metaphor; a comparison demonstrating similarities between two things, people or situations.
Effect: Makes the explanation easier, extends our understanding.

Antonyms
Words which are opposite to each other in meaning
Effect: Creates a contrast

Assonance
Repetition of vowels sounds in words with close connection; eg. how now brown cow
Effect: Appeals to our sense of sound; enhances imagery.

Connotation
Feelings, emotions, subtleties suggested by a word or phrase, as opposed to the word itself.
Effect: Conveys images in poetry; persuades in some texts (advertising).

Context
The circumstances (historical, social or cultural) or facts that surround a particular situation, event or text.
Effect: Every time you hear, read, see something, a set of circumstances influences your interpretation, therefore the meaning for you; composers are influenced by the context of their times and circumstances; responders are similarly influenced and find different meanings.

Elegy
A poem that expresses a lament; an expression of mourning or grief; a longing for something or someone that/who is absent.

Hyperbole
Exaggeration; usually verbal. eg. “Your bedroom looks like a cyclone has hit it.”
Effect: used to highlight or emphasise a point.

Imagery
When a picture is created in our imagination by the writer’s choice of words
Effect: to make a connection; to deepen meaning and create greater understanding.

Metaphor
A comparison between two unlike things which states that one thing is another. Eg. The moon is a balloon.
Effect: creates vivid images; engages the audience; creates greater understanding.

Ode
A type of poem or lyric verse which is usually addressed to a ‘personified’ being; eg. Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn”; usually dignified, with a lofty tone.
Onomatopoeia
A figure of speech where the sound of the word is the same as the meaning. eg. Tick, tock, buzz, honk, snap
Effect: meaning and imagery is enhanced.

Personification
A comparative figure of speech in which inanimate (non-living) objects or ideas are given human qualities.
Effect: creates vivid imagery and enhances meaning.

Repetition
Repeating of words and phrases or verses in a text.
Effect: used to emphasise a point, gain attention; create pleasing sounds in poetry.

Simile
A comparative figure of speech in which a person or object is said to be like another. (usually flagged by the words 'like' or 'as').
Effect: Enhance imagery; provides the reader with a connection to greater understanding.

Symbol
Something that stands for something else – may be colour, illustration, object. eg. A red rose symbolises love and passion.
Effect: Carries additional meaning; creates a shorthand link which does not need explicit expression.

Tone
The attitude being conveyed by the composer through word choice; emotional colouring.
Effect: creates meaning and conveys emotion beyond the literal meaning of the words.