

Sometimes a poet will create imagery in which one sensation is described in terms of another. This technique is called **synesthesia**. The chart shows an example from “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”

Example of Imagery	What Is Being Described
Heard melodies are sweet	A sound (melodies) is described in terms of a taste (sweet).

As you read the poems, note the types of imagery Keats uses to vividly convey his ideas to readers.

Reading Strategy: Paraphrase

Keats’s poetry can be challenging to read because of its **inverted syntax**—a change in word order that places the verb before the subject. Poets of his era often used inverted syntax to meet the demands of poetic meter and rhyme. Note the example of inverted syntax in the fourth line of this passage from “To Autumn.”

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;*

To help you understand the complex phrasing and sentence structures within the poems, **paraphrase**, or restate in your own words, difficult or confusing passages. An example is shown below.

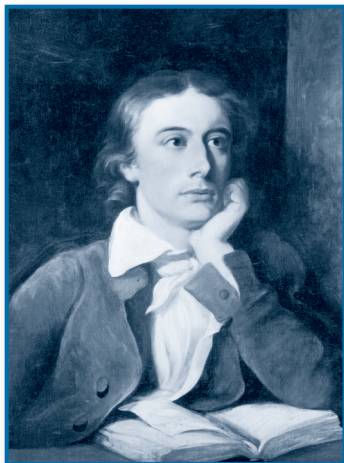
Keats’s Phrase	Paraphrase
<i>“...and bless / With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run”</i>	<i>and bless with fruit the vines that grow around the thatched roofs</i>

As you read Keats’s poetry, you will be asked to paraphrase lines and record your paraphrases in charts like the one above.

SET A PURPOSE FOR READING

Read this poem to discover why the speaker fears dying prematurely.

When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be



Poem by **JOHN KEATS**

BACKGROUND Keats wrote this poem—his first Shakespearean sonnet—in early 1818. For Keats, that year was filled with disappointment in work and love and was the beginning of the poet’s ill health. The sonnet hauntingly anticipates Keats’s death in 1821 at the age of 25.

A PARAPHRASE

Use the chart below to restate the meaning of lines 7–8.

Keats’s Phrase



Paraphrase

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean’d¹ my teeming brain,
 Before high piled books, in charactry,²
 Hold like rich garners³ the full ripen’d grain;
 5 When I behold, upon the night’s starr’d face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance; **A**
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 10 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the fairy power
 Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

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1. **glean’d**: collected all the bits from; examined bit by bit.
 2. **charactry**: handwriting.
 3. **garners**: storage bins.



Poem by
JOHN KEATS

BACKGROUND Keats wrote this poem on September 19, 1819. A walk Keats took from Winchester, England to London on an autumn night served as its inspiration.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves¹ run;
 5 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 10 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells. **B**

SET A PURPOSE FOR READING

As you read this poem, try to picture the abundant beauty of autumn the speaker describes.

B IMAGERY

Reread lines 1–11. Circle words and phrases that suggest the abundance of the setting. What feeling does the speaker seem to convey about autumn?

1. **thatch-eaves:** protruding edges of thatched roofs.

C PARAPHRASE

Who is being addressed in lines 12–22?

In your own words, restate the speaker’s message.

D IMAGERY

Reread line 26 and underline Keats’s use of **synesthesia**. What is the sensation that is used to describe another?

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

15 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing² wind;

Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,

Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook³

Spares the next swath⁴ and all its twinéd flowers:

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

20 Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cider-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours. **C**

Where are the songs of Spring? Aye, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—

25 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; **D**

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river willows,⁵ borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

30 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;⁶

Hedge crickets sing; and now with treble soft⁷

The redbreast whistles from a garden croft;⁸

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

2. **winnowing** (wĭn'ō-ĭng): separating chaff from grain by blowing the chaff away.

3. **hook**: a scythe, or tool with a curved blade used for mowing and reaping.

4. **swath**: a row of grain to be cut.

5. **sallows**: willow trees.

6. **boorn**: region.

7. **treble soft**: faint high pitch.

8. **croft**: a small enclosed field.



Ode on a Grecian Urn

Poem by **JOHN KEATS**



BACKGROUND Many antique vases show gods, goddesses, heroes, and mortals entangled in adventures. Traditionally, urns have been used as containers or for burial. The urn Keats describes is painted with a series of mythological scenes, but no one knows exactly which urn Keats had in mind when he wrote this ode. Probably it is an imaginative combination of several vases he had seen in engravings and in the British Museum. Keats addresses the vase itself in the first stanza.

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan¹ historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
5 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about² thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?³
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?⁴
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
10 What pipes and timbrels?⁵ What wild ecstasy? **E**

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1. **Sylvan**: pertaining to trees or woods.
 2. **haunts about**: surrounds.
 3. **Tempe** (tĕm'pĕ') . . . **Arcady** (ār'kĕ-dĕ): two places in Greece that became traditional literary settings for an idealized rustic life. Tempe is a beautiful valley; Arcady (Arcadia) is a mountainous region.
 4. **loath**: unwilling; reluctant.
 5. **timbrels**: tambourines.

SET A PURPOSE FOR READING

Read this poem to find out how an elaborate antique vase inspires the poet's imagination.

E IMAGERY

Reread lines 1–10. What do you picture from the imagery in this description? Use the chart to respond.

Examples of Imagery



What Is Being Described

SET A PURPOSE FOR READING

Read this poem to discover why the speaker envies the nightingale.



Ode to a Nightingale

Poem by **JOHN KEATS**

BACKGROUND Keats was inspired to write this ode after hearing the nightingale’s song while staying at a friend’s house in Hempstead. There are no nightingales in North America. Their unearthly, sad, sweet song can only be heard in the British Isles and in central and western Europe.

H IMAGERY

Reread lines 1–10. Underline the words the speaker uses to describe his physical and mental state. What effect does the nightingale’s song have on the speaker?

1

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock¹ I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards² had sunk:
5 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad³ of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen⁴ green, and shadows numberless,
10 Singest of summer in full-throated ease. **H**

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1. **hemlock:** a poisonous plant.
 2. **Lethe-wards** (lē'thē): into oblivion. The Lethe was a river in the underworld of Greek mythology; drinking its waters was said to bring forgetfulness.
 3. **Dryad** (drī'əd): in Greek mythology, a nymph or god of the woods.
 4. **beechen:** relating to beech trees.



IMAGERY

Reread lines 35–40. Circle descriptive words and phrases. What scene do these images create in your mind?

But on the viewless wings of Poesy,¹¹
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
35 Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply¹² the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;¹³
But here there is no light,
Save¹⁴ what from heaven is with the breezes blown
40 Through verdurous¹⁵ glooms and winding mossy ways. **1**

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed¹⁶ darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
45 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;¹⁷
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
50 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6

Darkling¹⁸ I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused¹⁹ rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;

11. **viewless:** invisible; **Poesy** (pō'ī-zē): poetry.
12. **haply:** perhaps.
13. **Fays:** fairies.
14. **Save:** except.
15. **verdurous** (vûr'jər-əs): green with plant life.
16. **embalmed** (ëm-bämd'): perfumed.
17. **pastoral** (päs'tər-əl): rural; **eglantine** (ëg'län-tîn'): honeysuckle or sweetbrier.
18. **Darkling:** in the dark.
19. **mused:** meditated; pondered.



55 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
 60 To thy high requiem become a sod.²⁰ **PAUSE & REFLECT**

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:²¹
 65 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth,²² when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements,²³ opening on the foam
 70 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
 Adieu! the fancy²⁴ cannot cheat so well
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
 75 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 80 Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep? **K**

20. **requiem** (rĕk'wĕ-əm): funeral mass; sod: a piece of earth.
 21. **clown**: rustic; peasant.
 22. **Ruth**: the biblical Ruth, who left her native land to live with her husband's people.
 23. **casements**: hinged windows that open outward.
 24. **fancy**: the "viewless wings of Poesy" mentioned earlier.

PAUSE & REFLECT

How has the nightingale affected the way the speaker feels in this stanza?

K ODE

Describe the **tone** of the poem. How is the tone characteristic of an ode?

Text Analysis: Imagery

Find an example of **imagery** from each poem and record it in the first column of the chart. (Include at least one example of **synesthesia** in the chart, and tell which two senses it blends). In the second column, describe the effect of the imagery. For example, you might consider what idea it expresses or feeling it conveys.

Poem	Example of Imagery	Effect of Imagery
“When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be”		
“To Autumn”		
“Ode on a Grecian Urn”		
“Ode to a Nightingale”		

Reading Strategy: Paraphrase

Paraphrase lines 75–78 of “Ode to a Nightingale.”

What is BEAUTY?

Look back at what your classmates equated beauty with on page 296. Recall that Keats wrote, “I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.” Describe something that others would not necessarily consider beautiful but that you yourself do. Then explain the “principle of beauty” that influences your own feelings.

Academic Vocabulary in Writing

device

differentiate

function

inherent

technique

In past eras, poets commonly used **devices** such as rhythm and rhyme to **differentiate** their work from prose. Some modern poets do not use these devices. They rely on other **techniques** to create poetic works. Write a brief explanation of how a reader can determine whether a selection qualifies as poetry. Use at least two of the Academic Vocabulary words in your response. Definitions of these words appear on page 215.

Assessment Practice

DIRECTIONS Use the poems to answer questions 1–4.

- Which contains an example of synesthesia?
 - Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance*
 - Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness*
 - In some melodious plot / Of beechen green*
 - And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.*
- Which is the best paraphrase of the line “Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?” from “To Autumn”?
 - Who has seen you up at the store?
 - Who hasn’t seen you often among your stored harvest?
 - Who have you seen after the harvest?
 - Who haven’t you seen among the harvest?
- The phrase “Tasting of Flora and the country green” blends which two senses?
 - taste and touch
 - taste and smell
 - smell and touch
 - sight and taste
- The lines “While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day, / And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue” describe the effect of —
 - late afternoon autumn light and shadow on fields
 - clouds filling the sky on an autumn morning
 - sunshine through clouds on a field of spring flowers
 - striped clouds in a rose-red autumn sky