

Cheat Sheet Group Topic: Diction, Syntax, and Tone.

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Diction: The language or vocabulary the author uses in his poetic work. To create a meaningful poem the author must make sure that he uses the words that are most accurate to what he wants to say.

Syntax: Syntax and diction are related. Syntax determines how the words will be used; how will they be arranged in a sentence. In poetry the word order of a sentence changes so the poem can have rhyme or melody.

For example in the first two lines of Poe's poem in order to achieve rhyme between the words been and seen he ends the second line with seen.

“From childhood's hour I have not been

As others were—I have not seen”

Of course you can reword the second line to “I have not seen— as others were” but then you would lose the rhyme. So it is vital to the author when he chooses words and their arrangement because they end up enhancing the poem's meaning.

Tone: The tone in a piece of poetry lets us figure out the mood of the speaker in the poem. Tone is created, or can be identified, by the syntax and diction.

Think of it this way: **Syntax + Diction = Tone.**

Poem: Alone by Edgar Allan Poe.

From childhood's hour I have not been	From the sun that 'round me roll'd
As others were—I have not seen	In its autumn tint of gold—
As others saw—I could not bring	From the lightning in the sky
My passions from a common spring—	As it pass'd me flying by—
From the same source I have not taken	From the thunder, and the storm—
My sorrow—I could not awaken	And the cloud that took the form
My heart to joy at the same tone—	(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
And all I lov'd—I lov'd alone—	Of a demon in my view—
Then—in my childhood—in the dawn	
Of a most stormy life—was drawn	
From ev'ry depth of good and ill	
The mystery which binds me still—	
From the torrent, or the fountain—	
From the red cliff of the mountain—	