

So You Want to Talk About Diction?

Understand that most poetic choice is instinctual. A talented poet feels the correct word not only because of its meaning but also because of the rhythm this choice supports or interrupts in the flow of the language choices in the poem.

Three Functions of Diction

1. Sound
2. Accuracy
3. Connotation

SOUND

Learn the mutes and the liquids

Mutes (8)

b, d, k, p, q, t, and c and g (as hard sounds)

These are sounds that cause an abrupt or hard stop to the sound of a word. They hard stop the voice more suddenly than say a long vowel or a liquid consonant. The effect is a pause--emphasis

Liquids (4)

l, m, n, and r

When liquids appear at the end of a word, they create a flow as the sound lingers a bit. This flow moves the reader easily to the next line.

Consider the following three imperatives:

Hush!

Please be quiet!

Shut up!

Analyze the use and effect of sound in each one.

Finally, examine and explain the difference between **rock** and **stone** as a poetic choice.

rock = sharp, ragged, jutting

stone = rounded and smooth

