

Imagery in poetry

Poets use imagery in several ways to provide intense descriptions. Think about the following techniques when you read, and look out for examples of each. You can read the entire poems below on the BBC poetry season website at: bbc.co.uk/poetryseason

*My heart is **like** a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;*
From *A Birthday* by Christina Rossetti



Similes describe something by comparing it to something else using '**like**' or '**as**'.

*The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.*
From *Preludes* by T S Eliot



Metaphors describe things using words or phrases that normally apply to something else. Metaphors are not meant to be literal; the meaning is 'carried across' from one word or idea to another. In this example, an evening cannot 'settle down' literally, but the image provided by the metaphor adds to a sense of cosiness.

*Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.*
From *Death* by Emily Dickinson



Allegory is an extended metaphor. In this example, 'Death' is personified as a visitor, taking the 'I' of the poem on a journey.