

LITERARY ANALYSIS: RHYTHM AND METER

Rhythm is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Rhythm that follows a regular pattern from line to line is called **meter**.

When you “scan” a line of poetry, you analyze its rhythm, marking the syllables that are stressed (´) and those that are unstressed (˘). This system is called scansion. Read these lines from “The Highwayman” out loud. Concentrate on the stressed and unstressed syllables.

The wínd wás á tórrent óf dárknèss ámong the gústý trées.

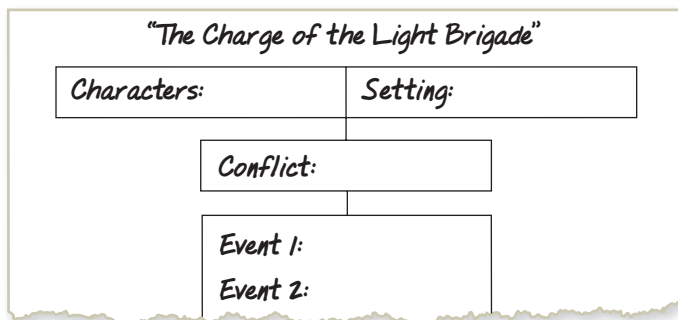
The móon wás á ghóstly gállèon tóssed úpon clóudy seás.

As you read the following selections, notice each poem’s rhythm and meter and the effect they create.

Review: Mood

READING STRATEGY: READING A NARRATIVE POEM

“The Highwayman” and “The Charge of the Light Brigade” are **narrative poems**, which means they tell stories. Like novels and short stories, narrative poems have characters, a setting, and a plot. As you read each poem, keep track of these elements in a story map.



VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced vocabulary words can help you picture the scenes in these poems. Match each word in Column A to the word or phrase in Column B that is closest in meaning.

- | Column A | Column B |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. cascade | a. twist |
| 2. claret | b. tan |
| 3. tawny | c. waterfall |
| 4. withe | d. dark red |

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: Victorian Poet

Tennyson’s best friend died in 1833, and the shock to Tennyson was severe. However, it was during this time of incredible grief that Tennyson wrote some of his best poetry. These poems were so popular that he was named poet laureate, or court poet, by Queen Victoria.



Alfred, Lord Tennyson
1809–1892

Alfred Noyes: Popular Poet

English poet Alfred Noyes wrote “The Highwayman” when he was only 24. Readers loved it, but critics didn’t. Regardless of the critics, Noyes still earned his living from poetry.



Alfred Noyes
1880–1958

Background

A Tragic Battle “The Charge of the Light Brigade” was inspired by a real-life battle in the Crimean War between England and Russia (1854–1856). A group of British troops called the Light Brigade, armed only with swords, was ordered to charge a unit of Russian gunners. Though the British lost this battle, they eventually won the war.



MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND BACKGROUND

To learn more about these poets and the Crimean War, visit the **Literature Center** at ClassZone.com.