

# Understanding Poetry

Read the following poem, *Spellbound* by Emily Brontë. It might help you to understand it if you read it aloud.

## **Spellbound**

by Emily Brontë

The night is darkening round me,  
The wild winds coldly blow;  
But a tyrant spell has bound me  
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending  
Their bare boughs weighed with snow.  
And the storm is fast descending,  
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,  
Wastes beyond wastes below;  
But nothing drear can move me;  
I will not, cannot go.

When you have read the poem, look at the questions below, which will help you to understand some of the language and poetic techniques.

- 1 Look at the two lists below of 'Words' and 'Meanings'.

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right. Use a dictionary to check your answers.

<b>Words</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
wild	a powerful influence on someone
a tyrant	to limit what someone is allowed to do by making them obey a rule or agreement
a spell	when trees or areas of land have nothing growing on them
to bind (bound)	a big branch on a tree
giant	stormy, with strong winds
bare	past a place or outside an area
a bough	large areas of empty land
to descend	extremely large
beyond	making you feel bored or unhappy
wastes	someone who rules a country in a cruel and unfair way
drear	to become lower/come nearer to the ground

- 2 Can you find examples of these poetic techniques in the poem? Underline them.

**alliteration** (using words that start with the same sound, e.g. *silver sky*)

**assonance** (using words that have the same vowel sound, e.g. *white night*)

**repetition** (using the same word more than once)

- 3 We can describe the rhyming patterns in a poem by using the letters A, B and C. The rhyming pattern for the following 4-line verse can be shown as AABA. The first two and the last lines all rhyme and so are all described as 'A':

He stood there softly at the door, **(A)**

I saw the smile he wore. **(A)**

He called my name, I turned to go, **(B)**

I could not stay for more. **(A)**

Look back at the poem *Spellbound* and choose which of the rhyming patterns below is used:

- a ABAB
- b ABCB
- c ABBA

4 Answer the following questions:

a Describe the mood, or tone, of the poem *Spellbound*, using words from the box if you wish.

sad happy thoughtful brave strong-minded threatening angry frightening

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a Do you like the poem?

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b Why do you think the person in the poem 'cannot go'?

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c Who or what do you think has cast a 'tyrant spell' on the person in the poem?

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