

Name: _____

Date: _____

Onomatopoeia in Literature

Authors often use **onomatopoeia**—words that imitate sounds—to try to describe the sounds that are part of the setting and plot. The use of **onomatopoeia** also helps authors to develop other figurative devices, such as alliteration and rhythm.

Exercise:

Identify the examples of onomatopoeia in each literary passage by underlining them. Then, on the line state what is making the sound.

“I will arise and go now, for always night and day / I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore.” (“The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” Yeats)

“Hear the loud alarum bells, / Brazen bells! / What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells! / In the startled ear of night / How they scream out their affright! / Too much horrified to speak / They can only shriek, shriek, / out of tune” (“Bells,” Poe)

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.” . . .
Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;

And I / Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound, / Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet; Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro’ the lawn, / The moan of doves in the immemorial elms, / and murmuring of innumerable bees.” (“Come Down, O Maid,” Tennyson)

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ANSWERS--Onomatopoeia in Literature

Authors often use **onomatopoeia**—words that imitate sounds—to try to describe the sounds that are part of the setting and plot. The use of **onomatopoeia** also helps authors to develop other figurative devices, such as alliteration and rhythm.

Exercise:

Identify the examples of onomatopoeia in each literary passage by underlining them. Then, on the line state what is making the sound.

“I will arise and go now, for always night and day / I hear lake water **lapping** with low sounds by the shore.” (“The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” Yeats)

The lake water is lapping on the shore.

“Hear the loud alarum bells, / Brazen bells! / What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells! / In the startled ear of night / How they **scream** out their affright! / Too much horrified to speak / They can only **shriek, shriek,** / out of tune” (“Bells,” Poe)

The bells are screaming and shrieking.

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a **tapping,**
As of some one gently **rapping, rapping** at my chamber door.

“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “**tapping** at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.” . . .

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a **flirt and flutter,**
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;

The raven is making all of these noises.

And I / Thy shepherd **pipe,** and sweet is every sound, / Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet; Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro’ the lawn, / The **moan** of doves in the immemorial elms, / and **murmuring** of innumerable bees.” (“Come Down, O Maid,” Tennyson)

The shepherd pipes; doves moan; and bees murmur.
