

Line Break

Definition of Line Break

A line break is a poetic device that is used at the end of a line, and the beginning of the next line in a poem. It can be employed without traditional punctuation. Also, it can be described as a point wherein a line is divided into two halves. Sometimes, a line break that occurs at mid-clause creates [enjambment](#).

Examples of Line Break in Literature

Example #1: *Cymbeline* (By William Shakespeare)

“With his own sword,
Which he did wave against my throat, I have ta’en
His head from him
I am absolute
Twas very Cloten”

There are two line break examples in the given passage. One line break cuts the line, “I have ta’en his head from him” in the middle, placing the line break at the end of the second line. Another line break is used in the fourth line, “I” being a person has an absolute meaning. These line breaks are determining the visual shape of this text.

Example #2: *Ulysses* (By Alfred Lord Tennyson)

“Match’d with an aged wife, **I mete and dole**
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: **I will drink**
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, **have suffer'd greatly**, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Vext the dim sea: **I am become a name**
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments..."

There are many line breaks within this excerpt. First, a line break cuts the phrase, "I mete and dole unequal laws unto a savage race," into two at the end of the first line. Similarly, a break occurs in other lines like "I will drink life to lees," "All times I have enjoyed greatly, have suffer'd greatly," and "I am become a name."

Example #3: *Ode to a Nightingale* (By John Keats)

"My heart aches, and **a drowsy numbness pains**
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drain ...
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot...
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease."

In this excerpt, Keats has employed line breaks to create different types of artistic effect. The line also forces readers to take a slight break, which in turn reinforces the disclosure of the following lines.

Example #4: *The Second Coming* (By William Butler Yeats)

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; **the centre cannot hold**;
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, **and everywhere**
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity ...

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last ...”

This excerpt is also filled with several line breaks. These include “the center cannot hold,” “and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned...”
The poet takes readers into surprising and multiple ideas.

Example #5: *Ozymandias* (By Percy Bysshe Shelley)

“Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, **stamped on these lifeless things**,
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. **Round the decay**
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

This excerpt is also a good example of line break. These line breaks give vitality to the poem, also creating breaks in the flow of reading.

Function of Line Break

Line breaks can be a source of dynamism in poetry, as they provide a manner whereby poetic forms inculcate contents with strength and consequential meanings – which might not be possible in other types of text in the same level. Line breaks are used as important poetic devices, because they often bring [ambiguity](#) and also affect the meaning. However, they lead readers into surprising ideas and different understandings, as well as controlling the manner wherein they come upon ideas.