

# Caesura

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# Definition

- **Caesura – a pause, which is a rhythmical pause in a poetic line or a sentence**
- **Poets indicate such a pause with a parallel symbol thus: ||**

# Medial Caesura

- I loked on my left half || as þe lady me taughte

And was war of a woman || worpeli ycloped.

- William Langland “Piers Ploughman”

# Initial Caesura

- **Dead ! || One of them shot by the sea  
in the east...**  
**What art can a woman be good  
at? Oh, vain!**
  - **Elizabeth Barrett Browning “Mother  
and Poet”**

# Terminal Caesura

- No voice says “My mother” again to me. || What !  
You think Guido forgot ?
  - Elizabeth Barrett Browning “Mother and Poet”

# Types of caesura

## Feminine Caesura

- Feminine Caesura = occurs after a non-stressed and short syllable in a poetic line
- It is for you we speak, || not for ourselves:  
You are abused || and by some putter-on  
That will be damn'd for't; || would I knew  
the villain,  
I would land-damn him. || Be she  
honour-flaw'd,  
I have three daughters; || the eldest is  
eleven – (Shakespeare “The Winter Tale”)

# Types of caesura

## Masculine Caesura

- Masculine pause occurs after a long or accented syllable in a line
- Of reeds and stalk-crickets, || fiddling  
the dank air,  
Lacing his boots with vines, || steering  
glazed beetles  
- Derek Walcott “The Bounty”

# Function of Caesura

- It breaks the monotonous rhythm of a line and forces readers to focus on the meaning of the phrase preceding the caesura
- It creates a dramatic or ominous effect
- Adds an emotional and theatrical touch to a line
- Helps convey depth of the sentiments