

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-cricket, || 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