Sick by Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today,"  
Said little Peggy Ann McKay.  
"I have the measles and the mumps,  
A gash, a rash and purple bumps.  
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,  
I'm going blind in my right eye.  
My tonsils are as big as rocks,  
I've counted sixteen chicken pox  
And there's one more--that's seventeen,  
My leg is cut--my eyes are blue--  
It might be instamatic flu.

I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,  
I'm sure that my left leg is broke--  
My hip hurts when I move my chin,  
My belly button's caving in,  
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.  
My nose is cold, my toes are numb.  
I have a sliver in my thumb.  
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,  
I hardly whisper when I speak.  
My tongue is filling up my mouth,  
I think my hair is falling out.  
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,  
My temperature is one-o-eight.  
I have a hangnail, and my heart is--what?  
What's that? What's that you say?  
You say today is... Saturday?  
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

• In blue are other examples of hyperbole.

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Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 4:38 PM  
Comment: This is an AABB rhyme scheme  
Today/McKay... mumps/bumps

We see this repeated through the rest of the poem.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 4:53 PM  
Comment: Here we see both a simile (a comparison using "like" or "as") and a hyperbole. (an extreme exaggeration).  
The little girl is comparing her tonsils to rocks (simile), but she is also exaggerating quite a bit (hyperbole).

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 4:47 PM  
Comment: Here we see a metaphor. – a comparison to something that does not normally belong together.  
She is comparing her illness to something that is "instamatic," which the flu is not. An "instamatic" is a type of automatic snapshot camera.

Kelly Gardner 9/20/10 3:52 PM  
Comment: Here we see more repetition of the first word "My". He does this in many of the lines of this poem.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 5:05 PM  
Comment: This is a change in the normal AABBBCC pattern or rhyme. The speaker changes and breaks the rhyme with "what", then rhymes the last three lines.
For a closer look at some poetic devices, look at the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of poetic device</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Examples in other works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SICK</td>
<td>Writing the main idea of the poem at the top</td>
<td>Give the reader an idea of what the poem is about</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I cannot go to school today,&quot; said little Peggy Ann McKay</td>
<td>Does not write lines to edge of page. Write each item or new phrase on new line. Each line begins with capital letter, even if in the middle of a sentence. All lines begin in same left-hand margin. No indentation for new paragraphs</td>
<td>Line length depends on rhythm pattern. Indicates that is a poem</td>
<td>Verse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I cannot go to school today,&quot; said little Peggy Ann McKay</td>
<td>Every other syllable in a line is stressed</td>
<td>Keeps a regular beat. Makes the poem sound like a song</td>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>laharic tetrameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...today...McCoy...dumps...bumps</td>
<td>The last word of each two lines sounds similar</td>
<td>Makes the poem sound like a song</td>
<td>Rhyme</td>
<td>Rhyming couplets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...my toenails are as big as rocks...my belly button's on fire</td>
<td>Comparing two things using &quot;like&quot; or &quot;as&quot;</td>
<td>Creating a vivid visual image; explaining a difficult or unfamiliar idea or object with something familiar</td>
<td>Imagery - simile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...my toenails are as big as rocks...my belly button's on fire</td>
<td>Making an exaggerated statement for effect</td>
<td>Creates humour</td>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It might be instant flu...</td>
<td>Comparing two things (falsely assumes that develops picture instantly) without using &quot;like&quot; or &quot;as.&quot;</td>
<td>Creating a vivid visual image; explaining a difficult or unfamiliar idea or object with something familiar</td>
<td>Imagery - metaphor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...my mouth is wet...my elbow's bent...</td>
<td>Includes &quot;inside&quot; things in list of ailments as contrast to real illnesses &quot;sore throat&quot; &quot;mumps&quot; &quot;chicken pox&quot;</td>
<td>Creates humour</td>
<td>Exaggeration, incongruity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...a shiver in my thumb...I have a hangnail...</td>
<td>Includes &quot;inside&quot; ailments with serious illnesses</td>
<td>Creates humour</td>
<td>Incongruity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a hangnail, and my heart is—what?</td>
<td>Pattern of rhyming: couplet in line. Last line rhyme.</td>
<td>Reinforces abrupt change in tone, change of direction in text. Unexpected break creates humour</td>
<td>Rhyme</td>
<td>Iliassome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You say today is Saturday? O'bye, I'm going out to play!</td>
<td>After long list of ailments, speaker is suddenly well when day is revealed to be non-school day</td>
<td>Creates humour</td>
<td>Irony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart – Courtesy of: By Jennifer Hind
Education Services Coordinator
The Royal Gazette