

## **Exploring Meaning Through Dominant Sound Patterns in Stephen Crane Poem's "Fast Rode The Knight"**

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Received: 15/06/2026

Revised: 28/06/2026

Accepted: 30/06/2026

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### **Abstrak**

This study aims to analyze the contribution of sound in establishing the meaning of the poem *Fast Rode the Knight* by Stephen Crane. Sound usage in poetry is not merely associated with aesthetic effects, but in some cases, it may serve as one of the instruments of interpreting the meaning. Therefore, this study tries to find out what consonants and vowels dominate in the poem and whether there is any connection between the sounds and the implied meaning of the poem. In order to accomplish it, a qualitative approach incorporating phonostylistic analysis was used. Data was acquired through repeated readings of the poem and transcribing the sounds into phonetics for each line. Sounds were then classified and analyzed according to their frequency for the determination of the dominant consonants and vowels. From the results, the most dominant consonant sounds in the poem are the /t/, /l/, /s/, /d/, and /n/ sounds, while the most dominant vowel sounds are /ə/, /i/, /o/, /æ/, as well as /i/, /ɔ/, and /aɪ/. Through the sounds that dominate in the poem, the word "lost" can be formed, even though it does not explicitly appear in the poem. The word carries the entire meaning of the poem, where there is a comparison between the heroic description at the start and the ultimate end that depicts the element of loss and incompleteness. From the findings, it can be concluded that sound patterns could also contribute to meaning making and give an additional layer in interpreting poems, other than looking at the text.

Keyword: Stylistics, Phono-stylistics, Poem, Sound

### **Introduction**

Language is the primary medium in literary works that allows writers to convey ideas, emotions, and human experiences aesthetically (Uduak, 2020). In literature, language acts as a mode of communication as well as an art used creatively by writers for their influence on the reader. One branch of science that studies the relationship between language and artistic effects in texts is stylistics. Stylistics can be simply defined as the study of styles in texts. In linguistics, styles refer to the manner in which the authors utilize language to communicate their messages or make an impact on their audience. According to Leech & Short (2013), stylistics is the study of style from in literary texts, aiming to explain the relationship between the writer's language choices and the meaning produced in the text. This approach places language as the main focus of analysis, so the interpretation of literary works is not only based on thematic meaning but also

on the linguistic structure that shapes the text. Furthermore, stylistics also provides a more systematic approach in the analysis of literary works because it employs linguistic concepts and methods. Therefore, the stylistic theory is frequently used for the analysis of various forms of literature, including novels, drama, and poetry (Manqoush, 2024). It includes literary criticism and linguistics in examining language influence on texts (Devi et al., 2023).

In literary works, especially poetry, the aspect of sound plays a very important role because poetry often relies on the musicality of language to create artistic effects. (G. Leech, 1983) states that sound patterns in poetry can create a relationship between linguistic form and poetic meaning, making sound elements one of the important components in the interpretation of poetry. The use of rhyme, rhythm, and the repetition of certain sounds can emphasize specific words or phrases, thereby reinforcing the message the poet wants to convey (Fabb & Sykari, 2022). Poetry itself is one form of literary work that has distinctive linguistic characteristics. Unlike prose, poetry tends to use language that is more compact, imaginative, and rich in symbols and connotative meanings. (Abrams & Harpham, 2015) define poetry as a form of literary work that uses language intensively and aesthetically to express human experience. The language in poetry is often arranged rhythmically and has specific sound patterns that provide a musical and emotional effect to the reader.

One element that often tends to draw attention in poetry is the sound structure existing within the literary work. These sound devices include such notions as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm, and although these are just aesthetic elements, sometimes they may help convey the poem's meaning as well. According to Simpson (2025), analysis of the sounds in poetry will help determine how the sound structure of the poem is connected with its meaning. One important branch of stylistics is phono-stylistics, which focuses on the sound elements in a text (Mohammed, 2025). Phono-stylistics studies how phonological aspects such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance are used to create aesthetic effects in literary works, especially in poetry. (Wales, 2014) explains that phono-stylistics is the study of the relationship between sound patterns in language and style in literary texts. Sound elements not only function as musical elements in the text but can also reinforce the meaning, atmosphere, and emotions that the writer wants to convey (Shofqorov, 2026).

Several previous studies have examined the role of phonological features in poetry using phono-stylistic analysis. From the study of Clara Vanessa C. De Castro et al. (2024), phonological aspects such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, and meter have a great influence in creating a lyrical effect on poetry. From their study, it is clear that the sound aspects not only improve the aesthetic aspect of poetry but also help in creating a better understanding of poetry by drawing attention to sound effects. This is due to the fact that poems invite readers to listen to the poetry by emphasizing the importance of sound patterns. The meaning of the poem can be understood based on the frequent sounds used in it.

Then, Rangkuti & Tannada (2024) conducted their research on Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem," focusing on the most repeated vowels and consonant sounds in it. They discover that the frequent sounds in the poem help readers comprehend its meaning. Lastly, Munaris et al. (2024) reveal the significance of phonological deviation in conjunction with other linguistic deviations to generate the meaning of poems. These studies show that phonological features play an important role in shaping meaning and aesthetic effects in poetry. However, there is still a lack of research that applies a phono-stylistic approach to Crane's poem "Fast Rode the Knight." The

poem's short and compact structure provides an interesting context for examining how repeated sound patterns contribute to meaning construction. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gaps by analysing how sound patterns in the poem function not only as aesthetic devices but also as key elements in constructing its implied meanings and themes. This study also expands previous phono-stylistic research by showing how dynamic phonological changes in the text actively drove the thematic transition from romantic heroism to the grim reality of war.

The main objective of this study is the poem "Fast Rode the Knight" by Stephen Crane. At first sight, the described action in this poem represents a heroic deed, which can easily be related to heroism. However, further on, the poem does not glorify the knight or his actions but rather describes the effects of wars, the truth about which the poem tries to show. While sound devices play an essential part in poems, the use of sounds in conveying meaning is not always adequately analyzed in literary analysis. Sounds are often regarded as decorative elements of a poem, without their significance being recognized as contributing factors in the development of its overall message. It is for this reason that the present study is concerned with the identification of the sound elements used in the poem "Fast Rode the Knight," written by Stephen Crane, and their effect on meaning construction. The outcome of this study will serve to better comprehend the nature of sound elements in poetry.

## **Method**

The methodology used in this study is qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research focuses on the interpretation, description, and analysis of linguistic features in literary texts (Creswell, 2014). This approach is appropriate for this study because it aims to interpret the phonological features and their contribution to meaning and theme in the poem rather than to measure or quantify the data. This study analyzes the phonological level of Stephen Crane's poem *Fast Rode the Knight* through the identification and interpretation of phonological features such as consonants, vowels, and syllable structures in relation to meaning.

The primary data source in this study is the poem "Fast Rode the Knight", while the research data consists of words, phrases, and lines containing phonological elements. The primary research instrument is the researcher, supported by phonetic transcription tables and linguistic references.

The data were collected using the documentation method through repeated readings of the poem, followed by phonetic transcription of the sounds found. The identified phonological features were then classified and recorded for analysis.

The data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive phono-stylistic approach. This approach involves identifying and classifying phonological features such as consonants, vowels, and syllable structures, followed by the interpretation of their contribution to meaning in the poem. According to Roach (2016), phono-stylistic analysis focuses on revealing prominent phonetic features that support the interpretation of meaning in literary texts. The analysis also includes syllable structure and sound patterns formed from combinations of consonants and vowels (AL-Mamri, 2023). The analysis was carried out through several stages, namely identifying phonological components in each line, classifying them based on sound patterns, and interpreting their function in creating meaning in the poem.

## **Result and Discussion**

This section contains a comprehensive description of data analysis or sampling. Usually, if the amount of data being analyzed is relatively large, then in this section, only representatives (representation) of each existing data group are presented. Other data can be placed in the appendix.

Table 1. Phonetic Transcription

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Phonetic Transcription</i>
Fast rode the knight	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt
With spurs, hot and reeking	wɪð spɜ:z, hɒt ænd 'ri:kɪŋ,
Ever waving an eager sword,	'evə 'weɪvɪŋ ən 'i:gə sɔ:d,
"To save my lady!"	"tu: seɪv maɪ 'leɪdi!"
Fast rode the knight,	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt
And leaped from saddle to war.	ænd li:pt frəm 'sædəl tu: wɔ:.
Men of steel flickered and gleamed	mɛn ɒv sti:l 'flɪkəd ænd gli:md
Like riot of silver lights,	laɪk 'raɪət ɒv 'sɪlvə laɪts,
And the gold of the knight's good banner	ænd ðə gəʊld ɒv ðə naɪts gʊd 'bænə
Still waved on a castle wall.	sti:l weɪvd ɒn ə 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.
A horse,	ə hɔ:s,
Blowing, staggering, bloody thing,	'bləʊɪŋ, 'stæɡərɪŋ, 'blʌdi θɪŋ,
Forgotten at foot of castle wall.	fə'ɡɒtən æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.
A horse	ə hɔ:s,
Dead at foot of castle wall.	dɛd æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.

Table 2. Sound of Consonants

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Phonetic Transcription</i>	<i>Consonant</i>
Fast rode the knight	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt	/f/, /s/, /t/, /r/, /d/, /ð/, /n/, /t/
With spurs, hot and reeking	wɪð spɜ:z, hɒt ænd 'ri:kɪŋ,	/w/, /ð/, /s/, /p/, /z/, /h/, /t/, /n/, /d/, /r/, /k/, /ŋ/
Ever waving an eager sword,	'evə 'weɪvɪŋ ən 'i:gə sɔ:d,	/v/, /w/, /v/, /ŋ/, n/, /g/, /s/, /d/
"To save my lady!"	"tu: seɪv maɪ 'leɪdi!"	/t/, /s/, /v/, /m/, /l/, /d/
Fast rode the knight,	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt	/f/, /s/, /t/, /r/, /d/, /ð/, /n/, /t/
And leaped from saddle to war.	ænd li:pt frəm 'sædəl tu: wɔ:.	/n/, /d/, /l/, /p/, /t/, /f/, /r/, /m/, /s/, /d/, /l/, /t/, /w/
Men of steel flickered and gleamed	mɛn ɒv sti:l 'flɪkəd ænd gli:mɪd	/m/, /n/, /v/, /s/, /t/, /l/, /f/, /l/, /k/, /d/, /n/, /d/, /g/, /l/, /m/, /d/
Like riot of silver lights,	laɪk 'raɪət ɒv 'sɪlvə laɪts,	/l/, /k/, /r/, /t/, /v/, /s/, /l/, /v/, /l/, /t/, /s/
And the gold of the knight's good banner	ænd ðə gəʊld ɒv ðə naɪts gʊd 'bænə	/n/, /d/, /ð/, /g/, /l/, /d/, /v/, /ð/, /n/, /t/, /s/, /g/, /d/, /b/, /n/
Still waved on a castle wall.	sti:l weɪvd ɒn ə 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/s/, /t/, /l/, /w/, /v/, /d/, /n/, /k/, /s/, /l/, /w/, /l/
A horse,	ə hɔ:s,	/h/, /s/
Blowing, staggering, bloody thing,	'bləʊɪŋ, 'stæɡərɪŋ, 'blʌdi θɪŋ,	/b/, /l/, /ŋ/, /s/, /t/, /g/, /r/, /ŋ/, /b/, /l/, /d/, /θ/, /ŋ/
Forgotten at foot of castle wall.	fə'ɡɒtən æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/f/, /g/, /t/, /n/, /t/, /f/, /t/, /v/, /k/, /s/, /l/, /w/, /l/
A horse	ə hɔ:s,	/h/, /s/
Dead at foot of castle wall.	dɛd æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/d/, /d/, /t/, /f/, /t/, /v/, /k/, /s/, /l/, /w/, /l/

Table 3. Sound of Vowel

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Phonetic Transcription</i>	<i>Vowel</i>
Fast rode the knight	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt	/ɑ/, /əʊ/, /ə/, /aɪ/
With spurs, hot and reeking	wɪð spɜ:z, hɒt ænd 'ri:kɪŋ,	/ɪ/, /ə/, /ɒ/, /æ/, /i/, /ɪ/
Ever waving an eager sword,	'evə 'weɪvɪŋ ən 'i:gə sɔ:d,	/ɛ/, /ə/, /eɪ/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /i/, /ə/, /ɔ/
"To save my lady!"	"tu: sɛv maɪ 'leɪdi!"	/u/, /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /eɪ/, /i/
Fast rode the knight,	fɑ:st rəʊd ðə naɪt	/ɑ/, /əʊ/, /ə/, /aɪ/
And leaped from saddle to war.	ænd li:pt frəm 'sædʒl tu: wɔ:.	/æ/, /i/, /ɒ/ /æ/ /ə/ /u/, /ɔ/
Men of steel flickered and gleamed	mɛn ɒv sti:l 'flɪkəd ænd gli:mɪd	/ɛ/ /ɒ/ /i/, /ɪ/ /ə/ /æ/ /i/
Like riot of silver lights,	laɪk 'raɪət ɒv 'sɪlvə laɪts,	/aɪ/ /aɪ/ /ə/ /ɒ/ /ɪ/ /ə/ /aɪ/
And the gold of the knight's good banner	ænd ðə gəʊld ɒv ðə naɪts gʊd 'bænə	/æ/ /ə/ /əʊ/ /ɒ/ /ə/ /aɪ/ /ʊ/ /æ/ /ə/
Still waved on a castle wall.	sti:l weɪvd ɒn ə 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/ɪ/ /eɪ/ /ɒ/ /ə/ /ɑ/ /ə/ /ɔ/  /ə/, /ɔ/
A horse,	ə hɔ:s,	/ə/, /ɔ/
Blowing, staggering, bloody thing,	'bləʊɪŋ, 'stædʒərɪŋ, 'blʌdi θɪŋ,	/əʊ/ /ɪ/ /æ/ /ə/ /ɪ/ /ʌ/ /i/ /ɪ/
Forgotten at foot of castle wall.	fə'gɒtən æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/ə/ /ɒ/ /ə/ /æ/ /ʊ/ /ɒ/ /ɑ/ /ə/ /ɔ/
A horse	ə hɔ:s,	/ə/, /ɔ/
Dead at foot of castle wall.	dɛd æt fʊt ɒv 'kɑ:səl wɔ:l.	/ɛ/ /æ/ /ʊ/ /ɒ/ /ɑ/ /ə/ /ɔ/

Table 4. Total of Consonant Sounds

No	Consonats	line															Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1	/f/	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	7
2	/s/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	17
3	/t/	2	1	-	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	-	1	3	-	2	19
4	/r/	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	6
5	/d/	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	-	3	1	-	1	-	-	2	17
6	/ð/	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
7	/n/	1	1	1	-	1	1	2	-	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	12
8	/w/	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	7
9	/p/	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
10	/z/	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
11	/h/	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	3
12	/k/	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	6
13	/ŋ/	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	5
14	/v/	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	10
15	/g/	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	6
16	/m/	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
17	/l/	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	3	1	3	-	2	2	-	2	19
18	/b/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	3
19	/θ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1

There are five dominant consonants sound in the "Fast Rode The Knight" poem, with the consonant /t/ and /l/ appears 19 times, consonant /s/ and /d/ appears 17 times, and consonant /n/ appears 12 times.

Tabel 5. Total of Vowel Sounds

No	Vowel	line															Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1	/ɑ/	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	4
2	/ə/	1	-	3	-	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	3	1	1	22
3	/ʊ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	3
4	/ʌ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>	-	-	-	1
5	/ɪ/	-	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	9
6	/ɜ/	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
7	/ɒ/	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	9
8	/æ/	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	1	9
9	/i/	-	1	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	7
10	/e/	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
11	/u/	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
12	/ɔ/	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	7
13	əʊ	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
14	aɪ	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
15	eɪ	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
16	ɔɪ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
17	aʊ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
18	ɪə	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
19	eə	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
20	ʊə	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

There are five dominant vowels sound in the "Fast Rode The Knight" poem, with the vowel /ə/ appears 22 times, vowels /ɪ/, /ɒ/, and /æ/ appears 9 times, and both /i/, /ɔ/, and /aɪ/ actually appeared equals, namely 7 times.

In this section, the researchers present the findings of the phonostylistic analysis of the poem Fast Rode the Knight. Fast Rode the Knight is a poem written by an American writer named Stephen Crane. The poem here presents a story about the harsh reality of a war. But at first it portrays to celebrate bravery and heroism, where the knight is described as riding quickly into battle with a clear purpose, to save his lady. However, as the poem moves forward, its ending is revealed to be a mortally wounded horse lying beside the walls of the castle. This reveals a contrast between the first conception of heroism and the second outcome of defeat and death.

In this study, the analysis was done by identifying the dominant consonants and vowels which was made possible by phonetic transcription of each line, and then classifying and calculating the frequency of each sound. This approach aligns with phonostylistic studies which emphasize that sound patterns in literary texts contribute not only to the aesthetic quality of a poem, but also to its meaning or thematic construction.

According to the data presented in the tables, the researcher identified the five dominant consonant sounds in the poem, they are /t/ and /l/, which both appeared 19 times, and then /s/ and /d/, which appeared 17 times each, and lastly the consonant sound /n/, which appeared 12 times. On the other hand, with regard to the vowels, the most dominant sound is /ə/, which appeared 22 times. This is then followed by the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʊ/, and /æ/, which appeared 9 times each. Moreover, the vowel sounds /i:/, /ɔ/, and /aɪ/ appeared 7 times and are included in the dominant group of vowels due to their relatively high frequency of occurrence in the poem.

As a result, from a combination of the main consonants and vowels, researchers were able to find that a word like "lost" can be formed from a combination of consonants like /l/, /s/, /t/, and a vowel like /ʊ/. This particular word does not appear directly in the poem, but its meaning does appear from a combination of the main sound patterns used. This proves that implicit meaning in poetry can be derived using sound patterns, not just the choice of words used. The word "lost" relates to the theme of the poem, which describes the harsh reality of war and its consequences. At the beginning of the poem, the knight appears to be an extremely courageous hero. However, towards the end of the poem, the image of the hero becomes contrasting as only the horse remains, dying at the foot of the castle wall.

"Lost," therefore, is not simply an indication of physical loss such as death due to fighting but also implies a sense of personal loss where one loses life, purpose, and even heroism. The knight's heroic purpose is lost, the anticipated victory is lost, and even the narrative focus is lost. What remains is not glory, but the effects of violence. This interpretation is in line with the idea that phonological patterns can reinforce the emotional and thematic depth of a poem, even when the derived words are not explicitly written in the text. As it found also in previous studies in the analysis of Langston Hughes' poem Harlem where implicit words such as "tear" and "star" support the theme of suffering and hope.

Therefore, it is clear that the dominant phonological elements in the poem are closely related to its meaning. The way the word "lost" is formed from these sounds helps reinforce the idea that the poem is not only about the theme of heroism. The theme of loss, disillusionment, and harsh reality of the war are also addressed by the author. Therefore, it can be seen that phonostylistic analysis enables us to appreciate how sounds can convey deeper meanings beyond those of the words themselves.

## **Conclusion**

This study focuses on the phonostylistic analysis of the poem Fast Rode the Knight by Stephen Crane based on the examination of the dominant consonant and vowel sounds in the poem as well as their relation to meaning. The result shows that the following consonants are the most frequently appear in the poem: /t/, /l/, /s/, /d/, and /n/. Moreover, the most frequent vowel sounds are /ə/, /ɪ/, /ʊ/, and /æ/, in addition to /i:/, /ɔ/, and /aɪ/.

As the result of analysis of dominant sound patterns in this poetry, a word such as “lost” can be formed. Although this word does not explicitly appear in the poem, it reflects the meaning that is already present in the text. There is a contrast presented by the poem in terms of how the poem begins and ends, wherein the beginning presents an idea about courage, while the ending presents the idea about what remains after the occurrence. In this case, the word “lost” captures the idea of incompleteness and absence that emerges at the end of the poem.

As it can be seen from the above results, analysis of phonostylistic features can serve as additional tool in literary analysis of poetry. By identifying dominant phonological elements, it is possible to observe how certain patterns correspond with the overall direction of the poem’s meaning. This does not replace textual interpretation, but simply to add another layer that helps explain how meaning can also be expressed through sound.

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