Poetry—Sound
P8 Euphony and Cacophony

Cacophony: a harsh, unpleasant combination of sounds or tones. It may be an unconscious flaw in the poet’s music, resulting in harshness of sound of difficulty of articulation, or it may be used consciously for effect.

Example:
’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.”
-- “Jabberwocky”, by Lewis Carroll

“Lick, crack, sick, hack. The beggar harried her open back.
Crash, bang, clang!!
We want no parlay with you and your grisly gang who work your wicked will.”
-- Winston Churchill

Function: An author may use the unpleasant sounds of a cacophony to communicate or invoke negative emotions such as disgust, distress or fear. It may also consist of “nonsense” words that cause discordance of sound and awkward alliteration.

Rules:
1. Harsher sounds include the "plosives" (b, d, hard g, k, p, t)

Euphony: a style in which combinations of words pleasant to the ear predominate; opposite of cacophony

Example:
“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.”
-- Endymion, by John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
--To Autumn, by John Keats

Purpose: Euphony is used by authors to bring about pleasant, peaceful feelings in the reader. It puts the reader at ease and makes the poem or piece of literature enjoyable to read. Long vowels are used in euphony because they are more melodious than consonants and short vowels; making the euphony soothing and harmonious. The enunciation and pronunciation are easy and agreeable.

Rules:
1. Long vowels: though all vowels tend to be more melodious than consonants, long vowels (e.g. "moon," "coat," "crate," ) resonate in the ear more than the short vowels found in "hat," "tin," "fun," "shed," or "hot"
2. Consonants that are fairly euphonious:
   A. The "liquids " (l, m, n, r)
   B. Soft f or v sounds
   C. The semi-vowels w or y
   D. th or wh