

kennings

A **kenning** is a literary device in which a poetic phrase substitutes for a noun. In the best kennings, one element of the phrase will create a striking, unexpected comparison. Often used in Anglo-Saxon poetry and especially in *Beowulf*, a kenning provides powerful imagery that help the audience focus on the words of the *scop* or poet telling the story. A kenning also allows the *scop* some variety, so words don't become overused. Finally, Anglo-Saxon poetry depends heavily on alliteration, and some kennings provided additional alliteration. Here are examples:

sky-candle (the sun)

swan-road (the sea)

stout-hearted (brave)

battle sweat (blood)

light-of-battle (sword)

helmet bearers (warriors)

giver of gold (king)

earth-hall (burial mound, barrow)

dwelling place (home)

storm of swords (battle)

Listed below are some modern kennings. Can you find examples of striking imagery, alliteration, and rhyme among them? Can you identify the concept each kenning represents?

1. gas guzzler
2. rug rat
3. land line
4. cancer stick
5. couch potato

Create 5 kennings of your own. You cannot use existing, well-known expressions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.