# Audio file – “Punching words”

[15-Track-15.mp3](https://neagov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/travisd_arts_gov/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/15-Track-15.mp3)

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The recitation of poetry, and every other kind of public speaking, is about conveying meaning. The primary way in which we convey meaning in our spoken language is through stress. By stressing a word, we emphasize its importance. Poetry operates the same way. It arranges stresses in a pattern that we call meter. Meter conveys meaning.

Actors and public speakers understand the power of stress. Actors call this “punching a word.” By changing the stress, you change the meaning. Listen:

You gave her *flowers?*

You gave *her* flowers?

*You* gave her flowers?

When you recite a poem, punch the words you want to emphasize the most.