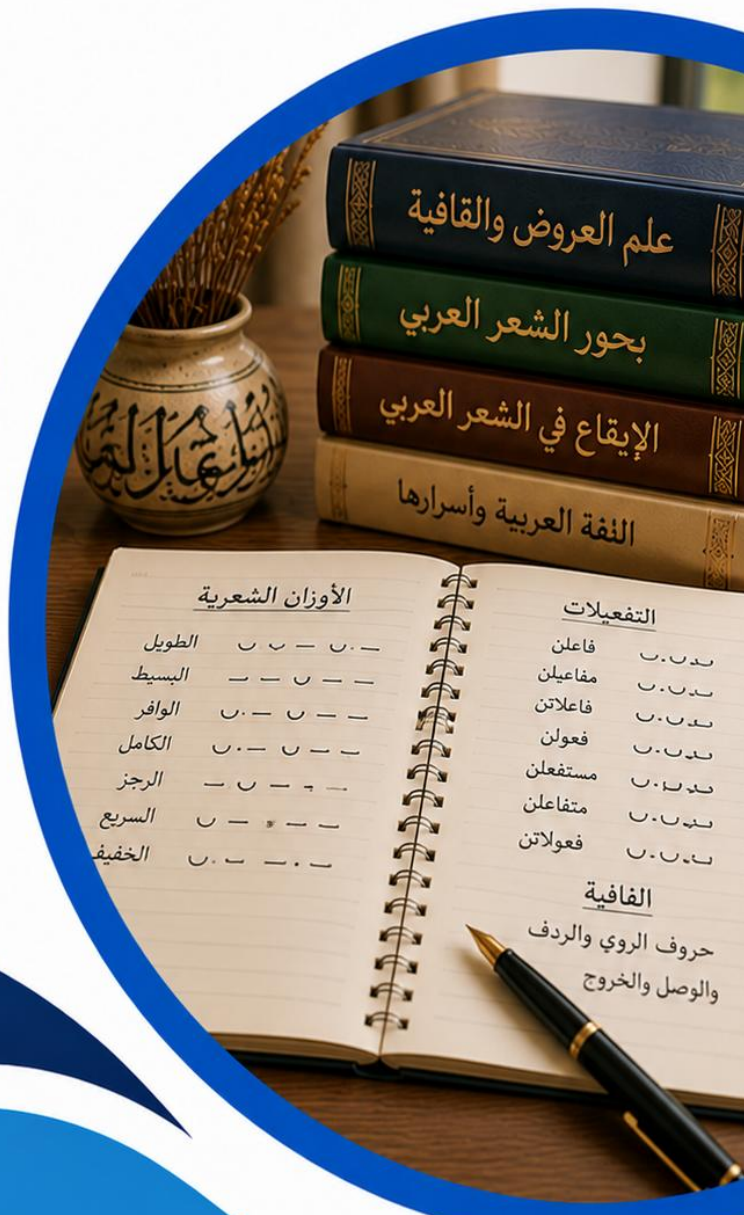




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ARA 317

PROSODY 1



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Course code: ARA 317

Course title: Prosody 1

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: Historical Background of Arabic Prosody

- **1.1 Emergence of Arabic Prosody**
 - 1.1.1 Definition of Prosody
 - 1.1.2 Early Use of Rhythm and Metre in Arabic Poetry
 - 1.1.3 Cultural and Linguistic Context of Prosody's Emergence
- **1.2 Historical Development of Prosody**
 - 1.2.1 Evolution of Prosodic Studies in Classical Arabic Literature
 - 1.2.2 Role of Scholars in Shaping Prosody
 - 1.2.3 Transmission of Prosodic Knowledge Across Generations
- **1.3 Significance of Prosody in Arabic Poetry**
 - 1.3.1 Prosody as a Tool for Analysing Poetry
 - 1.3.2 Influence on Arabic Literary Tradition
 - 1.3.3 Relevance of Prosody to Modern Arabic Studies

Introduction

Arabic poetry has long been admired for its rhythm, elegance, and expressive power. Behind this artistry lies the science of **prosody**, which provides the framework for understanding how poetic lines are structured and how their musical quality is achieved. By tracing the historical background of Arabic prosody, learners gain insight into the cultural and intellectual foundations that shaped the discipline. This Series sets the stage for the entire course, as it introduces the origins and development of prosody, helping you appreciate why it remains central to the study and analysis of Arabic poetry today.



The aim of this Series is to acquaint you with the beginnings and historical growth of Arabic prosody, enabling you to define its core concepts, explain its emergence, and analyse its significance within Arabic literary tradition.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the **emergence of Arabic prosody**, including its definition, early use of rhythm, and the cultural context of its rise. Next, we will examine the **historical development of prosody**, focusing on how it evolved through classical literature and the contributions of scholars who preserved and transmitted its knowledge. Finally, we will conclude by considering the **significance of prosody in Arabic poetry**, highlighting its role as a tool for analysis, its influence on literary traditions, and its relevance to modern studies. This sequential journey will provide you with a strong foundation for the more technical aspects of prosody that follow in later Series.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 1: Origins and Historical Development of Arabic Prosody

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define the concept of **prosody** and explain its role in Arabic poetry.
- **SLO 1.2** describe the early use of rhythm and metre in Arabic poetic traditions.
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the cultural and linguistic context that led to the emergence of Arabic prosody.
- **SLO 1.4** explain the historical development of prosody within classical Arabic literature.
- **SLO 1.5** evaluate the contributions of scholars to the transmission and preservation of prosodic knowledge.
- **SLO 1.6** assess the significance of prosody as a tool for analysing Arabic poetry and its influence on literary traditions.
- **SLO 1.7** discuss the relevance of prosody to modern Arabic literary and linguistic studies.



1.1 Emergence of Arabic Prosody

1.1.1 Definition of prosody

Prosody (in Arabic: علم العروض) is the science that studies the rhythm, metre, and sound patterns of poetry. It provides rules for identifying the structure of poetic lines and ensures that verses conform to recognised patterns. In Arabic, prosody was developed to preserve the musicality of poetry and to prevent distortion in recitation. The term 'Arūḍ (العروض) refers specifically to the discipline introduced by scholars to analyse poetic metres.

Prosody is not merely about counting syllables, but about understanding how long and short sounds combine to form rhythmic units. For example, the Arabic poetic line is built upon sequences of **long syllables** (—) and **short syllables** (◡), which together create a harmonious flow.

Fill in the blank: Prosody in Arabic is called _____, and it studies the rhythm and metre of poetry.

Arabic Poetic Metre: Tawil (الطويل)

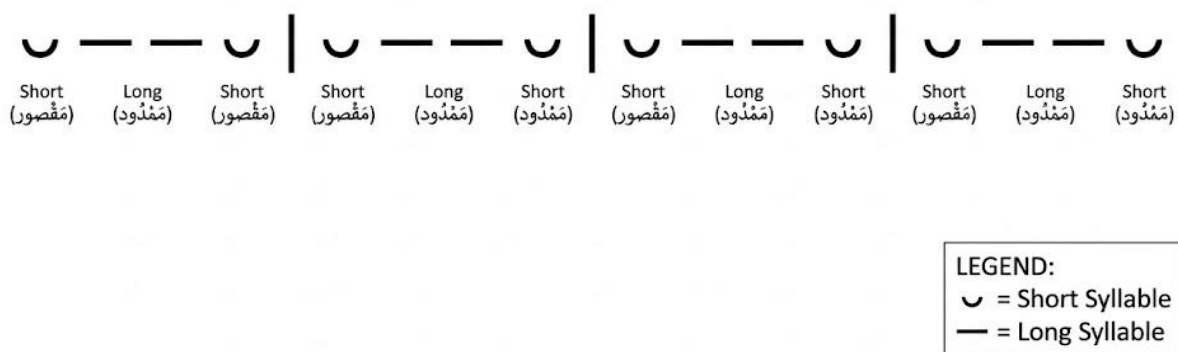


Figure 1.1: Basic syllable patterns in Arabic prosody



1.1.2 Early use of rhythm and metre in Arabic poetry

Arabic poetry predates the formal codification of prosody. In the pre-Islamic era, poets composed verses that relied on natural rhythm and oral tradition. These poems, known as **Qaṣīda** (قصيدة), often followed consistent rhythmic patterns even before scholars formally studied them. The oral transmission of poetry meant that rhythm was essential for memorisation and performance.

For instance, poets would instinctively use balanced lines to maintain harmony. Later, scholars identified these patterns as **metres** (بحور الشعر), which became the foundation of prosodic study.

Fill in the blank: The pre-Islamic Arabic poem that relied on rhythm and oral tradition is called _____.



Plate 1.1: Early Arabic poetic manuscripts

1.1.3 Cultural and linguistic context of prosody's emergence

The emergence of prosody was closely tied to the cultural importance of poetry in Arab society. Poetry was not only a form of art but also a medium for preserving history, expressing values, and showcasing linguistic mastery. The Arabic language, with its rich system of consonants and vowels, provided a natural foundation for rhythmic expression.



The codification of prosody ensured that poetry retained its elegance and avoided irregularities. Scholars such as **الخليل بن أحمد الفراهيدي (Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī)** later formalised these patterns, but the cultural context had already prepared the ground for such a discipline.

Fill in the blank: The scholar credited with formalising Arabic prosody is _____.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Role of Poetry</i>	<i>Details & Examples</i>
Historical Record	<i>Preserved tribal history and genealogy</i>	<i>Poets recited lineage, heroic deeds, and battles, ensuring oral transmission of collective memory.</i>
Social Cohesion	<i>Unified tribes through shared values</i>	<i>Poetry reinforced loyalty, honor, and solidarity, often performed at gatherings and markets.</i>
Political Influence	<i>Served as propaganda and diplomacy</i>	<i>Tribes used poetry to boast of victories, shame rivals, or negotiate alliances.</i>
Entertainment & Art	<i>Main form of cultural expression</i>	<i>Poetic competitions were held at fairs like Ukaz Market, showcasing linguistic mastery.</i>
Religious & Spiritual Dimension	<i>Reflected pre-Islamic beliefs</i>	<i>Poems invoked gods, spirits, and fate, blending myth with daily life.</i>
Economic Role	<i>Elevated poets as valued figures</i>	<i>Skilled poets were rewarded with patronage, gifts, and prestige within their tribes.</i>
Linguistic Development	<i>Shaped Arabic language and literature</i>	<i>The qasida (ode) became the dominant form, with strict conventions influencing later Islamic poetry.</i>

Box 1.1: Cultural role of poetry in Arab society

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Prosody in Arabic is known as _____.



2. Which type of pre-Islamic poem relied heavily on rhythm and oral tradition?
3. What do long and short syllables represent in Arabic poetic structure?
4. Name the scholar who formalised Arabic prosody.
5. Why was poetry culturally significant in pre-Islamic Arab society?

1.2 Historical Development of Prosody

1.2.1 Evolution of prosodic studies in classical Arabic literature

The science of **prosody** (علم العروض) was formally established in the 8th century by **الخليل بن أحمد** (Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī). He systematised the rhythmic patterns of Arabic poetry into a set of rules that could be studied and applied consistently. His work transformed poetry from an oral tradition into a discipline with clear analytical foundations.

Prosody became a cornerstone of classical Arabic literature, guiding poets in composing verses that adhered to recognised **metres** (بحور الشعر). These metres were not invented by Al-Khalīl, but rather codified from existing poetic practices. His contribution was to organise them into a coherent system, ensuring that poetry retained its musicality and avoided irregularities.

Fill in the blank: The scholar who systematised Arabic prosody into a formal discipline was _____.





Figure 1.2: Timeline of Arabic prosody from oral tradition to formal science

1.2.2 Role of scholars in shaping prosody

After Al-Khalīl's foundational work, other scholars expanded and refined the study of prosody. They examined variations in poetic metres and documented irregularities known as **zihāfāt** (زحافات) and **'ilāl** (علل). These terms refer to permissible modifications in metre that allow poets flexibility while maintaining rhythm.

Scholars also produced commentaries and teaching manuals, ensuring that prosody was transmitted across generations. Their efforts preserved the integrity of Arabic poetry and provided learners with tools to analyse verses critically.

Fill in the blank: The two terms used to describe permissible modifications in Arabic poetic metre are _____ and _____.



Scholar	Contribution	Impact on Prosody
<i>Al-Akhfash al-Awsat (d. 830 CE)</i>	<i>Edited and transmitted al-Khalīl's system; clarified ambiguous points.</i>	<i>Helped preserve the original framework of prosody and made it more accessible to students.</i>
<i>Al-Asma'ī (d. 831 CE)</i>	<i>Collected and authenticated poetic examples to illustrate prosodic meters.</i>	<i>Strengthened the link between theory and actual poetic practice.</i>
<i>Sibawayh (d. 796 CE)</i>	<i>Though primarily a grammarian, integrated prosodic insights into his Kitāb.</i>	<i>Showed the interconnection between grammar and prosody in shaping Arabic linguistic sciences.</i>
<i>Ibn Jinnī (d. 1002 CE)</i>	<i>Expanded on phonological aspects of prosody; analyzed sound patterns in verse.</i>	<i>Brought a linguistic depth to prosody, connecting it with phonetics and morphology.</i>
<i>Al-Khalīl's Students (e.g., Al-Layth ibn al-Muẓaffar)</i>	<i>Preserved oral transmission of prosodic rules.</i>	<i>Ensured continuity of the discipline across generations.</i>
<i>Shi'ī Scholars (e.g., Ibn al-Mu'tazz, d. 908 CE)</i>	<i>Innovated in poetic theory, blending prosody with aesthetics.</i>	<i>Introduced stylistic refinements that influenced later Arabic and Persian poetics.</i>
<i>Later Grammarians (e.g., Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, d. 1108 CE)</i>	<i>Integrated prosody into broader literary criticism.</i>	<i>Cemented prosody as part of the intellectual canon of Islamic scholarship.</i>

Box 1.2: Contributions of scholars after Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad

1.2.3 Transmission of prosodic knowledge across generations

Prosody was taught in madrasas and literary circles, becoming an essential part of Arabic education. Students memorised poetic metres and practised applying them to verses. This



transmission ensured that prosody remained a living discipline, not confined to scholarly texts but actively used in poetic composition.

The continuity of prosody across centuries highlights its importance in maintaining the identity of Arabic poetry. Even today, learners study the same metres codified by Al-Khalīl, demonstrating the enduring relevance of his work.

Fill in the blank: Prosody was transmitted through _____ and literary circles, ensuring its continuity across generations.



Plate 1.2: Teaching prosody in classical Arabic education

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Who is credited with systematising Arabic prosody into a formal discipline?
2. What are the Arabic terms for permissible modifications in poetic metre?
3. How did scholars after Al-Khalīl contribute to the study of prosody?
4. Through which institutions was prosody transmitted across generations?
5. Why is prosody considered essential for maintaining the identity of Arabic poetry?



1.3 Significance of Prosody in Arabic Poetry

1.3.1 Prosody as a tool for analysing poetry

Prosody (علم العروض) serves as a scientific tool for examining the structure of Arabic poetry. It enables learners to identify the **metre** (البحر الشعري) of a poem, determine whether the verses conform to established rhythmic patterns, and detect deviations. By applying prosody, one can distinguish between well-structured poetry and irregular compositions.

For example, when analysing a **Qaṣīda** (قصيدة), prosody helps in breaking down each line into syllables, marking long and short sounds, and matching them to recognised metres. This process ensures that poetry maintains its musical quality and adheres to tradition.

Fill in the blank: The science that helps identify the structure and rhythm of Arabic poetry is called _____.

تقطيع البيت الشعري

قَفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِي حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ

wa	man	-zi-	ḥa	-bī-	bin	dhik-	rā	nab-	ki	Qi	-fā
----	-----	------	----	------	-----	-------	----	------	----	----	-----

u — — u — — — u — — u —

فَعُولُنْ مَفَاعِيلُنْ فَعُولُنْ مَفَاعِيلُنْ

Figure 1.3: Analysing syllables in Arabic poetry using prosody



1.3.2 Influence on Arabic literary tradition

Prosody has played a vital role in shaping the **Arabic literary tradition** (التراث الأدبي العربي). It provided poets with a framework to compose verses that were both aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound. Through prosody, poetry became a disciplined art form, respected not only for its beauty but also for its adherence to scholarly rules.

The influence of prosody extended beyond poetry, as it contributed to the development of Arabic linguistics and literary criticism. Scholars used prosodic analysis to evaluate poetic works and to preserve the authenticity of Arabic literature.

Fill in the blank: Prosody contributed to the development of Arabic _____ and literary criticism.



Plate 1.3: Classical Arabic manuscript with prosodic annotations



1.3.3 Relevance of prosody to modern Arabic studies

In modern times, prosody remains relevant as a tool for both literary and linguistic studies. It helps scholars and students appreciate the artistry of classical poetry while also applying its principles to contemporary works. Prosody is studied in universities as part of Arabic language and literature programmes, ensuring that learners continue to engage with this foundational discipline.

Moreover, prosody provides a bridge between tradition and modernity. By learning prosody, students can analyse ancient texts and apply the same principles to modern poetry, thereby maintaining continuity in Arabic literary culture.

Fill in the blank: Prosody serves as a bridge between _____ and modernity in Arabic literary studies.

Dimension	Role of Prosody Today	Examples & Applications
<i>Linguistic Analysis</i>	<i>Provides tools for studying rhythm, meter, and phonology in Arabic.</i>	<i>Used in modern linguistics to analyze spoken Arabic dialects and classical texts.</i>
<i>Literary Criticism</i>	<i>Offers frameworks for evaluating poetry and prose aesthetics.</i>	<i>Scholars apply prosodic rules to interpret classical works and modern free verse.</i>
<i>Cultural Continuity</i>	<i>Connects contemporary Arabic literature with its classical heritage.</i>	<i>Preserves appreciation of qasida and traditional meters while adapting to modern forms.</i>
<i>Education</i>	<i>Integral to curricula in Arabic language and literature departments.</i>	<i>Students learn prosody to understand classical texts and refine writing skills.</i>
<i>Comparative Studies</i>	<i>Enables cross-cultural analysis of poetic traditions.</i>	<i>Prosody is compared with metrics in Persian, Urdu, and Western poetics.</i>
<i>Digital Humanities</i>	<i>Applied in computational analysis of Arabic texts.</i>	<i>Algorithms use prosodic rules to detect meter, rhyme, and stylistic features.</i>



<i>Creative Innovation</i>	<i>Inspires modern poets to experiment with rhythm and free verse.</i>	<i>Neo-classical and modernist poets blend traditional meters with contemporary themes.</i>
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Box 1.3: Modern relevance of prosody

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What is the role of prosody in analysing Arabic poetry?
2. How does prosody influence the Arabic literary tradition?
3. In what ways did prosody contribute to Arabic linguistics and criticism?
4. Why is prosody still relevant in modern Arabic studies?
5. How does prosody act as a bridge between tradition and modernity?

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the origins and historical development of Arabic prosody, highlighting its importance as the foundation for studying Arabic poetry. By exploring how prosody emerged, developed, and became significant within literary traditions, you have gained a clearer understanding of why it remains central to both classical and modern Arabic studies.

We began by examining the **emergence of prosody**, including its definition, early rhythmic patterns, and cultural context. We then moved on to the **historical development of prosody**, focusing on the contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad and subsequent scholars who refined and transmitted the discipline. Finally, we considered the **significance of prosody**, noting its role as a tool for analysing poetry, its influence on Arabic literary tradition, and its continuing relevance today. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define prosody, describe its early use, analyse its cultural background, explain its historical development, evaluate scholarly contributions, and assess its significance for both classical and modern Arabic studies.



Glossary of Terms

- **‘Arūd (العروض)**: The Arabic term for prosody, referring to the science that studies the rhythm, metre, and sound patterns of poetry.
- **‘Ilāl (علل)**: Permissible irregularities or alterations in Arabic poetic metre that slightly change the rhythm while keeping the overall structure intact.
- **Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (الخليل بن أحمد الفراهيدي)**: The 8th-century Arab scholar credited with systematising Arabic prosody and organising poetic metres into a formal discipline.
- **Metre (البحر الشعري)**: The rhythmic pattern of a poem, created by sequences of long and short syllables, which gives poetry its musical quality.
- **Prosody (علم العروض)**: The science of analysing the rhythm and structure of poetry, ensuring that verses conform to recognised patterns.
- **Qaṣīda (قصيدة)**: A traditional pre-Islamic Arabic poem, often long and elaborate, composed with consistent rhythm and oral performance in mind.
- **Syllable (مقطع صوتي)**: A unit of sound in poetry, classified as either long (—) or short (و), which together form the rhythmic structure of a verse.
- **Zihāfāt (زحافات)**: Minor modifications or variations in Arabic poetic metre that allow flexibility in composition without breaking the rules of prosody.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Prosody in Arabic is known as _____. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. The traditional pre-Islamic poem that relied on rhythm and oral tradition is called _____. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
3. Who systematised Arabic prosody into a formal discipline? (Linked to SLO 1.4)
4. The two terms used to describe permissible modifications in Arabic poetic metre are _____ and _____. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
5. Prosody serves as a bridge between _____ and modernity in Arabic literary studies. (Linked to SLO 1.7)



Short-Answer Questions

6. Define the term **metre** (البحر الشعري) in the context of Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Explain why rhythm was important in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. Describe the role of scholars after Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad in shaping prosody. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
9. Analyse how prosody contributed to Arabic linguistics and literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 1.6)
10. Discuss the relevance of prosody to modern Arabic studies. (Linked to SLO 1.7)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Evaluate the cultural and linguistic context that led to the emergence of Arabic prosody. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
12. Assess the significance of prosody as a tool for analysing Arabic poetry and preserving literary tradition. (Linked to SLO 1.6)
13. Explain the historical development of prosody from oral tradition to its formal codification by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. 'Arūḍ (العروض)
2. Qaṣīda (قصيدة)
3. Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī
4. Zihāfāt (زحافات) and 'Ilāl (علل)
5. Tradition

Short-Answer Questions

6. Metre refers to the rhythmic pattern of a poem, created by sequences of long and short syllables.
7. Rhythm was important because it aided memorisation and oral performance, ensuring poetry could be transmitted across generations.
8. Scholars documented variations in metre, explained zihāfāt and 'ilāl, wrote manuals, and preserved prosodic knowledge for students.
9. Prosody contributed to linguistics by systematising sound patterns and to criticism by providing tools to evaluate poetic works.



10. Prosody remains relevant as it is studied in universities, applied to both classical and modern poetry, and preserves continuity in Arabic literary culture.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** Prosody emerged due to the cultural importance of poetry in Arab society and the linguistic richness of Arabic, which naturally lent itself to rhythmic expression.

Value-added response: Beyond this, prosody reflected the intellectual drive of Arab scholars to preserve oral traditions, codify them into systematic rules, and ensure poetry remained a respected art form across generations.

12. **Basic response:** Prosody is significant because it provides a framework for analysing poetry, ensuring verses conform to recognised patterns and preserving literary tradition.

Value-added response: Additionally, prosody elevated poetry into a scholarly discipline, influenced Arabic linguistics, and continues to serve as a bridge between classical heritage and modern literary studies.

13. **Basic response:** Prosody developed from oral traditions where rhythm guided memorisation, and was later codified by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad into a formal science.

Value-added response: This codification not only preserved existing poetic practices but also created a structured discipline that influenced Arabic education, literary criticism, and the transmission of cultural identity across centuries.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1 Emergence of Arabic Prosody

- ‘Arūḍ (العروض)
- Qaṣīda (قصيدة)
- Long and short syllables in Arabic poetic structure
- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī
- Poetry preserved tribal history, expressed values, demonstrated linguistic mastery, and served as entertainment

Part 1.2 Historical Development of Prosody

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī
- Zihāfāt (زحافات) and ‘Ilāl (علل)
- Scholars documented variations, wrote manuals, and transmitted prosodic knowledge
- Madrasas and literary circles
- Prosody maintained the identity and continuity of Arabic poetry

Part 1.3 Significance of Prosody in Arabic Poetry

- Prosody provides a framework for analysing poetry
- It shaped the Arabic literary tradition by ensuring structural and aesthetic quality
- It contributed to Arabic linguistics and literary criticism
- Prosody is studied in modern universities and applied to both classical and contemporary poetry
- Prosody connects tradition with modernity in Arabic literary studies



References and Attributions [Series 1]

General References

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. (8th century). *Foundational works on Arabic prosody* ('*Arūḍ*). Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry traditions. (n.d.). *Qaṣīda and oral transmission*. Retrieved from open educational resources on Arabic literature.
- Zihāfāt and 'Ilāl. (n.d.). *Variations in Arabic poetic metre*. Documented in classical prosodic manuals.

Illustration References and Attributions

- *Figure 1.1: Basic syllable patterns in Arabic prosody*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a simple diagram showing Arabic poetic metre with long and short syllables marked as — and ٠.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic prosody syllable structure diagram OER.”
- *Plate 1.1: Early Arabic poetic manuscripts*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of an ancient Arabic manuscript with handwritten poetry lines.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry manuscript OER.”
- *Box 1.1: Cultural role of poetry in Arab society*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the cultural role of poetry in pre-Islamic Arab society.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Pre-Islamic Arab poetry cultural role OER.”
- *Figure 1.2: Timeline of Arabic prosody from oral tradition to formal science*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a timeline diagram showing the development of Arabic prosody from oral tradition to Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic prosody historical timeline OER.”
- *Box 1.2: Contributions of scholars after Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the contributions of scholars to Arabic prosody after Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic prosody scholars contributions OER.”
- *Plate 1.2: Teaching prosody in classical Arabic education*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a traditional Arabic madrasa with students learning poetry and prosody.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic madrasa poetry teaching OER.”
- *Figure 1.3: Analysing syllables in Arabic poetry using prosody*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing an Arabic poetic line divided into syllables with long and short marks.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry syllable analysis diagram OER.”
- *Plate 1.3: Classical Arabic manuscript with prosodic annotations*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with handwritten poetry and prosodic notes.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic manuscript prosody annotations OER.”
- *Box 1.3: Modern relevance of prosody*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the modern relevance of prosody in Arabic studies.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Modern relevance of Arabic prosody OER.”



Series 2: Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in Arabic Metres

- **2.1 Understanding Zihāfāt (زحافات)**
 - 2.1.1 Definition of Zihāfāt
 - 2.1.2 Types of Zihāfāt in Arabic Metres
 - 2.1.3 Examples of Zihāfāt in Selected Verses
- **2.2 Exploring ‘Ilāl (علل)**
 - 2.2.1 Definition of ‘Ilāl
 - 2.2.2 Types of ‘Ilāl in Arabic Metres
 - 2.2.3 Examples of ‘Ilāl in Selected Verses
- **2.3 Comparative Study of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl**
 - 2.3.1 Distinctions between Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl
 - 2.3.2 Functional role of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in prosody
 - 2.3.3 Application in analysing Arabic poetry

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the historical background of Arabic prosody, tracing its origins, development, and cultural significance. Having established this foundation, we now turn to two essential concepts that shape the rhythm and flexibility of Arabic poetic metres: **Zihāfāt (زحافات)** and **‘Ilāl (علل)**. These modifications are crucial because they allow poets to maintain creativity while still adhering to established prosodic rules. Understanding them will deepen your ability to analyse poetry with precision and appreciate the artistry behind its composition.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the definitions, types, and applications of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl, and to equip you with the skills needed to distinguish between them, evaluate their functions, and apply them in the analysis of Arabic poetry.



We shall commence this Series by examining **Zihāfāt**, beginning with its definition, types, and examples in selected verses. Next, we will explore **‘Ilāl**, considering its meaning, classifications, and practical illustrations. Finally, we will wrap up with a **comparative study of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl**, highlighting their distinctions, functional roles, and applications in prosodic analysis. This progression will ensure that you not only recognise these concepts but also apply them confidently in your study of Arabic poetic metres.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 2: Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in Arabic Poetic Metres

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define the concept of **Zihāfāt (زحافات)** in Arabic poetic metres.
- **SLO 2.2** explain the different types of Zihāfāt with appropriate examples.
- **SLO 2.3** demonstrate how Zihāfāt are applied in selected Arabic verses.
- **SLO 2.4** define the concept of **‘Ilāl (علل)** in Arabic poetic metres.
- **SLO 2.5** describe the various types of ‘Ilāl with illustrative examples.
- **SLO 2.6** apply knowledge of ‘Ilāl to analyse selected Arabic verses.
- **SLO 2.7** analyse the distinctions between Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in prosodic study.
- **SLO 2.8** evaluate the functional role of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in maintaining rhythm and flexibility in Arabic poetry.
- **SLO 2.9** apply both Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in the critical analysis of Arabic poetic texts.



2.1 Understanding Zihāfāt (زحافات)

2.1.1 Definition of zihāfāt

Zihāfāt (زحافات) are minor modifications that occur in Arabic poetic metres. They involve changes to specific syllables within a poetic foot, usually by shortening or dropping a sound, while still maintaining the overall rhythm of the verse. Zihāfāt are considered permissible variations, meaning they do not break the rules of prosody but instead provide poets with flexibility in composition.

For example, a long syllable may be shortened, or a short syllable may be omitted, creating subtle rhythmic shifts that enrich the musicality of the poem. These variations are carefully documented by scholars to ensure that they remain within the accepted framework of prosody.

Fill in the blank: Zihāfāt are _____ modifications in Arabic poetic metres that allow rhythmic flexibility.

Before Zihāf (Original Foot)		After Zihāf (Modified Foot)
فَعُولُنْ (Fa'ūlun)	Zihāf:	فَعُولْ (Fa'ūlu)
ف (fa) - عُو ('ū) - لُنْ (lun)	↓	ف (fa) - عُو ('ū) - لْ (lu)
1 — — —	Zihāf: Qabḍ (قَبْض)	1 — — 1
		Removal of the 5th silent letter (nūn)

Figure 2.1: Example of a poetic foot modified by zihāfāt



2.1.2 Types of zihāfāt in Arabic metres

Scholars classify zihāfāt into different types depending on the nature of the modification. The most common types include:

- **Deletion (الحذف):** Removing a short syllable from a foot.
- **Substitution (الإبدال):** Replacing a long syllable with a short one.
- **Transformation (التغيير):** Altering the sequence of syllables to create a new rhythmic variation.

Each type of zihāfāt has specific rules and examples in classical poetry. These variations are not random but follow established patterns that learners must study carefully.

Fill in the blank: The three main types of zihāfāt are deletion, substitution, and _____.

Type (Arabic)	Transliteration	Effect on Meter
خبْن	<i>Khabn</i>	<i>Dropping the first short syllable</i>
طَيّ	<i>Ṭayy</i>	<i>Removing the middle consonant of a foot</i>
قَطْع	<i>Qaṭʿ</i>	<i>Dropping the final short syllable</i>
عَقْل	<i>ʿAql</i>	<i>Dropping the second short syllable in a foot</i>
كَشَف	<i>Kašf</i>	<i>Dropping the final consonant of a foot</i>
صَلَم	<i>Ṣalm</i>	<i>Removing the first syllable of a foot</i>
خَفَض	<i>Khafḍ</i>	<i>Dropping a short syllable</i>
كَسَر	<i>Kasr</i>	<i>Changing a short syllable into a long one</i>
تَخْفِيف	<i>Takhfīf</i>	<i>Lightening by removing a consonant</i>
إِدْمَاج	<i>Idmāj</i>	<i>Merging two syllables into one</i>

Box 2.1: Types of zihāfāt in Arabic poetry

2.1.3 Examples of zihāfāt in selected verses

To fully grasp zihāfāt, it is important to see them applied in actual poetry. Consider the following verse:



وَإِذَا الْمَنَاءُ أَخْطَأَتْكَ أَصَابَكَتْ

(When death misses you, it strikes you elsewhere.)

In this line, scholars identify a modification where a short syllable is dropped, creating a smoother rhythm without altering the meaning. Such examples show how *ziḥāfāt* enhance the musical quality of poetry while preserving its semantic integrity.

Fill in the blank: *Ziḥāfāt* can be observed in poetry when a _____ syllable is dropped or altered.



Plate 2.1: Classical Arabic verse with *ziḥāfāt* annotations

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What are *ziḥāfāt* in Arabic poetic metres?
2. Name the three main types of *ziḥāfāt*.
3. Which type of *ziḥāfāt* involves removing a short syllable?
4. How do *ziḥāfāt* affect the rhythm of Arabic poetry?
5. Provide an example of a verse where *ziḥāfāt* are applied.



2.2 Exploring ‘Ilāl (علل)

2.2.1 Definition of ‘Ilāl

‘**Ilāl (علل)** are structural modifications in Arabic poetic metres that involve more significant changes than *ziḥāfāt*. While *ziḥāfāt* usually affect single syllables, ‘*Ilāl* alter entire feet or larger rhythmic units. These modifications may lengthen, shorten, or transform the metre, creating distinctive variations in the flow of poetry. Scholars classify ‘*Ilāl* as permissible irregularities, meaning they are accepted within prosodic rules and enrich the diversity of Arabic verse.

For example, an entire foot may be shortened or extended, producing a new rhythmic balance while maintaining the integrity of the poem.

Fill in the blank: ‘*Ilāl* are _____ modifications in Arabic poetic metres that affect entire feet or larger rhythmic units.

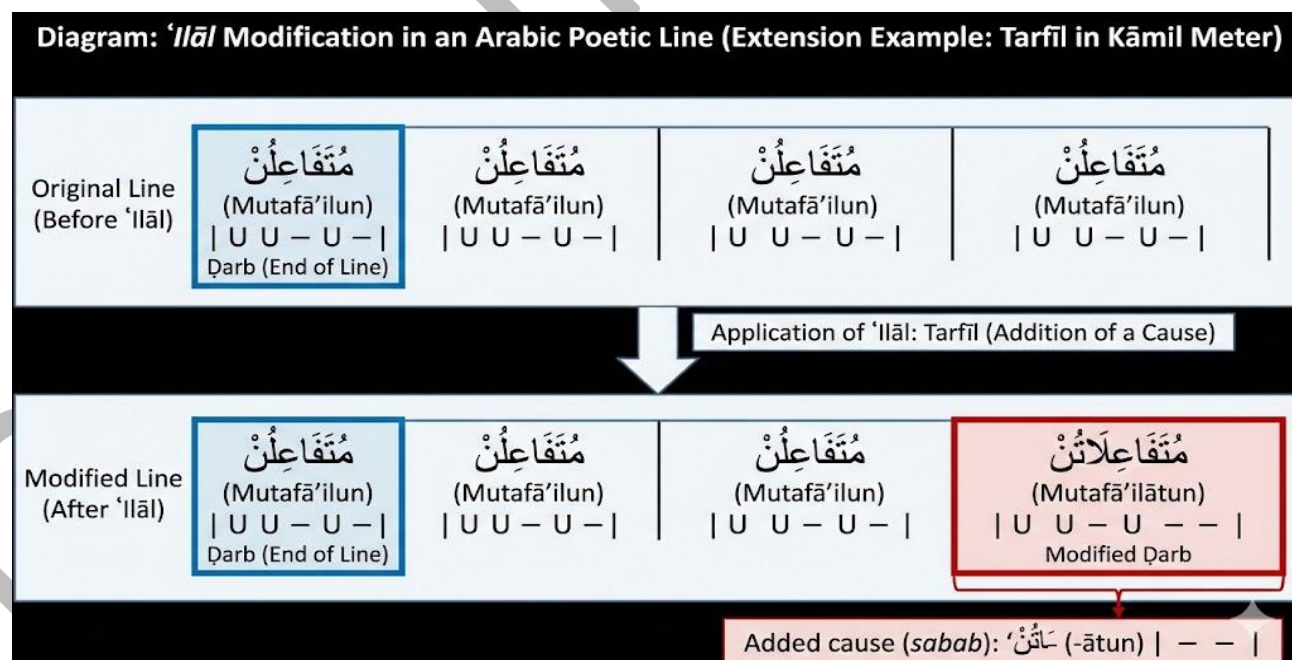


Figure 2.2: Example of a poetic line modified by ‘*Ilāl*



2.2.2 Types of ‘Ilāl in Arabic metres

Scholars identify several types of ‘Ilāl, each with specific rules and applications. The most common include:

- **Qaṭʿ (القطع)**: Removing the final consonant of a foot, often shortening the rhythm.
- **Qaṣr (القصر)**: Shortening a long syllable into a short one.
- **Ṭayy (الطي)**: Dropping a syllable from the middle of a foot.
- **Kaff (الكف)**: Removing the final short syllable of a foot.

These types demonstrate how ‘Ilāl provide poets with creative options while still adhering to prosodic principles.

Fill in the blank: The type of ‘Ilāl that shortens a long syllable into a short one is called _____.

Type (Arabic)	Transliteration	Effect on Meter
القطع	Qaṭʿ	Removing the final consonant of a foot
القصر	Qaṣr	Shortening a long syllable into a short one
الطي	Ṭayy	Dropping a syllable from the middle of a foot
الكف	Kaff	Removing the final short syllable of a foot
الحذف	Ḥadhf	Dropping the final syllable entirely
الوقف	Waqf	Pausing by dropping the last consonant
التدبيل	Tadhīl	Adding an extra syllable at the end
الترفيل	Tarfil	Extending a foot by adding two syllables
التدوير	Tadwīr	Shifting syllables between feet
الإضمار	Iḍmār	Dropping a medial syllable with compensation

Box 2.2: Types of ‘Ilāl in Arabic poetry



2.2.3 Examples of 'Ilāl in selected verses

To see 'Ilāl in practice, consider the following verse:

وَأِنَّمَا الْأُمُورُ بِمَقَادِيرِهَا

(Indeed, matters are determined by their measures.)

In this line, scholars note the shortening of a long syllable into a short one, an example of **qaṣr** (القصر). Such modifications demonstrate how 'Ilāl can subtly shift rhythm while preserving meaning and poetic elegance.

Fill in the blank: An example of 'Ilāl is seen when a _____ syllable is shortened into a short one.



Plate 2.2: Classical Arabic verse with 'Ilāl annotations

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What are 'Ilāl in Arabic poetic metres?



2. Name four common types of 'Ilāl.
3. Which type of 'Ilāl involves shortening a long syllable into a short one?
4. How do 'Ilāl differ from zihāfāt in terms of scope?
5. Provide an example of a verse where 'Ilāl are applied.

2.3 Comparative Study of Zihāfāt and 'Ilāl

2.3.1 Distinctions between zihāfāt and 'ilāl

Although both **zihāfāt** (زحافات) and **'ilāl** (علل) are permissible modifications in Arabic poetic metres, they differ in scope and impact. Zihāfāt are minor changes that usually affect single syllables within a foot, such as shortening or dropping a sound. In contrast, 'ilāl are more structural, altering entire feet or larger rhythmic units, such as shortening a long syllable or removing a final consonant.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial because it helps learners identify whether a modification is a small rhythmic variation or a more significant structural adjustment.

Fill in the blank: Zihāfāt usually affect _____, while 'ilāl alter entire feet or larger rhythmic units.



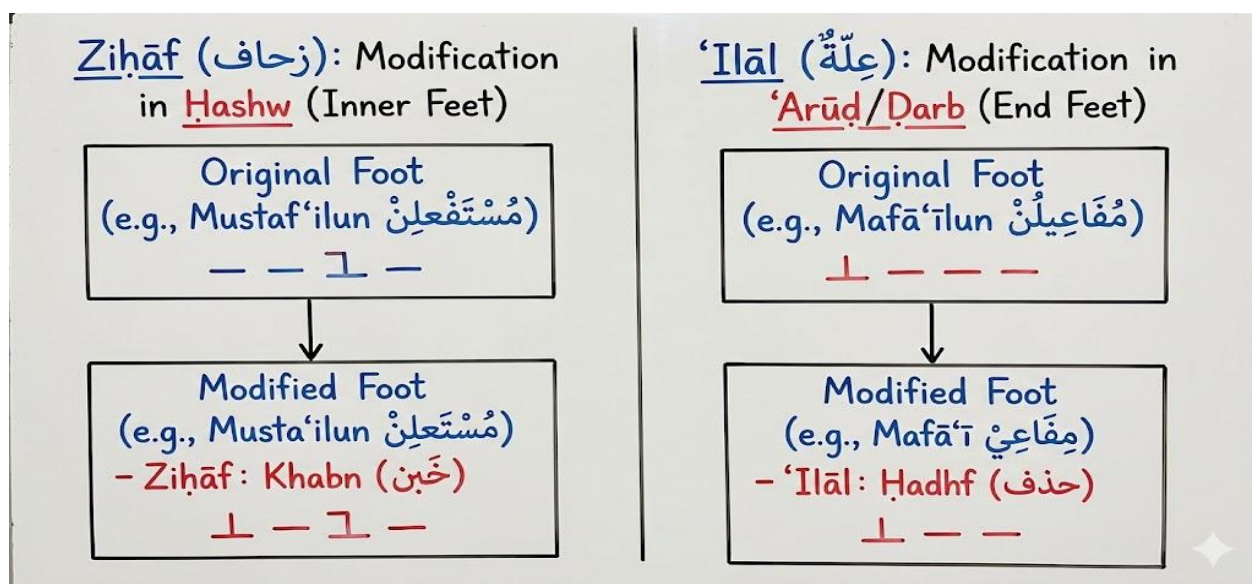


Figure 2.3: Distinctions between zihāfāt and ‘ilāl in Arabic metres

2.3.2 Functional role of zihāfāt and ‘ilāl in prosody

Both zihāfāt and ‘ilāl serve important functions in Arabic prosody. Zihāfāt provide poets with subtle rhythmic flexibility, allowing them to adjust syllables without disrupting the overall metre. ‘Ilāl, on the other hand, enable more significant structural variations, which can change the flow of a verse while still keeping it within accepted prosodic rules.

Together, these modifications enrich the musicality of poetry, offering poets creative freedom while preserving the discipline of prosody.

Fill in the blank: Zihāfāt provide subtle rhythmic flexibility, while ‘ilāl allow more _____ structural variations.

Category	Definition	Functional Role	Scale of Change	Example
Zihāfāt (زحافات)	Minor alterations applied to short syllables	Introduce rhythmic variation without altering the overall meter	Small-scale (affects single syllables)	Dropping the first short syllable (<i>khabn</i>)



‘Ilāl (علل)	Structural modifications applied to entire metrical feet	Adjust the length or structure of a foot while preserving metrical integrity	Large-scale (affects whole feet)	Removing the final consonant (<i>qaṭʿ</i>) or shortening a long syllable (<i>qaṣr</i>)
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Box 2.3: Functional roles of *ziḥāfāt* and ‘*ilāl*

2.3.3 Application in analysing Arabic poetry

When analysing Arabic poetry, learners must be able to identify both *ziḥāfāt* and ‘*ilāl*. This involves breaking down verses into syllables, marking long and short sounds, and recognising where modifications occur. By applying these concepts, one can evaluate whether a poem adheres to prosodic rules while appreciating the creative variations introduced by the poet.

For example, in a verse where a short syllable is dropped, this would be classified as a *ziḥāf*. If an entire foot is shortened, it would be considered an ‘*ilāl*. Recognising these differences allows for a more accurate and nuanced analysis of poetry.

Fill in the blank: Dropping a short syllable is an example of _____, while shortening an entire foot is an example of _____.





Plate 2.3: Classical Arabic verse annotated with *zihāfāt* and *‘ilāl*

Pilot questions 2.3

1. What is the main distinction between *zihāfāt* and *‘ilāl*?
2. How do *zihāfāt* contribute to rhythmic flexibility in poetry?
3. What structural role do *‘ilāl* play in Arabic prosody?
4. Why is it important to identify both *zihāfāt* and *‘ilāl* when analysing poetry?
5. Provide an example of a verse where both *zihāfāt* and *‘ilāl* can be observed.

Series Summary

This Series has guided you through the study of **Zihāfāt (زحافات)** and **‘Ilāl (علل)**, two essential concepts in Arabic prosody that provide poets with flexibility while preserving the integrity of poetic metres. The purpose of this Series was to help you recognise, classify, and apply these modifications in the analysis of Arabic poetry, thereby strengthening your ability to engage critically with both classical and modern texts.



We began by examining **Zihāfāt**, focusing on their definition, types, and examples in selected verses. We then explored **‘Ilāl**, considering their broader structural role, classifications, and practical illustrations. Finally, we carried out a **comparative study of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl**, highlighting their distinctions, functional roles, and applications in prosodic analysis. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define and explain both concepts, demonstrate their application in verses, analyse their differences, evaluate their role in maintaining rhythm and flexibility, and apply them confidently in the critical study of Arabic poetry.

Glossary of Terms

- **‘Ilāl (علل)**: Structural modifications in Arabic poetic metres that involve significant changes to entire feet or larger rhythmic units, such as shortening, lengthening, or removing syllables.
- **Kaff (الكف)**: A type of ‘ilāl where the final short syllable of a foot is removed.
- **Metre (البحر الشعري)**: The rhythmic pattern of a poem, created by sequences of long and short syllables, which gives poetry its musical quality.
- **Qaṣr (القصر)**: A type of ‘ilāl where a long syllable is shortened into a short one.
- **Qaṭ‘ (القطع)**: A type of ‘ilāl involving the removal of the final consonant of a foot, often shortening the rhythm.
- **Ṭayy (الطي)**: A type of ‘ilāl where a syllable is dropped from the middle of a foot.
- **Zihāfāt (زحافات)**: Minor modifications in Arabic poetic metres that affect single syllables within a foot, such as shortening or dropping a sound, while maintaining the overall rhythm.



Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Zihāfāt are defined as _____ modifications in Arabic poetic metres. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. The three main types of zihāfāt are deletion, substitution, and _____. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Which type of ‘ilāl shortens a long syllable into a short one? (Linked to SLO 2.5)
4. Dropping a short syllable is an example of _____, while shortening an entire foot is an example of _____. (Linked to SLO 2.7)
5. Zihāfāt provide subtle rhythmic flexibility, while ‘ilāl allow more _____ structural variations. (Linked to SLO 2.8)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Define zihāfāt and explain their role in Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 2.1, 2.2)
7. Demonstrate with an example how zihāfāt are applied in a verse. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
8. Define ‘ilāl and describe one of its types with an example. (Linked to SLO 2.4, 2.5)
9. Apply knowledge of ‘ilāl to analyse a verse where a long syllable is shortened. (Linked to SLO 2.6)
10. Analyse the distinctions between zihāfāt and ‘ilāl in terms of scope and function. (Linked to SLO 2.7)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Evaluate the functional role of zihāfāt and ‘ilāl in maintaining rhythm and flexibility in Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 2.8)
12. Apply both zihāfāt and ‘ilāl in the critical analysis of a selected Arabic poetic text. (Linked to SLO 2.9)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Minor
2. Transformation
3. Qaṣr (القصر)
4. Zihāfāt; ‘ilāl
5. Significant



Short-Answer Questions

6. Zihāfāt are minor modifications in Arabic poetic metres that affect single syllables, allowing rhythmic flexibility without breaking prosodic rules.
7. In a verse where a short syllable is dropped, the rhythm is smoothed while the meaning remains intact, showing zihāfāt in practice.
8. ‘Ilāl are structural modifications in Arabic poetic metres. For example, qat‘ (القطع) removes the final consonant of a foot, shortening the rhythm.
9. In a verse where a long syllable is shortened into a short one, this is an example of qasr (القصر), demonstrating how ‘ilāl modifies the metre.
10. Zihāfāt affect single syllables and provide subtle rhythmic changes, while ‘ilāl alter entire feet or larger units, creating structural variations.

Long-Answer Questions

11. **Basic response:** Zihāfāt and ‘ilāl are functional tools in prosody that allow poets to adjust rhythm and structure while maintaining accepted rules.

Value-added response: Beyond this, they enrich the musicality of poetry, provide creative freedom, and demonstrate the sophistication of Arabic prosody as both an art and a science.

12. **Basic response:** In analysing a poetic text, one can identify zihāfāt where syllables are dropped and ‘ilāl where feet are shortened, showing how both modifications shape rhythm.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may extend this by comparing multiple verses, evaluating how poets strategically use zihāfāt and ‘ilāl to balance creativity with tradition, and linking these observations to broader literary criticism.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Part 2.1 Understanding Zihāfāt (زحافات)

- Minor modifications in Arabic poetic metres that allow rhythmic flexibility.
- Deletion, substitution, and transformation.
- Removing a short syllable.
- They smooth or adjust the rhythm without breaking prosodic rules.
- A verse where a short syllable is dropped to create smoother rhythm.

Part 2.2 Exploring ‘Ilāl (علل)

- Structural modifications in Arabic poetic metres affecting entire feet or larger rhythmic units.
- Qat‘ (القطع), Qaṣr (القصر), Ṭayy (الطي), Kaff (الكف).
- Qaṣr (القصر).
- Zihāfāt affect single syllables, while ‘Ilāl alter entire feet or larger units.
- A verse where a long syllable is shortened into a short one.

Part 2.3 Comparative Study of Zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl

- Zihāfāt affect single syllables, while ‘Ilāl involve structural changes to entire feet.
- They provide subtle rhythmic flexibility.
- They allow more significant structural variations while preserving prosodic rules.
- It ensures accurate analysis and appreciation of poetic creativity.
- A verse showing both a dropped syllable (zihāf) and a shortened foot (‘ilāl).



References and Attributions [Series 2]

General References

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. (8th century). *Foundational works on Arabic prosody* ('Arūḍ). Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Zihāfāt and 'Ilāl. (n.d.). *Documented variations in Arabic poetic metres*. Retrieved from open educational resources on Arabic literature.
- Pre-Islamic and classical Arabic poetry manuscripts. (n.d.). *Examples of prosodic modifications*. Suggested OER sources.

Illustration References and Attributions

- *Figure 2.1: Example of a poetic foot modified by zihāfāt*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a diagram showing an Arabic poetic foot before and after applying zihāfāt."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic prosody zihāfāt diagram OER."
- *Box 2.1: Types of zihāfāt in Arabic poetry*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a text box summarising the types of zihāfāt in Arabic poetry."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Types of zihāfāt Arabic poetry OER."
- *Plate 2.1: Classical Arabic verse with zihāfāt annotations*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with highlighted syllables showing zihāfāt modifications."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic poetry manuscript zihāfāt OER."
- *Figure 2.2: Example of a poetic line modified by 'Ilāl*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a diagram showing an Arabic poetic line with a foot shortened or extended due to 'Ilāl."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic prosody 'Ilāl diagram OER."
- *Box 2.2: Types of 'Ilāl in Arabic poetry*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a text box summarising the types of 'Ilāl in Arabic poetry."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Types of 'Ilāl Arabic poetry OER."
- *Plate 2.2: Classical Arabic verse with 'Ilāl annotations*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with highlighted syllables showing ‘Ilāl modifications.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry manuscript ‘Ilāl OER.”
- *Figure 2.3: Distinctions between zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in Arabic metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a side-by-side diagram showing an Arabic poetic foot with zihāfāt and another with ‘Ilāl.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Comparison of zihāfāt and ‘ilāl Arabic prosody diagram OER.”
- *Box 2.3: Functional roles of zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the functional roles of zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Functional role of zihāfāt and ‘ilāl Arabic poetry OER.”
- *Plate 2.3: Classical Arabic verse annotated with zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with annotations highlighting both zihāfāt and ‘Ilāl.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry manuscript zihāfāt and ‘ilāl OER.”



Series 3: Study and Analysis of the Fourteen Metres

3.1 Introduction to the Fourteen Metres

- 3.1.1 Historical background and codification by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad
- 3.1.2 Importance of metre classification in Arabic prosody
- 3.1.3 Overview of the fourteen standard metres

3.2 Study of Major Metres (Group A)

- 3.2.1 Ṭawīl (الطويل)
- 3.2.2 Basīṭ (البسيط)
- 3.2.3 Kāmil (الكامل)
- 3.2.4 Wāfir (الوافر)
- 3.2.5 Ramal (الرمال)

3.3 Study of Remaining Metres (Group B)

- 3.3.1 Rajaz (الرجز)
- 3.3.2 Khafīf (الخفيف)
- 3.3.3 Hazaj (الهاج)
- 3.3.4 Muḍāriʿ (المضارع)
- 3.3.5 Sarīʿ (السريع)
- 3.3.6 Munṣariḥ (المنسرح)
- 3.3.7 Madīd (المديد)
- 3.3.8 Muḥtath (المجتث)
- 3.3.9 Mutadārik (المتدارك)

3.4 Comparative Analysis and Application

- 3.4.1 Distinctive features across the fourteen metres
- 3.4.2 Practical application in analysing Arabic poetry
- 3.4.3 Relevance of the fourteen metres in modern Arabic studies



Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the concepts of **zihāfat** and **‘ilāl**, learning how these modifications provide poets with flexibility while preserving the integrity of Arabic poetic metres. Building on that foundation, we now turn to the fourteen recognised metres codified by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, which form the backbone of Arabic prosody. These metres are not only central to the structure of classical poetry but also remain relevant in modern literary studies, making their mastery essential for any serious student of Arabic poetry.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the fourteen Arabic poetic metres, explain their distinctive features, and equip you with the skills to analyse and apply them in the study of poetry. By the end of this Series, you should be able to identify each metre, recognise its rhythmic pattern, and evaluate its role in shaping the artistry of Arabic verse.

We shall commence this Series with an **introduction to the fourteen metres**, focusing on their historical background, codification, and importance in prosody. Next, we will study the **major metres (Group A)**, including Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil, Wāfir, and Ramal. Following that, we will continue with the **remaining metres (Group B)**, such as Rajaz, Khafīf, Hazaj, Muḍāri‘, Sarī‘, Munṣariḥ, Maḍīd, Mujtath, and Mutadārik. Finally, we will wrap up with a **comparative analysis and application**, highlighting distinctive features across the fourteen metres and demonstrating their relevance in both classical and modern Arabic poetry.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 3: Study and Analysis of the Fourteen Arabic Poetic Metres

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the fourteen Arabic poetic metres and explain their historical codification.
- **SLO 3.2** describe the importance of metre classification in Arabic prosody.



- **SLO 3.3** identify the structural features of the major metres (Ṭawīl, Basīt, Kāmil, Wāfir, and Ramal).
- **SLO 3.4** demonstrate the rhythmic patterns of the major metres using selected verses.
- **SLO 3.5** identify the structural features of the remaining metres (Rajaz, Khaff, Hazaj, Muḍārī', Sarī', Munṣariḥ, Madīd, Mujtath, and Mutadārik).
- **SLO 3.6** apply knowledge of the remaining metres to analyse selected verses.
- **SLO 3.7** analyse the distinctive features across all fourteen metres.
- **SLO 3.8** evaluate the relevance of the fourteen metres in both classical and modern Arabic poetry.

3.1 Introduction to the Fourteen Metres

3.1.1 Historical background and codification by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad

The study of Arabic poetic metres begins with the work of **Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī**, an 8th-century scholar who systematically codified the rhythmic structures of Arabic poetry. He identified fifteen metres through his prosodic circles, which later became the foundation of Arabic prosody. Over time, scholars refined his system, and fourteen metres emerged as the standard set widely recognised and used in Arabic poetry. These metres provided poets with a structured yet flexible framework to compose verses that were both musical and meaningful.

Fill in the blank: The scholar credited with codifying the Arabic poetic metres is _____.



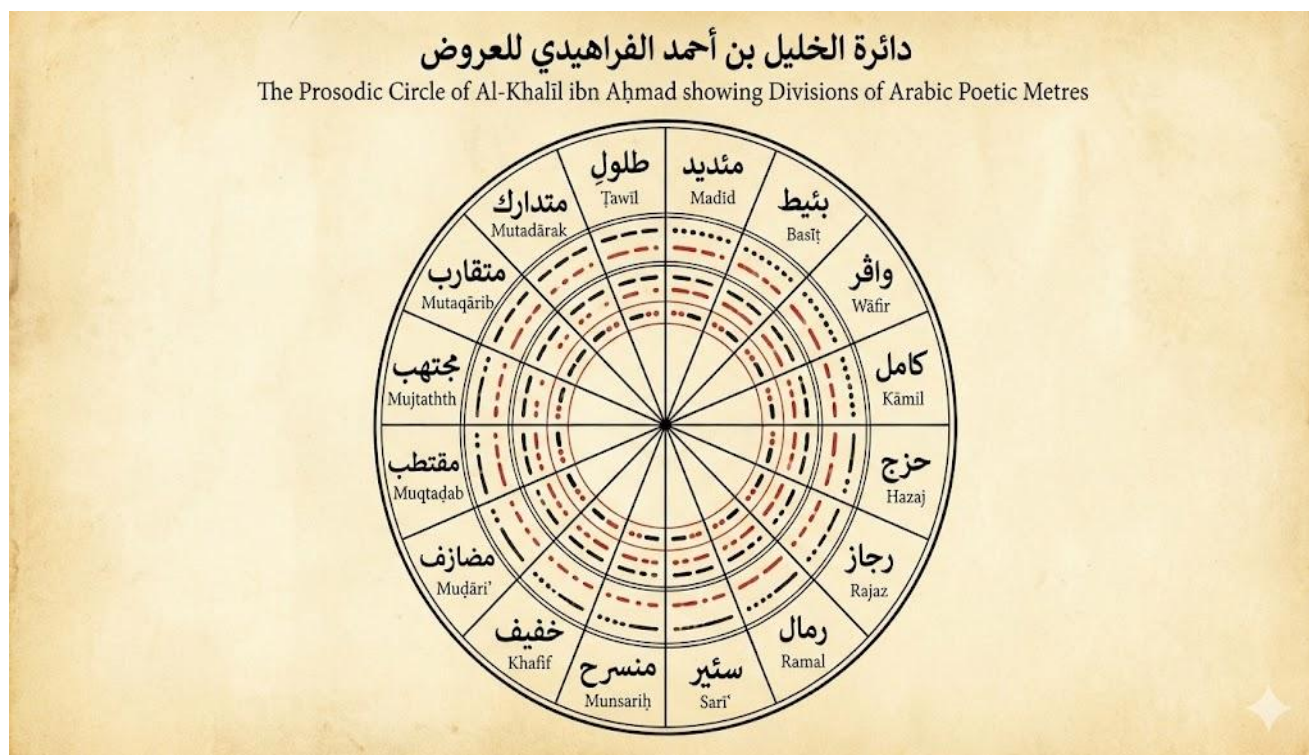


Figure 3.1: Al-Khalīl's prosodic circle illustrating the origin of the metres

3.1.2 Importance of metre classification in Arabic prosody

Metre classification refers to the systematic arrangement of long and short syllables that create the rhythm of a poem. This classification is essential because it allows poets to compose within recognised patterns, ensuring harmony and balance in their verses. It also provides scholars and learners with a framework for analysing poetry, identifying variations, and appreciating the artistry of composition.

Without classification, poetry would lack the consistency needed for memorisation, recitation, and transmission across generations. The fourteen metres thus serve as both creative tools and analytical instruments.

Fill in the blank: Metre classification ensures _____ and balance in Arabic poetry.



Function	Description	Impact
Organizing Rhythm	<i>Provides a systematic framework for diverse rhythmic patterns</i>	<i>Ensures consistency and recognizability across poems</i>
Preserving Tradition	<i>Safeguards the prosodic system established by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad</i>	<i>Maintains continuity between classical and later poetic practice</i>
Guiding Composition	<i>Helps poets select suitable metres for themes, moods, and genres</i>	<i>Offers creative flexibility while staying within accepted rules</i>
Facilitating Analysis	<i>Enables scholars to study and critique poems based on metre</i>	<i>Provides technical vocabulary for prosodic discussion</i>
Balancing Artistry and Rules	<i>Allows controlled variation through <i>zihāfāt</i> and <i>‘ilāl</i></i>	<i>Harmonizes strict metrical rules with creative expression</i>

Box 3.1: Functions of metre classification in Arabic poetry

3.1.3 Overview of the fourteen standard metres

The fourteen recognised metres form the backbone of Arabic poetry. Each metre has a unique rhythmic pattern defined by sequences of long and short syllables. Some metres, such as **Ṭawīl** (الطويل) and **Basīṭ** (البسيط), are frequently used in classical poetry, while others, like **Mutadārik** (المتدارك), are less common but still part of the accepted system. Together, they represent the full range of rhythmic possibilities available to poets.

The fourteen metres are: Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil, Wāfir, Ramal, Rajaz, Khafīf, Hazaj, Muḍārī‘, Sarī‘, Munṣariḥ, Madīd, Mujtath, and Mutadārik.

Fill in the blank: The fourteen recognised metres are defined by sequences of _____ and _____ syllables.

Metre	Arabic name	Distinctive feature
Ṭawīl	الطويل	Long, flowing rhythm



Basīt	البسيط	Balanced alternation
Kāmil	الكامل	Strong, complete rhythm
Wāfir	الوافر	Rich and expansive
Ramal	الرمل	Smooth and flowing
Rajaz	الرجز	Simple, repetitive rhythm
Khafīf	الخفيف	Light and delicate
Hazaj	الهمزج	Musical and lyrical
Muḍāriʿ	المضارع	Rarely used, distinctive pattern
Sarīʿ	السريع	Fast-paced rhythm
Munṣariḥ	المنسرح	Expansive variation
Maḍīd	المديد	Extended rhythm
Mujtath	المجتث	Shortened form
Mutadārik	المتدارك	Later addition, rare usage

Table 3.1: List of the fourteen Arabic poetic metres

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Who codified the Arabic poetic metres?
2. Why is metre classification important in Arabic prosody?
3. How many metres are recognised as the standard set?
4. Name three of the fourteen metres.
5. What do the fourteen metres have in common in terms of structure?

3.2 Study of Major Metres (Group A)

3.2.1 Ṭawīl (الطويل)

The **Ṭawīl** (الطويل) is one of the most prominent Arabic poetic metres. It is characterised by its **long, flowing rhythm**, which makes it suitable for epic and narrative poetry. The structure of Ṭawīl allows poets to develop extended themes with grandeur and dignity, often used in pre-Islamic odes (*qaṣā'id*).



Fill in the blank: The Ṭawīl metre is especially suited for _____ poetry because of its long, flowing rhythm.

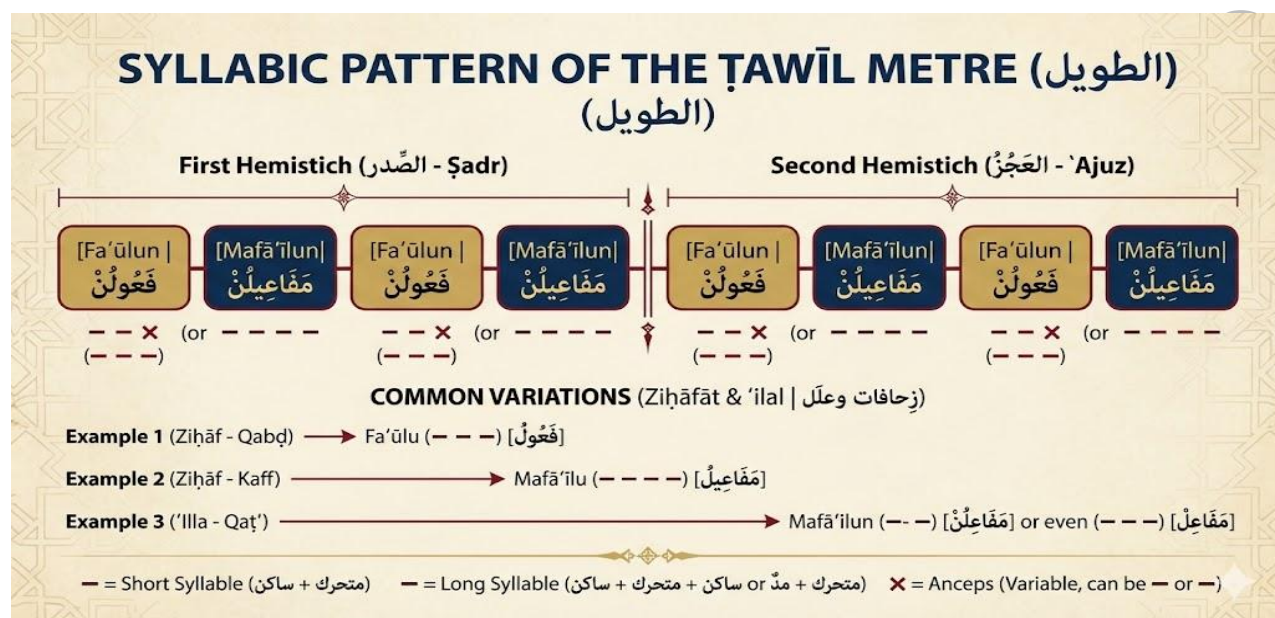


Figure 3.2: Rhythmic structure of Ṭawīl

3.2.2 Basīṭ (البسيط)

The **Basīṭ (البسيط)** is known for its **balanced alternation** of long and short syllables. Its rhythm is steady and versatile, making it suitable for both descriptive and reflective poetry. Basīṭ is often employed when poets wish to maintain clarity and balance in their verses.

Fill in the blank: The Basīṭ metre is characterised by a _____ alternation of long and short syllables.

Feature	Description	Example / Note				
---------	-------------	----------------	--	--	--	--



Name	“Basīt” literally means	Reflects its flowing,					
Meaning	<i>extended or spread out</i> in Arabic	expansive rhythm					
Popularity	Among the four most common metres (with Ṭawīl, Kāmil, Wāfir)	Frequently used in pre- Islamic and classical poetry					
Structure (tafā’īl)	Alternates between Mustaf’ilun (مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ) and Fā’ilun (فَاعِلُنْ)	Mnemonic pattern: <i>Mustaf’ilun Fā’ilun</i> <i>Mustaf’ilun Fa’ilun</i>					
Metrical Scheme	Often represented as: (	x – u –	x	–	u	)	“–” = long syllable, “u” = short syllable, “x” = variable
Couplet Form	Typically used in eight feet per couplet	Creates balanced, flowing verses					
Rhythmic Quality	Smooth, straightforward, and easy to recite	Contributes to its popularity across eras					
Usage in Poetry	Found in qasīdas and other classical forms	Example: Al- Mutanabbī’s qasīda “The poet reproaches Sayf al- Dawla” (38 couplets)					
Function	Provides poets with a flexible yet disciplined rhythmic framework	Balances artistry with metrical rules					

Box 3.2: Features of Basīt metre

3.2.3 Kāmil (الكامل)

The **Kāmil** (الكامل) is distinguished by its **strong and complete rhythm**, which conveys power and intensity. It is often used in poetry that celebrates achievements, expresses pride, or conveys



emotional strength. The completeness of its rhythm makes it one of the most admired metres in Arabic prosody.

Fill in the blank: The Kāmil metre is often chosen for poetry that conveys _____ and intensity.

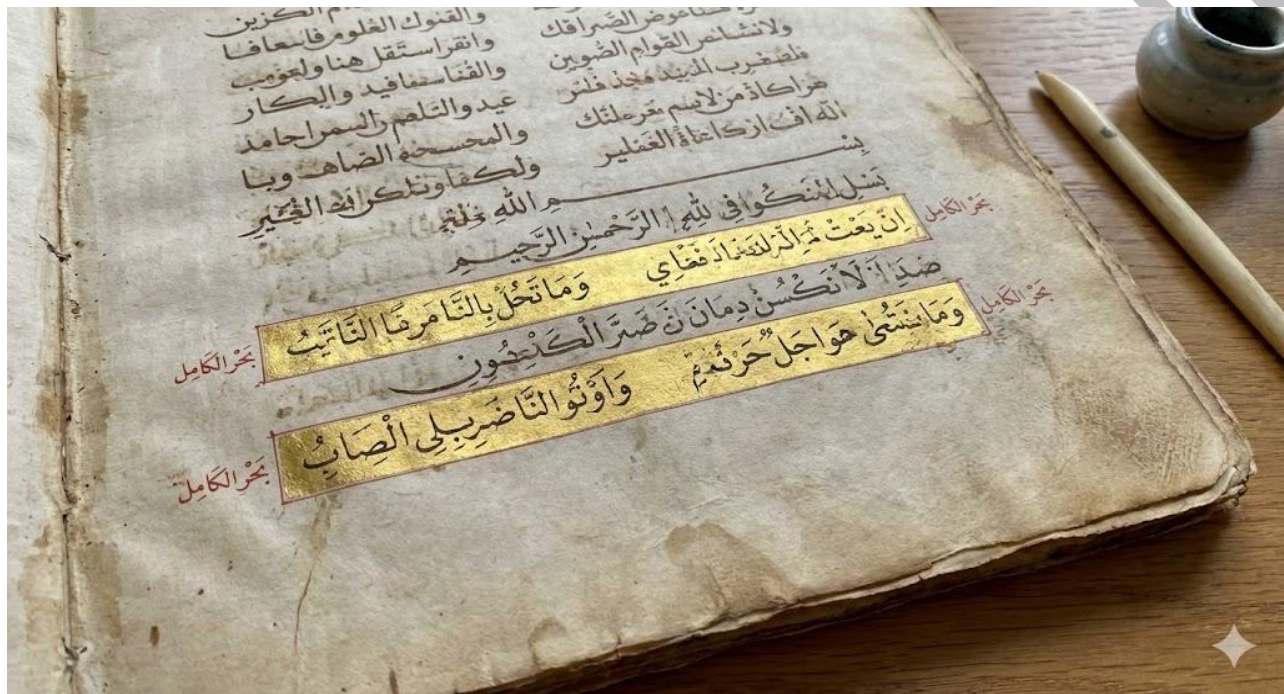


Plate 3.2: Classical Arabic verse in Kāmil metre

3.2.4 Wāfir (الوافر)

The **Wāfir** (الوافر) is recognised for its **rich and expansive rhythm**, which provides poets with flexibility in expression. It is frequently used in lyrical and romantic poetry, as its rhythm accommodates emotional depth and musicality.

Fill in the blank: The Wāfir metre is frequently used in _____ poetry because of its rich and expansive rhythm.



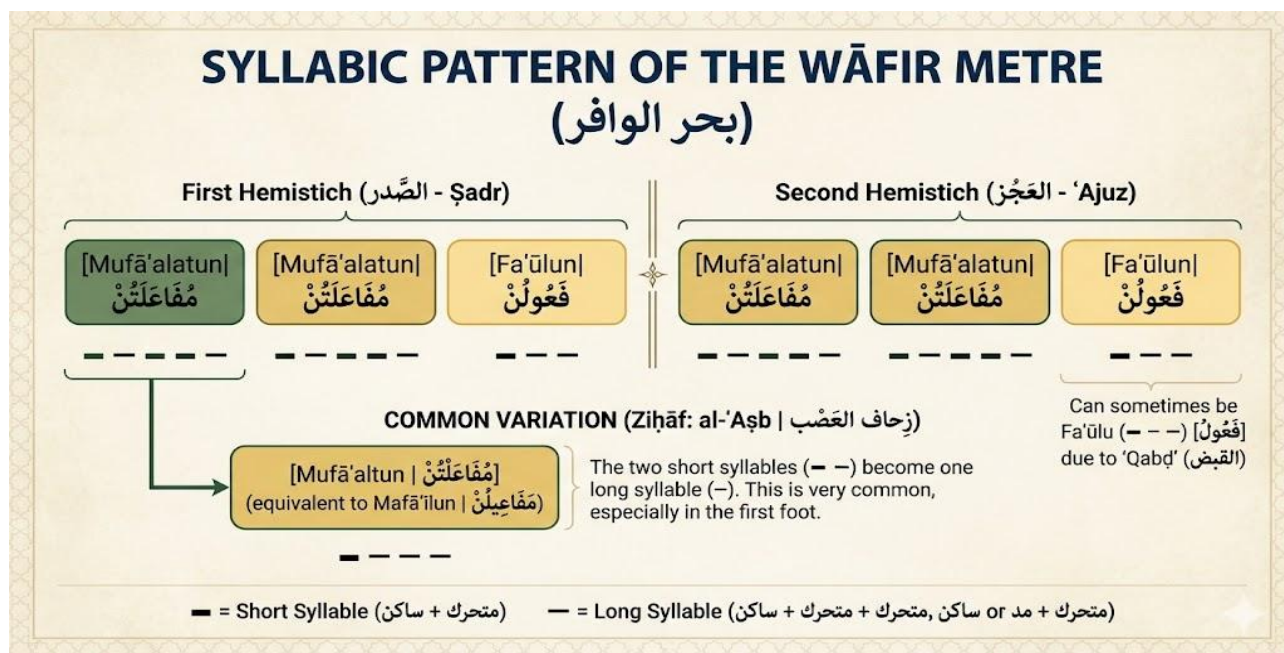


Figure 3.3: Rhythmic structure of Wāfir

3.2.5 Ramal (الرمل)

The **Ramal** (الرمل) is known for its **smooth and flowing rhythm**, often associated with elegance and subtlety. It is commonly used in poetry that conveys gentle emotions, such as longing or reflection. Its flowing nature makes it distinct among the major metres.

Fill in the blank: The Ramal metre is associated with _____ and subtlety in Arabic poetry.

Metre	Arabic name	Distinctive feature	Common usage
Tawīl	الطويل	Long, flowing rhythm	Epic and narrative poetry
Basīṭ	البسيط	Balanced alternation	Descriptive and reflective poetry
Kāmil	الكامل	Strong, complete rhythm	Pride and celebratory poetry
Wāfir	الوافر	Rich and expansive rhythm	Lyrical and romantic poetry
Ramal	الرمل	Smooth and flowing rhythm	Gentle and reflective poetry

Table 3.2: Summary of major metres (Group A)



Pilot questions 3.2

1. What is the distinctive feature of the Ṭawīl metre?
2. Which metre is characterised by balanced alternation of syllables?
3. For what type of poetry is the Kāmil metre often chosen?
4. Why is the Wāfir metre suitable for lyrical poetry?
5. Which metre is associated with smooth and flowing rhythm?

3.3 Study of Remaining Metres (Group B)

3.3.1 Rajaz (الرجز)

The **Rajaz (الرجز)** is one of the simplest and most repetitive metres in Arabic poetry. It is characterised by a **short, recurring rhythm** that makes it easy to memorise and recite. Because of its simplicity, Rajaz was often used in oral traditions, improvised poetry, and didactic verses.

Fill in the blank: The Rajaz metre is especially suited for _____ poetry because of its simple and repetitive rhythm.



The Syllabic Pattern of the **Rajaz** Metre (بَحْرُ الرَّجَزِ) in Arabic Poetry

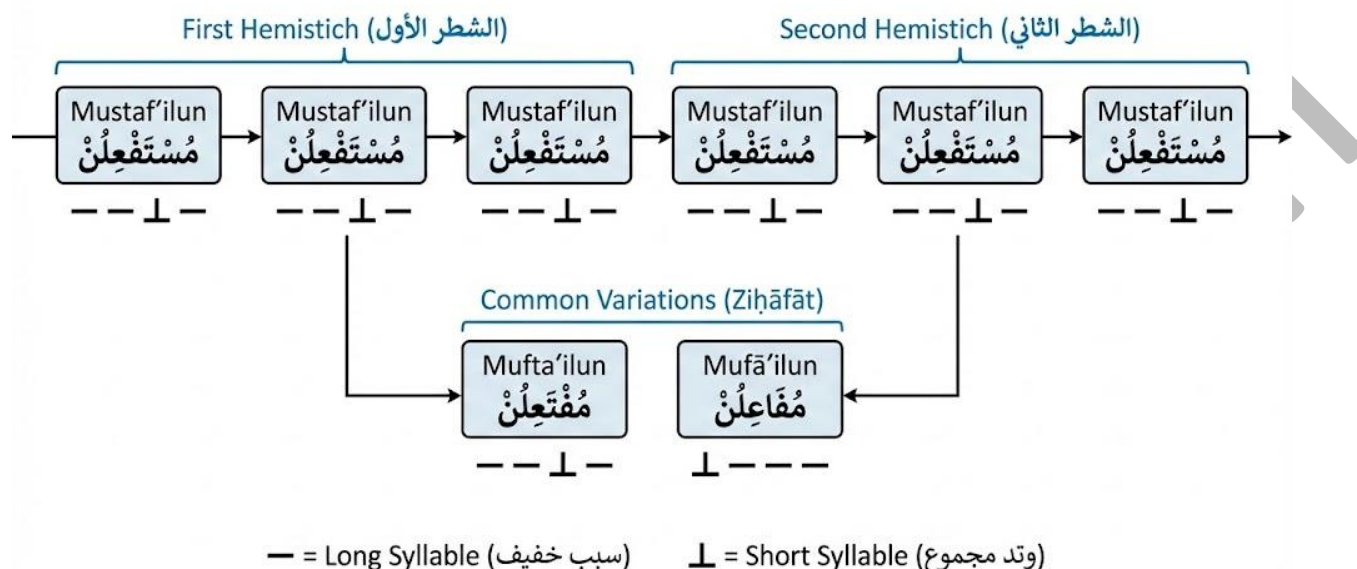


Figure 3.4: Rhythmic structure of Rajaz

3.3.2 Khafif (الخفيف)

The **Khafif** (الخفيف) is known for its **light and delicate rhythm**, which gives poetry a graceful flow. It is often used in lyrical compositions and verses that aim to convey elegance and subtlety.

Fill in the blank: The Khafif metre is characterised by a _____ and delicate rhythm.

Feature	Description	Example / Note				
Name	"Khafif" means light or gentle	Reflects its smooth, flowing rhythm				
Meaning						
Popularity	One of the sixteen classical metres	Favored for lyrical and descriptive poetry				



Structure (<i>tafā'īl</i>)	Built on repetition of <i>Fā'ilātun</i> (فاعلاتن) and <i>Mustaf'ilun</i> (مستفعلن)	Typical scheme: <i>Fā'ilātun</i> <i>Mustaf'ilun</i> <i>Fā'ilātun</i>				
Metrical Scheme	Often represented as: (	– u – –	– u – –	– u – –	)	“–” = long syllable, “u” = short syllable
Couplet Form	Usually composed of six feet per line	Creates balanced, melodic verses				
Rhythmic Quality	Light, graceful, and easy to recite	Suited for themes of elegance and beauty				
Usage in Poetry	Found in <i>qasīdas</i> and lyrical compositions	Example: Used by <i>Al-Buḥturī</i> in descriptive poetry				
Function	Provides poets with a metre that balances clarity and musicality	Ideal for expressive, flowing verse				

Box 3.3: Features of Khafif metre

3.3.3 Hazaj (الهزج)

The **Hazaj** (الهزج) is distinguished by its **musical and lyrical quality**, often used in songs and chants. Its rhythm is smooth and melodious, making it ideal for poetry that is intended to be sung or performed.

Fill in the blank: The Hazaj metre is often chosen for poetry that is intended to be _____.



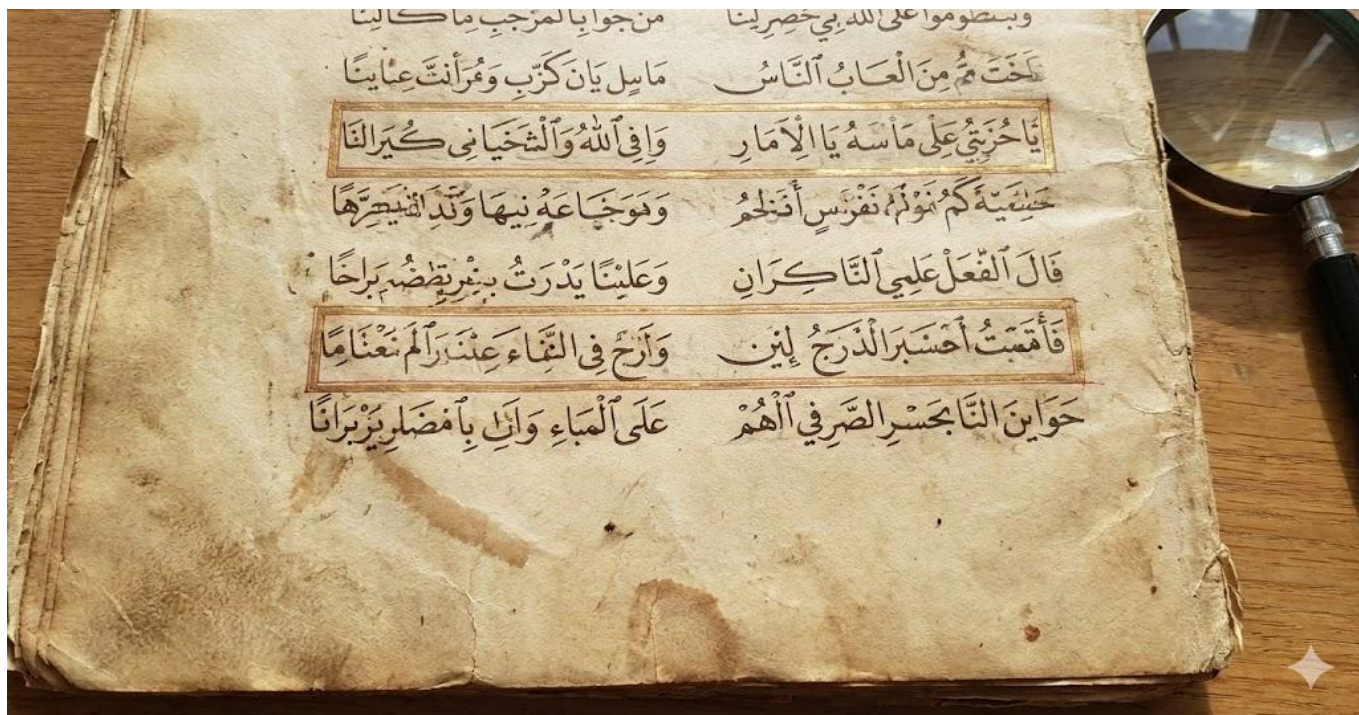


Plate 3.3: Classical Arabic verse in Hazaj metre

3.3.4 Muḍārī' (المضارع)

The **Muḍārī'** (المضارع) is a relatively rare metre, recognised for its **distinctive rhythmic pattern**. Although not frequently used, it remains part of the fourteen standard metres and demonstrates the diversity of Arabic prosody.

Fill in the blank: The Muḍārī' metre is considered _____ because of its distinctive rhythmic pattern.



SYLLABIC PATTERN OF THE MUḌĀRĪ' METRE (بحر المضارع)

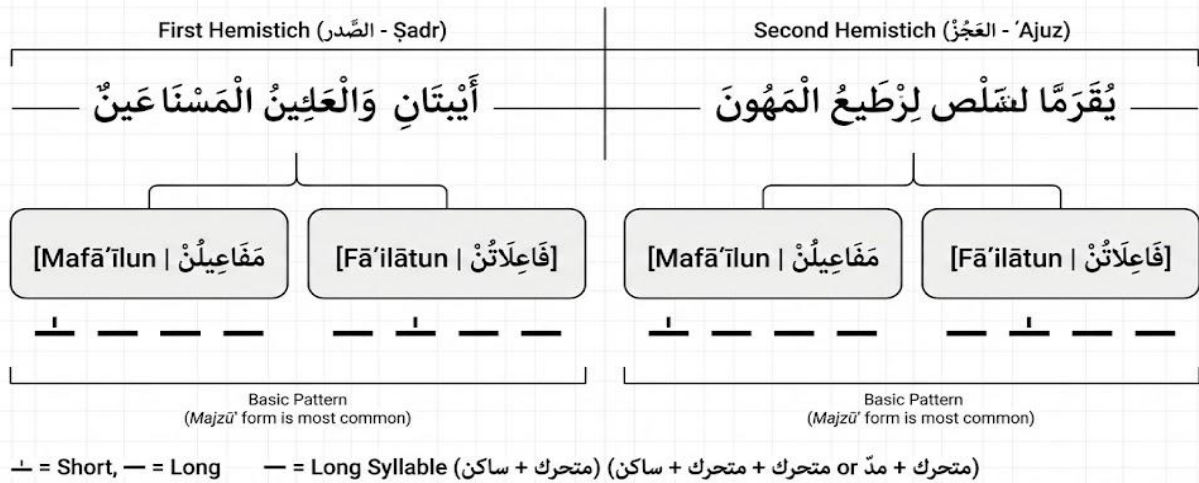


Figure 3.5: Rhythmic structure of Muḍārī'

3.3.5 Sarī' (السريع)

The **Sarī'** (السريع) is characterised by its **fast-paced rhythm**, which creates energy and momentum in poetry. It is often used in verses that aim to convey urgency or excitement.

Fill in the blank: The Sarī' metre is suitable for poetry that conveys _____ and momentum.

Feature	Description	Example / Note				
Name	"Sarī'" means swift or rapid	Reflects its fast, flowing rhythm				
Meaning						
Popularity	One of the sixteen classical metres	Favored for energetic and lively themes				



Structure (<i>tafā'īl</i>)	Built on repetition of <i>Mustaf'ilun</i> (مستفعلن) and <i>Fā'ilun</i> (فاعلن)	Typical scheme: <i>Mustaf'ilun</i> <i>Mustaf'ilun Fā'ilun</i>			
Metrical Scheme	Often represented as: (	– u – –	– u – –	– u – –	) “–” = long syllable, “u” = short syllable
Couplet Form	Usually composed of six feet per line	Produces brisk, forward-moving cadence			
Rhythmic Quality	Fast-paced, dynamic, vigorous	Suited for themes of action and movement			
Usage in Poetry	Found in <i>qasīdas</i> and narrative verse	Often used in battle or heroic poetry			
Function	Provides poets with a metre of speed and vitality	Ideal for conveying urgency and dramatic energy			

Box 3.4: Features of Sarī' metre

3.3.6 Munṣariḥ (المنسرح)

The **Munṣariḥ** (المنسرح) is known for its **expansive variation**, offering poets flexibility in expression. It is less common than other metres but remains significant for its unique rhythmic possibilities.

Fill in the blank: The Munṣariḥ metre provides poets with _____ in expression.



Syllabic Pattern of the Munṣariḥ Metre (بَحْرُ الْمُنْسَرِح) in Arabic Poetry

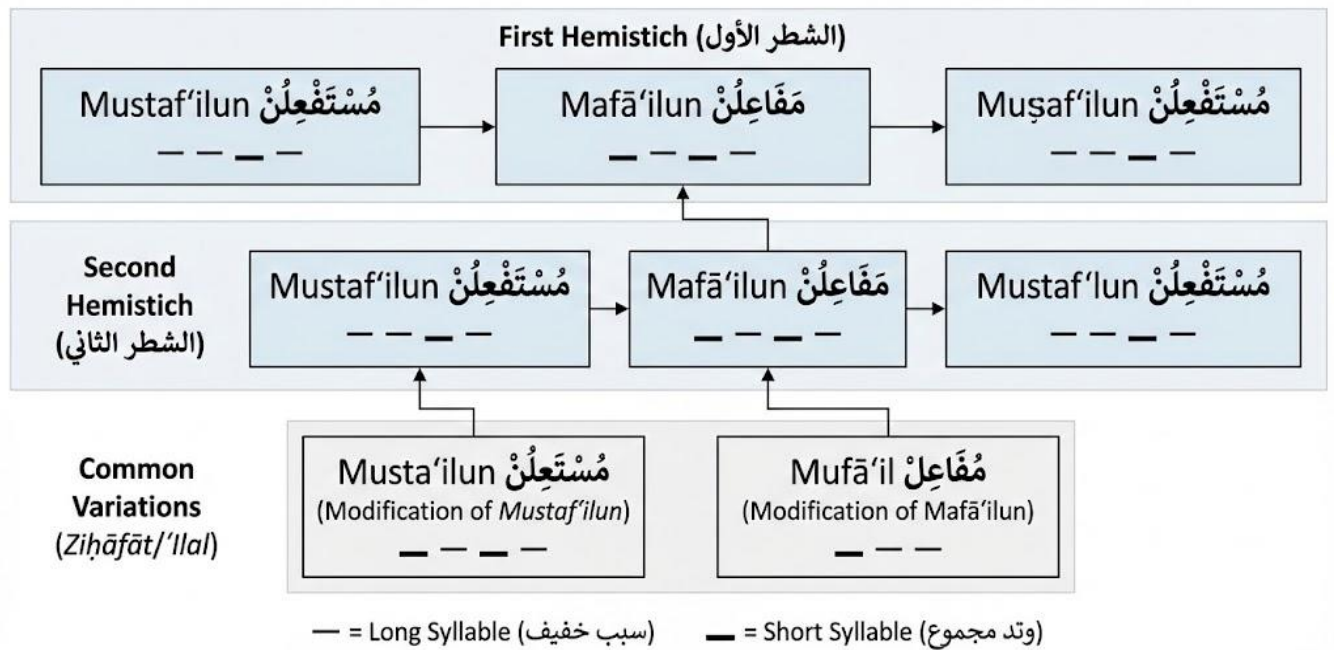


Figure 3.6: Rhythmic structure of Munṣariḥ

3.3.7 Madīd (المديد)

The **Madīd** (المديد) is recognised for its **extended rhythm**, which allows for longer poetic lines. It is often used in reflective poetry, where the extended rhythm supports contemplative themes.

Fill in the blank: The Madīd metre is often used in _____ poetry because of its extended rhythm.





Plate 3.4: Classical Arabic verse in Madīd metre

3.3.8 Mujtath (المجتث)

The **Mujtath** (المجتث) is a shortened form of other metres, giving it a **compact rhythm**. It is suitable for concise poetic expression and is often used in shorter compositions.

Fill in the blank: The Mujtath metre is characterised by its _____ rhythm.



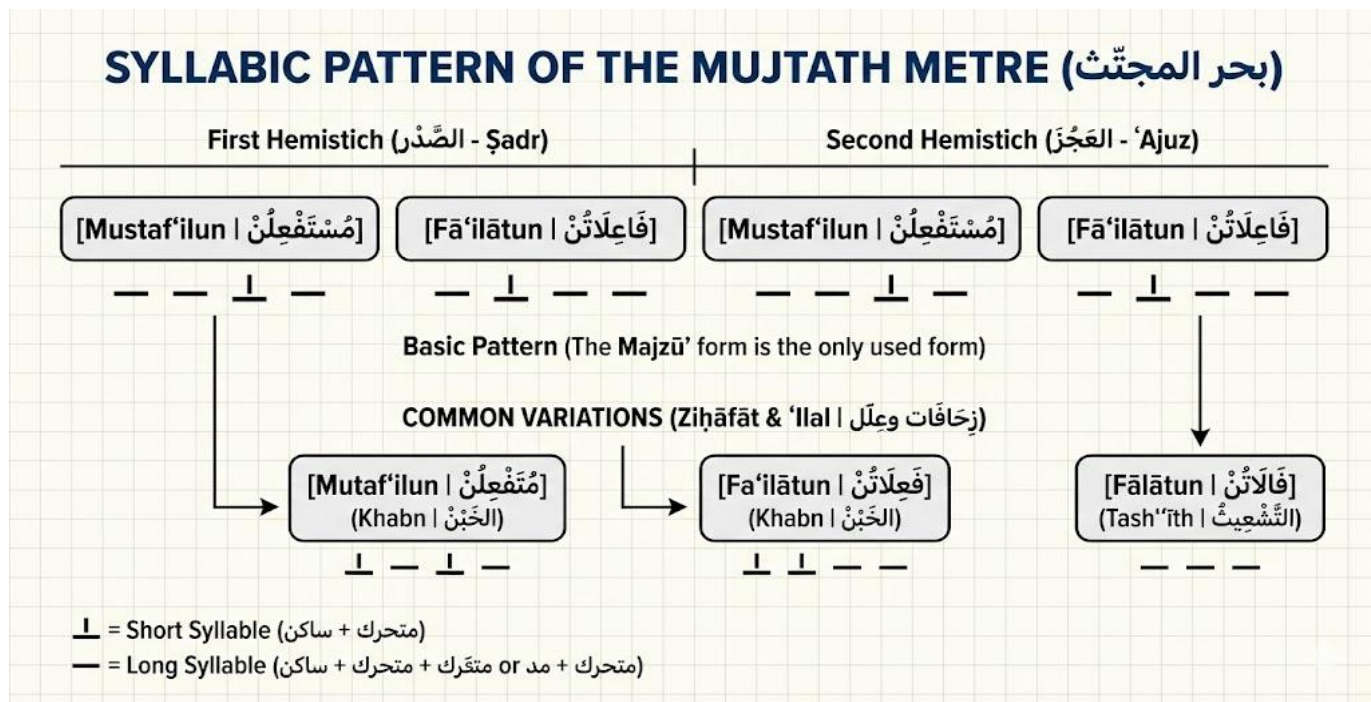


Figure 3.7: Rhythmic structure of Mujtath

3.3.9 Mutadārik (المتدارك)

The **Mutadārik** (المتدارك) is a later addition to the system of metres, introduced by Al-Akhfash al-Akbar. It is recognised for its **rare usage** but remains part of the fourteen standard metres. Its rhythm is distinctive and provides further variety in Arabic prosody.

Fill in the blank: The Mutadārik metre was introduced by _____ as a later addition to the system of metres.

Metre	Arabic name	Distinctive feature	Common usage
Rajaz	الرجز	Simple, repetitive rhythm	Oral and didactic poetry
Khafīf	الخفيف	Light and delicate rhythm	Lyrical poetry
Hazaj	الهزج	Musical and lyrical quality	Songs and chants
Muḍārī'	المضارع	Distinctive rhythmic pattern	Rarely used
Sarī'	السريع	Fast-paced rhythm	Energetic poetry



Munṣariḥ	المنسرح	Expansive variation	Flexible expression
Madīd	المديد	Extended rhythm	Reflective poetry
Mujtath	المجتث	Compact rhythm	Short compositions
Mutadārik	المتدارك	Rare usage, later addition	Occasional use

Table 3.3: Summary of remaining metres (Group B)

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What is the distinctive feature of the Rajaz metre?
2. Which metre is characterised by light and delicate rhythm?
3. For what type of poetry is the Hazaj metre often chosen?
4. Why is the Muḍāri‘ metre considered rare?
5. Which metre is known for its fast-paced rhythm?
6. What is the distinctive feature of the Munṣariḥ metre?
7. Why is the Madīd metre suitable for reflective poetry?
8. What type of rhythm characterises the Mujtath metre?
9. Who introduced the Mutadārik metre?

3.4 Comparative Analysis and Application

3.4.1 Distinctive features across the fourteen metres

Each of the fourteen Arabic poetic metres carries its own **distinctive features**, meaning the qualities that set one rhythmic pattern apart from another. For example, **Ṭawīl** is marked by its long, flowing rhythm, while **Sarī‘** is fast-paced and energetic. Similarly, **Hazaj** is musical and lyrical, whereas **Khafīf** is light and delicate. Recognising these differences helps learners appreciate the diversity of Arabic prosody and understand why poets select particular metres for specific themes.



Fill in the blank: The Sarī‘ metre is characterised by its _____ rhythm, while the Hazaj metre is known for its _____ quality.

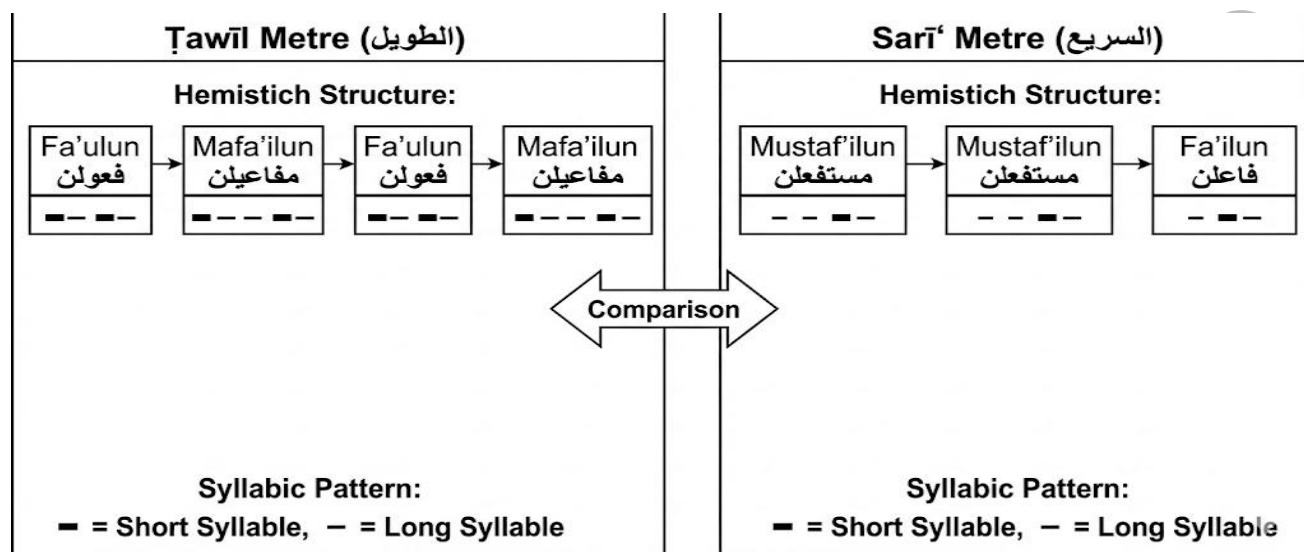


Figure 3.8: Comparative rhythmic structures of selected metres

3.4.2 Practical application in analysing Arabic poetry

The study of metres is not only theoretical but also practical. By applying knowledge of the fourteen metres, learners can break down verses into syllables, identify the metre used, and evaluate how rhythm supports meaning. For instance, a verse written in **Wāfir** may convey lyrical richness, while one in **Ramal** may express subtle emotions. This analytical skill is essential for both literary criticism and creative composition.

Fill in the blank: Analysing a verse involves breaking it down into _____ and identifying the metre used.

Step	Action	Purpose
1. Identify the Poem's Text	Select the verse or couplet to be analyzed	Establish the material for scansion
2. Segment into Feet (Tafā'īl)	Break the verse into metrical units (feet)	Reveal the underlying rhythmic structure



3. Mark Syllables	<i>Distinguish between long (–) and short (u) syllables</i>	<i>Map the rhythm accurately</i>
4. Match with Standard Metres	<i>Compare the syllable pattern with the sixteen classical metres (al-buḥūr)</i>	<i>Identify the metre used</i>
5. Check for Variations	<i>Note permissible alterations (ziḥāfāt and ‘ilāl)</i>	<i>Recognize acceptable deviations</i>
6. Confirm Consistency	<i>Ensure the pattern is sustained across the poem</i>	<i>Validate adherence to prosodic rules</i>
7. Interpret Function	<i>Assess how the metre contributes to rhythm, mood, and meaning</i>	<i>Link technical analysis to artistic effect</i>

Box 3.5: Steps in applying metre analysis

3.4.3 Relevance of the fourteen metres in modern Arabic studies

Although the fourteen metres were codified centuries ago, they remain highly relevant today. Modern scholars use them to analyse classical poetry, while contemporary poets sometimes adapt them to new themes and contexts. The metres provide a bridge between tradition and innovation, ensuring that Arabic poetry retains its musicality while evolving with changing times.

Fill in the blank: The fourteen metres remain relevant today because they provide a bridge between _____ and _____.

Metre	Classical usage	Modern relevance
Ṭawīl	Epic and narrative poetry	Used in literary criticism and heritage studies
Basīṭ	Reflective and descriptive poetry	Adapted in modern lyrical compositions
Kāmil	Pride and celebratory poetry	Applied in contemporary performance poetry
Wāfir	Romantic and lyrical poetry	Studied for musicality in modern verse
Sarī‘	Energetic and urgent themes	Used in experimental poetry

Table 3.4: Classical and modern relevance of the fourteen metres



Pilot questions 3.4

1. What are distinctive features across the fourteen metres?
2. How can knowledge of metres be applied in analysing Arabic poetry?
3. What steps are involved in identifying the metre of a verse?
4. Why do the fourteen metres remain relevant in modern Arabic studies?
5. Give an example of how a classical metre is adapted in contemporary poetry.



Series Summary

This Series has taken you through the study and analysis of the fourteen Arabic poetic metres, which form the foundation of Arabic prosody. Its purpose was to help you recognise their historical significance, understand their distinctive rhythmic patterns, and apply them in the analysis of poetry. By exploring both major and remaining metres, you have seen how poets use rhythm to shape meaning, emotion, and artistry across different themes and contexts.

We began with an introduction to the fourteen metres, highlighting their codification by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad and the importance of metre classification. We then examined the major metres such as Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil, Wāfir, and Ramal, before moving on to the remaining metres including Rajaz, Khafīf, Hazaj, Muḍāri‘, Sarī‘, Munṣariḥ, Madīd, Mujtath, and Mutadārik. Finally, we carried out a comparative analysis to identify distinctive features and consider their relevance in modern studies. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define and describe the fourteen metres, demonstrate their rhythmic patterns, apply them in verse analysis, and evaluate their continuing importance in both classical and contemporary Arabic poetry.

Glossary of Terms

- **Basīṭ (البسيط)**: An Arabic poetic metre characterised by a balanced alternation of long and short syllables, often used in descriptive and reflective poetry.
- **Hazaj (الهزج)**: A musical and lyrical metre, commonly used in songs and chants due to its smooth and melodious rhythm.
- **Kāmil (الكامل)**: A strong and complete rhythmic metre, frequently chosen for poetry that conveys pride, celebration, or emotional intensity.
- **Khafīf (الخفيف)**: A light and delicate metre that creates a graceful flow, often used in lyrical poetry.



- **Madīd (المديد):** A metre with an extended rhythm, suitable for reflective and contemplative poetry.
- **Metre (البحر الشعري):** The rhythmic pattern of Arabic poetry, created by sequences of long and short syllables, which provides structure and musicality.
- **Muḍāri‘ (المضارع):** A rare metre with a distinctive rhythmic pattern, included in the fourteen standard metres but seldom used.
- **Mujtath (المجتث):** A shortened form of other metres, giving it a compact rhythm suitable for concise poetic expression.
- **Munṣariḥ (المنسرح):** A metre known for its expansive variation, offering poets flexibility in expression.
- **Mutadārik (المتدارك):** A later addition to the system of metres, introduced by Al-Akhfash al-Akbar, recognised for its rare usage.
- **Ramal (الرمل):** A smooth and flowing metre, often associated with elegance and subtle emotions such as longing or reflection.
- **Rajaz (الرجز):** A simple and repetitive metre, commonly used in oral traditions, improvised poetry, and didactic verses.
- **Sarī‘ (السريع):** A fast-paced metre that conveys energy, urgency, and momentum in poetry.
- **Ṭawīl (الطويل):** One of the most prominent metres, characterised by its long, flowing rhythm, often used in epic and narrative poetry.
- **Wāfir (الوافر):** A rich and expansive metre, frequently employed in lyrical and romantic poetry for its musical depth.



Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Define the term *metre* in Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Identify the scholar credited with codifying the Arabic poetic metres. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
3. Which metre is characterised by a long, flowing rhythm suitable for epic poetry? (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. Name the metre known for its fast-paced rhythm that conveys urgency. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
5. Which metre was introduced later by Al-Akhfash al-Akbar? (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Describe the importance of metre classification in Arabic prosody. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
7. Explain the distinctive feature of the Basīṭ metre. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
8. Demonstrate how the Hazaj metre is applied in lyrical poetry. (Linked to SLO 3.6)
9. Analyse the difference between the Rajaz and Khafif metres in terms of rhythm. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
10. Apply knowledge of metre analysis to explain how rhythm supports meaning in a verse. (Linked to SLO 3.6)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the distinctive features across the fourteen metres and explain why they are important for poets. (Linked to SLO 3.7)
12. Evaluate the relevance of the fourteen metres in both classical and modern Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 3.8)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. A rhythmic pattern in Arabic poetry created by sequences of long and short syllables.
2. Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.
3. Ṭawīl (الطويل).
4. Sarī‘ (السريع).
5. Mutadārik (المتدارك).



Short-Answer Questions

6. Metre classification ensures structure, harmony, and balance in poetry, making it easier to compose, recite, and analyse.
7. Basīṭ is characterised by a balanced alternation of long and short syllables, giving it a steady rhythm.
8. Hazaj is applied in lyrical poetry by using its smooth, melodious rhythm to enhance musicality and performance.
9. Rajaz has a simple, repetitive rhythm suited for oral and didactic poetry, while Khafīf has a light, delicate rhythm suited for lyrical compositions.
10. Rhythm supports meaning by reinforcing the emotional tone of a verse, such as urgency in Sarī' or grandeur in Ṭawīl.

Long-Answer Questions

11.

- **Basic response:** The fourteen metres each have distinctive features, such as long, flowing rhythm in Ṭawīl or fast-paced rhythm in Sarī'. These features are important because they allow poets to choose the most suitable metre for their themes.
- **Value-added response:** Beyond this, the distinctive features reflect cultural preferences and poetic traditions. Outstanding learners may compare how different metres shape emotional impact, memorability, and performance, showing how metre choice is both artistic and strategic.

12.

- **Basic response:** The fourteen metres remain relevant because they are used to analyse classical poetry and provide structure for modern compositions.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may extend this by evaluating how contemporary poets adapt classical metres to new themes, how scholars use them in literary criticism, and how they serve as a bridge between tradition and innovation in Arabic literature.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1 Introduction to the Fourteen Metres

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.
- Structure and balance.
- Fourteen.
- Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil.
- Long and short syllables.

Part 3.2 Study of Major Metres (Group A)

- Long, flowing rhythm.
- Balanced alternation of syllables.
- Pride and celebratory poetry.
- Rich and expansive rhythm.
- Smooth and flowing rhythm.

Part 3.3 Study of Remaining Metres (Group B)

- Simple, repetitive rhythm.
- Light and delicate rhythm.
- Songs and chants.
- Rare usage.
- Fast-paced rhythm.
- Expansive variation.
- Reflective poetry.
- Compact rhythm.
- Al-Akhfash al-Akbar.

Part 3.4 Comparative Analysis and Application

- Long, flowing rhythm in Ṭawīl; fast-paced rhythm in Sarī‘; musical quality in Hazaj; delicate rhythm in Khafīf.
- By breaking down verses into syllables and matching them to recognised patterns.
- Break down into syllables, identify long and short syllables, match to a metre, evaluate rhythm.



- They connect tradition with modern relevance, supporting both literary criticism and creative composition.
- Classical metres such as Basīṭ or Wāfir adapted in contemporary lyrical or performance poetry.



References and Attributions [Series 3]

General References

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. (8th century). *Foundational works on Arabic prosody* ('*Arūḍ*). Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Al-Akhfash al-Akbar. (9th century). *Later additions to Arabic poetic metres*. Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Zihāfāt and 'Ilāl. (n.d.). *Documented variations in Arabic poetic metres*. Retrieved from open educational resources on Arabic literature.
- Pre-Islamic and classical Arabic poetry manuscripts. (n.d.). *Examples of prosodic modifications*. Suggested OER sources.

Illustration References and Attributions

- *Figure 3.1: Al-Khalīl's prosodic circle illustrating the origin of the metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a diagram of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's prosodic circle showing divisions of Arabic poetic metres."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad prosodic circle Arabic poetry OER."
- *Box 3.1: Functions of metre classification in Arabic poetry*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a text box summarising the functions of metre classification in Arabic poetry."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Functions of metre classification Arabic poetry OER."
- *Table 3.1: List of the fourteen Arabic poetic metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a table listing the fourteen Arabic poetic metres with names and distinctive features."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Fourteen Arabic poetic metres list OER."
- *Figure 3.2: Rhythmic structure of Ṭawīl*
 - AI-generated suggestion: "Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Ṭawīl metre in Arabic poetry."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Ṭawīl metre Arabic poetry diagram OER."
- *Box 3.2: Features of Basīṭ metre*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the features of the Basīt metre in Arabic poetry.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Basīt metre Arabic poetry features OER.”
- *Plate 3.2: Classical Arabic verse in Kāmil metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with highlighted verses in Kāmil metre.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Kāmil metre Arabic poetry manuscript OER.”
- *Figure 3.3: Rhythmic structure of Wāfir*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Wāfir metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Wāfir metre Arabic poetry diagram OER.”
- *Table 3.2: Summary of major metres (Group A)*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table summarising the major Arabic poetic metres (Ṭawīl, Basīt, Kāmil, Wāfir, Ramal) with features and common usage.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Major Arabic poetic metres summary table OER.”
- *Figure 3.4: Rhythmic structure of Rajaz*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Rajaz metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Rajaz metre Arabic poetry diagram OER.”
- *Box 3.3: Features of Khafīf metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the features of the Khafīf metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Khafīf metre Arabic poetry features OER.”
- *Plate 3.3: Classical Arabic verse in Hazaj metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with highlighted verses in Hazaj metre.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Hazaj metre Arabic poetry manuscript OER.”
- *Figure 3.5: Rhythmic structure of Muḍārī‘*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Muḍārī‘ metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Muḍārī‘ metre Arabic poetry diagram OER.”
- *Box 3.4: Features of Sarī‘ metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the features of the Sarī‘ metre in Arabic poetry.”



- Suggested OER search string: “Sari‘ metre Arabic poetry features OER.”
- *Figure 3.6: Rhythmic structure of Munṣariḥ*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Munṣariḥ metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Munṣariḥ metre Arabic poetry diagram OER.”
- *Plate 3.4: Classical Arabic verse in Madīd metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript with highlighted verses in Madīd metre.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Madīd metre Arabic poetry manuscript OER.”
- *Figure 3.7: Rhythmic structure of Mujtath*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram illustrating the syllabic pattern of the Mujtath metre in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Mujtath metre Arabic poetry diagram OER.”
- *Table 3.3: Summary of remaining metres (Group B)*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table summarising the remaining Arabic poetic metres (Group B) with features and common usage.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Remaining Arabic poetic metres summary table OER.”
- *Figure 3.8: Comparative rhythmic structures of selected metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing the syllabic patterns of Ṭawīl and Sari‘ metres.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Comparative rhythmic structures Arabic poetic metres OER.”
- *Box 3.5: Steps in applying metre analysis*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the steps in applying metre analysis to Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry metre analysis steps OER.”
- *Table 3.4: Classical and modern relevance of the fourteen metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table showing classical usage and modern relevance of selected Arabic poetic metres.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Classical and modern relevance Arabic poetic metres OER.”



Series 4: Contributions of Khalīl bin Ahmad to Arabic Prosody

- **4.1 Historical and Intellectual Background**
 - 4.1.1 Biography of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad
 - 4.1.2 Intellectual context of his era
 - 4.1.3 His role in Arabic linguistics and lexicography
- **4.2 Codification of Arabic Prosody**
 - 4.2.1 Development of prosodic circles
 - 4.2.2 Identification of poetic metres
 - 4.2.3 Methodology and analytical framework
- **4.3 Lasting Contributions and Influence**
 - 4.3.1 Impact on Arabic poetry and literary criticism
 - 4.3.2 Influence on later scholars and traditions
 - 4.3.3 Relevance in modern studies of prosody
- **4.4 Comparative Reflections and Applications**
 - 4.4.1 Comparison with other prosodic traditions
 - 4.4.2 Application of Khalīl's framework in contemporary analysis
 - 4.4.3 Enduring legacy in Arabic literary heritage

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the fourteen recognised Arabic poetic metres and examined how they shape rhythm, meaning, and artistry in poetry. Building on that foundation, this Series turns our attention to the scholar who codified these metres, **Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī**. His contributions to Arabic prosody are regarded as groundbreaking, providing a systematic framework that has influenced poetry, linguistics, and literary criticism for centuries.



Understanding his work allows us to appreciate not only the technical aspects of prosody but also the intellectual legacy that continues to shape Arabic studies today.

The aim of this Series is to highlight the contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad to Arabic prosody, explain his methodology, and evaluate the lasting impact of his work on both classical and modern scholarship. By the end of this Series, you should be able to recognise his role in shaping prosody, analyse his innovations, and apply his framework to the study of poetry.

We shall commence this Series with an exploration of Al-Khalīl's historical and intellectual background, including his biography and the scholarly context of his era. Next, we will examine his codification of Arabic prosody, focusing on the development of prosodic circles and the identification of poetic metres. Following that, we will consider his lasting contributions and influence, looking at how his work shaped Arabic poetry and inspired later scholars. Finally, we will wrap up with comparative reflections and applications, where we connect his framework to other traditions and evaluate its relevance in contemporary literary analysis.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 4: The Contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad to Arabic Prosody

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** describe the historical and intellectual background of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.
- **SLO 4.2** explain the scholarly context of his era and his role in Arabic linguistics and lexicography.
- **SLO 4.3** define the concept of prosodic circles and explain how Al-Khalīl used them to codify Arabic prosody.
- **SLO 4.4** analyse the methodology Al-Khalīl employed in identifying and classifying poetic metres.
- **SLO 4.5** evaluate the impact of Al-Khalīl's contributions on Arabic poetry and literary criticism.
- **SLO 4.6** assess the influence of his work on later scholars and traditions.
- **SLO 4.7** apply Al-Khalīl's framework to the analysis of selected Arabic verses.



- **SLO 4.8** compare Al-Khalīl's prosodic system with other prosodic traditions.
- **SLO 4.9** evaluate the relevance of Al-Khalīl's contributions in contemporary studies of Arabic prosody.

4.1 Historical and Intellectual Background

4.1.1 Biography of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī was an 8th-century Arab scholar renowned for his pioneering work in **Arabic prosody**, the study of poetic metre and rhythm. Born in Oman and later active in Basra, he became a leading figure in linguistics, lexicography, and philology. His most famous contribution was the codification of Arabic poetic metres, which provided poets and scholars with a systematic framework for analysing and composing verse.

Fill in the blank: Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad is best known for codifying _____ in Arabic poetry.



Plate 4.1: Classical manuscript associated with Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad



4.1.2 Intellectual context of his era

Al-Khalīl lived during the **Abbasid period**, a time of flourishing scholarship in linguistics, mathematics, and literary studies. Scholars sought to preserve and systematise the Arabic language, ensuring its precision for both religious and literary purposes. Within this context, Al-Khalīl's work stood out for its originality and rigour. He introduced the concept of **prosodic circles**, a visual method for organising and classifying poetic metres.

Fill in the blank: The Abbasid period was marked by flourishing scholarship in _____, mathematics, and literary studies.



Figure 4.1: Intellectual disciplines in the Abbasid era

4.1.3 His role in Arabic linguistics and lexicography

Beyond prosody, Al-Khalīl made significant contributions to **lexicography**, the science of compiling dictionaries. He authored *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, the first known Arabic dictionary, which



arranged words according to their phonetic roots. This work demonstrated his deep understanding of the structure of the Arabic language and reinforced his reputation as a meticulous scholar. His dual role in prosody and lexicography highlights his importance in shaping both the literary and linguistic traditions of Arabic.

Fill in the blank: Al-Khalīl’s dictionary, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, arranged words according to their _____ roots.

<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Impact</i>
<i>Authored Kitāb al-‘Ayn</i>	<i>Compiled the first Arabic dictionary</i>	<i>Established a foundation for Arabic lexicography</i>
<i>Phonetic Root-Based Classification</i>	<i>Organized words by their trilateral roots and phonetic order</i>	<i>Created a systematic approach to understanding word formation</i>
<i>Advancement of Linguistics & Philology</i>	<i>Studied sound patterns, morphology, and grammar</i>	<i>Deepened scholarly knowledge of Arabic language structure</i>
<i>Influence on Later Scholars</i>	<i>Inspired generations in both language and literature</i>	<i>Shaped the work of grammarians, lexicographers, and literary critics</i>

Box 4.1: Contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad beyond prosody

Pilot questions 4.1

1. What is Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad best known for?
2. During which period did Al-Khalīl live and work?
3. What intellectual disciplines flourished during the Abbasid era?
4. What was the title of the first Arabic dictionary compiled by Al-Khalīl?
5. How were words arranged in *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*?



4.2.2 Identification of poetic metres

Through his prosodic circles, Al-Khalīl identified fifteen poetic metres, of which fourteen became standard in Arabic poetry. Each **metre** is defined as a rhythmic pattern created by sequences of long and short syllables. By mapping these metres, Al-Khalīl provided poets with a structured framework that ensured consistency and musicality in composition. His classification remains the foundation of Arabic prosody today.

Fill in the blank: A poetic metre is defined as a rhythmic pattern created by sequences of _____ and _____ syllables.

Number	Metre (Arabic)	Distinctive feature
1	Ṭawīl	Long, flowing rhythm
2	Basīṭ	Balanced alternation
3	Kāmil	Strong, complete rhythm
...	...	...

Table 4.1: Al-Khalīl's identification of poetic metres

4.2.3 Methodology and analytical framework

Al-Khalīl's methodology was based on a careful analysis of syllable length and repetition. He distinguished between **long syllables** (which take more time to pronounce) and **short syllables** (which are quicker), and then arranged them into recurring patterns. His analytical framework allowed for the systematic study of poetry, making it possible to identify errors, variations, and innovations in verse. This framework also enabled poets to experiment creatively while remaining within recognised structures.

Fill in the blank: Al-Khalīl's framework distinguished between _____ syllables and _____ syllables.



<i>Element</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Function in Prosody</i>
<i>System of al-Buḥūr (Metres)</i>	<i>Classified Arabic poetry into sixteen canonical metres</i>	<i>Provided a structured taxonomy of rhythmic patterns</i>
<i>Tafā'īl (Metrical Feet)</i>	<i>Developed recurring units like fa'ūlun, mustaf'īlun, fā'ilātun</i>	<i>Served as building blocks for scansion and analysis</i>
<i>Scansion Method ('Arūd)</i>	<i>Introduced systematic marking of long (–) and short (u) syllables</i>	<i>Enabled precise identification of metre in verses</i>
<i>Zihāfāt (Minor Alterations)</i>	<i>Defined permissible changes to short syllables</i>	<i>Allowed rhythmic variation without breaking metre</i>
<i>Ilāl (Structural Modifications)</i>	<i>Explained larger changes to metrical feet</i>	<i>Provided flexibility while maintaining prosodic integrity</i>
<i>Analytical Vocabulary</i>	<i>Created technical terms for prosodic phenomena</i>	<i>Standardized scholarly discourse on poetry</i>
<i>Integration of Linguistics</i>	<i>Linked prosody with phonology and morphology</i>	<i>Strengthened the scientific study of Arabic language</i>

Box 4.2: Key elements of Al-Khalīl's analytical framework

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What visual method did Al-Khalīl use to classify poetic metres?
2. How many poetic metres did Al-Khalīl identify, and how many became standard?
3. What defines a poetic metre in Arabic prosody?
4. What distinction did Al-Khalīl make between syllables in his framework?
5. Why was Al-Khalīl's analytical framework important for poets and scholars?



4.3 Lasting Contributions and Influence

4.3.1 Impact on Arabic poetry and literary criticism

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's work in prosody had a profound impact on **Arabic poetry**, which refers to the art of composing verse using structured rhythm and metre. By codifying the metres, he provided poets with a reliable framework that ensured harmony and musicality in their compositions. His system also gave literary critics a tool to evaluate poetry more objectively, focusing on rhythm and structure alongside meaning.

Fill in the blank: Al-Khalīl's codification of metres provided poets with a reliable framework that ensured _____ and musicality.

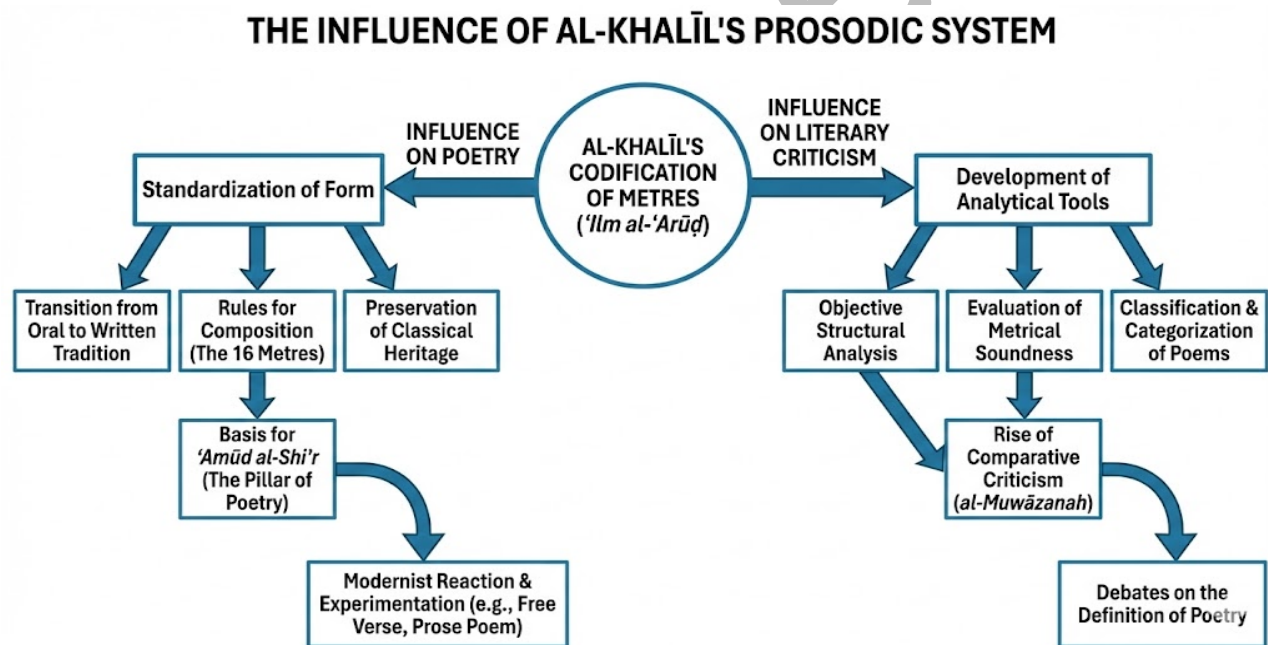


Figure 4.3: Impact of Al-Khalīl's prosody on poetry and criticism

4.3.2 Influence on later scholars and traditions

Al-Khalīl's contributions extended beyond his lifetime, influencing generations of scholars. His students and successors adopted his methods, ensuring that his framework became the standard



for Arabic prosody. Later traditions in Islamic scholarship, including linguistics and literary studies, drew upon his systematic approach. His work also inspired comparative studies, where scholars examined similarities and differences between Arabic prosody and other literary traditions.

Fill in the blank: Later scholars adopted Al-Khalīl’s methods, ensuring that his framework became the _____ for Arabic prosody.

<i>Area of Influence</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Impact</i>
<i>Lexicography</i>	<i>Authored Kitāb al-‘Ayn, the first Arabic dictionary</i>	<i>Inspired later lexicographers such as Ibn Manẓūr (Lisān al-‘Arab)</i>
<i>Linguistics & Philology</i>	<i>Developed root-based and phonetic classification of words</i>	<i>Shaped the study of morphology, phonology, and grammar</i>
<i>Prosody & Poetics</i>	<i>Founded the science of ‘Arūd (Arabic prosody)</i>	<i>Guided generations of poets and critics in metrical analysis</i>
<i>Educational Tradition</i>	<i>His methods became central to madrasa curricula</i>	<i>Ensured continuity of linguistic and literary sciences</i>
<i>Influence on Scholars</i>	<i>Directly influenced Sibawayh and later philologists</i>	<i>Cemented his role as a cornerstone of Arabic intellectual heritage</i>

Box 4.3: Influence of Al-Khalīl on later scholarship

4.3.3 Relevance in modern studies of prosody

In modern times, Al-Khalīl’s framework continues to be relevant. Scholars of Arabic literature use his classification to analyse classical texts, while contemporary poets sometimes adapt his metres to new themes. His methodology also provides a foundation for comparative literary studies, linking Arabic prosody with global traditions. The enduring relevance of his work demonstrates its adaptability and importance in both historical and modern contexts.



Fill in the blank: Contemporary poets sometimes adapt Al-Khalīl's _____ to new themes in modern poetry.

Contribution	Classical relevance	Modern relevance
Codification of metres	Provided structure for poets	Used in literary criticism and teaching
Prosodic circles	Classified rhythmic patterns	Applied in comparative studies
Lexicography (<i>Kitāb al-'Ayn</i>)	First Arabic dictionary	Basis for modern linguistic research

Table 4.2: Classical and modern relevance of Al-Khalīl's contributions

Pilot questions 4.3

1. What impact did Al-Khalīl's codification of metres have on Arabic poetry?
2. How did his work influence literary criticism?
3. Why did later scholars adopt his methods?
4. What role does his framework play in modern studies of prosody?
5. How do contemporary poets adapt Al-Khalīl's contributions today?

4.4 Comparative Reflections and Applications

4.4.1 Comparison with other prosodic traditions

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's system of prosody can be compared with other literary traditions, such as **Greek prosody**, which refers to the study of rhythm and metre in classical Greek poetry, and **Latin prosody**, which follows similar principles of syllable length and stress. While these traditions also relied on patterns of long and short syllables, Al-Khalīl's innovation lay in his use of **prosodic circles**, a visual method of classification unique to Arabic scholarship. This



comparative perspective helps learners appreciate both the universality and distinctiveness of Al-Khalīl's contributions.

Fill in the blank: Unlike Greek and Latin traditions, Al-Khalīl introduced _____ circles as a visual method of classification.

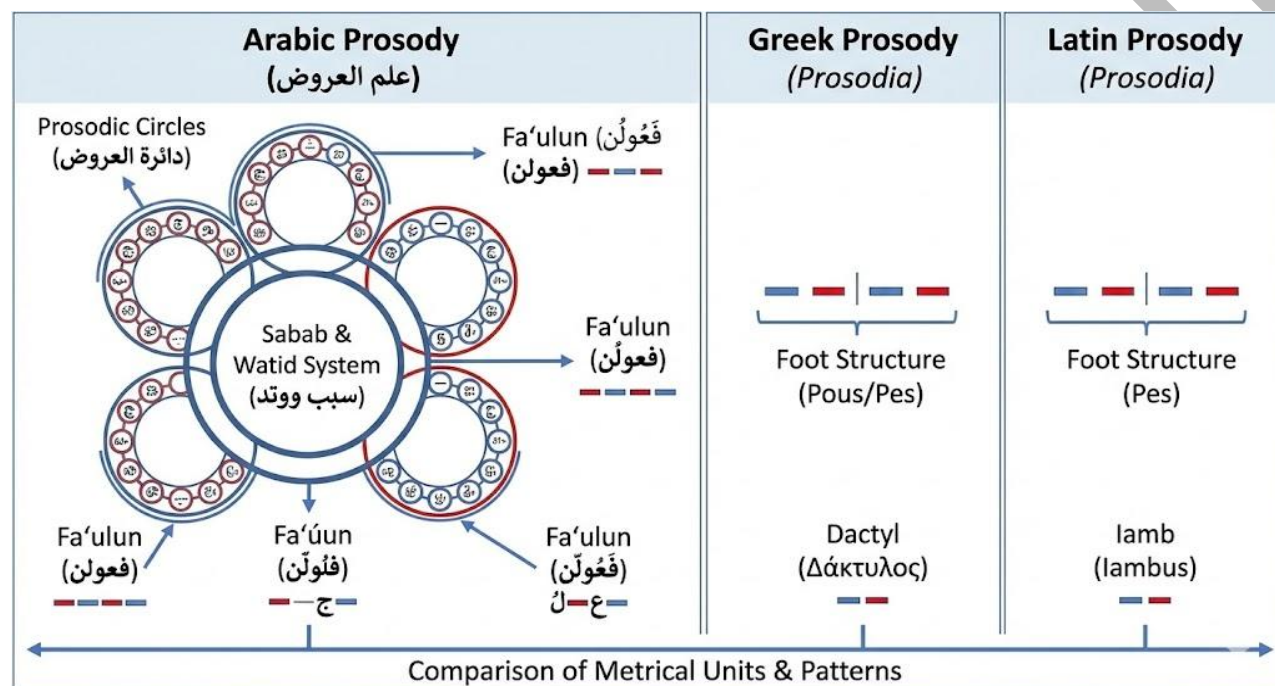


Figure 4.4: Comparative structures in prosodic traditions

4.4.2 Application of Khalīl's framework in contemporary analysis

Al-Khalīl's framework remains a valuable tool in modern literary studies. Scholars use his classification to analyse classical Arabic poetry, while contemporary poets adapt his metres to new themes. His methodology also supports comparative research, allowing scholars to examine how rhythm functions across different languages and cultures. By applying his framework today, learners can bridge the gap between classical heritage and modern creativity.



Fill in the blank: Contemporary scholars use Al-Khalīl’s framework to analyse _____ Arabic poetry and adapt it to modern themes.

Application	Description	Impact
Analysis of Classical Arabic Poetry	Used to study and interpret traditional qasīdas and other poetic forms	Preserves and deepens understanding of heritage literature
Adaptation of Metres in Modern Compositions	Contemporary poets experiment with classical metres in new contexts	Bridges tradition with modern creativity
Comparative Studies Across Languages	Prosodic principles applied to compare Arabic with Greek, Latin, Persian, and modern literatures	Highlights cross-cultural rhythmic and poetic structures
Teaching and Learning of Prosody	Forms part of curricula in universities and literary programs	Provides students with tools for scansion and poetic analysis
Digital & Computational Applications	Framework adapted in linguistic software and AI models for text analysis	Expands prosody into digital humanities and computational linguistics

Box 4.4: Applications of Al-Khalīl’s framework today

4.4.3 Enduring legacy in Arabic literary heritage

The enduring legacy of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad lies in his ability to provide a systematic foundation for Arabic prosody that continues to inform scholarship and creativity. His contributions are not only historical but also living, as they shape the way poetry is studied, taught, and composed. This legacy demonstrates the adaptability of his work and its relevance across centuries.

Fill in the blank: Al-Khalīl’s enduring legacy lies in his ability to provide a _____ foundation for Arabic prosody.



Contribution	Classical impact	Modern legacy
Codification of metres	Structured poetic composition	Basis for literary analysis
Prosodic circles	Visual classification of rhythm	Comparative research tool
Lexicography (<i>Kitāb al-ʿAyn</i>)	First Arabic dictionary	Foundation for modern linguistics

Table 4.3: Enduring legacy of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad

Pilot questions 4.4

1. How does Al-Khalīl's prosody compare with Greek and Latin traditions?
2. What unique innovation did Al-Khalīl introduce in his classification system?
3. How is his framework applied in modern literary studies?
4. What role does his methodology play in comparative research?
5. What aspects of his legacy continue to influence Arabic literary heritage today?



Series Summary

This Series has focused on the remarkable contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad to Arabic prosody, highlighting his role as the scholar who provided a systematic foundation for the study of poetic rhythm and metre. Its purpose was to help you appreciate the historical and intellectual background of his work, understand how he codified prosody, and recognise the enduring influence of his methodology on both classical and modern scholarship.

We began by exploring Al-Khalīl's biography and the intellectual context of the Abbasid era, then examined his codification of prosody through the development of prosodic circles and the identification of poetic metres. Following that, we considered his lasting contributions, including their impact on Arabic poetry, literary criticism, and later scholars. Finally, we reflected on comparative perspectives and modern applications, showing how his framework continues to be relevant today. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to describe his background, explain his methodology, analyse his influence, apply his framework to verse, and evaluate its relevance in both classical and contemporary contexts.

Glossary of Terms

- **Abbasid period:** A major era in Islamic history (8th–13th centuries) marked by flourishing scholarship in linguistics, mathematics, literature, and philosophy.
- **Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī:** An 8th-century Arab scholar credited with codifying Arabic poetic metres and authoring the first Arabic dictionary, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.
- **Arabic poetry:** The art of composing verse in Arabic, structured by rhythm and metre to create musicality and meaning.
- **Kitāb al-ʿAyn:** The first known Arabic dictionary, compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, which arranged words according to their phonetic roots.
- **Lexicography:** The science of compiling dictionaries, involving the systematic arrangement and explanation of words.



- **Literary criticism:** The study and evaluation of literary works, including analysis of rhythm, structure, and meaning in poetry.
- **Long syllable:** A syllable in Arabic prosody that takes more time to pronounce, forming part of the rhythmic structure of a metre.
- **Metre:** A rhythmic pattern in poetry created by sequences of long and short syllables, providing structure and musicality.
- **Prosodic circles:** Visual diagrams introduced by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad to classify and organise Arabic poetic metres systematically.
- **Prosody:** The study of rhythm and metre in poetry, focusing on how syllables combine to create structured patterns.
- **Short syllable:** A syllable in Arabic prosody that is pronounced quickly, contrasting with long syllables in rhythmic patterns.



Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Identify the scholar credited with codifying Arabic poetic metres. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Define the term *prosody* in the context of Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
3. Which visual method did Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad introduce to classify poetic metres? (Linked to SLO 4.3)
4. Name the first Arabic dictionary compiled by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
5. How many poetic metres did Al-Khalīl identify, and how many became standard? (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Describe the intellectual context of the Abbasid period in which Al-Khalīl worked. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
7. Explain the significance of prosodic circles in Al-Khalīl's methodology. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
8. Analyse the impact of Al-Khalīl's codification on Arabic poetry and literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
9. Demonstrate how Al-Khalīl's framework distinguishes between long and short syllables. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
10. Apply Al-Khalīl's framework to explain how rhythm supports meaning in a verse. (Linked to SLO 4.7)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Evaluate the influence of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad on later scholars and traditions. (Linked to SLO 4.6)
12. Compare Al-Khalīl's prosodic system with Greek or Latin traditions, highlighting similarities and differences. (Linked to SLO 4.8)
13. Assess the relevance of Al-Khalīl's contributions in contemporary studies of Arabic prosody. (Linked to SLO 4.9)



Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.
2. The study of rhythm and metre in poetry.
3. Prosodic circles.
4. *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.
5. Fifteen identified, fourteen became standard.

Short-Answer Questions

6. The Abbasid period was marked by flourishing scholarship in linguistics, mathematics, and literary studies.
7. Prosodic circles provided a visual method to classify and organise poetic metres systematically.
8. His codification gave poets a structured framework and critics an objective tool for analysis.
9. Long syllables take more time to pronounce, while short syllables are quicker, forming rhythmic patterns.
10. Rhythm reinforces meaning by aligning emotional tone with structured patterns, such as urgency in *Sarīʿ* or grandeur in *Ṭawīl*.

Long-Answer Questions

11.

- **Basic response:** Al-Khalīl influenced later scholars by providing a standardised framework for prosody, which was adopted and expanded in Arabic literary traditions.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may note his influence on comparative studies, linguistics, and philology, showing how his systematic approach shaped broader intellectual traditions.

12.

- **Basic response:** Al-Khalīl's system, like Greek and Latin prosody, relied on long and short syllables, but his prosodic circles were unique.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may compare how each tradition reflects cultural priorities, with Arabic focusing on visual classification and Greek/Latin on stress and syllable length, highlighting cross-cultural innovation.



13.

- **Basic response:** His contributions remain relevant as scholars use his framework to analyse classical poetry and contemporary poets adapt his metres.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may extend this by evaluating his role in comparative research, modern linguistics, and teaching, showing how his work bridges tradition and modernity.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

Part 4.1 Historical and Intellectual Background

- Codifying Arabic poetic metres.
- The Abbasid period.
- Linguistics, mathematics, and literary studies.
- *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.
- Phonetic roots.

Part 4.2 Codification of Arabic Prosody

- Prosodic circles.
- Fifteen identified, fourteen became standard.
- A rhythmic pattern created by sequences of long and short syllables.
- Long syllables and short syllables.
- It provided a systematic framework for analysing and composing poetry.

Part 4.3 Lasting Contributions and Influence

- It gave poets a reliable framework for structured rhythm and musicality.
- It enabled critics to evaluate poetry objectively through rhythm and structure.
- Because his framework became the standard for Arabic prosody.
- It is used in literary criticism, teaching, and comparative studies.
- By adapting his metres to modern themes and contexts.

Part 4.4 Comparative Reflections and Applications

- They all relied on long and short syllables, but Al-Khalīl's system was uniquely visual.
- Prosodic circles.
- To analyse classical Arabic poetry and adapt metres to modern compositions.
- It allows comparison of rhythm across different languages and traditions.
- His codification of metres, prosodic circles, and lexicography continue to shape Arabic literary heritage.



References and Attributions [Series 4]

This section compiles references and illustration attributions for **Series 4: Contributions of Khalil ibn Ahmad to Arabic Prosody**. The referencing style applied here follows a simplified APA format for clarity and consistency.

General References

- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. (8th century). *Codification of Arabic poetic metres*. Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Al-Akhfash al-Akbar. (9th century). *Later additions to Arabic prosody*. Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Abbasid scholarship. (n.d.). *Intellectual context of the Abbasid period*. Retrieved from open educational resources on Islamic history.
- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. (n.d.). *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*. First Arabic dictionary arranged by phonetic roots.

Illustration References and Attributions

- *Plate 4.1: Classical manuscript associated with Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate an image of a classical Arabic manuscript attributed to Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad Arabic manuscript OER.”
- *Figure 4.1: Intellectual disciplines in the Abbasid era*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing major scholarly disciplines during the Abbasid period, including linguistics and mathematics.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Abbasid period intellectual disciplines OER.”
- *Box 4.1: Contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad beyond prosody*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s contributions beyond prosody.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Kitab al-Ayn Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad contributions OER.”
- *Figure 4.2: Example of a prosodic circle developed by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram of a prosodic circle showing divisions of syllable patterns in Arabic poetry.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad prosodic circles Arabic poetry OER.”
- *Table 4.1: Al-Khalīl’s identification of poetic metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table listing Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s identified poetic metres with distinctive features.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad identified poetic metres OER.”
- *Box 4.2: Key elements of Al-Khalīl’s analytical framework*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the key elements of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s analytical framework for prosody.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad analytical framework prosody OER.”
- *Figure 4.3: Impact of Al-Khalīl’s prosody on poetry and criticism*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing how Al-Khalīl’s codification of metres influenced poetry and literary criticism.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Impact of Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad prosody Arabic poetry criticism OER.”
- *Box 4.3: Influence of Al-Khalīl on later scholarship*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s influence on later scholars and traditions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad influence on Arabic scholarship OER.”
- *Table 4.2: Classical and modern relevance of Al-Khalīl’s contributions*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table showing the classical and modern relevance of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s contributions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Modern relevance of Al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad contributions OER.”
- *Figure 4.4: Comparative structures in prosodic traditions*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram comparing Arabic prosodic circles with Greek and Latin prosody structures.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Comparative prosody Arabic Greek Latin OER.”
- *Box 4.4: Applications of Al-Khalīl’s framework today*



- AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising applications of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s framework in modern literary studies.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Applications of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad framework modern prosody OER.”
- *Table 4.3: Enduring legacy of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table showing the classical impact and modern legacy of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad’s contributions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Legacy of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad Arabic prosody OER.”



Series 5: Applied Study of Arabic Metres in Selected Poems

- **5.1 Introduction to Applied Study**
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Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the contributions of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad to Arabic prosody, focusing on how he codified poetic metres and established a framework that continues to shape literary studies. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the practical application of those concepts. By studying selected poems, both classical and modern, you will see how the metres we have discussed are used in real texts, and how rhythm and structure enhance meaning and artistry. This applied study is essential because it bridges theory with practice, allowing you to experience prosody as a living tradition rather than a purely abstract system.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the skills to analyse Arabic poetic metres in actual poems, apply scansion techniques, and reflect on how classical frameworks remain relevant in contemporary poetry. By the end of this Series, you should be able to confidently identify metres



in selected verses, demonstrate their effect on poetic expression, and evaluate their adaptation in modern contexts.

We shall commence this Series by introducing the purpose of applied study, the criteria for selecting poems, and the method of analysis. Next, we will move on to the analysis of selected classical poems, where we will apply metres such as Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil, and Wāfir to demonstrate their use in pre-Islamic and Abbasid poetry. Finally, we will wrap up with contemporary applications and reflections, considering how classical metres are adapted in modern Arabic poetry, drawing comparisons with global traditions, and engaging in practical exercises in scansion and analysis.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 5: Applied Study of Arabic Metres in Selected Poems

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** explain the purpose of applied study in Arabic prosody.
- **SLO 5.2** describe the criteria used for selecting poems for metre analysis.
- **SLO 5.3** demonstrate the method of scansion and analysis in applied prosody.
- **SLO 5.4** apply the Ṭawīl metre to the analysis of selected pre-Islamic poems.
- **SLO 5.5** analyse the use of the Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry.
- **SLO 5.6** evaluate examples of Kāmil and Wāfir metres in classical verse.
- **SLO 5.7** assess how classical metres are adapted in modern Arabic poetry.
- **SLO 5.8** compare the application of Arabic metres with global poetic traditions.
- **SLO 5.9** perform practical scansion exercises to identify and classify metres in selected poems.



5.1 Introduction to Applied Study

5.1.1 Purpose of applied study in prosody

Applied study in prosody means taking the theoretical knowledge of **metres** (الأوزان الشعرية), defined as rhythmic patterns created by sequences of long and short syllables, and using it to analyse actual poems. This approach helps learners to see how abstract rules are realised in practice. For example, consider the opening of Imru' al-Qays's famous *Mu'allaqah*:

قِفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِي حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ

qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili

This line is in the **Tawīl metre** (البحر الطويل), and applied study allows us to break it down into syllables and identify its rhythmic pattern.

Fill in the blank: Applied study in prosody involves using theoretical knowledge of _____ to analyse actual poems.

5.1.2 Selection criteria for poems

When conducting applied study, it is important to establish clear **selection criteria** (معايير الاختيار), which are standards used to choose appropriate poems for analysis. These criteria may include historical significance, representation of a particular metre, or the presence of distinctive rhythmic features. For instance, a poem from the Abbasid era using the **Basīṭ metre** (البحر البسيط) might be chosen to illustrate balance and flow:

إِذَا غَامَرْتُ فِي شَرَفٍ مَرُومٍ

idhā ghāmartā fī sharafīn marūmi

Fill in the blank: Selection criteria are standards used to choose appropriate _____ for analysis.



5.1.3 Method of analysis

The **method of analysis** (طريقة التحليل) in applied prosody involves breaking down a poem into syllables, identifying long (طويلة) and short (قصيرة) syllables, and matching these to recognised metres. This process is called **scansion** (التقطيع العروضي), which refers to the systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern. For example, the line:

أَلَا لَيْتَ الشَّبَابَ يَعُودُ يَوْمًا

alā layta al-shabāba ya 'ūdu yawman

is scanned to reveal its rhythm in the **Kāmil metre** (البحر الكامل).

Fill in the blank: The systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern is called _____.

Pilot questions 5.1

1. What does applied study in prosody involve?
2. What are selection criteria in applied study?
3. Why is it important to select poems carefully for analysis?
4. What is the systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern called?
5. Provide one Arabic verse example that illustrates applied study.

5.2 Analysis of Selected Classical Poems

5.2.1 Application of Ṭawīl metre in pre-Islamic poetry

The **Ṭawīl metre** (البحر الطويل) is one of the most prominent and widely used metres in pre-Islamic poetry. A **metre** is a rhythmic pattern created by sequences of long and short syllables, providing structure and musicality to verse. The Ṭawīl metre is characterised by its flowing rhythm, often used to express grandeur and solemn themes.



For example, in Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqa*:

قِفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِي حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ

qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili

This line demonstrates the extended rhythm of the Ṭawīl metre, which conveys a sense of majesty and emotional depth.

Fill in the blank: The Ṭawīl metre is characterised by its _____ rhythm, often used to express grandeur.



Figure 5.2: Scansion of Imru' al-Qays's verse in Ṭawīl metre

5.2.2 Use of Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry

The **Basīṭ metre** (البحر البسيط) is known for its balanced alternation of syllables, producing a smooth and flowing rhythm. It was frequently used in Abbasid poetry to express themes of wisdom, reflection, and moral lessons.

Consider the line by Al-Mutanabbī:



إذا غامرت في شرف مروم

idhā ghāmartā fī sharaḥin marūmi

This verse illustrates the Basīṭ metre's ability to balance rhythm and meaning, creating a reflective tone.

Fill in the blank: The Basīṭ metre is known for its _____ alternation of syllables, producing a smooth rhythm.

Feature	Description	Example / Note
Name Meaning	"Basīṭ" means extended or spread out	Reflects its flowing, expansive rhythm
Popularity in Abbasid Era	Widely used in court poetry and panegyrics	Favored for its clarity and balance
Structure (tafā'īl)	Alternates between Mustaf'ilun (مستفعلن) and Fā'ilun (فاعلن)	Typical scheme: Mustaf'ilun Fā'ilun Mustaf'ilun Fā'ilun
Rhythmic Quality	Smooth, straightforward, and expansive	Ideal for long descriptive or praise-filled qasīdas
Themes in Abbasid Poetry	Used for panegyrics, moral reflections, and lyrical descriptions	Al-Mutanabbī and Al-Buḥturī employed it in praise poetry
Function in Abbasid Literature	Balanced artistry with metrical discipline	Helped poets convey grandeur and elegance in courtly settings

Box 5.2: Features of the Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry

5.2.3 Examples of Kāmil and Wāfir metres in classical verse

The **Kāmil metre** (البحر الكامل) is distinguished by its strong, complete rhythm, often used for themes of pride and heroism. The **Wāfir metre** (البحر الوافر) is softer and more lyrical, frequently chosen for themes of love and longing.



An example of Kāmil metre:

أَلَا لَيْتَ الشَّبَابَ يَعُودُ يَوْمًا

alā layta al-shabāba ya 'ūdu yawman

An example of Wāfir metre:

إِذَا مَتَّ ظَمَانًا فَلَا نَزَلَ الْقَطْرُ

idhā mitta ṣam 'ānā falā nazala al-qaṭru

These examples show how different metres evoke distinct emotional tones, reinforcing the poet's message.

Fill in the blank: The Kāmil metre is often used for themes of _____, while the Wāfir metre is chosen for love and longing.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Kāmil Metre (الكامل)</i>	<i>Wāfir Metre (الوافر)</i>
Name Meaning	“Perfect” or “complete”	“Abundant” or “plentiful”
Structure (tafā 'īl)	Built on repetition of Mutafā 'ilun (متفاعلن)	Built on repetition of Mufa 'alatun (مفاعلتن)
Rhythmic Quality	Strong, emphatic, and versatile	Flowing, expansive, and balanced
Themes	Heroic poetry, panegyrics, and grand narratives	Love poetry, lyrical expression, and moral reflection
Usage in Classical Poetry	Often used by Al-Mutanabbī in praise and self-glorification	Favored by poets like Al-Buḥturī and Abū Tammām for lyrical and reflective verse
Example	Al-Mutanabbī's qasīdas celebrating rulers and battles	Al-Buḥturī's descriptive poetry and Abū Tammām's moral reflections
Function	Conveys power, grandeur, and intensity	Conveys emotional depth, elegance, and abundance of imagery



Table 5.2: Comparison of Kāmil and Wāfir metres

Pilot questions 5.2

1. What characterises the Ṭawīl metre in pre-Islamic poetry?
2. Provide one example of a verse in Ṭawīl metre.
3. What is the distinctive feature of the Basīṭ metre?
4. Which Abbasid poet is closely associated with the Basīṭ metre?
5. What themes are commonly expressed in Kāmil and Wāfir metres?
6. Provide one example of a verse in Kāmil metre and one in Wāfir metre.

5.3 Contemporary Applications and Reflections

5.3.1 Adaptation of classical metres in modern Arabic poetry

Modern Arabic poets often adapt **classical metres** (الأوزان الكلاسيكية), which are the traditional rhythmic patterns codified by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, to suit contemporary themes and styles. While some poets maintain strict adherence to the classical forms, others experiment by blending them with free verse or modernist techniques. For example, Mahmoud Darwish frequently employed classical metres but infused them with modern imagery and political resonance:

على هذه الأرض ما يستحق الحياة

‘alā hādhihi al-arḍi mā yastahiqqu al-ḥayāt

This line shows how rhythm can be preserved while addressing modern concerns.

Fill in the blank: Modern Arabic poets often adapt classical _____ to suit contemporary themes and styles.



Adaptation of Classical Arabic Metres in Modern Poetry

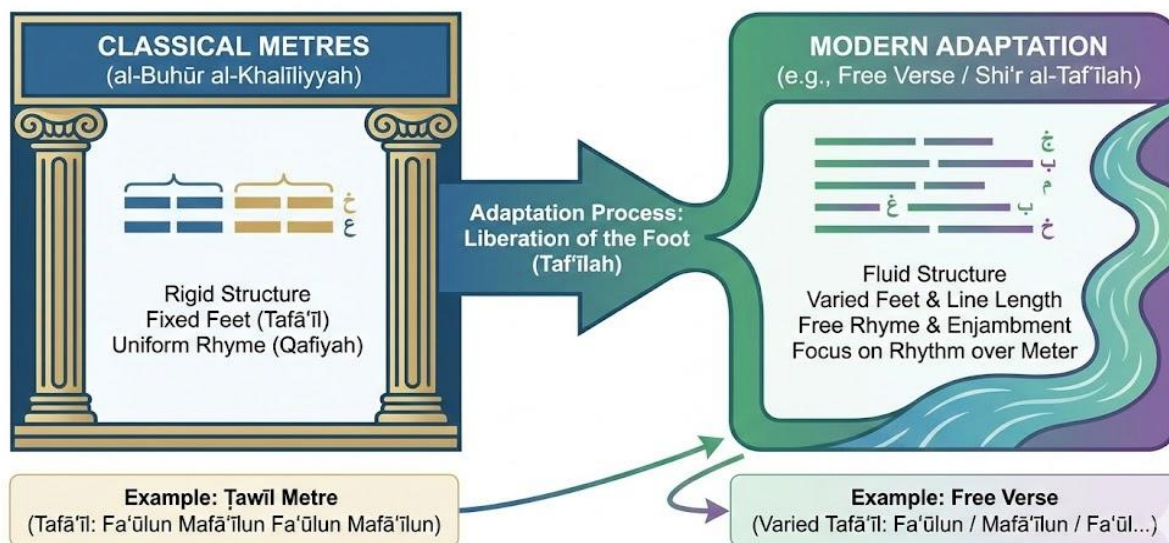


Figure 5.3: Adaptation of classical metres in modern Arabic poetry

5.3.2 Comparative reflections with global poetic traditions

Arabic prosody can be compared with global traditions such as English, French, or Persian poetry. While Arabic relies on syllable length, English poetry often uses **stress patterns** (emphasis on syllables in speech). Persian poetry, influenced by Arabic prosody, also employs quantitative metres but with unique variations. These comparisons highlight both the universality of rhythm in poetry and the distinctive features of each tradition.

Fill in the blank: English poetry often relies on _____ patterns, while Arabic prosody is based on syllable length.

Tradition	Basis of Rhythm	Example	Key Features
Arabic	Syllable length (long vs. short syllables)	قَفَا نَبِكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِى حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ (Imru' al-Qays, pre-Islamic qasīda)	System codified by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad ; 16 canonical metres (al-buḥūr); uses tafā'il (metrical feet)



English	Stress patterns (stressed vs. unstressed syllables)	<i>“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”</i> (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)	Dominated by accentual-syllabic metre ; common forms include iambic pentameter ; rhythm shaped by natural stress of words
Persian	Quantitative metres (long vs. short syllables, similar to Arabic but adapted)	Classical ghazals of Hafez	Adopted and adapted Arabic prosody; emphasizes musicality and lyrical flow ; central to ghazal and rubā‘ī traditions

Table 5.3: Comparative reflections on prosodic traditions

5.3.3 Practical exercises in scansion and analysis

To consolidate learning, learners should practise **scansion** (التقطيع العروضي), which is the systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern. Begin by breaking down a modern Arabic verse into syllables, then identify long and short syllables, and finally match them to a recognised metre. For instance, try scanning the following line:

أحبك أكثر

uḥibbuki akthar

This short verse can be analysed to see whether it aligns with a classical metre or reflects free verse tendencies.

Fill in the blank: The systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern is called _____.

Step	Action	Purpose
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1. Select a Verse	<i>Choose a line or couplet from classical or modern Arabic poetry</i>	<i>Establish the material for analysis</i>
2. Transcribe Clearly	<i>Write the verse with syllable divisions visible</i>	<i>Prepare the text for scansion</i>
3. Identify Syllables	<i>Mark long (–) and short (u) syllables based on vowel length and consonant closure</i>	<i>Map the rhythm accurately</i>
4. Group into Feet (Tafāʿil)	<i>Segment syllables into metrical units like faʿūlun, mustafʿilun, etc.</i>	<i>Reveal the underlying metrical structure</i>
5. Compare with Canonical Metres	<i>Match the pattern against the sixteen classical metres (al-buḥūr)</i>	<i>Identify the metre used</i>
6. Check for Variations	<i>Note permissible changes (ziḥāfāt and ʿilāl)</i>	<i>Recognize acceptable deviations</i>
7. Confirm Consistency	<i>Ensure the metre is sustained across the poem</i>	<i>Validate adherence to prosodic rules</i>
8. Interpret Artistic Effect	<i>Reflect on how the metre shapes rhythm, mood, and meaning</i>	<i>Connect technical analysis to literary appreciation</i>

Box 5.3: Steps for practical scansion exercises

Pilot questions 5.3

1. How do modern Arabic poets adapt classical metres?
2. Provide one example of a modern Arabic verse that uses classical rhythm.
3. What is the main difference between Arabic and English prosody?
4. Which poetic tradition was influenced by Arabic prosody but developed unique variations?
5. What are the main steps involved in scansion exercises?



Series Summary

This Series has focused on the applied study of Arabic metres in selected poems, building on the theoretical foundations established earlier. Its purpose was to show how prosodic principles are realised in practice, helping you connect abstract rules with actual verses and appreciate the artistry of rhythm in both classical and modern contexts.

We began by introducing the purpose of applied study, the criteria for selecting poems, and the method of scansion. We then moved on to the analysis of selected classical poems, examining the use of Ṭawīl, Basīṭ, Kāmil, and Wāfir metres in pre-Islamic and Abbasid poetry. Finally, we explored contemporary applications, reflecting on how classical metres are adapted in modern Arabic poetry, compared with global traditions, and practised through scansion exercises. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to explain the purpose of applied study, demonstrate scansion techniques, analyse classical verses, evaluate modern adaptations, and perform practical exercises that connect theory with poetic practice.

Glossary of Terms

- **Basīṭ metre (البحر البسيط)**: A classical Arabic poetic metre known for its balanced alternation of syllables, producing a smooth and flowing rhythm often used in reflective or moral poetry.
- **Classical metres (الأوزان الكلاسيكية)**: Traditional rhythmic patterns codified by Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, forming the foundation of Arabic prosody and used in pre-Islamic and Abbasid poetry.
- **Kāmil metre (البحر الكامل)**: A strong and complete rhythmic pattern in Arabic poetry, commonly used to express pride, heroism, and grandeur.
- **Metre (وزن شعري)**: A rhythmic pattern in poetry created by sequences of long and short syllables, providing structure and musicality to verse.
- **Prosody (علم العروض)**: The study of rhythm and metre in poetry, focusing on how syllables combine to create structured patterns.



- **Scansion (التقطيع العروضي)**: The systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern by identifying long and short syllables and matching them to recognised metres.
- **Selection criteria (معايير الاختيار)**: Standards used to choose appropriate poems for applied study, such as historical significance, representation of a specific metre, or distinctive rhythmic features.
- **Ṭawīl metre (البحر الطويل)**: A flowing and extended rhythmic pattern in Arabic poetry, often used in pre-Islamic verse to convey grandeur and solemn themes.
- **Wāfir metre (البحر الوافر)**: A softer and lyrical rhythmic pattern in Arabic poetry, frequently chosen for themes of love, longing, and emotional expression.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Identify the scholar who codified Arabic poetic metres. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Define the term *scansion* in Arabic prosody. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
3. Which metre is characterised by a flowing rhythm and used in pre-Islamic poetry? (Linked to SLO 5.4)
4. Name the Abbasid poet closely associated with the Basīṭ metre. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
5. Which metre is often used for pride and heroism, and which for love and longing? (Linked to SLO 5.6)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the purpose of applied study in Arabic prosody. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
7. Describe the criteria used for selecting poems for analysis. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
8. Demonstrate the steps involved in scansion of a verse. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
9. Analyse the use of the Ṭawīl metre in Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allāqa*. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
10. Compare the rhythmic features of the Kāmil and Wāfir metres. (Linked to SLO 5.6)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Evaluate the significance of the Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry. (Linked to SLO 5.5)



12. Assess how classical metres are adapted in modern Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 5.7)
13. Compare Arabic prosody with English and Persian traditions, highlighting similarities and differences. (Linked to SLO 5.8)
14. Design a practical scansion exercise using a modern Arabic verse. (Linked to SLO 5.9)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī.
2. Scansion is the systematic examination of verse to determine its rhythmic pattern.
3. The Ṭawīl metre.
4. Al-Mutanabbī.
5. Kāmil for pride and heroism; Wāfir for love and longing.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Applied study connects theoretical knowledge of prosody with actual poems, making abstract rules practical.
7. Criteria include historical significance, representation of a specific metre, and distinctive rhythmic features.
8. Break down the verse into syllables, identify long and short syllables, match them to a metre, and evaluate rhythm.
9. The Ṭawīl metre in Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqa* conveys grandeur and emotional depth through extended rhythm.
10. Kāmil has a strong, complete rhythm suited to heroic themes, while Wāfir is softer and lyrical, suited to love.

Long-Answer Questions

11.
 - **Basic response:** The Basīṭ metre is significant in Abbasid poetry for its balanced rhythm and reflective tone.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may note its use by Al-Mutanabbī to convey wisdom and moral lessons, and its role in shaping Abbasid literary style.



12.

- **Basic response:** Modern poets adapt classical metres by blending them with contemporary themes and sometimes free verse.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may highlight Mahmoud Darwish's use of classical rhythm infused with modern imagery and political resonance.

13.

- **Basic response:** Arabic prosody is based on syllable length, English on stress patterns, and Persian combines quantitative metres with unique variations.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explore how these traditions reflect cultural priorities, showing universality of rhythm but distinct methods of expression.

14.

- **Basic response:** A scansion exercise involves breaking down a modern verse into syllables, identifying long and short syllables, and matching them to a metre.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may design exercises using verses from contemporary poets, comparing them with classical metres to highlight adaptation and innovation.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

Part 5.1 Introduction to Applied Study

- Using theoretical knowledge of metres to analyse actual poems.
- Standards used to choose appropriate poems for analysis.
- To ensure the poems illustrate prosodic principles and provide meaningful insights.
- Scansion.
- Break down into syllables, identify long and short syllables, match to recognised metres, and evaluate rhythm.

Part 5.2 Analysis of Selected Classical Poems

- A flowing rhythm often used to express grandeur.
- قفا نَبكِ من ذِكْرِ خَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ (*qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili*).
- Balanced alternation of syllables producing a smooth rhythm.
- Al-Mutanabbī.
- Kāmil for pride and heroism; Wāfir for love and longing.
- Kāmil: أَلَا لَيْتَ الشَّبَابَ يَعُودُ يَوْمًا (*alā layta al-shabāba ya 'ūdu yawman*).
- Wāfir: إِذَا مِتَّ ظَمَأْنَا فَلَا نَزَلَ الْقَطْرُ (*idhā mitta ḡam 'ānā falā nazala al-qatru*).

Part 5.3 Contemporary Applications and Reflections

- By blending classical metres with modern themes or free verse.
- عَلَى هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ مَا يَسْتَحِقُّ الْحَيَاةَ (*alā hādhihi al-arḍi mā yastaḥiqqu al-ḥayāt*).
- Stress patterns.
- Persian poetry.
- Break down the verse into syllables, identify long and short syllables, match to a metre, and evaluate rhythm.

References and Attributions [Series 5]

General References



- Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. (8th century). *Codification of Arabic poetic metres*. Classical Arabic literary tradition.
- Imru' al-Qays. (6th century). *Mu'allaqa*. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.
- Al-Mutanabbī. (10th century). *Selected poems*. Abbasid Arabic poetry.
- Darwish, M. (20th century). *Selected modern Arabic poems*. Contemporary Arabic literature.
- Abbasid scholarship. (n.d.). *Intellectual context of the Abbasid period*. Retrieved from open educational resources on Islamic history.

Illustration References and Attributions

- *Figure 5.1: Relationship between theory and applied study in prosody*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing the relationship between theoretical prosody and applied study in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Applied study prosody Arabic poetry OER.”
- *Box 5.1: Suggested criteria for selecting poems in applied study*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising criteria for selecting poems in applied study of Arabic prosody.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Criteria for selecting poems Arabic prosody OER.”
- *Table 5.1: Steps in the method of analysis (scansion)*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table showing the steps in scansion for applied study of Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Scansion method Arabic poetry analysis OER.”
- *Figure 5.2: Scansion of Imru' al-Qays's verse in Ṭawīl metre*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing the scansion of Imru' al-Qays's line in Ṭawīl metre with syllable divisions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Ṭawīl metre scansion Imru' al-Qays Arabic poetry OER.”
- *Box 5.2: Features of the Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising the features of the Basīṭ metre in Abbasid poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Basīṭ metre Abbasid poetry Al-Mutanabbī OER.”
- *Table 5.2: Comparison of Kāmil and Wāfir metres*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table comparing the Kāmil and Wāfir metres with features, themes, and examples.”



- Suggested OER search string: “Kāmil and Wāfir metres Arabic poetry examples OER.”
- *Figure 5.3: Adaptation of classical metres in modern Arabic poetry*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a diagram showing how classical Arabic metres are adapted in modern poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Adaptation of classical Arabic metres modern Arabic poetry OER.”
- *Table 5.3: Comparative reflections on prosodic traditions*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a table comparing Arabic, English, and Persian prosodic traditions with examples.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Comparative prosody Arabic English Persian poetry OER.”
- *Box 5.3: Steps for practical scansion exercises*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a text box summarising steps for practical scansion exercises in Arabic poetry.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Scansion exercises Arabic poetry OER.”

