

# RHYMES, STANZA-FORMS, AND TYPES OF RHYMING POEMS

# RHYMES

A pair of rhyming lines is called a **couplet**. Couplets are frequently run together, not separated as stanzas.

“While the plowman near at hand,  
Whistles o’er the furrowed land”

The **heroic couplet** is an iambic pentameter couplet that is end stopped (marked by a heavy pause) and frequently pointed and witty.

“The hungry judges soon the sentence sign  
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine”

# RHYMES

A stanza of three lines is called a **tercet**:

Light the first light of evening , as in a room,  
In which we sit, and for small reason, think  
The world imagined is the ultimate good

**Terza rima** is a form of pentameter tercet with interlinked rhymes (aba bcb cdc and so on)

# RHYMES

A stanza of four lines is called a quatrain. The commonest quatrain is the ballad stanza, in which the first and third lines are unrhymed and have four beats, while the second and fourth lines rhyme and have three beats.

It is an ancient Mariner  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
“By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?”

# RHYMES

A stanza of 6 lines is called a sixain or a **sestet**.

The only common seven-line stanza is **rime royal** (after King James I)—iambic pentameter rhyming ababbcc)

# TYPES OF RHYMING POEMS

The sonnet is a 14 lines pentameter poem. There are two forms:

Italian (Petrarchan) sonnet consists of an octave and a sestet. The first 8 lines rhyme abbaabba, and the last 6 rhyme cdecde.

Who will in fairest book of Nature know  
How Virtue may best lodged in beauty be,  
Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,  
Stella, those fair lines which

# THE SONNET

As with many poems, the structure of the sonnet reflects the content.

1<sup>st</sup> quatrain: presents a problem or situation

2<sup>nd</sup> quatrain: gives examples of problem

3<sup>rd</sup> quatrain: solution or resolution

Couplet: solution/resolution/advice

The villanelle is a French form with five pentameter tercets rhyming aba, followed by a pentameter quatrain rhyming abaa. This poem intentionally repeats entire lines.

“Do Not Go Gentle into That good Night” by Dylan Thomas

- ◎ An Ode in English is usually a stanzaic poem, but it has no set form. An ode is defined by its content: it is a poem of a lofty or sublime sort, often using the figure of speech called apostrophe, which is an address to some divine or quasi-divine person or thing (usually absent).

Keats “Ode to a Grecian Urn”

# BLANK VERSE

The most common form of counted unrhymed verse is blank verse. This is the verse of Shakespeare's plays and of Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*:

That space the evil one abstracted stood  
From his own evil, and for the time remained  
Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed,  
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge.

Who will in fairest book of Nature know  
How Virtue may best lodged in beauty be,  
Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,  
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.  
There shall he find all vices' overthrow,  
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty  
Of reason, from whose light those nightbirds fly,  
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.  
And, not content to be Perfection's heir  
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,  
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.  
So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,  
As fast thy Virtue bends that love to good.  
“But ah,” Desire still cries, “give me some food.”

The English (Shakespearean) sonnet consists of three four line quatrains, alternately rhymed and a couplet.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved

# FREE VERSE

Free verse—verse in which the lines are of different widths (meter) and which does not rhyme in any regular way—was invented by poets who had been brought up on rhymed and counted verse. Most poets who write in free verse reside in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or later. Free verse poetry must justify its reasons for breaking a line here rather than there (rhyme or meter usually justifies counted verse)

# “THE RED WHEELBARROW” BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

So much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

besides the white  
chickens