

Sestina



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Origin of Sestina

12th Century- Arnaut Daniel (creator)

Great poet: “grand master of love”

Provençal troubadour

Performer with chivalry, courtly love

- 39 Lines
 - No rhyme scheme
 - 6 different end words that rotate
 - 6 stanzas with 6 lines + envoi



Pattern of End Words

1. ABCDEF

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. FAEBDC

6 1 5 2 4 3

3. CFDABE

3 6 4 1 2 5

4. ECBFAD

5 3 2 6 1 4

5. DEACFB

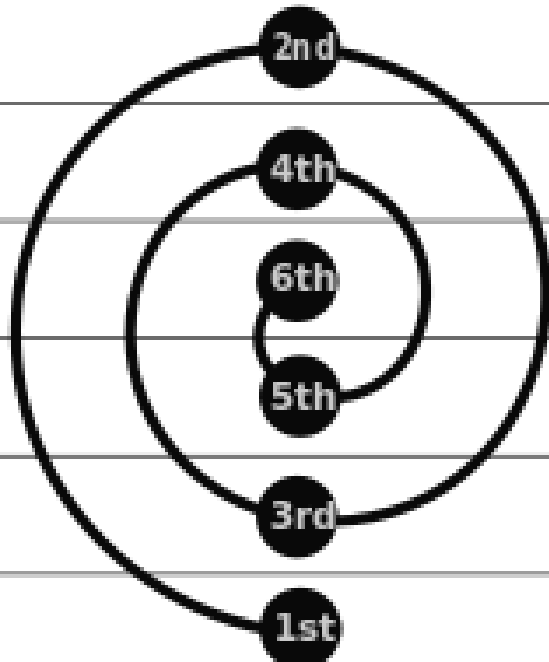
4 5 1 3 6 2

6. BDFECA

2 4 6 5 3 1

7. Envoi

Envoi

STANZA	I	... new order ...	STANZA	II	III	IV	V	VI
<i>end-word</i>	1		6	3	5	4	2	
	2		1	6	3	5	4	
	3		5	4	2	1	6	
	4		2	1	6	3	5	
	5		4	2	1	6	3	
	6		3	5	4	2	1	

Last Stanza - Envoi

- The most fluctuating element
- Must contain all six words
- No apparent order
- Two words per line
- Presented in a three-lined stanza

Sestina from the Life of a Double Monster

In your eyes, (1)
I see my will (2)
reflected in your face, as surely (3)
as you have a face, the struggle does not die, (4)
the struggle for you to break from (5)
our shared atavism, this (6)

inexorable tie, this (6)
literal bond, the connectedness that you and I (1)
share. But there is no escape from (5)
us, nor for us. No amount of will (2)
can ever make a difference. The die (4)
is cast. The fates are sure. (3)

In a fashion, sure, (3)
I have loved you. This (6)
condition left me little choice. Die (4)
and you would kill me, as I (1)
must live for you. We will (2)
always be thus dependent, no escape from (5)

our biology. We, a bicellular life from (5)
the liver of God -- for surely (3)
He was angry when He willed (2)
us into condemnation, this (6)
prison of abnormality, this burden both you and I (1)
must bear until we die. (4)

And until we die, (4)
I will curse God from (5)
morning until night. I (1)
will dream of hatred and revenge as surely (3)
as this brain of mine, this (6)
half of all our thoughts, will (2)

retain the ability to think. My will (2)
is immutable, and dyed (4)
into the fabric of my very soul. Our soul.
This (6)
bicephalous singularity from (5)
which I've never been apart, I surely (3)
have never reconciled. But I (1)

will (2) never escape from (5)
us, as surely (3) as there will be death, (4)
and this (6) H for solitary I. (1)

Vocab

Atavism - Reversion to something ancient or ancestral

Inexorable - impossible to stop

Bicephalous - having two heads

Poetic Effect and Analysis

What is the underlying plot?

How do you categorize the connection between the speaker and the other?

Why did the Author choose to write in this form?

How does the form contribute to the plot and the theme of the poem?

Does this form help the author express the plot? Or does it limit him

***Bob* by Jonah Winter**

According to her housemate, she is out with Bob tonight, and when she's out with Bob you never know when she'll get in. Bob is an English professor. Bob used to be in a motorcycle gang, or something, or maybe Bob rides a motorcycle now. How radical of you, Bob—

I wish I could ride a motorcycle, Bob, and also talk about Chaucer intelligently. Bob is very tall, bearded, reserved. I saw Bob at a poetry reading last week—he had such a Bob-like poise—so quintessentially Bob! The leather jacket, the granny glasses, the beard—Bob!

and you were with my ex-girlfriend, Bob! And you're a professor, and I'm nobody, Bob, nobody, just a flower-deliverer, Bob, and a skinny one at that, Bob—and you are a large person, and I am small, Bob, and I hate my legs, Bob,

but why am I talking to you as if you were here, Bob? I'll try to be more objective. Bob is probably a nice guy. Or that's what one hears. Bob is not, however, the most passionate person named Bob you'll ever meet. Quiet, polite, succinct, Bob opens doors for people, is reticent in grocery stores. Bob

does not talk about himself excessively to girlfriends. Bob does not have a drinking problem. Bob does not worry about his body, even though he's a little heavy. Bob has never been in therapy. Bob, also, though, does not have tenure—ha ha ha—and Bob cannot cook as well as I can. Bob

never even heard of paella, and if he had, Bob would not have changed his facial expression at all. Bob is just so boring, and what I can't understand, Bob—yes I'm talking to you again, is why you, Bob, could be more desirable than me. Granted, Bob, you're more stable, you're older, more mature maybe but Bob . . .

(Months later, on the Bob-front: My former girlfriend finally married Bob. Of Bob, she says, “No one has taken me higher or lower than Bob.” Me? On a dark and stormy sea of Bob-thoughts, desperately, I bob.)

Assignment

Write 3 stanzas + an envoi using the 6 end words chosen by the class. (21 lines)