

Forms of Poetry

ABC poem An ABC poem has 5 lines that create a mood, picture, or feeling. Lines 1 through 4 are made up of words, phrases or clauses - and the first word of each line is in alphabetical order from the first word. Line 5 is one sentence, beginning with any letter.

Ballad A poem that tells a story similar to a folk tale or legend and often has a repeated refrain.

Ballade A type of poem, usually with three stanzas of seven, eight, or ten lines and a shorter final stanza of four or five lines. All stanzas end with the same one-line refrain.

Blank verse Poetry that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Blank verse is often unobtrusive and the iambic pentameter form often resembles the rhythms of ordinary speech. Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse.

Burlesque Burlesque is a story, play, poem, or essay that treats a serious subject ridiculously, or is simply a trivial story

Canzone A medieval Italian lyric poem, with five or six stanzas and a shorter concluding stanza (or envoy). The poet Petrarch was a master of the canzone.

Carpe diem A Latin expression that means "seize the day." Carpe diem poems have the theme of living for today.

Cinquain A cinquain has five lines. Line 1 is one word (the title). Line 2 is two words that describe the title. Line 3 is three words that tell the action. Line 4 is four words that express the feeling. Line 5 is one word that recalls the title

Classicism The principles and ideals of beauty that are characteristic of Greek and Roman art, architecture, and literature. Examples of classicism in poetry can be found in the works of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, which are characterized by their formality, simplicity, and emotional restraint.

Couplet A couplet has rhyming stanzas each made up of two lines. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.



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Elegy A sad and thoughtful poem usually lamenting the death of a person. An example of this type of poem is Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

Epic A long, serious poem that tells the story of a heroic figure. Two of the most famous epic poems are the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer and Longfellow's epic poem of Hiawatha.

Epigram A very short, satirical and witty poem usually written as a brief couplet or quatrain. The term epigram is derived from the Greek word epigramma, meaning inscription. The epigram was cultivated in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by poets like Ben Jonson and John Donne

Epitaph An epitaph is a commemorative inscription on a tomb or mortuary monument written in praise of a deceased person.

Epithalamium (or Epithalamion) A wedding poem written in honour of a bride and bridegroom.

Free verse (also vers libre) Poetry composed of either rhymed or unrhymed lines that have no set fixed metrical pattern or expectation.

Haiku A Japanese poem composed of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku reflects on some aspect of nature.

Idyll, or Idyl Either a short poem depicting a peaceful, idealized country scene, or a long poem that tells a story about heroes of a by-gone age.

Lay A lay is a long narrative poem, especially one that was sung by medieval minstrels called trouvères.

Limerick A short, sometimes bawdy, humorous poem of consisting of five anapaestic lines. Lines 1, 2, and 5 of a Limerick have seven to ten syllables and rhyme with one another. Lines 3 and 4 have five to seven syllables and also rhyme with each other.

Lyric A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode, that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet. The term lyric now generally refers to the words of a song.

Name Poem A name poem tells about a word. It uses the letters of the word for the first letter of each line.



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Narrative Poetry Ballads, epics, and lays are different kinds of narrative poems.

Ode John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is probably the most famous example of this type of poem, which is long and serious in nature and written to a set structure.

Pastoral A poem that depicts rural life in a peaceful, idealized way: for example, of shepherds or country life.

Quatrain A stanza or poem of four lines. Lines 2 and 4 must rhyme. Lines 1 and 3 may or may not rhyme. Rhyming lines should have a similar number of syllables.

Rhyme A rhyme has the repetition of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words, most often at the ends of lines. There are several derivatives of this term, which include double rhyme, triple rhyme, rising rhyme, falling rhyme, perfect and imperfect rhymes.

Rhyme royal A type of poetry introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer consisting of stanzas of seven lines in iambic pentameter.

Romanticism Nature and love were major themes of Romanticism favored by 18th and 19th century poets such as Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Emphasis was placed on the personal experiences of the individual.

Senryu A short Japanese poem that is similar to a haiku in structure but treats human beings rather than nature, often in a humorous or satiric way.

Tanka A Japanese poem of five lines, the first and third composed of five syllables and the rest of seven.

Terza rima A type of poetry consisting of 10 or 11 syllable lines arranged in three-line "tercets". The poet Dante is credited with inventing terza rima, and it has been used by many English poets including Chaucer, Milton, Shelley, and Auden.

Sonnet English (or Shakespearean) sonnets are lyric poems that are 14 lines long falling into three coordinate quatrains and a concluding couplet. Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnets are divided into two quatrains and a six-line sestet.

Verse A single metrical line of poetry, or poetry in general (as opposed to prose).

Adapted from <http://www.poetry-online.org//poetry-terms.htm>

