

Glossary

Acrostic Initial letter from each line spells a word. In Hebrew poetry, often each letter spells out the alphabet.

Alliteration Old English. Usually three repetitions of the same initial consonant in the line.

Anapest Tetrameter Lines of four metric feet. Each foot has two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable.

Ballad A story in song, almost always catastrophic, related in the third person usually with alternating four-and three-stress lines and simple repeating lines, often with a refrain.

Ballade French. A form consisting of three (sometimes five) stanzas, each with the same meter, rhyme scheme and last line, with a shorter concluding stanza (an *envoi*).

Blank verse A type of poetry, distinguished by having a regular meter but no rhyme. In English, the meter most commonly used with blank verse has been iambic pentameter.

Englyn penfyr Welsh. Consists of a verse of three lines. The first line has ten syllables and the other two have seven each. The seventh, eighth or ninth syllables of the first line introduces the rhyme and this is repeated on the last syllable of the other two lines. The fourth syllable of the second line echoes the final syllable of the first through either rhyme or consonance.

Free verse A type of poetry having neither meter nor rhyme.

Haiku Japanese poetry. Consists of 17 syllables in lines of 5-5-7 syllables. It is usually an image from nature and often reflects a particular season.

Hokku Japanese. A chain of Haiku.

Linked Sonnets John Donne wrote a set of sonnets where the last line of one became the first line of the next. They became a chain, since the last line of the last sonnet is the same as the very first line of all the sonnets.

Mayan couplets Duplicated lines change one or two key words, similar to Hebrew poetry such as the Psalms.

Ottava Rima Italian. Eight iambic pentameter lines. Each stanza consists of three rhymes following the rhyme scheme *a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c*.

Sestina A highly structured form of poetry, dating back to the 12th century. It consists of thirty-nine lines; six six-line stanzas ending with a triplet. There are no restrictions on line length, although, in English, the sestina is most commonly written in iambic pentameter or in decasyllabic meters.

In the five stanzas following the first one which sets it up; the same six words must end the six lines, in a strictly prescribed variation of order. The variation is this: if we number the six words that end the first stanza's lines as 123456, these same words will switch places in the following sequences— 615243, 364125, 532614, 451362, and 246531. The six words are then included within the lines of the concluding triplet (also called the *envoy* or *tornada*), again in a prescribed order: the first line containing 2 & 5, the second line containing 4 & 3, and the final line containing 1 & 6.

Sonnet A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter with a carefully patterned rhyme scheme. The **Italian**, or **Petrarchan** sonnet break into an **octave** (or **octet**), which usually rhymes *abbaabba*, but which may sometimes be *abbacddc* or even (rarely) *abababab*; and a **sestet**, which may rhyme *xyzxyz* or *xyxyxy*, or any of the multiple variations possible using only two or three rhyme-sounds. The **English** or **Shakespearean** sonnet, developed first by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), consists of three quatrains and a couplet—that is, it rhymes *abab cdcd efef gg*.

Tanka A popular form of Japanese poetry of 31 syllables arranged in lines of 5-5-7-5-7 syllables.

Terza Rima A three-line stanza using chain rhyme in the pattern *a-b-a, b-c-b, c-d-c, d-e-d*. There is no limit to the number of lines, but poems or sections of poems written in terza rima end with either a single line or couplet. There is no set rhythm but in English iambic pentameters are preferred.

Triolet Rhyme scheme is *ABaAabAB* and all lines are in iambic tetrameter; the first, fourth and seventh lines are identical, as are the second and final lines, thereby making the initial and final couplets identical as well.