

## POETIC TYPES

### What Is Poetry?

Poetry is a type of literature that conveys a thought, describes a scene or tells a story in a concentrated, lyrical arrangement of words. Poems can be structured, with rhyming lines and meter, the rhythm and emphasis of a line based on syllabic beats. Poems can also be freeform, which follows no formal structure.

The basic building block of a poem is a verse known as a stanza. A stanza is a grouping of lines related to the same thought or topic, similar to a paragraph in prose. A stanza can be subdivided based on the number of lines it contains. For example, a couplet is a stanza with two lines.

On the page, poetry is visibly unique: a narrow column of words with recurring breaks between stanzas. Lines of a poem may be indented or lengthened with extra spacing between words. The white space that frames a poem is an aesthetic guide for how a poem is read.

### What Is Meter in Poetry?

A poem can contain many elements to give it structure. Rhyme is perhaps the most common of these elements: countless poetic works, from limericks to epic poems to pop lyrics, contain rhymes. But equally important is meter, which imposes specific length and emphasis on a given line of poetry. Learn more about meter in poetry [here](#).

### What Is a Stanza?

In poetry, a stanza is used to describe the main building block of a poem. It is a unit of poetry composed of lines that relate to a similar thought or topic—like a paragraph in prose or a verse in a song. Every stanza in a poem has its own concept and serves a unique purpose. A stanza may be arranged according to rhyming patterns and meters—the syllabic beats of a line. It can also be a free-flowing verse that has no formal structure. Learn more about stanzas in poetry [here](#).

### What Is a Rhyme Scheme?

There are many different types of rhymes that poets use in their work: internal rhymes, slant rhymes, eye rhymes, identical rhymes, and more. One of the most common ways to write a rhyming poem is to use a rhyme scheme composed of shared vowel sounds or consonants. Learn about 10 different poetry rhyme schemes [here](#).

### 15 Types of Poetic Forms

From sonnets and epics to haikus and villanelles, learn more about 15 of literature's most enduring types of poems.

**Blank verse.** Blank verse is poetry written with a precise meter—almost always iambic pentameter—that does not rhyme. Learn more about blank verse [here](#).

Rhymed poetry. In contrast to blank verse, rhymed poems rhyme by definition, although their scheme varies. Learn more about rhymed poetry [here](#).

**Free verse.** Free verse poetry is poetry that lacks a consistent rhyme scheme, metrical pattern, or musical form. Learn more about free verse [here](#).

**Epics.** An epic poem is a lengthy, narrative work of poetry. These long poems typically detail extraordinary feats and adventures of characters from a distant past. Learn more about epics [here](#).

**Narrative poetry.** Similar to an epic, a narrative poem tells a story. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" exemplify this form. Learn more about narrative poetry [here](#).

**Haiku.** A haiku is a three-line poetic form originating in Japan. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line again has five syllables. Learn more about haikus [here](#).

**Pastoral poetry.** A pastoral poem is one that concerns the natural world, rural life, and landscapes. These poems have persevered from Ancient Greece (in the poetry of Hesiod) to Ancient Rome (Virgil) to the present day (Gary Snyder). Learn more about pastoral poetry [here](#).

**Sonnet.** A sonnet is a 14 line poem, typically (but not exclusively) concerning the topic of love. Sonnets contain internal rhymes within their 14 lines; the exact rhyme scheme depends on the style of a sonnet. Learn about Petrarchan sonnets [here](#). Learn about Shakespearean sonnets [here](#).

**Elegies.** An elegy is a poem that reflects upon death or loss. Traditionally, it contains themes of mourning, loss, and reflection. However, it can also explore themes of redemption and consolation. Learn more about elegies [here](#).

**Ode.** Much like an elegy, an ode is a tribute to its subject, although the subject need not be dead—or even sentient, as in John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Learn more about odes [here](#).

**Limerick.** A limerick is a five-line poem that consists of a single stanza, an AABBA rhyme scheme, and whose subject is a short, pithy tale or description. Learn more about limericks [here](#).

**Lyric poetry.** Lyric poetry refers to the broad category of poetry that concerns feelings and emotion. This distinguishes it from two other poetic categories: epic and dramatic. Learn more about lyric poetry [here](#).

**Ballad.** A ballad (or ballade) is a form of narrative verse that can be either poetic or musical. It typically follows a pattern of rhymed quatrains. From John Keats to Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Bob Dylan, it represents a melodious form of storytelling. Learn more about ballads [here](#).

**Soliloquy.** A soliloquy is a monologue in which a character speaks to him or herself, expressing inner thoughts that an audience might not otherwise know. Soliloquies are not definitionally poems, although they often can be—most famously in the plays of William Shakespeare. Learn more about soliloquies [here](#).

**Villanelle.** A nineteen-line poem consisting of five tercets and a quatrain, with a highly specified internal rhyme scheme. Originally a variation on a pastoral, the villanelle has evolved to describe obsessions and other intense subject matters, as exemplified by Dylan Thomas, author of villanelles like "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night."