

### What is form?

And finally, every poem has form. A poet can arrange his poem so that you will read it as he wants you to read it to get its sound, rhythm, and emphasis. The length of lines and the location of pauses affect the speed at which you read his poem. In modern free verse the very typographical arrangement of words in lines produces emphasis, just as regular rhythm and rhyme produce emphasis in regular verse.

There is such a vast difference in the following arrangements of words that the very meaning of the words is changed:

Star, if you are a love compassionate, you will walk  
with us this year. We face a glacial distance who are  
here huddled at your feet. —Burford

Star,  
If you are  
A love compassionate,  
You will walk with us this year.  
We face a glacial distance who are here  
Huddl'd  
At your feet.  
--Burford

#### Prose

words  
sentences  
paragraphs  
chapters

#### Poetry

words  
lines  
stanzas  
cantos

The appearance of the poem is often a clue to its form, since form is usually determined by the number of lines, the length of the lines, the rhythmic pattern, and/or the rhyming scheme. The **rhyming scheme** (rhyme pattern) can be determined only by looking at the form of the

whole poem. Rhyme schemes are indicated by the use of letters to designate rhyming combinations:

-sound = A  
 -ten = B  
 -men = B = A B B A C  
 -round = A  
 -fight = C

## Types of poetry according to form:

(Regular Verse, Blank Verse, Free Verse)

### Regular verse: Rhyme and Rhythm

<u>No. of Lines</u>	<u>What It's Called</u>	<u>What It Is</u>
2	rhymed couplet	2 lines with identical rhymes
2	heroic couplet	2 lines with identical rhymes
3	tercet, triplet	3 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
4	quatrain	4 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
4	ballad quatrain	4 lines rhyming a b c b; 1st & 3rd lines iambic tetrameter, 2nd & 4th lines iambic trimeter
5	quintet	5 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter
5	cinquain	5 lines – no rhyme, no meter BUT consisting respectively of 2, 4, 6, 8 and, 2 syllables a line
6	sestet	6 lines (often 3 sets of couplets) any rhyme scheme, any meter
7	rime royal	7 lines rhyming a b a b b c c iambic pentameter
8	octave	8 lines – any rhyme scheme, any meter

8	ottava rima	8 lines rhyming a b a b a b c c iambic pentameter
9	Spenserian stanza	9 lines rhyming a b a b b c b c c lines 1 - 8 iambic pentameter line 9 iambic hexameter
14	sonnet	14 lines iambic pentameter <b>English</b> - 3 quatrains + 1 couplet abab cdcd efef gg <b>Italian</b> - 1 octave + 1 sestet abbaabba cdecde OR cdcdee OR cdccdc OR...
19		villanelle 19 lines – 5 tercets + 1 quatrain 2 repeating refrains – 8 of 19 lines are refrain line 1 A' (repeated entirely at 6, 12, & 18) line 3 A'' (repeated entirely at 9, 15, & 19) scheme – A'bA'' abA' abA'' abA' abA'' abA'A''
Blank verse		Any number of lines No rhyme Usually iambic pentameter
Free verse		Any number of lines No rhyme No meter

### Poetry is also classified by content:

<u>Type of Poetry</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Specific Forms</u>
<b>Narrative Poetry</b>	A nondramatic poem which tells a story or presents a narrative, whether simple or complex, long or short.	ballad epic metrical romance
<b>Dramatic Poetry</b>	Poetry which employs dramatic form or dramatic techniques as a means of achieving poetic ends.	verse drama dramatic monologue verse dialogue

## **Lyric Poetry**

A brief subjective poem marked by imagination, melody, and emotion, strict definition is impossible.

dirge, epithalamion, elegy,  
but epigram, epitaph, hymn,  
sonnet, song,  
light verse, ode, pastoral, verse

## **How can one recognize what is and is not a symbol in a poem?**

There is no simple or sure method to guarantee recognition. Only through practice and study can you gain confidence and skill in reading and analyzing poetry – for its symbols as well as for other features. But here are three tips that may help:

1. Read carefully and closely, looking for the repetition of words, phrases, and ideas, and especially verbal patterns. Remember symbols do not so much “stick out” as emerge from the body of the poem.
2. Paraphrase the poem, or at least its notable parts, seeing if objects and the like suggest more than what at first they appear to. Paraphrasing often reveals in surprising ways a symbol or the likelihood of a symbolic element.
3. Observe in particular biblical, mythological, and historical references, or any pattern of seasonal and daily repetitions which may point to symbolic meanings.

It is better to find too few symbols than too many. The impulse to read too much into a poem, to project personal views or prejudices, and to confuse images with symbols is great and should be balanced with thoughtfulness. Every red rose does not have to be love and romance; every conflict between persons, an Oedipal or a Faustian struggle; every unfortunate victim, a crucified Jesus. Sometimes a rose is a rose is a rose!