

The Forms of Poetry

Poetry has many forms. Some are simple while others are more complicated. Some rhyme, some do not. Some use specific metrical patterns, many do not.

Lines of poetry are often grouped into stanzas. A two-line stanza is called a couplet, a three-line stanza a tercet or triplet, and a four-line stanza a quatrain. What do you think a five-line stanza might be called?

Rhyme (including Repetition)

Rhyming patterns within a stanza can take many forms, or be completely non-existent.

Rhythm (including metrics, tempo).

There are rhythms in everything around us, even in our own breathing and heartbeat. Meter is repeating patterns of heavily and lightly stressed syllables. Heavily stressed syllables are referred to as Accented. A single metrical unit is called a Foot.

- **An Iambic Foot** is the standard. It consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable, such as in: the girl, to love, and amaze.
- **A Trochaic Foot** is the opposite of iambic, the accented syllable leads the unaccented syllable, such as in: strike it, and water.
- **An Anapestic Foot** has three syllables, with the last being the accented syllable. For instance: of the house, as a bird, and intercede.
- **A Dactylic Foot** is the opposite of the anapestic, with the accented syllable leading the two unaccented syllables. For instance: carelessly, marry them, and syllable.
- **A Spondiac Foot** is two accented syllables together, such as: greenhouse, and stronghold.

Other Forms of Poetry

An Acrostic is a poem in which a word is written vertically. Try writing one using your name, and write about your best self.

C aring
 A rtistic
 T houghtful
 H andsome
 Y outhful

A **Double Crostic** spells out something at the beginning and end of each line.

G.....T
 L.....O
 O.....G
 R.....O
 Y.....D

A **Haiku** is a short poem with a big theme. It’s purpose is often to get you to think further about the subject. In this Japanese form of poetry, seventeen syllables are arranged in an unrhymed three-line poem. A true haiku is about nature, has at least one word that identifies or gives a clue to the season, is about a small scene, and is always written in present tense.

A **Limerick** is a five-line verse invented by a teacher to entertain the royal children during lessons. Children enjoy the nonsense rhymes; however, since then many have written limericks to amuse various interests of adults.