



POETRY TERMS

VERSE FORMS

CINQUAIN – Modern 5 line poetry form developed by American poet Adelaide Crapsey with increasing syllables in the first four lines before returning for 2 syllables in the last (2 syllables, 4 syllables, 6 syllables, 8 syllables, 2 syllables)

COUPLET – Poetry written in paired (often rhyming) lines with the same meter. When couplets use iambic pentameter, they are referred to as heroic couplets (used in the *Canterbury Tales*)

LIMERICK – Irish five line form often on a humorous subject. The Maigue Poets are thought to have developed the form, and Edward Lear is probably the best known practitioner. Rhyme scheme is AABBA

OTTAVA RIMA – Eight line form originally developed by Boccaccio. Byron (*Don Juan & Beppo*) and Yeats (*Sailing to Byzantium*) are the best known English language proponents. Rhyme scheme is ABABABCC

RHYME ROYAL – Seven line form introduced to English poetry by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Parliament of Fowles*. He also used it in four of the *Canterbury Tales*. It can either be a terza rima followed by two couplets (ABA BB CC) or a quatrain followed by a tercet (ABAB BCC).

HAIKU – Traditional Japanese poetic form consisting of 17 *ons* (roughly translated as syllables) and 3 lines (5, 7, 5 *ons*, respectively). Haikus traditionally contain both a *kigo* (word denoting a season) and a *kireji* (word that provides a grammatical break between lines). Basho is considered the master, and the form was repopularized in the 19th century by Shiki.

RONDEAU – 15 line French form. The best known example is John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields*.



SESTINA – 39 line poetry form consisting of six six-line stanzas followed by a tercet (3 line stanza). The same six words (in different orders) end each line of the six-line stanzas.

SPENSERIAN STANZA – Nine line form invented by Spenser for his *The Faerie Queen*. It consists of eight lines of iambic pentameter followed by one Alexandrine (12 syllable) line of iambic hexameter. Byron later used it in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and Keats used it in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

TERZA RIMA – Form that uses three line interlocking stanzas of the form ABA BCB CDC DED, etc. There is no limit to the number of stanzas in a terza rima poem. Dante invented the form for his *Divine Comedy*.

VILLANELLE – Nineteen line French form invented by the French poet Jean Passerat. Dyan Thomas used the form for his *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* and James Joyce's fictional Stephen Dedalus used it several times in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It consists of five tercets and a concluding quatrain.

METER

Meter is defined by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables within a line and the length of the line in feet (a foot is a combination of stressed & unstressed syllables). Thus, a line with five iambic feet is known as iambic pentameter.

DACTYL -	SUU
ANAPEST -	UUS
TROCHEE -	SU
IAMB -	US
PYRRHIC -	UU
SPONDEE -	SS

MONOMETER -	1 Foot
DIMETER -	2 Feet
TRIMETER -	3 Feet
TETRAMETER -	4 Feet
PENTAMETER -	5 Feet
HEXAMETER -	6 Feet

