

Fixed Poetic Forms

1. **Terza Rima**- tercets that use the middle line of each tercet as the first and third of the next- *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc.
2. **Heroic Stanza**- quatrains of iambic pentameter that rhyme *abab*- see Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."
3. **The Burns Stanza**- rhymes *aaabab*, with the *a*- lines tetrameter, and the *b*- lines dimeter. Named for Robert Burns (see "To a Mouse").
4. **Rhyme Royale**- seven- line stanzas rhyming *ababbcc*. See Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence."
5. **Ottava Rima**- Italian for "eight- line rhymes"- eight line stanzas rhyming *abababcc*- see Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium."
6. **Spensarian Stanza**- the only named nine- line stanza- *ababbcbcc*- see *The Faerie Queen*.
7. **English Sonnet**- 3 quatrains and a couplet at the end for a total of fourteen lines. Rhymes *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*. See Shakespeare.
8. **Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet**- Dante and Petrarch used this form- eight- line stanza followed by a six- line stanza. This one is a bit tricky: there is a rhyme scheme for both at the end of the line and the beginning in the sestet. This is represented by a double letter code for each line: stanza one (octave) *abbabba*, stanza two (sestet) *cc dd ec cd dc ed*.
9. **Spenserian Sonnet**- rhyme linked quatrains- *ababbcbccdcdee*. See "Amoretti."
10. **Sestina**- six line stanzas- same six words end each line, but switch position each stanza in a rotation. Each word is numbered here: stanza one- 1,2,3,4,5,6 stanza two- 6,1,2,3,4,5 stanza three- 5,6,1,2,3,4 etc. See Sidney's "Ye goatherd Gods"- this is a popular form with modern poets.
11. **Villanelle**- a nineteen- line poem that consists of a rhyme scheme and repeating lines (entire line repeats word for word- represented by capitol letters). The repeated lines still fall into the rhyme scheme.