

Forms of Poetry

This document is a compilation of three very useful books that I read at the beginning of my writing career:

- *The Book of Forms*, by Lewis Turco. ISBN: 1-58465-022-2
- *In Fine Forms: The Canadian Book of Form Poetry*, by Kate Braid and Sandy Shreve. ISBN: 1-55192-777-2
- *The Shapes of our Singing*, by Robin Skelton. ISBN: 0-910055-76-9

Of course, the list is not exhaustive. I just chose the forms that interested me the most. These three books contain most of the forms of poetry ever imagined!

I hope you enjoy!

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ACROSTIC

Verse that spells out a name or message with the 1st letters of each line. Commonly used for tributes.

- Double acrostic: first and middle letters or first and last letters.
- Triple acrostic: first, middle and last letters.

ALTERNATING QUATRAIN

4 line stanza rhyming abab.

BALASSI STANZA

Stanza rhyming bbaccadda. Syllable count: 6 6 7 6 6 7 6 6 7.

BALLADE

3 stanzas of 8 lines + 1 stanza of 4 lines (envoy). No fixed line length or metre. Rhyming scheme: ababbcbC ababbcbC ababbcbC bcbC (C= refrain).

BREF DOUBLE

14 lines with no fixed line length or metre. Lines are rhymed and unrhymed. Rhyming scheme: a_bc _b_c _a_c ab.

BURNS STANZA

6 lines. Rhyme scheme: aaabab. A lines = 8-9 syllables; B lines = 4-5 syllables.

CHOKA

Syllable count: 5 7 5 7 5 7... 5 7 7. Any length. Unrhymed, non-metrical. It deals with humanistic topics, especially involving relationships.

CINQUAIN

5 lines. Syllable count: 2 4 6 8 2. Possible rhyming scheme: abbba. Brief statements and images. Most effective with noun naming objects and when building towards a climax. The final line adds a slight "twist" to the topic.

CLOGYRNACH

Syllable count: 8 8 5 5 3 3. Rhyming scheme: aabbba.

COUNT UP

Ten lines. L.1 has one syllable, each succeeding line adding a syllable, with a total count of fifty-five syllables. This form allows both rhyme and meter, while its similar cousin, the Etheree, allows neither.

DIATELLE

Syllable count: 1 2 3 4 6 8 10 12 10 8 6 4 3 2 1. Rhyming scheme: abbcbccaccbcbba. This poetry form may be written on any subject matter and looks best center aligned in a diamond shape.

DODOITSU

4 lines. Syllable count: 7 7 7 5. Unrhymed, non-metrical.

ENDECHA

Syllable count: 7 7 7 11. Rhyming scheme: abcb.

ETHEREE

10 lines of 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 syllables.

- Reversed etheree: 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1.

- Double etheree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1.

- Triple etheree, quadruple etheree, etc.

FOURTEENTH CENTURY STANZA

Lines of 4 to 9 syllables. Rhyme scheme: aabccb.

HAIKU

Syllable count: 5 7 5. Alludes to the season of the year or nature. At some point, there is often a pause in both rhythm and grammar that divides the haiku in 2 parts. A traditional haiku has no title. A season word indicates the season of the year, a seasonal theme. Use of the present tense.

The goal is to convey a sense of awe or transcendence and evoke emotions, a sudden insight or meditation. Clear concrete imagery with minimal use of articles.

A good haiku is about those things that cause the reaction. This way, the reader can experience the same feelings you felt, without your having to explain them.

The 2 elements of a haiku may seem unrelated at first glance, but if the reader lingers on them sufficiently, they may notice a reverberation.

HYANGGA

2 stanzas of 4, 8, or 10 lines. Syllable count in each line: 4 - 15.

ITALIAN SESTET

6 line stanza with 8 syllables each, rhyming abcabc.

KATAUKA

Syllable count: 5 7 7. The first line is a question. The next 2 lines are a spontaneous and intuitive answer.

Kimo

A post-Haiku poetic form , consisting of three lines of 10, 7, and 6 syllables.

Knittelvers

Rhyming couplets with 4 stressed syllables per line. 9 syllables per line.

Kouta

A quatrain. Syllable count: 7 5 7 5 / 7 7 7 5.

LAI

Poem or stanza. Syllable count: 552 552 552. Rhyming scheme: aab aab aab.

LANTERN

5-line poem. Word count: 1 3 5 3 1.

LANTURNE

Written in the shape of a lantern. Syllable count: 1 2 3 4 1.

LUNE

Syllable count: 5 3 5. Or word count: 3 5 3.

MONDO

2 lines. Syllable count: 5 7. One-line question; one-line answer.

MOTE

No fixed syllable count or metre. 2-line poem that forms a complete sentence.

NAANI

4 lines and 20-25 syllables. Depends upon human relations and current statements.

NONET

9 lines. Rhyming is optional. Syllable count: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1.

NOVE OTTO

9-line poem with 8 syllables per line. Rhyming scheme: aacbbcdcc.

ODE

Stanzas of 9 lines. Syllable count: 10 4 10 4 10 10 4 4 8. Rhyming scheme: ababccddc.

PATHYA VAT

Quatrains of four syllable lines, with the second and third lines rhyming. Longer poems are made by chaining them together, with the last line of each rhyming with the second and third lines of the next.

PENSEE

Five line poem. Syllabic count: 2 4 7 8 6

QUATERN

16 octosyllabic lines or 4 quatrains. The refrain is in a different place in each quatrain: 1.1 of stanza 1; 1.2 of stanza 2; 1.3 of stanza 3; 1.4 of stanza 4. No fixed metre or rhyme scheme.

QUATERNION

A twelve-line, three-quatrain poem. Rhyming scheme: aabb ccdd abcd.

QUATRAIN

Stanzas/poem of 4 lines.

- Shakespearean: ababa;
- Petrarchan: abba;
- Omar Khayyam: aaxa;
- Monorhyme: aaaa.

QUINZAIN

Unrhymed verse of fifteen syllables. Syllable count: 7 5 3. The first line makes a statement. The next two lines ask a question relating to that statement.

RICTAMETRE

Diamond-shaped poem of 9 lines, opening and closing with the same 2 syllables. Syllable count: 2 4 6 8 10 8 6 4 2.

RIMAS DISSOLUTAS

No fixed line length or metre. Rhyming scheme: abcd abcd abcd etc.

RISPETTO

2 quatrains of 8 syllables per line. Rhyming scheme: abab ccdd /cdcd/cddc.

SEDOKA

2 stanzas. Syllable count: 5 7 7 5 7 7. Unrhymed and non-metrical. It may address the subject from differing perspectives.

The first part says the same thing as the second part but in a different way.

SENRYU

Syllable count: 5 7 5. Haiku focusing on human nature. Usually written in the present tense and only references to some aspect of human nature or emotions. There is no reference to the natural world.

SEPTOLET

2 short stanzas of 14 words or 7 lines. The 2nd stanza adds a slight slant on the topic of the first stanza. Both parts deal with the same thought and create a picture.

SEXTILLA

6-line stanza with 8 syllables per line and rhyming aabccb / ababcc.

STRAMBOTTO

One stanza poem:

- Octet of 11 syllables per line, rhyming abababab.
- or Sestet rhyming ababab.

TANKA

Syllable count: 5 7 5 7 7. Unrhymed, non-metrical. Mostly talks about nature and love, describing relationships or the author's situation, and uses simile, metaphor and personification. A tanka usually breaks into 2 parts. The first 2/3 lines often depict the world of nature. The last two lines convey a personal emotion or feeling. The third line can be a pivot, a word or words that form the link between the nature image and the author's emotional expression.

TETRACTYS

Syllable count:

- Single tetractys: 1 2 3 4 10 / 10 4 3 2 1
- Double tetractys: 1 2 3 4 10 10 4 3 2 1
- Triple tetractys: 1 2 3 4 10 10 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 10.

WAKA

5 lines. Syllables: 5 7 5 7 7. The 1st two lines and the last line form a complete sentence. Unrhymed and non-metrical.

WAYRA

Syllable count: 5 7 7 6 8.

WHITNEY

Poem of 7 lines. Syllable pattern: 3, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 7

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