

# Poetry Terms and Poetry Forms

## **Poetry Forms - ( Poetry Terms follow)**

The definition of poetry is a type of literature that is written in meter. A "poem" (from the Greek poiemalis) a specific work of poetry. A Poetry Form is the general organizing principle of a literary work.

Click the following link if you need detailed information (definitions and examples) about different **Types of Poetry**

## **Some Poetry Forms**

Detailed below are explanations of Poetry Forms. There are many poetry forms such as ballads, sonnets, odes, epitaphs, elegies and many more. What do they all mean and what are the differences in these various forms? Listed below are many definitions of Poetry Forms. A Form is the generic term for the organising principle of a literary work. In poetry, form is described in terms elements like rhyme, meter, and stanzaic pattern.

The section covering Specific terms used in Poetry follows directly after the definitions of Poetry forms.

- **ABC poem**  
An ABC poem has 5 lines that create a mood, picture, or feeling. Lines 1 through 4 are made up of words, phrases or clauses - and the first word of each line is in alphabetical order from the first word. Line 5 is one sentence, beginning with any letter.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Ballad**  
A poem that tells a story similar to a folk tale or legend and often has a repeated refrain.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Ballade**  
A type of poem, usually with three stanzas of seven, eight, or ten lines and a shorter final stanza of four or five lines. All stanzas end with the same one-line refrain.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Blank verse**  
Poetry that is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Blank verse is often unobtrusive and the iambic pentameter form often resembles the rhythms of ordinary speech. Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Burlesque**  
Burlesque is a story, play, or essay, that treats a serious subject ridiculously, or is simply a trivial story  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Canzone**  
A medieval Italian lyric poem, with five or six stanzas and a shorter concluding stanza (or envoy). The poet Patriarch was a master of the canzone.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Carpe diem**  
A Latin expression that means "seize the day." Carpe diem poems have the theme of living for

today.

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Cinquain**

A cinquain has five lines.

Line 1 is one word (the title)

Line 2 is two words that describe the title.

Line 3 is three words that tell the action

Line 4 is four words that express the feeling

Line 5 is one word that recalls the title

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Classicism**

The principles and ideals of beauty that are characteristic of Greek and Roman art, architecture, and literature. Examples of classicism in poetry can be found in the works of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, which are characterized by their formality, simplicity, and emotional restraint.

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Couplet**

A couplet has rhyming stanzas each made up of two lines. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.

- **Elegy**

A sad and thoughtful poem lamenting the death of a person. An example of this type of poem is Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

- **Epic**

A long, serious poem that tells the story of a heroic figure. Two of the most famous epic poems are the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer and the epic poem of Hiawatha.

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Epigram**

A very short, satirical and witty poem usually written as a brief couplet or quatrain. The term epigram is derived from the Greek word epigramma, meaning inscription.

The epigram was cultivated in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by poets like Ben Jonson and John Donne

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Epitaph**

An epitaph is a commemorative inscription on a tomb or mortuary monument written in praise of a deceased person.

- **Epithalamium (or Epithalamion)**

A wedding poem written in honour of a bride and bridegroom.

- **Free verse (also vers libre)**

Poetry composed of either rhymed or unrhymed lines that have no set fixed metrical pattern or expectation.

- **Haiku**

A Japanese poem composed of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku reflects on some aspect of nature.

- **Idyll, or Idyl**

Either a short poem depicting a peaceful, idealized country scene, or a long poem that tells a story about heroes of a bygone age.

### *Poetry Forms*

- **Lay**  
A lay is a long narrative poem, especially one that was sung by medieval minstrels called trouvères.
- **Limerick**  
A short sometimes bawdy, humorous poem of consisting of five anapaestic lines. Lines 1, 2, and 5 of a Limerick have seven to ten syllables and rhyme with one another. Lines 3 and 4 have five to seven syllables and also rhyme with each other. Need to find out more about Limericks ?  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Lyric**  
A poem, such as a sonnet or an ode, that expresses the thoughts and feelings of the poet. The term lyric is now generally referred to as the words to a song.
- **Name Poem**  
A name poem tells about the word. It uses the letters of the word for the first letter of each line.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Narrative Poetry**  
Ballads, epics, and lays are different kinds of narrative poems.
- **Ode**  
John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is probably the most famous example of this type of poem which is long and serious in nature written to a set structure.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Pastoral**  
A poem that depicts rural life in a peaceful, idealized way for example of shepherds or country life.
- **Quatrain**  
A stanza or poem of four lines.  
Lines 2 and 4 must rhyme.  
Lines 1 and 3 may or may not rhyme.  
Rhyming lines should have a similar number of syllables.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Rhyme**  
A rhyme has the repetition of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words most often at the ends of lines. There are several derivatives of this term which include double rhyme, Triple rhyme, rising rhyme, falling rhyme, Perfect and imperfect rhymes.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Rhyme royal**  
A type of poetry introduced by Geoffrey Chaucer consisting of stanzas of seven lines in iambic pentameter.
- **Romanticism**  
Nature and love were a major themes of Romanticism favoured by 18th and 19th century poets such as Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Emphasis was placed on the personal experiences of the individual.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Senryu**  
A short Japanese poem that is similar to a haiku in structure but treats human beings rather than nature, often in a humorous or satiric way.
- **Tanka**  
A Japanese poem of five lines, the first and third composed of five syllables and the rest of seven.

- **Terza rima**  
A type of poetry consisting of 10 or 11 syllable lines arranged in three-line "tercets". The poet Dante is credited with inventing terza rima and it has been used by many English poets including Chaucer, Milton, Shelley, and Auden.  
*Poetry Forms*
- **Sonnet**  
English (or Shakespearean) sonnets are lyric poems that are 14 lines long falling into three coordinate quatrains and a concluding couplet. Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnets are divided into two quatrains and a six-line sestet.
- **Verse**  
A single metrical line of poetry, or poetry in general (as opposed to prose).  
*Poetry Forms*

*A Form is the generic term for the organising principle of a literary work. In poetry, form is described in terms elements like rhyme, meter, and stanzaic pattern. Read on to learn about the definitions of Poetry Terms.*



## Poetry Terms

Poetry Terms are used when describing the content and structure of a poem. There are many different terms used in the English language which help when constructing poetry such as the use of metaphors and similes. If you want to enhance the content when you write poetry or increase your knowledge of Poetry terms in general then study the content of this page. At the very least you will most certainly increase your vocabulary!

### What do you know about Poetry Terms?

- Did you know that poetry term Enjambment comes from the French word for "to straddle." Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence from one line or couplet into the next and derives from the French verb 'to straddle'. An example by Joyce Kilmer is 'I think that I shall never see/A poem as lovely as a tree'?
- Did you know that an Alexandrine is a line of poetry that has 12 syllables and derives from a medieval romance about Alexander the Great that was written in 12-syllable lines?
- Did you know that the poetry term ' Foot ' has two or more syllables that together make up the smallest unit of rhythm in a poem. For example, an iamb is a foot that has two syllables, one unstressed followed by one stressed. An anapest has three syllables, two unstressed followed by one stressed?
- Did you know that an Heptameter is a line of poetry that has seven metrical feet?
- Did you know that a stanza has two or more lines of poetry that together form one of the divisions of a poem? The stanzas of a poem are usually of the same length and follow the same pattern of meter and rhyme.

Check out the definitions of the many Poetry Terms that follow!



## English Poetry Terms

Poetry Terms are used when describing the content and structure of a poem. There are many different terms used in the English language which help when constructing poetry such as the use of metaphors and similes. If you want to enhance the content when you write poetry or increase your knowledge of Poetry terms in general then study the content of this page. At the very least you will most certainly increase your vocabulary!

- **Accent**  
The prominence or emphasis given to a syllable or word. In the word poetry, the accent (or stress) falls on the first syllable.
- **Allegory**  
Allegory is a narrative having a second meaning beneath the surface one.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Alexandrine**  
A line of poetry that has 12 syllables and derives from a medieval romance about Alexander the Great that was written in 12-syllable lines.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Alliteration**  
The repetition of the same or similar sounds at the beginning of words such as tongue twisters like 'She sells seashells by the seashore'
- **Analogy**  
Analogy is a likeness or similarity between things that are otherwise unlike.
- **Anapaest**  
A metrical foot of three syllables, two short (or unstressed) followed by one long (or stressed). The anapaest is the opposite of the dactyl.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Antithesis**  
An example of antithesis is "To err is human, to forgive, divine." by Alexander Pope is an example of antithesis with words and phrases with opposite meanings balanced against each other.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Apostrophe**  
A figure of speech in which someone absent or dead or something nonhuman is addressed as if it were alive and present and could reply
- **Archetype**  
Archetype is the original pattern from which copies are made.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Assonance**  
The repetition or a pattern of similar sounds, as in the tongue twister "Moses supposes his toeses are roses."
- **Bard**  
The definition of a Bard is a Gaelic maker and signer of poems.

- **Blank verse**  
Blank verse is in unrhymed iambic pentameter which is a type of meter in poetry, in which there are five iambs to a line.
- **Cacophony**  
Lewis Carroll makes use of cacophony in 'Jabberwocky' by using an unpleasant spoken sound created by clashing consonants.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Caesura**  
A grammatical pause or break in a line of poetry (like a question mark), usually near the middle of the line.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Classicism**  
The principles and ideals of beauty, minimised by the use of emotional restraint, that are characteristic of Greek and Roman art and literature used by poets such as John Dryden and Alexander Pope.
- **Conceit**  
An example of a conceit can be found in Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" when an image or metaphor likens one thing to something else that is seemingly very different.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Consonance**  
Consonance is the repetition, at close intervals, of the final consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Connotation**  
connotation is What a word suggests beyond its basic definition. The words childlike and childish both mean 'characteristic of a child,' but childlike suggests meekness and innocence
- **Couplet**  
Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet and are a pair of lines that are the same length and usually rhyme and form a complete thought.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Dactyl**  
A metrical foot of three syllables, one long (or stressed) followed by two short (or unstressed), as in happily. The dactyl is the reverse of the anapaest.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Denotation**  
Denotation is the basic definition or dictionary meaning of a word.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*
- **Dialect**  
Dialect refers to pronunciation of a particular region of a Country or region.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Doggerel**  
Doggerels are a light verse which is humorous and comic by nature.
- **Elision**  
Elision refers to the leaving out of an unstressed syllable or vowel, usually in order to keep a regular meter in a line of poetry for example 'o'er' for 'over'.  
*Poetry and Literary Terms*

- **Enjambment**  
Enjambment comes from the French word for "to straddle." Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence from one line or couplet into the next and derives from the French verb 'to straddle'. An example by Joyce Kilmer is 'I think that I shall never see/A poem as lovely as a tree'.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Envoy**  
The shorter final stanza of a poem, as in a ballade.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Epithet**  
An epithet is a descriptive expression, a word or phrase expressing some quality or attribute.
- **Euphony**  
Euphony refers to pleasant spoken sound that is created by smooth consonants such as "ripple".  
*Literary Terms*
- **Euphemism**  
Euphemism is the use of a soft indirect expression instead of one that is harsh or unpleasantly direct. For example 'pass away' as opposed to 'die'.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Falling Meter**  
Trochaic and dactylic meters are called falling meters because they move from stressed to unstressed syllables.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Feminine rhyme**  
A rhyme that occurs in a final unstressed syllable: pleasure/leisure, longing/yearning.
- **Figure of speech**  
A verbal expression in which words or sounds are arranged in a particular way to achieve a particular effect such as alliteration, antithesis, assonance, hyperbole, metaphor, onomatopoeia and simile.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Foot**  
Two or more syllables that together make up the smallest unit of rhythm in a poem. For example, an iamb is a foot that has two syllables, one unstressed followed by one stressed. An anapest has three syllables, two unstressed followed by one stressed.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Form**  
Form is the generic term for the organising principle of a literary work. In poetry, form is described in terms elements like rhyme, meter, and stanzaic pattern.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Heptameter**  
A line of poetry that has seven metrical feet.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Heroic couplet**  
A stanza composed of two rhymed lines in iambic pentameter.
- **Hexameter**  
A line of poetry that has six metrical feet.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Hyperbole**  
Hyperbole (overstatement) is a type of figurative language that depends on intentional

overstatement.

*Literary Terms*

- **Iamb**

A metrical foot of two syllables, one short (or unstressed) and one long (or stressed). The iamb is the reverse of the trochee.

*Poetry Terms*

- **Iambic pentameter**

Shakespeare's plays were written mostly in iambic pentameter, which is the most common type of meter in English poetry. It is a basic measure of English poetry, five iambic feet in each line.

*Poetry Terms*

- **Idiom**

Idiom refers to words, phrases, or patterns of expression. Idioms became standard elements in any language, differing from language to language and shifting with time. A current idiom is 'getting in a car' but 'on a plane'.

*Literary Terms*

- **Imagery**

Imagery draws the reader into poetic experiences by touching on the images and senses which the reader already knows.

*Literary Terms*

- **Irony**

Irony is a situation, or a use of language, involving some kind of discrepancy. An example of this is "Water, water everywhere but ne'er a drop to drink".

*Literary Terms*

- **Jargon**

Jargon refers to words and phrases developed by a particular group to fit their own needs which other people understand.

- **Litotes**

A litote is a figure of speech in which affirmative is expressed by the negation of the opposite. "He's no dummy" is a good example.

*Poetry Terms*

- **Metaphor**

A metaphor is a pattern equating two seemingly unlike objects. An example of a metaphor is 'drowning in debt'.

- **Meter**

Meters are regularized rhythms. An arrangement of language in which the accents occur at apparently equal intervals in time. Each repeated unit of meter is called a foot.

*Literary Terms*

- **Meiosis**

Meiosis is a figure of speech that consists of saying less than one means, or of saying what one means with less force than the occasion warrants.

- **Metonymy**

A figure of speech in which one word is substituted for another with which it is closely associated. Some significant aspect or detail of an experience is used to represent the whole experience.

*Poetry Terms*

- **Moritake**

Moritake is figurative speech that depends on intentional overstatement or exaggeration.



- **Onomatopoeia**  
A figure of speech in which words are used to imitate sounds. Examples of onomatopoeic words can be found in numerous Nursery Rhymes e.g. clippety-clop and cock-a-doodle-do.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Paradox**  
A paradox is a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Pentameter**  
A line of poetry that has five metrical feet.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Persona**  
Persona refers to the narrator or speaker of the poem, not to be confused with the author.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Personification**  
Personification means giving human traits to nonhuman or abstract things.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Quatrain**  
A stanza or poem of four lines.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Refrain**  
A phrase, line, or group of lines that is repeated throughout a poem, usually after every stanza.
- **Rhyme**  
The occurrence of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Rhythm**  
Rhythm is significant in poetry because poetry is so emotionally charged and intense. Rhythm can be measured in terms of heavily stressed to less stressed syllables. Rhythm is measured in feet, units usually consisting of one heavily accented syllable and one or more lightly accented syllable.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Rising Meter**  
Anapaestic and iambic meters are called rising meters because they move from an unstressed syllable to a stressed syllable.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Romanticism**  
The principles and ideals of the Romantic movement in literature and the arts during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Romanticism, which was a reaction to the classicism of the early 18th century, favoured feeling over reason and placed great emphasis on the subjective, or personal, experience of the individual. Nature was also a major theme. The great English Romantic poets include Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Scansion**  
The analysis of a poem's meter. This is usually done by marking the stressed and unstressed syllables in each line and then, based on the pattern of the stresses, dividing the line into feet.
- **Simile**  
A figure of speech in which two things are compared using the word "like" or "as" to draw

attention to similarities about two things that are seemingly dissimilar.

*Literary Terms*

- **Slang**  
Slang refers to highly informal and sub-standard vocabulary which may exist for some time and then vanish. Some slang remains in usage long enough to become permanent, but slang never becomes a part of formal diction.
- **Spondee**  
A metrical foot of two syllables, both of which are long (or stressed).  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Stanza**  
Two or more lines of poetry that together form one of the divisions of a poem. The stanzas of a poem are usually of the same length and follow the same pattern of meter and rhyme.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Stress**  
Stress refers to the accent or emphasis, either strong or weak, given to each syllable in a piece of writing, as determined by conventional pronunciation.
- **Synecdoche**  
Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole.
- **Syntax**  
Syntax refers to word order and sentence structure. Normal word order in English sentences is firmly fixed in subject-verb-object sequence or subject-verb-complement. In poetry, word order may be shifted around to meet emphasis, to heighten the connection between two words, or to pick up on specific implications or traditions.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Tetrameter**  
A line of poetry that has four metrical feet.  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Trochee**  
A metrical foot of two syllables, one long (or stressed) and one short (or unstressed).  
*Literary Terms*
- **Trope**  
Trope is the use of a word or phrase in a sense different from its ordinary meaning.  
*Literary Terms*
- **Understatement**  
Understatement refers to the intentional downplaying of a situation's significance, often for ironic or humorous effect.
- **Verse**  
A single metrical line of poetry, or poetry in general (as opposed to prose).  
*Poetry Terms*
- **Versification**  
The system of rhyme and meter in poetry.  
*Poetry Terms*