

Poetry – Structured poems

Range of poetry

Poetry is a very wide-ranging type of text and has many purposes and forms. Often written or spoken for an intended reader, it may also be composed for a personal outcome because the concise and powerful nature of poetry conveys emotion particularly well. Like oral storytelling, poetry has strong social and historical links with cultures and communities.

The fact that poetry often plays with words makes it an attractive text type for children and one that they experiment with in their early language experiences. Features of other text types are frequently used as the basis for a poem, e.g. lists, dialogue, questions and answers. As children become familiar with a wider range of poetic forms and language techniques they can make increasingly effective use of wordplay to explore and develop ideas through poetry.

Structures:

Structured poems follow a consistent framework based on features such as line length, syllable count, rhyme pattern, rhythm, metre or a combination of these.

A poem's structure (particularly rhythm and rhyme) generally influences the way it sounds when read aloud and helps to make it memorable. Poems with a clear, simple structure are often used as models or writing frames for children's own writing.

The structure of a poem sometimes helps to organise the content. For example, a longer narrative poem (such as a ballad) may be organised chronologically into verses or parts. An important line may be repeated as a chorus or refrain.

The range of poetry structures presented as ICT texts is even wider and includes multimodal and/or interactive poems that contain hypertext, live links, moving images and sounds.

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
<p>There are many forms of structured poetry. Some are culturally specific.</p> <p>Some of the most</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Double-check that any deliberate patterns of rhyme or rhythm work all the way through. ▪ Remove clichés and change any

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common forms are:		rhymes that sound forced.
cinquain	A generic name for a five-line poem. One of the most commonly used forms follows a syllable pattern for each line: 2, 4, 6, 8, 2. There are many different types of cinquains providing a wide range of opportunities for children to experiment with rhyme or syllabification. For example, <i>reverse cinquains</i> where the line pattern works backward, <i>quintiles</i> where cinquains are grouped in multiples to create a longer poem and English <i>quintains</i> that have a rhyme pattern (ABABB) but no specific line length.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid choosing words just because they fit the pattern or rhyme – only use words that really work.
quatrain	Quatrain is a generic term for a four-line stanza or poem of any kind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-read aloud as you write, to check how the structure sounds, especially to hear rhyme and metre.
couplets	Two successive lines, usually part of a poem longer than two lines and typically at the end of a verse or stanza. Couplets have two lines, each with the same metre and often share the same rhyme (rhyming couplets).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When you have few words to use (e.g. haiku, couplets) make sure that every word works hard for meaning and effect.
rap	Rap is an example that straddles the boundaries between poetry, talk and song. It is one of the central elements of hip hop culture and uses strong musical rhythm and repeated rhyme patterns. The content is often focused on social commentary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't let the poem's structure take over and make all the choices for you – you are the writer so you decide what works and what doesn't.
limerick	A traditional five-line rhyming form, usually with humorous subject matter. Popularised in the nineteenth century by Edward Lear's <i>Book of Nonsense</i> . The rhyme pattern is usually AABBA. The first line of a limerick is typically: There once was a xx from xxx,	
kennings	Derived from Old English and Norse poetry, kennings use compound nouns to refer to a person or thing without using the actual name. Anglo-Saxons often used kennings to name their swords. A kenning is a type of list poem. Although kennings follow a list structure, they could be described as free verse in other respects because they rarely rhyme.	

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	<p>Haiku, tanka and renga all derive from Japanese poetry forms and are all based on syllabic line patterns. In their original form they were based on Japanese sound units which do not translate exactly to ‘syllables’ in English. There are no hard and fast rules for the structure of these forms written in English but the following conventions are widely applied:</p>	
haiku	<p>Three lines: syllable pattern 5, 7, 5. A personal but universal comment on nature and/or humankind’s place in the world. The poet aims to capture a single moment or thought and also aims to leave half the work for the reader to do.</p>	
tanka	<p>Five lines: syllable pattern 5, 7, 5, 7, 7. Typically a haiku with two additional lines. The first three lines may describe a state or situation and the last two provide more detail, or the poet’s comment.</p>	
renga	<p>Haiku-like verses linked together can be described as renga and are often written by more than one poet. Each is linked by two additional lines, each of seven syllables. The line/syllable pattern is:</p> <p>5, 7, 5</p> <p>7, 7</p> <p>5, 7, 5</p> <p>7, 7</p> <p>and so on.</p>	
ballads	<p>Ballads are narrative poems, usually of some length. Rhyme and musical rhythm patterns make them memorable for oral retelling. They often recount heroic deeds or legends. Ballads typically include a chorus between each verse or a refrain that repeats key lines.</p>	
question and answer poems	<p>Question and answer poems may not rhyme or maintain the same metre but they are often tightly structured as a series of questions, each followed by an answer.</p>	

Example Structured poems

rhyming couplet	question and answer poem	haiku
<p>I wonder why the sky is dark at night... Perhaps the moon and stars put out the light.</p>	<p>PUPPY IN THE HOUSE</p> <p>Who broke the window? It wasn't me. Wag, wag!</p> <p>Who chewed the rug? It wasn't me. Lick, lick!</p> <p>Who made a puddle? It wasn't me. Woof, woof!</p> <p>Who's the best puppy in the world? That would be ME! (Wag, lick, woof!)</p>	 <p>Light shines through a glass But not through me, and that's why I HAVE A SHADOW!</p>