

LYRIC POETRY :-

Lyric poetry is a formal type of poetry which expresses personal emotions or feelings, typically spoken in the first person. It is not equivalent to song lyrics, though they are often in the lyric mode.

Lyric poetry expresses personal emotions or thoughts of the speaker, just like the songs of today. Also, just like songs, lyric poems always have a musical quality, or a specific melody which makes it easy for you to sing along with. The term 'lyric poetry' actually comes from the ancient Greek word *lyre*, which refers to the instrument in that era that accompanied the reading of the lyric poem. Almost like the first version of a live concert.

Lyric poetry, for the most part, is short and written in first-person point of view. There is always some specific mood or emotion being expressed. Often that mood is about the extremes in life, mostly love or death or some other intense emotional experience. No matter the theme, though, all lyric poems are known for brevity, emotional intensity and musical quality. There are many types of lyric poems, each with their own format and purpose. Let's take a look at some.

THE SONNET

One type of lyric poem is the **sonnet**. Overall, sonnets have 14 lines usually written in iambic pentameter, which is five pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables. This overall structure of predetermined syllables and rhyme makes sonnets flow off your tongue in a similar way that a song on the radio does.

There are two types of sonnets: the Italian and the English, or Shakespearean. Both types follow a similar structure, with the main variation being a different rhyme scheme or the pattern of end rhyme. Here is an example of a Shakespearean sonnet focused on an intense love. See if you can notice the melody.

'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often in his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.'

Shakespearean Sonnet Basics: Iambic Pentameter and the English Sonnet Style

Shakespeare's sonnets are written predominantly in a meter called iambic pentameter, a rhyme scheme in which each sonnet line consists of ten syllables. The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs or iambic feet. An iamb is a metrical unit made up of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. An example of an iamb would be good BYE. A line of iambic pentameter flows like this:

baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM.

Here are some examples from the sonnets:

When I / do COUNT / the CLOCK / that TELLS / the TIME ([Sonnet 12](#))

When IN / dis GRACE / with FOR / tune AND / men's EYES
I ALL / a LONE / be WEEP / my OUT/ cast STATE ([Sonnet 29](#))

Shall I / com PARE/ thee TO / a SUM / mer's DAY?
Thou ART / more LOVE / ly AND / more TEM / per ATE ([Sonnet 18](#))

Shakespeare's plays are also written primarily in iambic pentameter, but the lines are unrhymed and not grouped into stanzas. Unrhymed iambic pentameter is called [blank verse](#). It should be noted that there are also many prose passages in Shakespeare's plays and some lines of [trochaic tetrameter](#), such as the [Witches' speeches in Macbeth](#).

SONNET STRUCTURE

There are fourteen lines in a Shakespearean sonnet. The first twelve lines are divided into three quatrains with four lines each. In the three quatrains the poet establishes a theme or problem and then resolves it in the final two lines, called the couplet. The rhyme scheme of the quatrains is abab cdcd efef. The couplet has the rhyme scheme gg. This sonnet structure is commonly called the English sonnet or the Shakespearean sonnet, to distinguish it from the Italian Petrarchan sonnet form which has two parts: a rhyming octave (abbaabba) and a rhyming sestet (cdcdcd). The Petrarchan sonnet style was extremely popular with Elizabethan sonneteers, much to Shakespeare's disdain (he mocks the conventional and excessive [Petrarchan style in Sonnet 130](#)).

Only three of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets do not conform to this structure: [Sonnet 99](#), which has 15 lines; [Sonnet 126](#), which has 12 lines; and [Sonnet 145](#), which is written in iambic tetrameter.

THE ELEGY

Another type of lyric poem is the **elegy**. The elegy originally had a strict structure dealing with meter alternating between six foot and five foot lines. Nowadays, elegies don't follow a specific format, but always have the same mood.

Usually, elegies commemorate the dead and are melancholy, mournful and contemplative. The structure may no longer exist, but this darker theme is always apparent in elegies. Here is the first stanza of Walt Whitman's famous elegy 'O Captain! My Captain!' Notice not only the somber mood and intense sadness but also the melodic flow of the words.

'O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack,
the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.
O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up- for you the flag is flung- for
you the bugle trills'

THE ODE

A third example of lyric poetry is the **ode**. Like the elegy, there is no strict structure or format for an ode. It is common for many odes to have refrains, or repeated lines or stanza, but that is not a requirement. Also, odes are often longer than other types of lyric poetry.

Odes maintain the dignified mood of lyric poetry, but there is one important difference: odes are often about positive topics, such as truth, love, art, freedom and justice. Here is an excerpt from Percy Shelley's poem 'Ode to the West Wind.' Notice the easy flow of the words and the positive topic.

'Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,