

Ode

Definition of Ode

An ode is a form of poetry such as [sonnet](#) or [elegy](#). Ode is a literary technique that is lyrical in nature, but not very lengthy. You have often read odes in which poets praise people, natural scenes, and abstract ideas. Ode is derived from a Greek word *aeidein*, which means to chant or sing. It is highly solemn and serious in its [tone](#) and [subject](#) matter, and usually is used with elaborate patterns of stanzas. However, the tone is often formal. A salient feature of ode is its uniform metrical feet, but poets generally do not strictly follow this rule though use highly elevated [theme](#).

Types of Ode

Odes are of three types, including (1) Pindar ode, (2) Horatian ode, and (3) irregular ode.

Pindar Ode

This ode was named after an ancient Greek poet, Pindar, who began writing choral poems that were meant to be sung at public events. It contains three triads; strophe, [antistrophe](#), and final [stanza](#) as epode, with irregular [rhyme](#) patterns and lengths of lines.

Horatian Ode

The name of this ode was taken from the Latin poet, Horace. Unlike heroic odes of Pindar, Horatian ode is informal, meditative and intimate. These odes dwelled upon interesting subject matters that were simple and were pleasing to the senses. Since Horatian odes are informal in tone, they are devoid of any strict rules.

Irregular Ode

This type of ode is without any formal [rhyme scheme](#), and structure such as the Pindaric ode. Hence, the poet has great freedom and flexibility to try any types of concepts and moods. William Wordsworth and [John Keats](#) were such poets who extensively wrote irregular odes, taking advantage of this form.

Function of Ode

Ode is a form of lyrical poetry, in which poets use a certain metrical pattern and rhyme scheme to express their noble and lofty sentiments in serious and sometimes satirical tone. Since the themes of odes are inspiring and lofty, they have universal appeal. Also, by using sublime and exceptional [style](#), poets endeavor to compose grand and elevated types of odes. Sometimes odes may be humorous, but they are always thoughtful,

intended to explore important themes and observations related to human relations, emotions and senses.

Examples of Odes in Literature

Example #1: *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (By William Wordsworth)

“There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of [a dream](#).
It is not now as it hath been of yore; —”

This is a perfect example of an English Pindaric ode. Just observe the use of different types of meters in each stanza, which have made it easier to read, and made flexible with simple rhyme scheme of ababac.

Example #2: *Ode to the Confederate Dead* (By Allen Tate)

“Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yield their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death ...”

This is an example of Horatian ode, which presents a consistent rhyme scheme. It has no division into triads like Pindar ode, but is less ceremonious, less formal, more tranquil, and better suited for reading. The purpose of using this type of ode is to give vent to pent-up feelings.

Example #3: *Ode to the West Wind* (By Percy Bysshe Shelley)

“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,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”

This presents an example of irregular ode, which employs neither three parts, nor four line stanzas like a Horatian ode. Nevertheless, each stanza of ode is distinct from the other stanzas in rhyme scheme, pattern and length.

Example #4: *The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode* (By Thomas Gray)

“A thousand rills their mazy progress take:
Now the rich stream of music winds along
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong ...
Now rolling down the steep amain,
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour:
The rocks and nodding groves rebellow to the roar.”

In the above mentioned ode, the [speaker](#) is addressing to poetry that is coming out among from different places to find its echoes in the nature. This is a good example of a true ode.

Example #5: *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (By John Keats)

“Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme ...
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter ...
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.”

This ode has a regular and tight structure. Except the final stanza, the first four lines in each stanza follow rhyme scheme of ABAB and the next lines follow CDE or CED. This is one of the most celebrated odes in English literature.

Example #6: *Ode to Spring* (By Thomas Gray)

“The untaught harmony of spring ...
Still is the toiling hand of Care:
The panting herds repose:
Yet hark, how thro’ the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!
Some lightly o’er the current skim,
Some show their gaily-gilded trim
Quick-glancing to the sun.”

This is another good example of an ode. The speaker is talking about the spring season, and praises its [beauty](#), expressing lofty and noble sentiments about it.