

Quatrain

The quatrain, or a four line stanza, is the most common in English versification, and is employed with various meters and rhyme schemes. Usually the quatrain is only a piece of a longer narrative poem or one stanza in an octave (eight lines). The Quatrain became a form on its own through its use by such poets as: W.B Yeats and Ogden Nash.

Structure

- Four lines
- Lines follow various rhyme schemes:
 - abab (alternating rhymes, commonly used in heroic quatrains)
 - abcb (commonly used in ballad stanzas)
 - aabb (a pair of rhyming couplets)
 - abba (envelope stanza)
 - aaba (Omar Khayyam stanza)
- Lines in a quatrain vary in length and rhythm; however, many poets use iambic pentameter (5 iambs – unstressed/stressed beat). This type of quatrain is commonly referred to as a heroic or elegiac stanza.
- Ballad stanzas, the most common of all English stanzaic forms, is written in lines of iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter, rhyming abcb or less commonly abab.

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum –
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My mind was going numb –

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain
Emily Dickson

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Thomas Gray

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see my stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Robert Frost

In Memoriam

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Who we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.

A. Tennyson

Cinquain

Cinquains are thought to be of French medieval origin; however, American poet Adelaide Crapsey is credited with its refinements as a form in the early 1900's.

Structure:

- Five lines
- Lines follow a strict pattern:

Two syllables
Four syllables
Six syllables
Eight syllables
Two syllables

- Twenty-two syllables in total
- Poem's tone varies according to subject – both are limitless.
- Enjambment is often used – especially between the last two lines.

The Ghost of His Hand

Shallow
Bruises blush blue
Hidden by my sweet smile
Bruises fade but their ghosts always
Linger

Nancy Bennett

November Nights

Listen...
With faint dry sound,
Like steps of passing ghosts,
The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

Adelaide Crapsey

Power
Can make people
Build pyramids, prisons
And roads, and can't make anyone
Forgive.

Anita L. Freeman

Triad

These be
Three silent wings
The falling snow...the hour
Before dawn...the mouth of one
Just dead.

Adelaide Crapsey

Shade Tree

The oak
In my backyard
Holds twisted rope and wood
And knows the name of every child
That swings.

Jeanne Cassler