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What are the 4 major types of poetry

What are the different types of poems? Let’s not get ahead of ourselves, first let’s consider this: “when we read poetry less as a form and more as a concept, we can see the poetic all around us.” Perhaps it’s helpful to think of poetry as an artistic medium rather than a structural form.I’ve found that focusing less on the intricacies of form, and more on the feeling that poetry evokes has helped me appreciate poetry more, whether it be blank verse, prose poetry, or rap that quote was taken from a TED-ed by Melissa Kovacs. I highly recommend you check out the video below.No matter who you are, you’re bound to have preconceptions about poetry – I know I did and, in many ways, still do. There’s a large swath of people who believe poetry is an elitist, self-congratulatory field – and that’s a well-warranted perspective; there certainly are a lot of stuck-up poets.But hey, maybe that’s what comes with four thousand years of history – perhaps one day film will be regarded in the same way. Without further ado, let’s jump into a poem definition.A poem is a piece of writing that relies on rhyme, rhythm and meter to evoke feeling, or to convey setting and story. There are dozens of different poetic forms, such as verse, haiku, sonnet, and ballad. Although poems aren’t defined by their forms, they are distinguished by them.Emphasis on MeterOften Involves RhymingMeant to Tell a Story or Evoke EmotionWe can trace poetry all the way back to the Ancient world, in Egypt, Greece, India, and Sumeria. Some of the most influential poems of all time come from this period, and they were epic. No, not epic as in the adjective “epic” but epic in the sense that they were epic poems. But what are epic poems?Epic PoemsEpic poems are poems of extraordinary length that usually follow a hero’s journey across a vast, and often mythological world.Examples of epic poems: The Epic of Gilgamesh (Sumeria), Beowulf (England), The Iliad (Greece), The Odyssey (Greece), The Mahābhārata (India), The Ramayana (India), and The Divine Comedy (Italy).For more on how The Epic of Gilgamesh laid the groundwork for Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey template, check out the video below:Nowadays, epic poems have gone out of style, but the core idea of what made them so great, lives on in literature, film, and video games.Epic poems weren’t the only types of poems that existed in the ancient world -- there were different kinds of poems as well, like those of the lyric and dramatic kind. During this period, China had its own different kinds of poems as well, which we refer to today as the Classic of Poetry.Lyric PoemsLyric poems are personal poems, usually written in the first person, and often accompanied by some sort of musical instrumentation. lambs and trochees are often used in lyrical poems. One could argue that Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter is poetic, although he used it mostly in his plays.Dramatic PoemsDramatic poems are poems that are meant to be spoken aloud. The subject matter of dramatic poems are almost always tragic.The Different Kinds of PoemsMiddle age of poetry brought rhythm The renaissance period brought about enormous change to the world of poetry. Playwrights like William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson, introduced a new poetic form to theater called blank verse. Blank verse is a non-rhyming poetic form that features a specific meter: often iambic pentameter.SonnetBut perhaps the most famous poetic form during this period was the sonnet; invented by Italian poet Giacomo da Lentini. But what is a sonnet? This next video explains everything you need to know: A sonnet is a 14-line poem that adheres to a loose structure and has a variable rhyme scheme. Here’s a sonnet example: Romeo and Juliet, by William ShakespeareTwo households, both alike in dignity,In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.From forth the fatal loins of these two foesA pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life;Whose misadventured piteous overthrowsDo with their death bury their parents’ strife.The fearful passage of their death-mark’d love,And the continuance of their parents’ rage,Which, but their children’s end, nought could remove,Is now the two hours’ traffic of our stage;The which if you with patient ears attend,What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. Although this example is taken from one of Shakespeare’s plays, other examples appear in the sonnets Shakespeare wrote outside of his work in the theater. Elsewhere in the world, new poetic forms emerged.HaikūIn 17th century Japan, the haiku was born, albeit under a different name (hokku). In many ways, haiku epitomizes what we talked about earlier -- poetry is meant to be a reflection of what surrounds us. But what is a haiku?A haiku is a three-line poem that uses a syllabic 5-7-5 structure. Here’s an example from Matsuo Basho, the man who many call the master of haiku: An old silent pond~A frog jumps into the pond, splash! Silence again. Nowadays, poetic forms are taught to kids in school. Some of the most popular poetic forms for beginners are acrostic poems and concrete poems. Both of these types of poems are used to activate the minds of the reader. Let’s take a look at a couple of examples:AcrosticAn acrostic is a poem that uses the first letter of each line to spell out a message, name, or title. Here’s an example of an acrostic poem, titled “An Acrostic” by Edgar Allan Poe: Elizabeth it is in vain you say“Love not” - thou sayest it in so sweet a way:In vain those words from thee or L. E. L.Zantippe’s talents had enforced so well:Ah! if that language from thy heart arise,Breathe it less gently forth - and veil thine eyes.Endymion, recollect, when Luna triedTo cure his love - was cured of all beside -His folly - pride - and passion - for he died. The first letter of each line spells out the name “Elizabeth” whom the poem is dedicated. Concrete poems are an especially creative form for young writers to practice. But what are concrete poems?Concrete PoemsConcrete poems are structured to make a specific shape. The image below is an example of a concrete poem, titled “Walt Whitman” by Edwin Honig.As you can see, Honig’s “Walt Whitman” is shaped as a pine tree. But the classroom wasn’t the only place where poetry has been taking new forms.During the 20th century, poetry was used as a tool for social resistance on the street. Writers like Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes used poetry to offer insight into the experiences of black Americans. By the 1920s, an artistic revolution was underway in urban centers, particularly in New York City’s Harlem neighborhood. This next video explores the importance of the Harlem Renaissance: Hughes’ social influence from jazz and blues music to give a lot of his poetry a unique rhythm. Although not directly, Hughes’ rhythm would go on to inspire Rudy Ray Moore, and subsequently the birth of rap music. Here’s an example of one of Hughes’ most famous poems, “I, Too.” I, too, sing America.I am the darker brother.They send me to eat in the kitchenWhen company comes,But I laugh,And eat well,And grow strong.Tomorrow,I’ll be at the tableWhen company comes.Nobody’ll dareSay to me,“Eat in the kitchen,”Then,Besides,They’ll see how beautiful I amAnd be ashamed—I, too, am America. In 2018, Kendrick Lamar won the Pulitzer Prize for Music, marking a huge step-forward for contemporary poetry. This next video explains how Lamar won one of the writing world’s most prestigious awards:Hip-hop is just one popular poetic form that’s used today – many of the forms we talked about earlier are still used by creative writers and academics. By tracing poetry’s evolution, we can begin to identify a trend that shows how poetry is perhaps the most iconic type of writing for reflecting our innate understanding of the world. We briefly talked about iambic pentameter in this article but there’s so much more to it than what we touched on here. In the next article, we break down everything you need to know about iambic pentameter, with examples from Shakespeare plays, poems, and rap songs. By the end, you’ll be ready to apply iambic pentameter in your own works, or recognize it in others’.Up Next: Iambic Pentameter – So, whether you want to try writing your own poems or just learn more about the art in general, we’ve put together a handy list of our faves to get you started. The haiku (or hokku) is an ancient form of Japanese poetry that has become very popular all over the world. Renowned for its small size, haikus consist of just three lines (tercet), the first and third lines have five syllables, whereas the second has seven. Haikus don’t have to rhyme and are usually written to evoke a particular mood or instance. So, you can have a lot of fun with them! You may have written or will find yourself writing your own haiku at some point in school, or you can get creative and try it at home, too. Free verse is a popular style of modern poetry, and as its name suggests there is a fair amount of freedom when it comes to writing a poem like this. Free verse can rhyme or not, it can have as many lines or stanzas as the poet wants, and it can be about anything you like! So, while free verse may sound simple enough, the lack of rules makes this form of poetry tricky to master! This very old form of poetry was made famous by none other than William Shakespeare, but the sonnet actually originated in 13th century Italy where it was perfected by the poet Petrarch. The word ‘sonnet’ is derived from the Italian word ‘sonnetto’ which means ‘little song’. Traditionally, sonnets are made up of 14 lines and usually deal with love. As a rule, Petrarchan (Italian) sonnets follow an ABBA ABBA CDE CDE rhyme scheme, whereas Shakespearean (English) sonnets are typically ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. But of course, rules are made to be broken! Like haikus, you’re likely to encounter acrostic poems at school. But that doesn’t mean they’re boring – in fact, far from it! This type of poetry spells out a name, word, phrase or message with the first letter of each line of the poem. It can rhyme or not, and typically the word spelled out, lays down the theme of the poem. Why not try it with the silliest word you can think of – it can be really fun! The villanelle is another very old form of poetry that came from France and has lots of rules. It is made up of 19 lines; five stanzas of three lines (tercet) each and a final stanza of four lines (quatrain). As you can see from the rhyme scheme, ABA ABA ABA ABA ABA, this type of poem only has two rhyming sounds. Plus, there is a lot of repetition throughout the villanelle. Line one will be repeated in lines six, 12 and 18; and line three will be repeated in lines nine, 15 and 19. So although this takes out the extra work of having to write 19 individual lines, the real challenge is to make meaning out of those repeated lines! Limericks are funny (and sometimes rude!) poems which were made popular by Edward Lear in the 19th century. They have a set rhyme scheme of AABBA, with lines one, two and five all being longer in length than lines three and four. The last line is often the punchline. Their sound is very distinctive, it’s likely you’ve heard or read one before! The ode is one of the oldest forms of poetry and believed to have come from ancient Greece. Yep – yonks ago! The word ‘ode’ is derived from the Greek word ‘aeidein’ which means ‘to sing or chant’, and these poems were originally performed with a musical instrument. An ode is typically written to praise a person, event or thing (you could write an ode to your pet or favourite food!) and they are usually quite short in length. An elegy doesn’t have rules like some of the other forms of poetry but it does have a set subject: death – eek! They are usually written about a loved one who has passed away, but can also be written about a group of people, too. Although they can sound sad, elegies often end on a hopeful note, hooray! The ballad is another old and traditional form of poetry that typically tells a dramatic or emotional story. They came from Europe in the late Middle Ages and were initially passed down from one generation to another, and often with music. Ballads do have a set form; they are typically four lines (quatrain) and have a rhyme scheme of ABAB or ABCB. However, this form is looser than others so can be modified to suit a writer’s (that’s you!) needs. Most modern pop songs you hear nowadays can be referred to as ballads! Stanza = a set amount of lines in poetry grouped together by their length, meter or rhyme scheme. Couplet = a two-line stanza. Tercet = a three-line stanza. Quatrain = a four-line stanza. Cinquain = a five-line stanza. Sestet = a six-line stanza. Meter = the pattern of stressed syllables (long-sounding) and unstressed syllables (short-sounding) in poetry. Rhyme scheme = the pattern of rhyme that comes at the end of each line or verse. Syllable = the single, unbroken sound of a spoken or written word.

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