

AP Literature: Poetic Forms & Genre

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Your Friend and Mine, the Sonnet

- 14 lines, iambic pentameter (easy to remember as 10 syllables per line)
- **English Sonnet(Shakespearean)**
 - Three four line **quatrains**, and one 2 line **couplet**
 - Typically, the couplet reverses, alters, or challenges the meaning of the preceding 12 lines in an ironic twist.
 - The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
- **Italian Sonnet (Petrarchan)**
 - One eight line **octet** and one 6 line sestet.
 - Typically, the octet poses a dilemma that is answered in the sestet.
 - The rhyme scheme is ABBACDDC CDECDE
- **Spenserian Sonnet**
 - a variant on the Shakespearean sonnet, with four quatrains with interlocked rhyme scheme.
 - ABAB BCBC CDCD EE

The Villanelle

- Nineteen lines, 5 three line stanzas followed by one four line stanza
- Usually tetrameter (4 beats) or pentameter (5 beats)
- Alternating end rhymes patterned aba, aba, aba, aba, abaa, although not all villanelles rhyme.
- Lines 1,6,12, and 18 are the same
- Lines 3, 9,15, and 19 are the same
- Usually nostalgic in tone.

Poetic Genres

- **Epic**: a long serious narrative poem concerning a heroic figure or group of heroes (Beowulf)
- **Lyric**: poems written in subjectively rich voice, often emotional. Sound quality is emphasized
- **Ode**: a formal lyric poem of exalted emotion celebrating someone or something
- **Elegy**: a poetic lament for the dead or missing
- **Prose Poem**: form of free verse that lacks the formal shape of poetry