

Definition of Poem

A poem is a collection of spoken or written words that expresses ideas or emotions in a powerfully vivid and imaginative [style](#). A poem is comprised of a particular rhythmic and metrical pattern. In fact, it is a literary technique that is different from [prose](#) or ordinary speech, as it is either in metrical pattern or in [free verse](#). Writers or poets express their emotions through this medium more easily, as they face difficulty when expressing through some other medium. It serves the purpose of a light to take the readers towards the right path. Also, sometimes it teaches them a [moral](#) lesson through sugar-coated language.

Types of Poem

- [Haiku](#) – A type of Japanese poem consisting of three unrhymed lines, with mostly five, seven, and five syllables in each line.
- [Free Verse](#) – Consists of non-rhyming lines, without any metrical pattern, but which follow a natural [rhythm](#).
- [Epic](#) – A form of lengthy poem, often written in [blank verse](#), in which poet shows a [protagonist](#) in action of historical significance, or a great mythic.
- [Ballad](#) – A type of [narrative poem](#) in which a story often talks about folk or legendary tales. It may take the form of a moral lesson or a song.
- [Sonnet](#) – It is a form of lyrical poem containing fourteen lines, with [iambic pentameter](#) and [tone](#) or [mood](#) changes after the eighth line.
- [Elegy](#) – A melancholic poem in which the poet laments the death of a [subject](#), though he gives consolation towards the end.
- [Epitaph](#) – A small poem used as an inscription on a tombstone.
- [Hymn](#) – This type of a poem praises spirituality or God's splendor.
- [Limerick](#) – This is a type of humorous poem with five anapestic lines in which the first, second, and fifth lines have three feet, and the third and fourth lines have two feet, with a strict [rhyme scheme](#) of aabba.
- [Villanelle](#) – A French styled poem with nineteen lines, composed of three-line [stanza](#), with five tercets and a final [quatrain](#). It uses [refrain](#) at the first and third lines of each stanza.

Examples of Poem in Literature

Example #1: *While you Decline to Cry* (By Ō no Yasumaro)

Haiku Poem

“While you decline to cry,
high on the mountainside
a single stalk of plume grass wilts.”

(Loose translation by Michael R. Burch)

This poem contains three lines, which is the typical structure of a haiku poem. It does not follow any formal [rhyme](#) scheme or proper rhythmical pattern.

Example #2: *The Song of Hiawatha* (By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

Epic Poem

“By the shore of Gitchie Gumee,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
At the doorway of his wigwam,
In the pleasant Summer morning,
Hiawatha stood and waited...”

These are a few lines from *The Song of Hiawatha*, a classic epic poem that presents an American Indian [legend](#) of a loving, brave, patriotic, and stoic [hero](#), but which bears resemblance to Greek myths of Homer. Longfellow tells of the sorrows and triumphs of the Indian tribes in detail in this lengthy poem. Therefore, this is a fine example of a modern epic, though other epics include *Paradise Lost* by [John Milton](#) and *Iliad* by Homer.

Example #3: *After the Sea-Ship* (By Walt Whitman)

Free Verse Poem

“After the Sea-Ship—after the whistling winds;
After the white-gray sails, taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves, hastening, lifting up their necks,

Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship:
Waves of the ocean, bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying..."

This poem neither has rhyming lines, nor does it adhere to a particular metrical plan. Hence, it is free of artificial expression. It has rhythm and a variety of [rhetorical devices](#) used for sounds, such as [assonance](#) and [consonance](#).

Example #4: *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (By John Keats)

Ballad

"O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
[Alone](#) and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing ...

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing."

This poem presents a perfect example of a ballad—a folk-style poem that typically narrates a love story. The language of this poem is simple. It contains twelve stanzas, with four quatrains and a rhyme scheme of abcb.

Function of Poem

The main function of a poem is to convey an idea or emotion in beautiful language. It paints a picture of what the poet feels about a thing, person, idea, concept, or even an [object](#). Poets grab the attention of the [audience](#) through the use of vivid [imagery](#), emotional shades, [figurative language](#), and other rhetorical devices. However, the supreme function of a poem is to transform imagery and words into verse form, to touch the hearts and minds of the readers. They can easily arouse the sentiments of their readers through versification. In addition, poets evoke imaginative awareness about things by using a specific [diction](#), sound, and rhythm.

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