

Poetic Forms and Genres

Lyric: Any fairly short, non-narrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought, feeling, observation, or memory. It may be organized in a variety of ways.

* Poetry: Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life"; T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; M. Atwood's "It's Dangerous to Read Newspapers"

** Modern music: Pearl Jam's "Alive"

Apostrophe: A direct address either to an absent person or to an abstract or inanimate entity. The effects can be either highly formal or of a sudden emotional impulse.

* Poetry: A. Ginsberg's "A Supermarket in California"

** Modern music: The Grateful Dead's "Box of Rain"

*** Student model: Denise Dawn Hubert's "The Dirty Window"

Confessional: "emphasizes the intimate, and sometimes unflattering, information about details of the poet's personal life, such as in poems about mental illness, sexuality, and despondence."

* Poetry: Sylvia Plath's "Daddy"

** Modern music: Eminem, basically everything

Ode: A lyric poem, serious in subject, elevated in style, and elaborate in stanzaic structure. Odes are written to praise or glorify someone or something. The stanzaic structure varies in line length and rhyme scheme. They often attempt to solve a private or human problem.

* Poetry: John Keats' "Ode to Melancholy"

** Modern music: Beastie Boys' "Ode to..."

Elegy: Is a lament or consolation for the death of a particular person, lost love, bygone event or idea. It is also used for somber meditations on serious topics. Elegiac meter alternates hexameter and pentameter lines.

* Poetry: W.B. Yeats' "Easter 1916"; Wallace Stevens' "A Postcard from the Volcano"

** Modern music: Alan Jackson's "Sissy's Song"; NAS' "Dance"

Blank Verse: Consists of lines of iambic pentameter which are unrhymed; this is the closest to natural speech patterns and the most frequently used.

* Poetry: W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming"; W. H. Auden's "The Watershed"

** Modern music: Bruce Springsteen's "Streets of Philadelphia"

Free Verse: Short lines instead of having the continuity of prose, has a more controlled rhythm than ordinary prose; the concentration is on emotion, words, pace, and on bucking conventional patterns of poetry such as rhyme scheme and line structure.

* Poetry: Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "From Pictures of the Gone World"

** Modern music: Pearl Jam's "Jeremy"

*** Student model: Brent Chisolm's "Six Rounds Slapped to my Side"

Ballad: A long narrative poem, ie tells a story.

Folk Ballad: a song designed to be transmitted orally which tells a story. The story, which often begins abruptly and moves rapidly, is told as an impersonal narrative, primarily through dialogue and action. The theme is often tragic and the events sensational (though there are also a number of comic ballads). A ballad typically deals with a single episode, with minimal imagery or background information, and little attempt to develop character. It is devoid of the author's personal attitudes or feelings. Many ballads also have refrains or use the technique of incremental repetition, a rhetorical device in which the same phrase is repeated with progressive variations over the course of the poem. It is usually formatted in quatrain stanzas (4 lines each) in alternating 4 and 3 stress iambic lines. The rhyme scheme is usually abcb, defe, or the 2nd and 4th lines rhyme, though you can have 1st and 3rd lines rhyme. A Literary Ballad is a deliberate imitation of a folk ballad, though meant to be written, and takes itself more seriously as a form.

- * Poetry: Edgar Allen Poe's "Bridal Ballad"; James Joyce's "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly"
- ** Modern music: Simon & Garfunkel "The Boxer"; Bon Jovi "Livin' on a Prayer"
- *** Student model: Denise Dawn Hubert "Hopes in a Crystal Jar"

Broadside ballad: is modeled on familiar folk ballads, but was essentially an early form of tabloid journalism—rhymed accounts of sensational news events. Like the folk ballad, the broadside ballad made use of simple language and rough rhyme, though the verse in the broadside ballad was likely to be mere non-sense. Among the topics were love, religion, drinking-songs, legends, and early journalism, which included disasters and political events.

*Poetry: John Skelton "A Ballade of the Scottyshe King" (1513); Jonathan Swift "Clever Tom Clinch Going to Be Hanged" (1726); Charles Dickens "The Fine Old English Gentleman" (1841); Rudyard Kipling "Miss Bailey's Ghost" and "Danny Deever"

** Modern music: "The Streets of Laredo" by many artists including Johnny Cash, Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, and Willie Nelson; "Jesse James" by artists such as Pete Seeger, Bruce Springsteen, and The Pogues; Don Maclean "American Pie"