



Form: Closed

Closed Form = Sometimes called a “fixed form” because the poem follows a set of rules that create some sort of pattern, such as a sonnet, or a haiku, or villanelle. Poems in closed form tend to look regular and symmetrical.

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Line = a line is the unit of attention in a poem.

Lines are parts of sentences, but when a sentence is divided into lines, a poem manipulates the sense and the rhythm in subtle ways.

Verse = any composition in lines of more or less regular rhythm. Contrast to prose, which relies solely upon sentence structure as its basic unit of thought.

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Stanza = a recurring pattern of two or more lines of verse. The poetic equivalent to a paragraph in prose. A basic organizational principle in many poems.

- *Couplet* = a two-line stanza.
- *Tercet* = a three-line stanza.
- *Quatrain* = a four-line stanza.

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Sonnet = a traditional and widely-used verse form, especially popular for love poetry. The **sonnet** is a fixed form of 14 lines, traditionally written in iambic pentameter. The Italian form is usually made up of an *octave* (the first 8 lines) and a *sestet* (6 lines). The English form is a variation, usually made up of three *quatrains* and a concluding *couplet*. The turning point, or *volta*, in a sonnet signals a shift in tone as the poem resolves.

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- Specimen: “Sonnet 116” by William Shakespeare
- Specimen: “What lips my lips have kissed” by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- Specimen: “Unholy Sonnet: After the Praying” by Mark Jarman

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Checklist: Reading a Sonnet

- Read the poem carefully.
- What is the mood of its opening lines?
- Keep reading until you feel the mood shift. Where does that shift take place?
- What is the tone after the sonnet's turn away from its opening direction?
- How does the poem resolve (i.e., how does it reconcile its contrasts)?

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Journal Topic: Compare three sonnets: Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116," Millay's "What lips my lips have kissed," and Addonizio's "First Poem for You." How does each poet conceive of love? How does the sonnet form help each poet (renaissance, modern, and post-modern) express their conception of love?

- Shakespeare:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45106/sonnet-116-let-me-not-to-the-marriage-of-true-minds>
- Millay:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46557/what-lips-my-lips-have-kissed-and-where-and-why>
- Addonizio:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47526/first-poem-for-you>