

Scribe

How to Write Form Poems

If you want to start with the form and then add your own style, go for it!

Haiku

Haiku do not rhyme, but their three lines always follow a pattern: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. This haiku is by Basho.

*An old silent pond. . .
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.*

Sonnets

Each of the 14 lines in a sonnet has 10 syllables. In the first three parts, called “stanzas,” the lines rhyme in a-b-a-b or a-b-b-a patterns. The last two lines rhyme with each other.

Number 43 (from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1850)

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.*

Limericks

Limericks are short, rhyming poems that are usually funny. They are five lines long. The first, second, and fifth lines usually rhyme with each other, and then the third and fourth lines also rhyme (a-a-b-b-a). Most limericks introduce a character in the first line.

“There was an Old Man with a Beard,” by Edward Lear

*There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, “It is just as I feared!—
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!”*

Read other writers’ work for inspiration if you get stuck. That’s called “writer’s block,” and it happens to everyone!