

NOTES ON SONNET FORM

SONNET

A *fourteen-line* poem in *iambic pentameter* the follows a strict *rhyme scheme*.

IAMBIC PENTAMETER

pentameter: five feet

foot: one stressed syllable plus one or more unstressed syllables in a repeating pattern

iambic: an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: $\sim \text{ '}$

IAMBIC WORDS

$\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$
belief arise defend prepare conceive

IAMBIC PENTAMETER LINES

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Shakespeare, Sonnet 18

$\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$
Shall I | compare | thee to | a sum | mer's day

When I consider how my light is spent. John Milton

$\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$ $\sim \text{ '}$
When I | consid | er how | my light | is spent

ITALIAN SONNET RHYME SCHEME

Octave 8 lines with 2 rhymes { A / B }	A	A	<i>octave</i> usually follows one of two set patterns. <i>sestet</i> may follow several different patterns. <i>turn</i> (or volta) occurs on the 9th line
	B	B	
	B	A	
	A	B	
	A	A	
	B	B	
	B	A	
	A	B	
Sestet 6 lines with 2 (or 3) rhymes { c / d / e }	c	c	c
	d	d	d
	e	c	d
	c	d	c
	d	c	e
	e	d	e

Dear, cherish this and with it my soul's will,	A
Nor for it ran away do it abuse.	B
Alas, it left poor me your breast to choose	B
As the blest shrine where it would harbor still.	A
Then favor show and not unkindly kill	A
The heart which fled to you, but do excuse	B
That which for better did the worse refuse,	B
And pleased I'll be, though heartless my life spill.	A
But if you will be kind and just indeed,	c
Send me your heart, which in mine's place shall feed	c
On faithful love to your devotion bound.	d
There shall it see the sacrifices made	e
Of pure and spotless love, which shall not fade	e
While soul and body are together found.	d

ENGLISH SONNET RHYME SCHEME

	A
	B
	A
	B
	C
	D
Three Quatrains	C
4 lines with 2 alternating rhymes	D
	C
	D
	E
	F
	E
	F
Closing Couplet	g
a pair of rhyming lines	g

Dear, why should you command me to my rest	A
When now the night doth summon all to sleep?	B
Methinks this time becometh lovers best;	A
Night was ordained together friends to keep.	B
How happy are all other living things	C
Which, though the day disjoin by several flight,	D
The quiet evening yet together brings,	C
And each returns unto his love at night.	D
O thou, that art so courteous else to all,	E
Why shouldst thou, Night, abuse me only thus,	F
That every creature to his kind doth call	E
And yet 'tis thou dost only sever us.	F
Well could I wish it would be ever day	g
If when night comes you bid me go away.	g