

Literary Terms Related to Poetry (Section-1)

[BA 1st Year, Paper-II]

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1. **Stanza:** A grouping of the lines in a poem into a recurring pattern determined by the number of lines, the metre of the lines and the rhyme scheme. For example, the stanza called 'rhyme royal' as frequently used by Chaucer has seven lines of iambic pentameter rhyming ababbcc.

2. **Couplet:** A pair of rhyming lines. The 13th and 14th lines in a Shakespearean sonnet form a couplet:

“O none; unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.”

3. **Octosyllabic Couplet:** A pair of rhyming lines of eight syllables each, usually consisting of four iambic feet. In Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*, the following lines form an octosyllabic couplet:

“The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there brace.”

4. **Heroic Couplet:** A pair of rhyming iambic pentameter lines. This stanza pattern was very favourite with the neo-classical poets. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, for example, uses this pattern:

“This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,

And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.” (*Canto 1*)

5. **Tercet:** A stanza of three lines usually with a single rhyme. In Richard Crawshaw’s *Wishes to His Supposed Mistress*, the tercet is used:

“Who e’er she be
That not impossible she
That shall command my heart and me;”

6. **Quatrain:** The stanza of four lines with or without rhyme. In Grey’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, this stanza form is used:

“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o’er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.”

7. **Terza rima:** A form of verse composed of interlinked tercets. The word at the end of the middle line of each stanza rhymes with the words at the end of the first and the third lines of the next stanza, so that the rhyme scheme becomes thus: aba bcb cdc ded... A poem with the Terza Rima ends with a couplet rhyming with the middle line of the previous stanza. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Shelly’s *Ode to the West Wind* are greatest examples :

“Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (*Ode to the West Wind*)

8. **Ottava rima:** Meaning 'eighth rhyme', it is stanza of eight lines of iambic pentameter rhyming abababcc. This pattern was brought from Italy by Thomas Wyatt. Its greatest example is Byron's *Don Juan*. Yeats also used it in *Sailing to Byzantium* and *Among School Children*.
9. **Spenserian stanza:** A stanza pattern created by Spenser, consisting of nine iambic lines and rhyming ababbcbcc. The first eight lines are in pentameter and the last line is an iambic hexameter of Alexandrine. In *The Faerie Queene*, the Spenserian stanza, with its length and unifying effect, gives the dignity of tone with the Alexandrine adding to the dignity. Other poems of this stanza pattern are Thomson's *A Castle of Indolence*, Shelly's *Adonais*, Keats' *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Tennyson's *The Lotus Eaters* and Byron's *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*.
10. **Blank Verse:** Poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines. Though it is called so, it is not metrically blank; it is blank only in the sense that its lines do not rhyme. In 'Free Verse', on the other hand, there is no regular beat of meter and, instead, there is the natural speech rhythm. Blank verse is suitable for poetic drama and other long rhythmic flexibility. Example is Milton's *Paradise Lost*.