When analyzing poetry, you may encounter different Poetic Forms. The term “Poetic Forms” refers to the overall structure of a poem. Some forms have a very rigid structure, requiring a specific rhyme scheme, meter, and number of stanzas. Other poetic forms are defined by the themes they explore. Knowing a poem’s form will help you follow its overall structure and understand it better!

### Types of Poetic Forms

Below is a list of common poetic forms:

- **Ballad**: a narrative song that is commonly constructed with rhyming quatrain stanzas  
  *Examples:*  
  “La Belle Dame sans Merci” by John Keats  
  “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- **Blank Verse**: a poem that follows a specific meter but does not rhyme  
  *Examples:*  
  “Paradise Lost” by John Milton  
  “Aurora Leigh” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

- **Elegy**: a poem that reflects upon the themes of death and mourning  
  *Examples:*  
  “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” by Emily Dickinson  
  “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” by W.H. Auden

- **Epic**: a lengthy narrative work that describes heroic journeys and extraordinary feats by historic or mythical figures  
  *Examples:*  
  “The Odyssey” by Homer  
  “The Divine Comedy” by Dante Alighieri

- **Free Verse**: a poem with no specific form, meter, or rhyme scheme  
  *Examples:*  
  “Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden  
  “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot

- **Haiku**: a Japanese poetic form that commonly focuses on the theme of nature, containing three lines and 17 syllables divided into a five/seven/five syllable count  
  *Example:*  
  “An old silent pond…  
  A frog jumps into the pond,  
  splash! Silence again.”  
  by Matsuo Bashō
• **Limerick**: a short, comical poem that contains only five lines with an AABBA rhyme scheme
  Example: “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!’”
  from *A Book of Nonsense* by Edward Lear

• **Lyric Poetry**: a broad category of poetry including song-like works that express emotions
  Examples: “If I Could Tell You” by W. H. Auden
             “Sonnet 18” by William Shakespeare

• **Narrative Poetry**: poems that tell a story
  Examples: “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe
             “The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Alfred Tennyson

• **Ode**: a poem that addresses a person, object, or event
  Example: “Ode to the West Wind” by Percy Bysshe Shelley
             “Ode to Autumn” by John Keats

• **Pastoral Poetry**: a category of poetry that focuses on the natural world, rural life, and landscapes
  Examples: “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” by Christopher Marlow
             “Country Summer” by Leonie Adams

• **Rhymed Poetry**: poems that contain a specific rhyme scheme
  Examples: “Sympathy” by Paul Laurence Dunbar
             “Midstairs” by Virginia Hamilton Adair

• **Soliloquy**: a monologue in which a speaker expresses his/her inner thoughts
  Examples: “Soliloquy of a Turkey” by Paul Laurence Dunbar
             “To Be or Not to Be” from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

• **Sonnet**: a strictly structured 14-line poem traditionally written in iambic pentameter and containing one of several rhyme schemes
  Examples: “Death Be Not Proud” by John Donne
             “Sonnet 29” by William Shakespeare

• **Villanelle**: a 19-line poem containing five three-line stanzas (“tercets”) and a final four-line stanza (“quatrain”), as well as two repeating rhymes and two refrains
  Examples: “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” by Dylan Thomas
             “Villanelle of Spring Bells” by Keith Douglas