Sonnet

Definition of Sonnet

The word *sonnet* is derived from the Italian word "sonetto," which means a "little song" or small [lyric](). In poetry, a sonnet has 14 lines, and is written in iambic [pentameter](). Each line has 10 syllables. It has a specific [rhyme]() scheme, and a *volta*, or a specific turn.

Generally, sonnets are divided into different groups based on the [rhyme scheme]() they follow. The rhymes of a sonnet are arranged according to a certain rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme in English is usually abab–cdcd–efef–gg, and in Italian abba–abba–cde–cde.

Types of Sonnet

Sonnets can be categorized into six major types:

> Italian Sonnet
> Shakespearean Sonnet
> Spenserian Sonnet
> Miltonic Sonnet
> Terza Rima Sonnet
> Curtal Sonnet

Examples of Sonnet in Literature

Let us take a look at the examples of sonnets in literature, based on the various [categories]():

Example #1: *Visions* (By Francesco Petrarch)

Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet

Italian or Petrarchan sonnet was introduced by 14th century Italian poet Francesco Petrarch.

"Being one day at my window all alone,
So manie strange things happened me to see,
As much as it grieveth me to thinke thereon.
At my right hand a hynde appear'd to mee,
So faire as mote the greatest god delite;
Two eager dogs did her pursue in chace.
Of which the one was blacke, the other white:
With deadly force so in their cruell race
They pincht the haunches of that gentle beast,
That at the last, and in short time, I spide,
Under a rocke, where she alas, opprest,
Fell to the ground, and there untimely dide.
Cruell death vanquishing so noble beautie
Oft makes me wayle so hard a desire."

The rhyme scheme of a Petrarchan sonnet features the first eight lines, called an octet, which rhymes as abba–abba–cdc–dcd. The remaining six lines are called a sestet, and might have a range of rhyme schemes.

Example #2: *Sonnet 1* (By William Shakespeare)

Shakespearean Sonnet

A Shakespearean sonnet is generally written in iambic pentameter, in which there are 10 syllables in each line. The rhythm of the lines must be as below:

"From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die.
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,

And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee..."

The rhyme scheme of the Shakespearian sonnet is abab–cdcd–efef–gg, which is difficult to follow. Hence, only Shakespeare is known to have done it.

Example #3: *Amoretti* (By Edmund Spenser)

Spenserian Sonnet

Sir Edmund Spenser was the first poet who modified the Petrarch's form, and introduced a new rhyme scheme as follows:

"What guile is this, that those her golden tresses
She doth attire under a net of gold;
And with sly skill so cunningly them dresses,
That which is gold or hair, may scarce be told?
Is it that men's frail eyes, which gaze too bold,
She may entangle in that golden snare;
And being caught may craftily enfold
Their weaker hearts, which are not yet well aware?
Take heed therefore, mine eyes, how ye do stare
Henceforth too rashly on that guileful net,
In which if ever ye entrapped are,
Out of her bands ye by no means shall get.
Folly it were for any being free,
To covet fetters, though they golden be."

The rhyme scheme in this sonnet is abab–bcbc–cdcd–ee, which is specific to Spenser, and such types of sonnets are called Spenserian sonnets.

Function of Sonnet

The sonnet has become popular among different poets because it has a great adaptability to different purposes and requirements. Rhythms are strictly followed. It could be a perfect poetic style for elaboration or

pentameter. In fact, it gives an ideal [setting](#) for a poet to explore strong emotions. Due to its short length, it is easy to manage for both the writer and the reader.