

# Lyric

## Definition of Lyric

Lyric is a collection of verses and choruses, making up a complete song, or a short and non-[narrative](#) poem. A lyric uses a single [speaker](#), who expresses personal emotions or thoughts. Lyrical poems, which are often popular for their musical quality and [rhythm](#), are pleasing to the ear, and are easily put to music.

The term *lyric* originates from the Greek word “*lyre*,” which is an instrument used by the Grecians to play when reading a poem. Lyrical poets demonstrate specific moods and emotions through words. Such moods express a range of emotions, from extreme to nebulous, about life, love, death, or other experiences of life. Read on to learn more about *lyric* in literature.

## Types of Lyric

There are several types of lyric used in poems such as given below:

### [Elegy](#)

An elegy is a mournful, sad, or melancholic poem or a song that expresses sorrow for someone who has been lost, or died. Originally, it followed a structure using a [meter](#) alternating six foot and five foot lines. However, modern elegies do not follow such a pattern, though the mood of the poem remains the same.

### Ode

An ode is a lyric poem that expresses intense feelings, such as love, respect, or praise for someone or something. Like an elegy, an ode does not follow any strict format or structure, though it uses refrains or repeated lines. It is usually longer than other lyrical forms, and focuses on positive moods of life.

## Sonnet

A sonnet uses fourteen lines, and follows iambic [pentameter](#) with five pairs of accented and unaccented syllables. The structure of a sonnet, with predetermined syllables and [rhyme](#) scheme, makes it flow off the tongues of readers in way similar way to a on song on the radio.

### Dramatic [Monologue](#)

A dramatic monologue has theatrical quality, which means that the poem portrays a solitary speaker communing with the [audience](#), without any [dialogue](#) coming from other characters. Usually, the speaker talks to a specific person in the poem.

### Occasional Poetry

Poets write *occasional* poetry for specific *occasions* such as weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, victories, and dedications, such as John Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis," and Edmund Spencer's "Epithalamion."

## Examples of Lyric in Literature

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### Example #1: *Italian Sonnet* (by James DeFord)

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"Turn back the heart you've turned away  
Give back your kissing breath  
Leave not my love as you have left  
The broken hearts of yesterday  
But wait, be still, don't lose this way...  
Accept my love, live for today."

This is an example of a sonnet, using fourteen lines with a metrical pattern of [iambic pentameter](#). The poem is about feelings of love for a beloved. It tells how it is worth staying with one another instead of leaving.

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### Example #2: *Ode to the West Wind* (by Percy Bysshe Shelley)

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“Scatter, as from an unextinguish’d hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawaken’d earth  
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”

This excerpt from an ode demonstrates lyric. This poem has fourteen lines, and is written in iambic pentameter. Each [stanza](#) is divided into four tercets followed by a [couplet](#). The [rhyme scheme](#) form is terza rima. The mood has a positive lyrical quality.

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### **Example #3: *My Last Duchess* (by Robert Browning)**

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“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands...  
“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,”

This poem is a dramatic monologue in which the Duke shows a portrait of his former wife to the emissary through his [point of view](#). In so doing, he reveals his position, his jealous temperament, and excessive pride. This monologue also has a lyrical quality found in its rhyme scheme.

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### **Example #4: *O Captain! My Captain* (by Walt Whitman)**

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“O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather’d every rack,  
the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
But O heart! heart! heart!”

This is the first stanza of Whitman’s famous elegy. Notice its mood, which is somber, and filled with intense sadness. Still, the words are giving melodic flow due to lyrical quality.

A lyrical poet addresses his audience directly by portraying their state of mind or emotions. That is why a lyrical poem expresses personal emotions of the poet. The themes of lyrical poems are also emotional and lofty, enabling the readers to look into the life of things deeply. That is why such poems have universal appeal, because readers can relate their feelings with the poem.