

Couplet

Definition of Couplet

A couplet is a literary device that can be defined as having two successive rhyming lines in a [verse](#), and has the same [meter](#) to form a complete thought. It is marked by a usual [rhythm](#), [rhyme](#) scheme, and incorporation of specific utterances.

It could be an independent poem, and might be a part of other poems, such as sonnets in Shakespearean poetry. If a couplet has the ability to stand apart from the rest of the poem, it is independent, and hence it is called a “closed couplet.” A couplet that cannot render a proper meaning alone is called an “open couplet.”

One of the commonly used couplet examples are these two lines from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

“The time is out of joint, O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!”

Types of Couplets

- Short Couplet
- Split Couplet
- Heroic Couplet (Closed and Open Couplets)
- Shakespearean Couplet
- Alexandrine Couplet
- Qasida
- Chinese Couplet

Examples of Couplet in Literature

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

“Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest
Now is the time that face should form another;
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother,
For where is she so fair whose unear’d womb...
But if thou live, remember’d not to be,
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.”

This is one of the Shakespearean sonnets that contains 14 lines; a couplet at the end of the poem usually rhymes, and concludes the poem. These lines generally give commentary on the [theme](#).

Example #2: *One Happy Moment* (By John Dryden)

“O, no, poor suff’ring Heart, no Change endeavour,
Choose to sustain the smart, rather than leave her;
My ravish’d eyes behold such charms about her,
I can die with her, but not live without her:
One tender Sigh of hers to see me languish,
Will more than pay the price of my past anguish...”

This excerpt is an example of closed heroic couplets. The lines are following an iamb [pentameter](#) pattern. All the couplets are forming complete separate thoughts and ideas, and the [rhyme scheme](#) is perfect.

Example #3: *Hero and Leander* (By Christopher Marlowe)

“At Sestos Hero dwelt; Hero the fair,
Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,
And offered as a dower his burning throne,
Where she should sit for men to gaze upon.
The outside of her garments were of lawn,
The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn...”

This is another very good example of open heroic couplets, where the end

the next lines. Or in poetic terms, it can be said that there is no [caesura](#).

Example #4: *An Essay on Criticism* (By Alexander Pope)

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts...”

This excerpt is a good example of closed heroic couplets. Here, all the couplets make complete sense – meaning they do not carry their sense into the following lines. Moreover, these couplets also rhyme.

Example #5: *The Canterbury Tales* (By Geoffrey Chaucer)

“Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breath
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne...”

This excerpt is an example of open heroic couplets that have [iambic pentameter](#) pattern. All the lines rhyme, they do not give independent meanings in a single line, and the sense is carried to subsequent lines.

Function of Couplet

The rhyming couplets are usually used in poetry in order to make a poem interesting and rhythmic. They help create a rhyming effect in a poem. In literature, Chaucer, Dryden, Pope and Shakespeare have been famous for using rhyming heroic couplets. In Arabic and Chinese literature, rhyming

