Sestina
Poetry Unit
Definition

- a structured (fixed/closed verse) 39 line poem
  - consisting of six stanzas of six lines each
  - followed by an *envoi* of three lines
    - a short stanza at the end of a poem used either to address an imagined or actual person or to comment on the preceding body of the poem.
  - the words that end each line of the first stanza are used as line endings in each of the following stanzas, rotated in a set pattern
The line ending words of the second stanza appear in the order 615243. The lines of the third stanza end 364125, the fourth 532614, the fifth 451362, and finally 246531. These six ending words then appear in a closing set (envoi) of three lines (a tercet) with the first line usually containing 6 and 2, its second 1 and 4, and its third 5 and 3, but other versions exist. The pattern of the line-ending words in a sestina are represented both numerically and alphabetically in the following diagram:

**Sestina Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza 1</th>
<th>Stanza 2</th>
<th>Stanza 3</th>
<th>Stanza 4</th>
<th>Stanza 5</th>
<th>Stanza 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A</td>
<td>6 F</td>
<td>3 C</td>
<td>5 E</td>
<td>4 D</td>
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<td>5 E</td>
<td>4 D</td>
<td>2 B</td>
<td>1 A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here in this bleak city of Rochester,
Where there are twenty-seven words for "snow,
Not all of them polite, the wayward mind
Basks in some Yucatan of its own making,
Some coppery, sleek lagoon, or cinnamon island
Alive with lemon tints and burnished natives,

And O that we were there. But here the natives
Of this grey, sunless city of Rochester
Have sown whole mines of salt about their land
(Bare ruined Carthage that it is) while snow
Comes down as if The Flood were in the making.
Yet on that ocean Marvell called the mind

An ark sets forth which is itself the mind,
Bound for some pungent green, some shore whose natives
Blend coriander, cayenne, mint in making
Roasts that would gladden the Earl of Rochester
With sinfulness, and melt a polar snow.
It might be well to remember that an island

Was blessed heaven once, more than an island,
The grand, utopian dream of a noble mind.
In that kind climate the mere thought of snow
Was but a wedding cake; the youthful natives,
Unable to conceive of Rochester,
Made love, and were acrobatic in the making.

Dream as we may, there is far more to making
Do than some wistful reverie of an island,
Especially now when hope lies with the Rochester Gas and Electric Co., which doesn't mind
Such profitable weather, while the natives Sink, like Pompeians, under a world of snow.

The one thing indisputable here is snow,
The single verity of heaven's making,
Deeply indifferent to the dreams of the natives,
And the torn hoarding-posters of some island.
Under our igloo skies the frozen mind
Holds to one truth: it is grey, and called Rochester.

No island fantasy survives Rochester,
Where to the natives destiny is snow
That is neither to our mind nor of our making.
Sestina – Importance of Form

- How would the strict form of the sestina impact the meaning and effect of the poem?
Villanelle
Poetry Unit
**Definition**

- **What Is a Villanelle?** A villanelle is a nineteen-line poem divided into five tercets (three-line stanzas) and a final quatrain. Each tercet has the rhyme scheme *aba*. The quatrain has the rhyme scheme *abaa*.

- **Tercets**
  - *aba*
  - *aba*
  - *aba*
  - *aba*
  - *aba*

- **Quatrain**
  - *abaa*
Repetition

- The rhyme scheme isn’t the only strict rule of the villanelle. This form also uses a distinct pattern of repetition.
- Lines 1 and 3 of the first stanza are used as refrains throughout the rest of the poem.
- Line 1 is repeated as lines 6, 12, and 18.
- Line 3 is repeated as lines 9, 15, and 19.
- The two lines used as refrains (lines 1 and 3) are paired as the final couplet.
The House on the Hill” by Edwin Arlington Robinson

They are all gone away,
The House is shut and still,
There is nothing more to say.

Through broken walls and gray
The winds blow bleak and shrill:
They are all gone away.

Nor is there one to-day
To speak them good or ill:
There is nothing more to say.

Why is it then we stray
Around the sunken sill?
They are all gone away,

And our poor fancy-play
For them is wasted skill:
There is nothing more to say.

There is ruin and decay
In the House on the Hill:
They are all gone away,
There is nothing more to say.
Villanelle—Importance of Form

- How would the strict form of the villanelle impact the meaning and effect of the poem?
Ode

- "Ode" comes from the Greek aeidein, meaning to sing or chant, and belongs to the long and varied tradition of lyric poetry.
- Originally accompanied by music and dance, and later reserved by the Romantic poets to convey their strongest sentiments, the ode can be generalized as a formal address to an event, a person, or a thing not present, praising it.
- There are three typical types of odes: the Pindaric, Horatian, and Irregular.
The Pindaric is named for the ancient Greek poet Pindar, who is credited with inventing the ode. Pindaric odes were performed with a chorus and dancers, and often composed to celebrate athletic victories, other events, gods, or other individuals. They contain a formal opening, or strophe, of complex metrical structure, followed by an antistrophe, which mirrors the opening, and an epode, the final closing section of a different length and composed with a different metrical structure. These 3 parts are often called: The Turn, The Counter-Turn, The Stand. EXAMPLE: Ben Johnson, “To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of the noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison”
Ben Johnson, “To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of the noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison”

THE TURN
Brave infant of Saguntum, clear
Thy coming forth in that great year,
When the prodigious Hannibal did crown
His rage with razing your immortal town.
Thou looking then about,
Ere thou wert half got out,
Wise child, didst hastily return,
And mad'st thy mother's womb thine urn.
How summ'd a circle didst thou leave mankind
Of deepest lore, could we the centre find!

THE COUNTER-TURN
Did wiser nature draw thee back,
From out the horror of that sack;
Where shame, faith, honour, and regard of right,
Lay trampled on? The deeds of death and night
Urg'd, hurried forth, and hurl'd
Upon th' affrighted world;
Sword, fire and famine with fell fury met,
And all on utmost ruin set:
As, could they but life's miseries foresee,
No doubt all infants would return like thee.

THE STAND
For what is life, if measur'd by the space,
Not by the act?
Or masked man, if valu'd by his face,
Above his fact?
Here's one outliv'd his peers
And told forth fourscore years:
He vexed time, and busied the whole state;
Troubled both foes and friends;
But ever to no ends:
What did this stirrer but die late?
How well at twenty had he fall'n or stood!
For three of his four score he did no good.
Horatian Ode

- The Horatian ode, named for the Roman poet Horace, is generally more tranquil, deeply personal, and contemplative than the Pindaric ode.
- Less formal, less ceremonious, and better suited to quiet reading than theatrical production, the Horatian ode typically uses a regular, recurrent stanza pattern.
  - The stanza pattern is not predetermined, but of the poet’s choice; all subsequent stanzas should mirror the structure of the first stanza
- EXAMPLE: The Allen Tate poem, “Ode to the Confederate Dead”
Allen Tate, “Ode to the Confederate Dead”

Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yield their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumour of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot
Of a thousand acres where these memories grow
From the inexhaustible bodies that are not
Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row.
Think of the autumns that have come and gone!--
Ambitious November with the humors of the year,
With a particular zeal for every slab,
Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot
On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:
The brute curiosity of an angel's stare
Turns you, like them, to stone,
Transforms the heaving air
Till plunged to a heavier world below
You shift your sea-space blindly
Heaving, turning like the blind crab.

Dazed by the wind, only the wind
The leaves flying, plunge

You know who have waited by the wall
The twilight certainty of an animal,
Those midnight restitutions of the blood
You know--the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze
Of the sky, the sudden call: you know the rage,
The cold pool left by the mounting flood,
Of muted Zeno and Parmenides.
You who have waited for the angry resolution
Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow,
You know the unimportant shrift of death
And praise the vision
And praise the arrogant circumstance
Of those who fall
Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision--
Here by the sagging gate, stopped by the wall.

Seeing, seeing only the leaves
Flying, plunge and expire
Irregular Ode

- The Irregular Ode has employed all manner of formal possibilities, while often retaining the tone and thematic elements of the classical Pindaric and Horatian Ode.

- The various strophes of the Irregular Ode vary in purpose, line length, number of lines, meter, and rhyme.
  - The frame of each strophe changes at the discretion of the poet.

- For example, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats was written based on his experiments with the sonnet.
“Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats

Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness,
    Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
    A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring’d legend haunts about thy shape
    Of deities or mortals, or of both,
    In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
    Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear’d,
    Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
    Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
    Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
    For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
    Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
    For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love!
    For ever warm and still to be enjoy’d,
    For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
    That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy’d,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
    To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead’st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
    And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
    Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
    Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
    Why thou art desolate, can e’er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
    Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
    Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
    When old age shall this generation waste,
    Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,
    "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
    Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."
Ode—Importance of Form

- How would the varying forms of the ode impact the meaning and effect of the poem?
Elegy

- **Definition**: a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead.

- The elements of a traditional elegy mirror three stages of loss.
  - First, there is a lament, where the speaker expresses grief and sorrow,
  - then praise and admiration of the idealized dead,
  - finally consolation and solace.
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!
   O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
   Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
   Here Captain! dear father!
   This arm beneath your head!
   It is some dream that on the deck,
   You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
   Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
   But I with mournful tread,
   Walk the deck my Captain lies,
   Fallen cold and dead.
Elegy– Importance of Form

• How would the form of the elegy impact the meaning and effect of the poem?