Poetic Rhyme Schemes

When analyzing poetry, you may be asked to determine the poem's **Rhyme Scheme**. A rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhymes that appears at the end of a poem's lines. To determine a poem's rhyme scheme, look at the last word of each line in a poem's stanzas.

When many people think of poetry, a Rhyme Scheme is often the first thing that comes to mind, giving poetry its signature sing-song flow.

TYPES OF RHYME SCHEMES

Below are some common rhyme schemes:

- **Alternate Rhyme:** *A* **B** *A* **B**

  Here is an example from "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep" by Robert Frost:

  > The people along the *sand*
  > All turn and look one **way**.
  > They turn their back on the *land*
  > They look at the sea all **day**.[1]

- **Ballade:** *A* **B** *A* **B** **B** *C* **B** *C*

  Here is an example of this old French verse form from "Ballade of Modest Confession" by Hilaire Belloc:

  > Painting on Vellum: not on silk or *hide*
  > Or ordinary Canvas: I **suppose**
  > No painter of the present day has *tried*
  > So many mediums with success, or **knows**
  > As well as I do how the subject **grows**
  > Beneath the hands of genius, that *anoint*
  > With balm. But I have something to **disclose**—
  > *Painting on Vellum is my weakest point.*

- **Coupled Rhyme (or Rhyming Couplets):** *A A* **B** **B** *C C*

  Here is an example of a Coupled Rhyme or Rhyming Couplet from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18":
  > So long as men can breathe or eyes can *see*,
  > So long lives this and this gives life to *thee*.

- **Enclosed Rhyme**: *A* **B** **B** *A*

  Here is an example of an Enclosed Rhyme from John Milton's "Sonnet VII":

  > How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of *youth*,
  > Stol'n on his wings my three-and-twentieth **year**!
  > My hasting days fly on with full **career**,

But my late spring no bud or blossom *shew'th*.

- **Simple Four-Line Rhyme:** *A* <u>B</u> *C* <u>B</u>

Here is an example of a Simple Four-Line Rhyme from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Coleridge:

It is an ancient *Mariner*,
And he stoppeth one of **<u>three</u>**.
By thy long grey beard and glittering *<u>eye</u>*,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou **<u>me</u>**?

- **Limerick:** *A A* <u>B</u> <u>B</u> *A*

Here is a Limerick from the famous Mother Goose collection "Hickory, Dickory, Dock":

Hickory, dickory, *dock*,
The mouse ran up the *clock*;
The clock struck **<u>one</u>**,
And down he **<u>run</u>**,
Hickory, dickory, *dock*.

- **Monorhyme:** *A A A A*

Here is an excerpt from Dick Davis's "A Monorhyme for the Shower":

Twenty odd years have turned to *air*;
Now she's the girl I didn't *dare*
Approach, ask out, much less *declare*
My love to, mired in young *despair*.

- **Terza Rima:** *A* <u>B</u> *A*   <u>B</u> *C* <u>B</u>   *C* D* *C*   D* E^ D*   E^ E^

Here is a section of Percy Shelley's Terza Rima "Ode to the West Wind":

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's *being*,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves **<u>dead</u>**
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter *fleeing*,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic **<u>red</u>**,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O *<u>thou</u>*,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry **<u>bed</u>**

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and *<u>low</u>*,
Each like a corpse within its grave, **until***
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall *<u>blow</u>*

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and **fill***
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in **air^**)
With living hues and odours plain and **hill**:*
Wild Spirit, which art moving **everywhere^**;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh **hear^**!

- **Triplet:** *A A A*

  Here is a triplet from Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle":

  > To this urn let those *repair*
  > That are either true or *fair*;
  > For these dead birds sigh a *prayer*.

- **Villanelle:** *A* **B** *A* *A* **B** *A* *A* **B** *A* *A* **B** *A* *A* **B** *A* *A* **B** *A A*

  Here is an excerpt from Edwin Arlington Robinson's Villanelle "The House on the Hill":

  > 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*.

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[1]This poem and all other poems retrieved from the Poetry Foundation: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems

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