

The

Shapes

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO VERSE FORMS
AND METRES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

of our

Singing

ROBIN SKELTON

Full Moon

Seeing pallid moonlit stones
beside the tide I feel Time's died and bow
down to the earth's cold bones.

The Englyn Byr Cwca pattern is:

Syllables: 7 10 6

End rhymes: A B A

The B end word rhymes with a word or syllable in the third line, frequently in the middle of it.

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NOTE the alliteration:

d t t
d t t d d
d d

NOTE the consonance:

e i i o
e l l l e l l o
o o o

The Cliff

For Michael Seward Snow

Staring here upon the face
of this steep clay cliff I trace
fragments of lost centuries,
past histories of a place

that changed shape age by age.
A scholarly mind might gauge
how, when and why, but I
won't meddle with that dry page,

for I sense there's something more.
I see it as a closed door,
fast bolted, a word unsaid,
and am led to think a law

controls all the games we play
with time and the mortal clay,
a law about man-made fate.
I'd wait my days away

If I could be sure I'd find
that fast-shut door in the mind
open and comprehend
what end is planned for mankind,

but that vast expanse of clay
has nothing that it may say.
We're living and then we die,
forgetful. I turn away.

The Englyn Cyrch pattern is:

Syllables: 7 7 7 7

End rhymes: A A B A

The endword B rhymes into the middle of the fourth line.

Where is rhyme B?

Where is it again in line 4?

May Day

On this early May morning, chill and dry,
larks high over the hill,
I sense no impending ill.

Yet May has a dangerous charm; it brings
yearnings that haunt and harm
against which nobody can arm.

Love may prove a beautiful cheat, a ruse,
choosing to feed earth's heat,
giving it our bones to eat.

The Englyn Penfyr pattern is:

Syllables: 10 7 7

End rhymes: A A A

The first A word occurs before the end of the first line, and the one, two or three syllables that follow it are echoed in the first syllables of the line following.

Identify above,
please

All

Whether she be far or near,
she is all that I desire,
moving through the midnight hour
to a heaven-haunted air

that, awakening the heart,
chokes with tears the burning throat,
stealing through the lonely night,
reaffirming mortal fate

with a song that, searing, proves
man, though murdered if he loves,
must lie nameless if he leaves
love no cause to grieve his graves.

The Englyn Proest Dalgron pattern is:

Syllables: 7 7 7 7

End rhymes: A A A A

The endrhymes are all near-rhymes, each one having a slightly different vowel or diphthong. All the end words are the same as regards to the stress they possess and their "quantity" which is to say the length of the vowel sounds and the consonants.

NOTE: each stanza has other organizing principles. What are they?

S o m n i u m

These nights when I fall asleep
I dream strangely and reshape
memories I'd like to keep,
but they alter, step by step.

I spent half my life in dream,
hardly even knew my name,
only knew that things that seem
never seem a second time.

So perhaps I should not care,
should not call my dream a liar,
if I'm altered here and there,
less grown less and more grown more.

Transformation is Time's game
played within a shifting stream
of air and water, earth and flame;
dream is how we learn our home.

The Englyn proest Gadwynog:

Syllables: 7 7 7 7

End rhymes: A B A C

The B and C end words off-rhyme with each other and with A.
The off-rhyme may take the form of a pararhyme or, less rigorously, of consonance.

NOTE: each stanza has other organizing principles. What are they?

Clair de Lune

Slowly clouds unveil the riding moon;
branches curve up high as if they mean
somehow to celebrate the scene, to bless
the peace the Goddess brings to Her demesne.

Leaning lonely on the garden gate,
watching a smooth bough stir, I pray some fate
will bring me soon the light that's Hers alone
and that trees have long known. I wait. I wait.

The Gwawdodyn pattern is:

Syllables: 9 9 10 9

End rhymes: A A B A

The B rhyme may link with A B word in the same line, or if it occurs before the actual end of the line, it may rhyme into the middle of the line following.

Please mark the B rhyme in both lines.
What would it have looked like if he had
done it the other way?

On the Mountain

Those who have met her on the mountain swear
that no account of her can ring true
to ears that once have heard the fir-tree sigh
and shudder of her speech renew

each fretted crystal of the long-smirched snow;
those who have seen, who have touched her, swear
that, though they ache, they never can return,
having taken such wild oaths to her

as none, and certainly not they, might keep,
binding them so tight by heart and hand
they are all foresworn and must forever
moil and mourn their green low-lying land.

The Toddaid pattern is:

Syllables: 10 9 10 9

End rhymes: A B C B

A syllable near the end of the first line rhymes with a syllable in the middle of the second line, and the same rhyming occurs between lines three and four.

I have marked stanza 1. Note how he has chosen to make these sounds the same, increasing the A rhyme. Please mark the others.

Dimlington Heights

In Memoriam William Robins

Here on the cliff edge, staring down
upon the hard-packed sand, the brown
slabs of pounded boulder clay,
I think how Grandfather would ride
his pony trap out where the tide
has hidden his fields away.

There was a fine old farm out there
more than a mile off shore, but where
exactly no one dare say;
does it bulk whole beneath the sea,
a stone house for eternity,
or has it been swept away?

What we remember has not gone,
although, because we scurry on
without a stop or stay
we think what's gone is gone for good,
the past stands where it's always stood;
it never could move away

for it's our heart, our head, our hand,
the very substance of the land,
each thought, each word we've said,
and that house drowned beneath the tide
has dark rooms that we hunt inside
for a guide to ride ahead.

The Cywydd Llosgyrnog pattern is:

Syllables: 8 8 7 8 8 7

End rhymes: A A B C C B

Endword A rhymes with a word in the middle of the third line.

Endword c rhymes with a word in the middle of line six.

Here, I've marked that:

Here on the cliff edge, staring down
upon the hard-packed sand, the brown
slabs of pounded boulder clay,
I think how Grandfather would ride
his pony trap out where the tide
has hidden his fields away.

Please mark the other stanzas. What other patterns support this shape?