

BLANK VERSE

FROM: *THE MAKING OF A POEM*

- 1) It is an iambic line with ten stresses and five beats.
- 2) It is unrhymed.
- 3) It is traditionally associated with dramatic speech and epic poetry.
- 4) The lack of rhyme makes enjambment more possible and often more effective.
- 5) It is often identified as the poetic form closest to human speech.

“Blank verse came into English poetry from Italian literature...The inventor of blank verse in England was Henry Howard [beheaded by Henry VIII when he was 30 years old].” Howard translated *The Aeneid* into blank verse using a strict ten-syllable line.

Blank verse allows for more natural speech in the poem. Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare, and John Milton all used blank verse in their works.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey **from his translation of *The Aeneid***

It was then night: the sound and quiet sleep
Had through the earth the wearied bodies caught;
The woods, the raging seas were fallen to rest;
When that the stars had half their course declined
The fields whist; beasts and fowls of divers hue,
And what so that in the broad lakes remained,
Or yet among the bushy thicks of briar
Laid down to sleep by silence of the night,
Gan' suage their cares, mindless of travels past.
Not so the sprite of this Phoenician:
Unhappy she, that on no sleep could chance,
Nor yet night's rest enter in eye or breast.
Her cares redouble; love doth rise and rage again,
And overflows with swelling storms of wrath.

Directive by Robert Frost

Back out of all this now too much for us,
Back in a time made simple by the loss
Of detail, burned, dissolved, and broken off
Like graveyard marble sculpture in the weather,
There is a house that is no more a house
Upon a farm that is no more a farm
And in a town that is no more a town.
The road there, if you'll let a guide direct you
Who only has at heart your getting lost,
May seem as if it should have been a quarry –
Great monolithic knees the former town
Long since gave up pretense of keeping covered.
And there's a story in a book about it:
Besides the wear of iron wagon wheels
The ledges show lines ruled southeast-northwest,
The chisel work of an enormous Glacier
That braced his feet against the Arctic Pole.
You must not mind a certain coolness from him
Still said to haunt this side of Panther Mountain.
Nor need you mind the serial ordeal
Of being watched from forty cellar holes
As if by eye pairs out of forty firkins.

As for the woods' excitement over you
That sends light rustle rushes to their leaves,
Charge that to upstart inexperience.
Where were they all not twenty years ago?
They think too much of having shaded out
A few old pecker-fretted apple trees.
Make yourself up a cheering song of how
Someone's road home from work this once was,
Who may be just ahead of you on foot
Or creaking with a buggy load of grain.
The height of the adventure is the height
Of country where two village cultures faded
Into each other. Both of them are lost.
And if you're lost enough to find yourself
By now, pull in your ladder road behind you
And put a sign up CLOSED to all but me.
Then make yourself at home. The only field
Now left's no bigger than a harness gall.
First there's the children's house of make-believe,
Some shattered dishes underneath a pine,
The playthings in the playhouse of the children.
Weep for what little things could make them glad.
Then for the house that is no more a house,
But only a belilaced cellar hole,

Now slowly closing like a dent in dough.

This was no playhouse but a house in earnest.

Your destination and your destiny's

A brook that was the water of the house,

Cold as a spring as yet so near its source,

Too lofty and original to rage.

(We know the valley streams that when aroused

Will leave their tatters hung on barb and thorn.)

I have kept hidden in the instep arch

Of an old cedar at the waterside

A broken drinking goblet like the Grail

Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,

So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.

(I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse.)

Here are your waters and your watering place.

Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.