

## Verse Forms: Villanelle

1. It is a poem of nineteen lines
2. It has five stanzas, each of three lines, with a final one of four lines
3. The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the second and fourth stanzas.
4. The third line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the third and fifth stanzas
5. These two refrain lines follow each other to become the second-to-last and last lines of the poem.
6. The rhyme scheme is *abab*. The rhymes are repeated according to the refrains.

Italian rustic song, a round song. “Figural development is possible...but the form refuses to tell a story. It circles around and around, refusing to go forward in any kind of linear development...suggesting powerful recurrences of mood and emotion and memory.”

Villanelles do not establish “conversational tone.” They are songlike or resemble lyric poetry and “address the idea of loss directly.” Look for “circularity of stanzas.”

Adapted from *The Making of a Poem* by Mark Strand & Eavan Boland

### Read and annotate the following poems. When finished, write your own 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 today  
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.

**Edwin Arlington Robinson**

#### “*The Waking*”

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?  
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?  
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,  
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?  
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do  
To you and me, so take the lively air,  
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.  
What falls away is always. And is near.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

**Theodore Roethke**

**“One Art”**

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

--Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

**Elizabeth Bishop**

**“Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”**

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green  
bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding  
sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on that sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I  
pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**Dylan Thomas**