

Verstory

A Look at the Past Through Poetry

On the following pages is information about, and examples of, seven different types of short poems. Your task is to write one poem of each type based on people, places, events, things, and ideas related to the American Civil War. Write a draft of each poem, have your drafts approved, and then publish your poems. You may create a paper booklet of your poems, or turn them into a Hyperstudio presentation.



A **Quatrain** is a poem consisting of four rhymed lines. It is the most common form of poetry stanza in the English language.

The rhyme scheme can take many forms, but the most common is ABAB. Notice in the example below that the first line rhymes with the third, and the second line rhymes with the fourth. Also, notice that the lines that **rhyme** have the same **rhythm**.

James Buchanan

*While James Buchanan was President,
The nation fell apart.
When no longer the White House resident,
The Civil War did start!*

The **Limerick** is really the only form of poetry that is original to the English language. It first appeared in *Songs for the Nursery* by Elizabeth Goose.

A limerick has five lines and in its most common form has a special rhyme scheme of aabba. An example:

Wagon Train

*While traveling the Oregon Trail,
Some pioneers feared they might fail,
When they did realize,
Much to their surprise,
That a wagon train did not run by rail!*



A **clerihew** is a short poem consisting of two couplets. It is always about a famous person, whose name forms one of the lines. Of course, since it is two couplets, the rhyme scheme is *aabb*. For example:

Lincoln

*Abraham Lincoln
Was always thinkin'
Of how to end the Civil War
And make the nation whole once more.*



An **Acrostic** is a verse where the opening letters of the lines, or the closing letters, or letters arranged at by some other system, name a person or convey a special message. For example

*Traveling on the
Underground Railroad, she
Brought 300 people to freedom.
Moses was what she was called
As she led her people
North out of bondage.*



A **Wingspark** is a type of poetry “invented” by students at Wings Park School. It has five lines, does not rhyme, and has some very special requirements.

The students who developed the Wingspark defined it as a poem where “the imagination is sparked and the mind takes wing!”

The special requirements for the Wingspark are listed below.

Each line of a Wingspark has a specific purpose. Study the form below carefully.

- Line 1 I dreamed...(your Wingspark will begin like this.)
- Line 2 Answer the question “who?” (someone)
- Line 3 Answer the questions “where?” (someplace)
- Line 4 State an action (something that person did)
- Line 5 One word (describe how the person felt or how the action was done.)



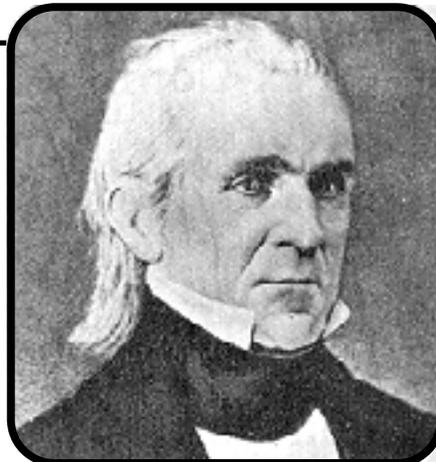
*I dreamed...
I was John Brown
At Harper's Ferry
Leading a slave revolt
Courageously.*

An **Epitaph** is something written about a person that would be carved into that person's tombstone after his or her death. Its purpose was to commemorate that person's life or achievements. In the past, this was a very popular way to remember a person.

Sometimes the person would write their own epitaph before their death, and sometimes it would be written by a friend, a relative, or an admirer after the person had died. Very often the epitaph took the form of a poem! For example:

James K. Polk

*He increased our nation
Through treaty and through war.
When he was asked, "How much land?"
He always answered, "MORE!"*



A **LanVan** is a five-line poem about a famous person or thing. It has a very specific form that must be followed.

Line 1: Identify the subject, then write
Line 2*: a metaphor appropriate to the subject,
Line 3*: a simile appropriate to the subject,
Lines 4 and 5: a rhyming couplet about the subject's significance

(Lines 2 and 3 may switch positions!)

For example:

*Underground Railroad
Night train to freedom,
Like a compass needle pointing north.
The fugitives hid through light of day,
And in darkness to Canada made their way.*

