

VILLANELLE

Forms of Poetry

Form

The form of the villanelle is composed of interspersed repeated lines with new lines that inform and give meaning to the repetition.

Stanza One

Three lines with an A, B, A, rhyme scheme. The repeated lines are line one and line three of this stanza.

Stanza's Two through Five

Three lines with an A, B, A rhyme scheme. The last line of each stanza alternates between repeated line one and repeated line two.

Stanza Six

Four lines with an A, B, A, A, rhyme scheme. The final two lines are a couplet composed of the repeated lines.

The Waking

Theodore Roethke

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow. (A1)
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go. (A2)

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. (A1)

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. (A2)

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. (A1)

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go. (A2)

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. (A1)
I learn by going where I have to go. (A2)

Another Example:

One Art by Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master; (A1)
so many things seem filled
with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no
disaster. (A2)

Lose something every day.
Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour
badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to
master. (A1)

Then practice losing farther,
losing faster:
places, and names, and where
it was you meant
to travel. None of these will
bring disaster. (A2)

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. (A1)

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. (A2)

—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, (A1)
though it may look like (*Write*
it!) like disaster. (A2)

Crafting a Villanelle

Choose a subject for your own villanelle. The subject should be quite general, such as love or time. Write two sentences about your subject:

Rewrite these two sentences so that they rhyme and have the same rhythm:

Now, using *The Waking* and *One Art* as models, write your poem: