

The Sonnet:

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Sonnets are not always written in the Italian or Shakespearean forms. Some of them are irregular. The following example, Ozymandias, by Percy B. Shelley (1792-1822) is one of these irregular sonnets:

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them And The heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair."
Nothing beside remains, Round the decay

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Narrative Poetry

Poems which tell stories are called narrative poems. Like stories told in prose, they have characters (real or unreal) and incidents and they are usually vivid, exciting and dramatic. A narrative poem however is told in a more simple, direct and compressed manner than a short story.

Stories told in verse are old in history. They were told centuries before the prose writers of many nations began to tell them. Some of the most famous narrative poems in English are Geoffrey Chaucer's (1340-1400) Canterbury Tales. These are stories told in verse in the most delightful way by a group of pilgrims to the shrine of Saint Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury. Equally famous are the stories revolving around the legendary King Arthur and his knights of the round Table -- stories dealing with chivalry love and loyalty.

Narrative poetry is the three kinds: the epic (the heroic epic and the mock-epic), the ballad (the popular or folk ballad and the literary ballad) and the romance.

The epic is the most elaborate form of narrative poetry. The epic is a heroic poem in high or elevated style, relating the deeds of a hero in great struggle, conflict or action, as in Beowulf, the first English epic. The epic hero is a character with heroic abilities, endowed with almost



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The Ballad is a narrative poem in quatrains (four lines that rhyme abab). It is of two kinds: The popular ballad and the literary ballad. The popular ballad is often anonymous. Passing along by word of mouth from one person to another. It is simple in theme and form, condensed in narrative, dealing with elementary emotions such as love, hate, jealousy, fear and so on. Its themes are varied ranging from domestic themes to love tragedies, folklore and superstition. Technically, the ballad makes frequent use of rhyme, repetition and refrains to create a high musical effect. Amongst the well-known popular ballads are Sir Patrick Spans which is an old anonymous Scottish ballad describing the disastrous loss at sea of Sir Patrick, His ship and his crew - as a result of royal vanity. Also very famous are the stories about Robin Hood. He is the hero of many popular ballads. He was a huntsman who lived in a forest called Sherwood. He stole from the rich to give to the poor.

The literary ballad resembles the popular ballad in theme and treatment, but is different in being more complex sophisticated. It is not anonymous and it is not transmitted orally from generation to generation or from place to place as the popular ballad. Literary ballads usually deal with more complex stories involving psychological themes. The most famous of this type of ballad is S.T.Coleridge's (1772-1834), The Rime of The Ancient Mariner, a story of guilt, suffering and repentance.

The Romance is a long narrative (in verse or prose) of love and adventure in which the events are surprising, magical or miraculous. The

