**Sonnet:**

The word sonnet is derived from the Italian word “sonetto.” It means a small or little song or lyric. In poetry, a sonnet has 14 fourteen lines and is written in iambic [pentameter](http://literarydevices.net/pentameter/). Each line has 10 syllables. It has a specific [rhyme](http://literarydevices.net/rhyme/) scheme and a “volta” or a specific turn.

**Types:**

### 1. Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet:

The Italian sonnet, which was created first, is the combination of an octave (eight lines broken into two quatrains) and a sestet (six lines broken into two tercets). The octave proposes a problem or question, and the sestet generally proposes the solution, or leads toward a conclusion. The ninth line of this sonnet, i.e., the first line of the sestet marks a turn in mood or stance whether or not there is a satisfactory conclusion. This turn is called the *volta*.

Italian sonnets are known as Petrarchan because the Italian writer Petrarch was one of the main proponents of the form. The rhyme scheme he used was generally ABBA ABBA for the octave and either CDC CDC or CDE CDE for the sestet. There are a few other accepted rhyme schemes for the sestets in Italian sonnets, such as CDD CDE or CDC DCD.

### 2. English, Elizabethan, or Shakespearean Sonnet

The English sonnet is sometimes also known as Elizabethan because they came into popularity in the English language during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, i.e., in the mid- to late-1500s. William Shakespeare was not the first to write sonnets in English, but he became perhaps the most famous sonneteer, and therefore the English form is also sometimes called Shakespearean.

The main different between Italian and English sonnets is the rhyme scheme, which, in Shakespearean sonnets is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. There is also a different breaking of the stanzas—English sonnets are comprised of three quatrains and a [couplet](http://www.literarydevices.com/couplet/). While the *volta* sometimes occurs in the third quatrain, which is to say the ninth line and therefore in the same place as in Italian sonnets, Shakespeare usually saved his change of tone and conclusion just for the couplet.