

Literary Forms-The Epic

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The Epic

- **The Epic Defined:-**

- 1. Long narrative poem heroic personages of history or tradition.
- 2. Tale in verse

- **Epic of Growth and Epic of Art:-**

- Epic is divided into two classes (1) The Epic of Growth or Authentic Epic or folk Epic. (2) The literary Epic or Epic of Art.
- Authentic Epic is not the work of one man.
- It is the collection of a series of folk songs and legends.
- The literary Epic is the work of one individual genius
- The old English epic “Beowulf”, Homer’s ‘Iliad’ is odyssey are Authentic Epics.
- Vergil’s “Aeneid” and Milton’s paradise Lost” Literary Epic.

Qualities of an epic:-

- High seriousness.
- Comprehensiveness.
- Characterized by greatness of scope and majesty.
- There is room for very great variety.
- The action of epic is spacious.
- Inclusiveness is another characteristic of an epic.
- The characters are gods to ordinary mortals.
- Its scenic background changes frequently.
- It takes long time.
- The events therein range from the earth.
- Choric aspect is a characteristic of an epic, which is mentioned by Professor Tillyard.
- Epic must express the spirit of an age or nation and not merely the feelings and experiences of individuals.
- Homer expresses the admiration of the people of his time for the heroic qualities.
- An epic poet has the consciousness of being a prophet of his time.

The Convention in the Epic:-

- (a) The theme of the Epic, is stated in the first few lines
- The prayer and the ‘innovation’.
- (b) Introduction of similes in the Homeric manner.
- Interest by themselves.
- Catalogues and lists of names are frequent embellishments.
- The supernatural machinery is often employed.
- The epic is divided into books. ‘The Iliad’ and the ‘Odyssey’ have twenty four books each.
- ‘The Faerie Queen’ and ‘Paradise Lost’ have 12 books each.
- The epic contains a number of thrilling episodes.

The Mock Epic:-

- Poets in Italy, France and England wrote the mock - epic.
 - Trivial subject is made ridiculous.
 - Elaborate and the dignified devices of the epic.
 - English verse is Pope's 'Rape of the Lock'.
 - Popular in all countries and the world.
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- Now it moves to the modern poets.

Literary Forms- Poetic Forms

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Introduction

- * Poetry is written in closed or open form.
- * Closed form poetry is characterized by patterns: verse, rhyme, meter and/or syllable. The content **fits into** the form.
- * Open form poetry is characterized by the lack of pattern. The content **creates** the form.

Major Styles of Poetry

- * Lyric
- * Narrative
- * Dramatic

Open Form Poetry

- * Content determines the form of the poem.
- * Punctuation, line breaks, and white spaces become very important in open form poetry.
- * "Free verse"
- * Concrete poems
- * Shaped poems

Free Verse

Cavalry Crossing a Ford

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun -- hark to the musical
clank
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering stop to drink,
Behold the the brown-faced men, each group, each person a picture, the negligent
rest on the saddles.
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering the ford --while,
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

Walt Whitman, 1865



Shaped Poems

- * Create a picture or visual pattern
- * Content is **more important** than shape
- * Content follows general grammatical rules
- * Shape **complements** content of poem

Easter Wings

by George Herbert

Lord, Who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:

With Thee
O let me rise,
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day Thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne;
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.

With Thee
Let me combine,
And feel this day Thy victorie;
For, if I imp my wing on Thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

Swan and Shadow

John Hollander

Dusk
Above the
water hang the
loud
flies
Here
O so
gray
then
What A pale signal will appear
When Soon before its shadow fades
Where Here in this pool of opened eye
In us No Upon us As at the very edges
of where we take shape in the dark air
this object bares its image awakening
ripples of recognition that will
brush darkness up into light
even after this bird this hour both drift by atop the perfect sad instant now
already passing out of sight
toward yet-untroubled reflection
this image bears its object darkening
into memorial shades Scattered bits of
light No of water Or something across
water Breaking up No Being regathered
soon Yet by then a swan will have
gone Yes out of mind into what
vast
pale
hush
of a
place
past
sudden dark as
if a swan
sang

Closed Form Poems

- * Recognizable patterns
- * Patterns can be determined by:
 - * Stanza length
 - * Metrical pattern (ex: *iambic pentameter*)
 - * Rhyme scheme
 - * Syllable count

Meter

- * Patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables
- * The basic unit of meter is a **foot**.
- * Most common feet in English poetry:
 - * Iamb u /
 - * Trochee / u
 - * Anapest u u /
 - * Dactyl / u u
 - * Spondee / /
 - * Pyrrhic u u

Metrical Lines

- * One foot monometer
- * Two feet dimeter
- * Three feet trimeter
- * Four feet tetrameter
- * Five feet pentameter
- * Six feet hexameter
- * Seven feet heptameter
- * Eight feet octameter

Stanzas

- * 2 line stanzas: couplets
- * 3 line stanzas:
 - ✦ tercets
 - ✦ triplets: aaa bbb ccc ddd
 - ✦ terza rima: aba bcb cdc ded
- * 4 line stanzas: quatrains
- * 5 line stanzas: quintets
- * 6 line stanzas: sestets
- * 7 line stanzas: septets
- * 8 line stanzas: octaves

COUPLETS

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens



Types of Narrative Poems

- * Narrative Poems tell a story
- * Ballads
- * Limericks
- * Epics
- * Satires/Parodies

Ballad

- * English
- * Narrative
- * 4 line stanzas
- * Meter: Common Meter
 - * iambic tetrameter alternating with
 - * iambic trimeter
- * Rhyme
 - * abab or
 - * abcb
- * Refrains: exact or incremental repetition

Types of Ballads

- * Traditional
 - ✦ Anonymous
 - ✦ Folk
- * Broadside
 - ✦ Propaganda
 - ✦ Social Protest
- * Literary
 - ✦ Romantic poets

Ballad Conventions

- * Conversational language -- dialect
- * Dialogue
- * Traditional motifs:
 - ✦ Lost love
 - ✦ Death
 - ✦ Supernatural seducers
 - ✦ Political protest

Limerick

- * 5 line nonsense poem

- * First line ends in proper name of place or person

- * Rhyme: aabba

- * Meter:

- ✧ 1st, 2nd and 5th lines are anapestic trimeter:

u u / u u / u u /

- ✧ 3rd and 4th lines are anapestic dimeter:

u u / u u /

Gervaise

There was a young belle of old Natchez
Whose garments were always in patchez
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes
She drawled, When Ah itchez, Ah scratchez!
Ogden Nash

There was a young woman named Plunnery
Who rejoiced in the practice of gunnery
Till one day unobservant
She blew up a servant
And was forced to retire to a nunnery.
Edward Gorey

Epic

- * Long narrative poem about many deeds of a great hero. Closely connected to a culture and reflects its values.

Types of Lyric Poetry

- * Poem that does not tell a story but expresses the personal feelings of a speaker.
- * Sonnet
- * Villanelle
- * Sestina
- * Ode
- * Haiku
- * Elegy

Sonnet

- * Italian origin
- * Lyric
- * 14 lines
- * Iambic pentameter

SONNETS

Italian or Petrarchan

* Stanzas:

- * **Octave** -- presents problem
- * **Sestet** -- resolution or meditation upon problem

* Rhyme:

- * **Octave** -- abbaabba
- * **Sestet** -- cdecde or cdccdc or cddcdd or variation

English or Shakespearean

* Stanzas:

- * **3 Quatrains** -- present similar images
- * **Heroic Couplet** -- paradoxical resolution

* Rhyme:

- * **Quatrains** --
 - * abab
 - * cdcd
 - * efef
- * **Couplet** -- gg

Villanelle

- * French origin
- * Originated with round dance
- * Stanzas and Rhyme
 - ✦ 5 tercets: aba aba aba aba aba
 - ✦ 1 quatrain: abaa
- * Line Repetition
 - ✦ 1, 6, 12, 18
 - ✦ 3, 9, 15, 19

Mad Girl's Love Song by Sylvia Plath

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead;
I lift my lids and all is born again.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

The stars go waltzing out in blue and red,
And arbitrary darkness gallops in:
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed
And sung me moon-struck, kissed me quite insane.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

God topples from the sky, hell's fires fade:
Exit seraphim and Satan's men:
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I fancied you'd return the way you said.
But I grow old and I forget your name.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

I should have loved a thunderbird instead;
At least when spring comes they roar back again.
I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)

Sestina

- * French origin
- * Stanzas:
 - * 6 *sestets*
 - * 1 *tercet*: an *envoi*
- * Repetition and linking of *talons*:
 - * a/b/c/d/e/f
 - * f/a/e/b/d/c
 - * c/f/d/a/b/e
 - * e/c/b/f/a/d
 - * d/e/a/c/f/b
 - * b/d/f/e/c/a
 - * ba/dc/fe
- * *Atmosphere* ranges from cozy to claustrophobic

"Sestina d'Inverno" by Anthony Hecht

Here in this bleak city of **Rochester**,
Where there are twenty-seven words for "**snow**,"
Not all of them polite, the wayward **mind**
Basks in some Yucatan of its own **making**,
Some coppery, sleek lagoon, or cinnamon **island**
Alive with lemon tints and burnished **natives**,

And O that we were there. But here the **natives**
Of this grey, sunless city of **Rochester**
Have sown whole mines of salt about their **land**
(Bare ruined Carthage that it is) while **snow**
Comes down as if The Flood were in the **making**.
Yet on that ocean Marvell called the **mind**

An ark sets forth which is itself the **mind**,
Bound for some pungent green, some shore whose

natives

Blend coriander, cayenne, mint in **making**
Roasts that would gladden the Earl of **Rochester**
With sinfulness, and melt a polar **snow**.
It might be well to remember that an **island**

Was blessed heaven once, more than an **island**
The grand, utopian dream of a noble **mind**.
In that kind climate the mere thought of **snow**
Was but a wedding cake; the youthful **natives**,
Unable to conceive of **Rochester**,
Made love, and were acrobatic in the **making**.

Dream as we may, there is far more to **making**
Do than some wistful reverie of an **island**,
Especially now when hope lies with the **Rochester**
Gas and Electric Co., which doesn't **mind**
Such profitable weather, while the **natives**
Sink, like Pompeians, under a world of **snow**.

The one thing indisputable here is **snow**,
The single verity of heaven's **making**,
Deeply indifferent to the dreams of the **natives**,
And the torn hoarding-posters of some **island**.
Under our igloo skies the frozen **mind**
Holds to one truth: it is grey, and called **Rochester**.

No **island** fantasy survives **Rochester**,
Where to the **natives** destiny is **snow**
That is neither to our **mind** nor of our **making**.

- * Japanese
- * Syllabic poetry:
- * 17 syllables
 - * 1st line - 5 syllables
 - * 2nd line -- 7 syllables
 - * 3rd line -- 5 syllables
- * Seasonal reference
- * Implied identification of **perceiver** (poet) with **perceived** (subject)

Haiku

Silent and still: then
Even sinking into rocks,
The cicada's screech

Basho

Sleepless at Crown Point

All night this headland
Lunges into the rumpling
Capework of the wind

Richard Wilbur

Elegy

- * Poem of mourning, usually for someone who has died.

Free Verse

- * Poem without a regular meter or rhyme scheme.

Example of Free Verse

I Hear America Singing.

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.