

The Sonnet is a type of poem finding its origin in Italy. Francesco Petrarch was one of the first to significantly solidify the sonnet structure. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet consists of two parts, an octave and a sestet. The octave can be broken down into two quatrains and the sestet into two tercets. The octave presents an idea to be contrasted by the ending sestet. The particular quatrains and tercets are divided by change in rhyme. Petrarch typically used an abba abba pattern for the octave, followed by either cde cde or cdc cdc rhymes in the sestet. The rhyme scheme and structure work together to emphasize the idea of the poem: the first quatrain presents the theme and the second expands on it. The repeated rhyme scheme within the Octave strengthens the idea. The sestet with either two or three different rhymes, uses its first tercet to reflect on the theme and the last to conclude.

Shakespeare utilised the sonnet in love poetry of his own, employing the sonnet structure conventionalized by English poets Wyatt and Surrey. This structure called English or Shakespearean Sonnet consists of three quatrains and a concluding couplet. The rhyme scheme is a simple abab cdcd efef gg format. The first quatrain is in low gear, then the second and the third accelerate sharply and ideas and metaphors flash past and then there is a sudden throttling back and one glides to a stop in the couplet.