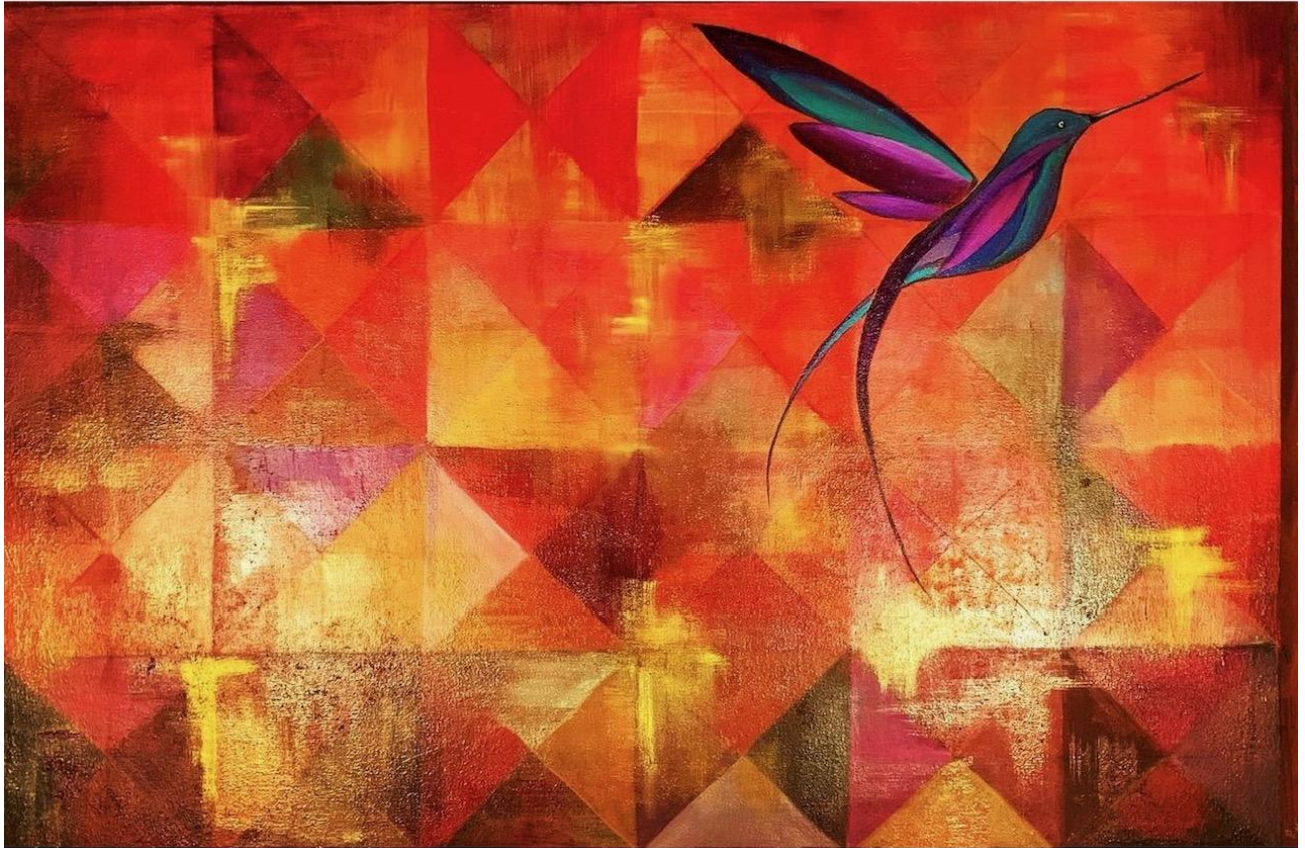


# Fun With Poetic Forms



Jeff Bettger

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Cover painting “Colibri” by Eugenia Ferreiro of Mexico City

I love this painting by my friend of the beautiful bird (poetic art)  
coming out of the geometric shapes (poetic structure).

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## Foreword

The inspiration for this collection of poems is the many historic poetic forms developed and made popular in different countries through the centuries. These forms include haiku, tanka, and sonnet. These forms differ based on the number of syllables in each line, the length of the poem, or the pattern of rhyming of the final words in each line. Below are some examples of some famous forms. For those readers not familiar with these poetic forms, throughout the book I have included information on the left side of each poem, listing the number of syllables in that line or the pattern of rhyming.

Haiku . . . A Japanese form. 3 lines of poetry following the pattern:

5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables

Tanka . . . A Japanese form. 5 lines of poetry following the pattern:

5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables, 7 syllables, 7 syllables

Sonnet . . . The form made famous by Shakespeare.

Six syllables per line,

with a stress pattern of unstressed/stressed.

The last word in each line rhyming in the pattern:

ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

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## Acrostic

**H**eavenly Father

**O**pen the doors of your

**P**ure love

**E**liminate our worries and fears

## **Ars Poetica**

Is it possible to write a perfect poem?  
Most would say it is not  
until they read one that hits like  
an earthquake that strikes from deep below,  
a Heavenly bolt of lightning  
to the mind and soul.  
Not just one memorable phrase,  
but one after another, like a waterfall.  
No extra words diluting the 100 proof  
glass of your earned joyful experience.  
You are here to metaphorically describe  
the true nature of life to us mere humans.  
Continue strolling on the seashore,  
looking into the mystic, sharing what you see.  
The beauty of your poem shadowed  
only by the radiance of your smile!

Tribute to Janet Janzen's  
"The Holiness of Time"

## Cento

Oh, don't sorrow - no, don't weep  
For tonight, at last, I am coming home  
I am coming home.

U2 "A Sort of Homecoming"

"Hey, " he said  
"Grab your things, I've come to take you home"  
Hey, back home.

Peter Gabriel "Solsbury Hill"

I'd sit on his lap in that big old Buick  
And steer as we drove through town  
He'd tousle my hair  
And say, "Son, take a good look around"  
This is your hometown.

Bruce Springsteen "My Hometown"

The trouble, it might drag you down  
If you get lost, you can always be found  
Just know you're not alone  
'Cause I'm gonna make this place your home.

Phillip Phillips "Home"

Country roads, take me home  
To the place I belong  
West Virginia, mountain mama  
Take me home, country roads.

John Denver "Take Me Home Country Roads"

## Ekphrastic

As I stare down the long road  
the remains of the recent snow fall  
still heavy on the tree limbs  
soon to melt as the rising sun appears.  
Shining crystals of ice reflecting the light.  
The storm has passed. A new day begins

Inspired by Larii Rochas'  
graphic art "Dirty Paws"



## English Sonnet

A Forgive my time away from you, my love  
B Absence made clear, no one can take your place  
A Too long apart, the sun still high above  
B I walk with haste until I see your face

C A clear mirage my eyes do see ahead  
D your home my goal awaits still miles away  
C No rest I take until I share your bed  
D The setting sun makes way for stars array

E The strong and clear beacons homeward to you  
F Sore feet nothing compared to my heartache  
E The memory of your fresh scent so true  
F does guide my path onward without mistake

G Your sweet caress, soft kiss, embrace so strong  
G tell me I am back where I most belong

Inspired by the song "I Drove All Night"  
by Cyndi Lauper

## Epic

I began as a blacksmith's apprentice,  
but discovered I was quick on the draw.  
An over-developed sense of justice,  
a Law man I became. My destiny found.

Ten years the town sheriff,  
ten evil men shot down,  
put into their unholy graves,  
my Colt pistol never defeated.

Over time, the blood I spilled  
infected my soul with revenge.  
Mirrors no longer reflected  
anything decent left in my soul.

I could not forgive myself,  
but I prayed God could.  
My wife's departure, no surprise  
on that bright summer's day.

Her gentle wave goodbye,  
said everything I needed to know.  
A sweet angel ain't meant  
to live that kind of hellish life.

Older and injured, I hung up my guns.  
My rusty badge buried in the sand.  
I packed my bags and rode North,  
hoping a seed of light could still grow.

A long winter's sentence spent  
in a cabin high in the Rockies.  
My bodily wounds healed with time,  
but my spirit was ripped beyond repair.

Long, freezing nights alone,  
except for the nightly visits  
from the ghosts of my deeds.  
No bullet sufficient to deter them.

Mercifully, the avalanche of guilt soon  
replaced by the warmth of Spring.  
A bird's song told me to leave now,  
before I collapsed under the weight.

My bags and saddle I packed.  
My destination was clear.  
To find the one thing that was  
ever good in my violent life.

Years had gone by without a word.  
Only rumors she lived on the plains.  
East, I descend, hoping to find her,  
longing for her smile and compassion.

Hundreds of miles of prairie behind me,  
clues found in small towns along the way.  
Finally, a small ranch house, surrounded by  
flowers. Yes, here is where she would be.

As I approached, I heard her singing as  
she fed the chickens under the clear sky.  
I must have looked a scary sight, as  
she bravely tried to hide her fright.

As she slowly recognized my horse, my hat  
and then my face, her body shivered.  
Too many emotions revived all at once.  
Tears running down her still-youthful face.

Practiced speeches and eloquent explanations  
escaped my mind upon seeing her sweet smile.  
I tipped my hat, as she dropped her pail of water.  
Neither of us able to break the years of silence.

I saw her eyes scanning for my badge and guns.  
The words, "I have retired" stuck in my throat,  
as the sound of the front door opening  
suddenly pulled our attention away.

Another man, carrying firewood, stepped  
into the sunlight. He looked at me and then  
at his wife. Seeing her tears, he stepped back  
and cautiously asked, "Can we help you mister?"

Before I could speak a calming lie, our wife  
offered, "This man brings sad news from my past. A  
dear friend has passed away. I never again will see."  
Her meaning clear. Happiness she found without me.

I tipped my hat and rode away. No destination in mind.  
The next day, I saw a rattle snake kill a small rabbit.  
I knew this was the way of nature, but I couldn't  
refrain. Something inside me felt that rabbit's pain.

At the next small town, I stayed on a few days.  
Asking around if any needed work offered pay.  
The devil tending the bar nodded and grinned,  
"We need a new sheriff. You any good with a gun?"

I had accepted long ago, no happy ending for me.  
My lonely end sealed the first day I picked up a gun.  
I thought about the laws of justice and of life.  
If the protector of innocents I am to be, then let it be.

With nothing left to lose, my resolve and gun steady,  
for five more years, I protected that little town.  
Never again thinking about what could have been.  
Just doing the job that needed to be done.

Over the years, many enemies were made,  
men with no sense of honor or shame.  
On a cold, dark winter's day, an eerie stillness,  
then a sharp bang, as a bullet pierced my back.

I never saw my assassin as I fell to the cold ground.  
Pulling out my gun from my right holster and  
my old wedding ring from my left pocket,  
I smiled as I saw a rabbit scurry past.

## Epistolary

Dear Dad,

I still think of you all the time  
Decided to write you some words that rhyme

So many daily things make me miss you  
Your garden, the Padres, and sauerkraut too

Must have been a big surprise when you found  
Your bother and sister buried in the same ground

An unexpected reunion, now only one brother survives  
But given his health, it won't be long before he arrives

I wonder what it is like for you now  
Hopefully on a farm with horses and cows.

Not sure if you can see your grandson  
He recently hit another homerun

The people we knew stop to say Hi  
They say you were such a nice guy

Shifu and his family came for a visit  
We could feel you were there in spirit

That's all I wanted to say  
Back to work on this beautiful day

We spent so much time together  
I'm sure we will meet again forever

## Fibonacci

1 You  
1 and  
2 I rest  
3 together  
5 under the shade tree  
8 the beating sun sapping our strength  
13 we walk up and down endless rows, weeding the beet field  
21 the long day passes, difficult back-breaking work, made bearable  
by sharing with you.

## Haiku

- 5 A path in the woods
- 7 An invitation to view
- 5 Summer's finest day



## Italian Sonnet

- A A form of self defense is taught worldwide  
B Judo, karate, boxing, kung fu, sword  
B Young boys and girls train hard a belt award  
A Japan, Brazil, and Thai, Shifu your guide  
A Kicking, punching, jumping, left side, right side  
B A tournament partake trophy reward  
B a mom a dad so proud a high mark scored  
A New skills obtained more strength is gained with pride
- C In China found another goal than fight  
D The Buddha taught to train your breathe and Chi.  
E To join as one the mind, body, spirit.  
C Shaolin, Wudang temples the homes of light  
D Bagua, ChinNa, Xingqi, Xigong, Taiji  
E The monks did learn to heal as well as hurt

## Limerick

- A There once was a boy from Sterling  
A Who had the chance to go skiing  
B On rented equipment he gained speed  
B Out of control, a hard fall indeed  
A The very sore boy from Sterling

## **Mondo**

By Jeff Bettger and John Henry Bettger

- 5    When you think deeply
- 7    What is the purpose of life?
- 5    What is always true?
  
- 5    When I think deeply
- 7    Looking back good times were had
- 5    I hope that stays true

## Ode

An Ode to poetry  
Ancient and diverse history  
So many forms  
So many ideas born  
Emotions displayed  
Memories replayed  
Written for my kids  
Glad that I did  
A lifetime of experience  
Recorded for their audience  
New friends made  
Similar experiences we trade  
Many forms of art exist  
But with poetry I persist  
My thoughts, my words  
Life moving forwards  
Important to take the time  
To write down a few rhymes.

## **Sedoka**

- 5 A basic question
- 7 How do work and play differ?
- 7 What is the motivation?
  
- 5 A simple answer
- 7 Delayed gratification
- 7 Play fun now, work fun later.

## **Semi-Free Verse**

(3 stanzas, 6 lines, 6 syllables)

How to compare art forms  
Music sculpting dancing  
A poet tries painting  
Canvas brush paint color  
Blending shading mixing  
Technique practice control

To represent the world  
In new visual ways  
Maybe real or abstract  
Shapes and colors allow  
Different emotions  
viewer to interpret

But clever words do not  
Translate to steady hands  
Rhyming and accent skill  
Distinct from color flow  
Maybe art is unique  
We each have distinct skills

## Senryu

- 5    So many projects
- 7    I need to accomplish soon
- 5    Maybe I should start

## Tanka

- 5 Faces in the crowd
- 7 Rare to find an artist's soul
- 5 Another like me
- 7 When found, a new precious friend
- 7 We share a deep, caring heart



## **Triolet**

- A I am just an actor looking for a new play
- B Perhaps my character no longer in demand
- a So much has changed from yesterday
- A I am just an actor looking for a new play
- a Old friends gone, never again to pass this way.
- b All things change. Who I was, no longer who I am
- A I am just an actor looking for a new play
- B Perhaps my character no longer in demand

## Zappai

- 5 See hear touch smell taste
- 7 These senses we know about
- 5 But how many more?

## About the Author

Jeff Bettger is a real estate agent in Chula Vista, CA and a past professor of special education. His poetry writing began in earnest while taking care of his ill father. During that time, he discovered poetry's healing power. A tribute to his father and other samples of Jeff's poems, awards, and publications can be found on his website [www.JeffBettgerPoetry.com](http://www.JeffBettgerPoetry.com). Jeff's poems employ a wide range of forms and cover a broad range of topics, typically optimistic in nature. Jeff is also the co-host of a community-themed video podcast [www.SouthBayFM.com](http://www.SouthBayFM.com) in which local educators, business owners and elected officials are interviewed. Jeff's newest endeavor is as the Executive Director of [www.TheTowneLocalBonita.com](http://www.TheTowneLocalBonita.com), a community-based monthly magazine. Jeff's long-term writing goal is to encourage a wider range of people to read and write poetry, especially teens and seniors.