

THE SONNET

The Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet

First quatrain	a		
	b		
	b		
	a	Octave	
Second quatrain	a		
	b		
	b		
	a		
	Turn, or volta		
First tercet	c		
	d		
	e	Sestet	
Second tercet	c		
	d		
	e		

The essence of the sonnet's form is the unequal relationship between octave and sestet, which is one of observation and conclusion, or statement and counterstatement. The turn after the octave is a shift of thought or feeling which develops the subject of the sonnet by surprise or conviction to its conclusion. This form employs feminine rhyme. (Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Auden.)

The English (Shakespearean) Sonnet

First quatrain	a		
	b		
	a		
	b		
Second quatrain	c		
	d	Douzain	
	c		
	d		
Third quatrain	e		
	f		
	e		
	f		
	Turn, or volta		
Couplet	g		
	g		

The English form developed out of the Italian one, obviously because of a misunderstanding. There is greater flexibility in rhyming, but the twelve-to-two division is what makes the English sonnet seem particularly summary or epigrammatic. There are three turns of the screw before the point is driven home. This form employs more masculine rhyme. (Spenser, Donne, Shakespeare).

Source: Fuller, John. *The Sonnet*. London: Methuen, 1972. 1-26.