# "The Villanelle"

## Characteristics:

1. Six stanzas

   - Five tercets (three line stanzas)
   - Closing quatrain (four line stanza)

2. Two lines are repeated throughout poem (the refrains)

3. Specific rhyme scheme

   - Tercet: a, b, a
   - Quatrain: a, b, a, a

## Example #1:

### "If Only This Remember Still"

| | |
|---|---|
| If only this remember still | a 1 |
| Through faulty breath and shadows ill, | b |
| Life is truly an act of will. | a 2 |
| Through raging storms and tempests shrill | a |
| A certain trust will stand us well. | b |
| If only this remember still. | a 1 |
| In moments grim, when wind blows ill, | a |
| believe, believe, the heart will know: | b |
| Life is truly an act of will. | a 2 |
| In pressing times, when all is nill, | a |
| Note the hardships, mistakes as well | b |
| If only this remember still. | a 1 |
| For though we stumble, find our fill, | a |
| All this will face and so again | b |
| Life is truly an act of will. | a 2 |
| Sweet dreams, mad goals the sky can fill, | a |
| Now cursed, now blessed, no matter now, | b |
| If only this remember still, | a 1 |
| Life is above all an act of will. | a 2 |

**Example #2**

## "A Bright Imagination Knows No End"

| | |
|---|---|
| A bright imagination knows no end, | a 1 |
| will stir and wiggle the simplest plan, | b |
| can change and be changed til the bitter end. | a 2 |
| See that clear sky? Watch it buckle and bend | a |
| beneath the amusement of some grand whim, | b |
| A bright imagination knows no end. | a 1 |
| Though all is merely a game of pretend | a |
| Who cares when such power comes into play, | b |
| can change and be changed til the bitter end. | a 2 |
| Whatever is lost, whatever must mend, | a |
| Can always be brought back to life again. | b |
| A bright imagination knows no end. | a 1 |
| In the darkest of times, always a friend, | a |
| Though disaster may strike and break the stride, | b |
| will change and be changed til the bitter end. | a 2 |
| So don t give a glance to those who say nay | a |
| For this is something will last day to day. | b |
| A bright imagination knows no end, | a 1 |
| can change and be changed til the bitter end. | a 2 |

- **Hints:**
  1. Begin by choosing a concept and writing the two lines that will be repeated (the refrains).
  2. Notice that the poets vary the rhythm and syntax of the refrains, adding, modifying, or subtracting words to make the poem flow.
  3. Vary the length of the sentences.
  4. Do not always end the sentence at the end of the line.

Villanelle Example:

Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night by Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.


1) Who is the narrator?

2) Who is the narrator speaking to?

3) Describe the meaning of the similes/metaphors of light and dark. How are they significant?

4) Identify the personifications used in this poem? How are they effective?

5) Identify the pattern in this poem?

6) What is Dylan Thomas's message/purpose/theme?


**YOUR TURN:**

With your partner, write a villanelle using the assigned theme and rhyme words. Be sure to use at least two effective and meaningful personification and two effective and meaningful similes and/or metaphors in the poem. Follow the template on the backside.

Villanelle Template: TITLE:_____

Line 1: _____(a)

Line 2: _____(b)

Line 3: _____(a)


Line 4: _____(a)

Line 5: _____(b)

Line 1: _____(a)


Line 7: _____(a)

Line 8: _____(b)

Line 3: _____(a)


Line 10: _____(a)

Line 11: _____(b)

Line 1: _____(a)


Line 13: _____(a)

Line 14: _____(b)

Line 3: _____(a)


Line 16: _____(a)

Line 18: _____(b)

Line 1: _____(a)

Line 3: _____(a)