

Hymns and Poetry

Why the classic hymn is the apex of the art of sacred music

Tunes and Texts

Technically, a *hymn* is the words we sing and not the tune.

Most hymn books before the late 1800's had only the text of the songs with no music.

A standardized combination of a text with a tune is primarily an American tradition.

WORLD RENOUNCED.

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Choosing the Pearl.

C. M.

- 1 **Y**E glittering toys of earth, adieu,
A nobler choice be mine;
A real prize attracts my view,
A treasure all divine.
- 2 Begone, unworthy of my cares,
Ye specious baits of sense :
Inestimable worth appears,
The pearl of price immense.
- 3 Jesus to multitudes unknown,
Oh name divinely sweet!
Jesus, in Thee, in Thee alone,
Wealth, honour, pleasure, meet.
- 4 Should both the Indies at my call,
Their boasted stores resign,
With joy I would renounce them all,
For leave to call Thee mine.
- 5 Should earth's vain treasures all depart,
Of this dear gift possess'd,
I'd clasp it to my joyful heart,
And be for ever bless'd.
- 6 Dear Sovereign of my soul's desires,
Thy love is bliss divine;
Accept the wish that love inspires,
And bid me call Thee mine.

Anne Steele, 1760.

What makes modern, English poetry?

Rhyming Schemes and Metrical Patterns.

Rhyming Schemes

- The rhyme scheme is the pattern of rhymes in the last syllables of each line.
- The method for noting the rhymes is to assign letters to each (e.g. ABAB, AABBA, ABABCDCDEFEGG).

Rhyming Schemes

- Isaac Watts's "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" (1719) uses an AABB pattern.
 - Jesus shall reign where'er the **sun** (A)
 - does its successive journeys **run**, (A)
 - His kingdom stretch from shore to **shore**, (B)
 - till moons shall wax and wane no **more**. (B)

Rhyming Schemes

- Isaac Watts’s “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross” (1707) uses an ABAB pattern:
 - When I survey the wondrous **cross** (A)
 - on which the Prince of glory **died**, (B)
 - my richest gain I count but **loss**, (A)
 - and pour contempt on all my **pride**. (B)

Rhyming Schemes

- Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I Am" uses an AAAB pattern:
 - Just as I am, without one **plea**, (A)
 - but that thy blood was shed for **me**, (A)
 - and that thou bidd'st me come to **thee**, (A)
 - O Lamb of God, I come, I **come**. (B)

Rhyming Schemes

- Fanny Crosby's "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross" (1869) uses an ABCB pattern, rhyming on the second and fourth lines:
 - Jesus, keep me near the cross, (A)
 - There a precious **fountain**; (B)
 - Free to all, a healing stream, (C)
 - Flows from Calv'ry's **mountain**. (B)

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Rhyming Schemes

- B.B. McKinney's "Neath the Old Olive Trees" uses an AABCCB pattern:
 - 'Neath the stars of the **night** (A)
 - Walked the Saviour of **light**, (A)
 - In the garden of dew-laden **breeze**; (B)
 - Where no light could be **found**, (C)
 - Jesus knelt on the **ground**, (C)
 - There He prayed 'neath the old olive **trees**, (B)

Metrical Patterns

- From Sing with Understanding:
 - “A somewhat less obvious feature of poetry is its meter. Meter refers to a systematically measured rhythm of accent in verse (that is, rhythm that consistently repeats a single basic patter). Like all verse, hymns are organized into poetic ‘feet’. Each ‘foot’ consists of either two or three syllables, only one of which is accented.”
- There are many types of patterns for the feet, and they are usually identified using terminology we inherited from the Greeks. A few common examples :

Metrical Patterns

Types of metrical feet:

5 Different Types of Feet

- Iambic (2 syllables) : Unstressed + Stressed
 - E.g. “bec**ause**,” “h**ello**”
- Trochaic (2 syllables) : Stressed+ Unstressed
 - E.g. “**ans**wer,” “**Tues**day”
- Spondaic (2 syllables) : Stressed + Stressed
 - E.g. “**foot**ball,” “**heart**break,” **black** hole”
- Anapestic (3 syllables) : Unstressed + Unstressed+ Stressed
 - E.g. “un-der-**stand**,” “Ma-ri-**anne**”
- Dactylic (3 syllables) : Stressed + Unstressed + Unstressed
 - E.g. “**beau**-ti-ful,” “**Sa**-tur-day”

Metrical Patterns

- **Iambic** – two syllables – *unstressed stressed*.
 - “*A-maz-ing* **Grace**, *how sweet the sound*”
- **Trochaic** – two syllables – *stressed unstressed*.
- “*On-ward* **Christ-ian** *sol-diers* **march-ing** *as to war*”

Metrical Patterns

- **Dactylic** – three syllables – ***stressed** unstressed unstressed*.
 - “*Be thou my vis-ion, O Lord of my heart*”
- **Anapestic** – three syllables – *unstressed unstressed **stressed***.
 - “*There's a land that is fair-er than day*”

Metrical Feet

MONOMETER:	1	FOOT PER LINE
DIMETER:	2	FEET PER LINE
TRIMETER:	3	FEET PER LINE
TETRAMETER:	4	FEET PER LINE
PENTAMETER:	5	FEET PER LINE
HEXAMETER:	6	FEET PER LINE
HEPTAMETER:	7	FEET PER LINE
OCTAMETER:	8	FEET PER LINE

Metrical Foot

Iamb
Iamb
Anapest
Dactyl



Line Length

Pentameter
Octameter
Tetrameter
Hexameter



Meter

Iambic Pentameter
Iambic Octameter
Anapestic Tetrameter
Dactylic Hexameter

Irregular

- Some texts are written without a metrical pattern or with an inconsistent one.
- These get lumped together into a category of “irregular”.
- The more modern the text, the more likely it is to be irregular.
- Example: “I Will Enter His Gates”

Tunes and Metrical Patterns

- For a text and tune to be used together, the metrical pattern must match.
- Most songs today have tunes specially written to match the pattern of the text.

Mismatch Example

- Both “Be Thou My Vision” and “Abide With Me” have the same number of syllables/beats per line (four lines of 10 syllables).
- However, their metrical patterns do not match.
 - “Be Thou My Vision” is dactylic.
 - three syllables – ***stressed*** *unstressed* *unstressed*.
 - “Abide With Me” is iambic.
 - two syllables – *unstressed* ***stressed***.

Comparison

“**Be** thou my **vi**-sion, O **Lord** of my **heart**;”

S U U S U U S U U S

“**A-bide** with **me**: fast **falls** the **e**-ven-**tide**;”

U S U S U S U S U S

Try it!

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.



Try it!

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.



Hymn Meters

- **Common Meter** (abbreviated **C.M.**) – 8.6.8.6
 - Example: “Amazing Grace”
- **Short Meter** (abbreviated **S.M.**) – 6.6.8.6
 - Example: “Blest Be The Tie That Binds”
- **Long Meter** (abbreviated **L.M.**) – 8.8.8.8
 - Example: “Doxology”

Hymn Meters (Double)

- **Common Meter Double** (abbreviated **C.M.D.**) – 8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6
 - Example: “It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”
- **Short Meter Double** (abbreviated **S.M.D.**) – 6.6.8.6.6.6.8.6.
 - Example: “Crown Him With Many Crowns”
- **Long Meter Double** (abbreviated **L.M.D.**) – 8.8.8.8.8.8.8.8.
 - Example: “Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Hymn Meters (Irregular)

- As stated before, some songs do not fit common meters.
- These can be listed by their own meter (8.7.8.7, 6.6.4.6.6.4, etc.)
 - There's really no end to these...
- Sometimes these are grouped together as “Irregular”
- There are other songs that simply do not strictly follow any meter...

Hymn Meters (Irregular)



1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
2. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion, O
3. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this hap-py mor - ning.



1. The_ first___ No - well the_ an - gel did say, Was to
2. For_ all___ to___ see there was_ a star Shin-ing
3. And by___ the_ light of_ that_ same star The___
4. Then let___ us___ all with one___ ac - cord Sing___

Hymn Meters (Irregular)

- Sometimes songs are so unique that they may be classified as “Peculiar Meter” (**P.M.**)
- According to Hymnary.org, “Almost Persuaded” is the only song that uses a 9.9.6.6.6.4 meter.
 - It will be classified as either Irregular Meter or Peculiar Meter.

Hymn Meters (Refrains)

- Traditionally, songs with a chorus/refrain are categorized by the meter of their verses. A notation is added that there is a chorus/refrain.
- Example: “Jesus Loves Me” is classified as “**7.7.7.7 with Refrain**”.

Content and Expression

- “A good hymn is the most difficult thing in the world to write.” – Tennyson
- Simple – it can be easily understood.
- Sensuous – it appeals to the senses.
- Feeling – it appeals to the heart, emotions, and mind.

Poetic Devices

- **Alliteration** – repetition of opening sounds of words.
 - “*His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,*
 - *till moons shall wax and wane no more.”*

Poetic Devices

- **Anaphora** – repetition of a word at the beginning of lines for emphasis.
 - “*Mild he lays his glory by,*
 - *born that we no more may die,*
 - *born to raise us from the earth,*
 - *born to give us second birth.”*

Poetic Devices

- **Assonance** – repetition of vowel sounds.
 - “*Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,*
 - *tell old Pharaob: Let my people go.”*

Poetic Devices

- **Chiasmus** – crossing of lines and clauses
 - *“Just and Holy is Thy name, (Savior)*
 - *I am all unrighteousness; (sinner)*
 - *False and full of sin I am, (sinner)*
 - *Thou art full of truth and grace. (Savior)”*
 - From a verse from “Jesus, Lover of my Soul”

Poetic Devices

- **Climax** – arranging ideas in increasing intensity
 - “Demands my soul, my life, my all”
- **Hyperbole** – exaggeration for effect
 - “O for a thousand tongues to sing
 - *my great Redeemer's praise,*”

Poetic Devices

- **Metaphor** – making a likeness or analogy by using one thing in place of another
 - *“Life’s evening sun is sinking low,”*
- **Personification** – representing something inanimate as a person
 - *“My faith looks up to thee,”*

Poetic Devices

- **Simile** – comparing two usually unlike things using *like* or *as*.
 - “*Like a river glorious is God’s perfect peace,*”
- **Tautology** – repeating a thought in a different way.
 - “*Jesus, thou art all compassion,* (1)
 - “*Pure, unbounded love thou art,*” (2)
 - From a lesser-known hymn by Charles Wesley.

Literary Patterns

- **Itemization** – combines many related ideas into one theme.
 - Verse 1 - “Open my **eyes** that I may see...”
 - Verse 2 – “Open my **ears** that I may hear...”
 - Verse 3 – “Open my **mouth** and let me bear...”

Literary Patterns

- **Call and Response** – sometimes called antiphony, where each line is followed by a tag or refrain.
 - “O for a thousand tongues to sing, - **CALL**
 - Blessed be the name of the Lord! - **RESPONSE**
 - The glories of my God and King, - **CALL**
 - Blessed be the name of the Lord!” - **RESPONSE**

Literary Patterns

- **Dialogue** – question and answer, conversation.
 - Verse 1 - “What Child is this, who, laid to rest,” – **QUESTION**
 - Chorus – “This, this is Christ, the King,” – **ANSWER**

Literary Patterns

- **Trinitarian** – similar to itemization, these hymns have one verse for each Person of the Trinity. A good example is “Come, Thou Almighty King”:
 - Verse 1 - “Come, thou almighty King...” - **FATHER**
 - Verse 2 – “Come, thou incarnate Word...” - **SON**
 - Verse 3 – “Come, holy Comforter,...” - **SPIRIT**
 - Verse 4 – “To thee, great One in Three...” - **TRINITY**