

Yule

Sestinas

A sestina is a 39-line poem. There are 6 verses of six lines each and a three-line verse to end it. The words that end each line of the first verse are used for the endings of the lines in **all** of the following verses. They must be rotated in a set pattern, (see below). *There is **no rhyme** in sestinas.* Sestinas are just one example of a fixed-verse form of poetry.

The way that a sestina is put together will enable you to produce a number of effects. The repeating of patterns within the poem is just one example.

History tells us that this form of poetry was invented by a French troubadour called Armut Daniel in the 12th Century.

The order of the lines and their endings in each verse are as below:

- 1,2,3,4,5,6
- 6,1,5,2,4,3
- 3,6,4,1,2,5
- 5,3,2,6,1,4
- 4,5,1,3,6,2
- 2,4,6,5,3,1 (*You might see a pattern here. Try to find out how it works.*)
- In the last verse, two words must appear in each line. The first anywhere in the line and the second at the end. The sequence is 2,5 4,3 6,1



Here is a poem, written about the season of Yule in a wood. Note the order of ending words.

Yule



*Soft snow falls gently down in woodland glade
Gentle breeze breathes softly through the boughs
And Mother Earth looks down upon the wood
Where forest spirits dance among the trees
And these, the simple spirits of the earth
Who care and nurture all of nature's world*

*How sacred, Mother Earth's own natural world
Is circled there, within that woodland glade
Where flowered clearing represents the Earth
Where crusted lichens lie upon the boughs
And Ivy climbs to sunlight through the trees
The scent of dampened moss pervades the wood*





*Immortal yew stands gnarled with the wood
 Depicts regeneration to the world
 Mistletoe hangs thick among the trees
 The holly points its thorns at edge of glade
 And clusters scarlet berries on its boughs
 To nurture and spread its seed to earth*

*And oh, what sustenance from Mother Earth
 Is given to nature's creatures in that wood
 The birds that sweep and swoop upon the boughs
 And wing fantastic trails around the world
 To tiny insects, deep within that glade
 And squirrels red, cavorting in the trees*



*I stand beneath the frozen forest trees
 Beneath my tread, the frozen woodland earth
 All senses heightened in that magic glade
 To gather nature's garlands from the wood
 That harbour safe, the spirits of the world
 We cut the yule log from the woodland boughs*

*The warmth and light from winter's Yuletide boughs
 Reminds us of the gift of nature's trees
 Any myriad gifts cascade upon the world
 The wondrous bounty given by Mother Earth
 To us and all the creatures of that wood
 That sleep and snuffle in hard winter's glade*



*Each spirit bows its head to Mother Earth
 The trees stand tall, cathedrals in that wood
 And all the world lies in that woodland glade*

Graham Temby 2012

Why not have a go at writing your own Yule/Christmas poem in sestina style? I am sure there are plenty of words you can think of around this theme!



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