



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 Arnaut Daniel in the 12th Century.

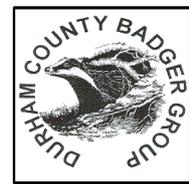
The order of the lines and their endings in each verse are as below:

- 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 the layout of a poem, written about badger baiting in a wood. Note the order of ending words.

Line		Last word
1	I heard the calls within the leafy	wood
2	As sun tipped over, slid toward the	earth
3	And breeze blew softly, wafting summer's	leaves
4	Who made the sound, and what his mission	there
5	I pondered as I stood to hear and	stare
6	But turned and wandered on with troubled	mind
6	I could not soothe the worry in my	mind
1	Etc.	wood
5	(You can change the meaning of the word, using homonyms.)	stair
2		earth
4		there
3		leaves



Now read the poem, 'Wildwood' below to see the full effect.

Wildwood

I heard the calls within the leafy wood,
As sun tipped over, slid toward the earth,
And breeze blew softly, wafting summer's leaves.
Who made the sound and what his mission there?
I pondered as I stood to hear and stare.
But turned and wandered on with troubled mind.

I could not soothe the burden in my mind,
To know what happened deep within the wood.
I went and climbed the bankside's craggy stair,
And gasped to see the carnage of the earth
For chasms gaped in riven earth right there,
Beneath my feet, while tears dripped from early morning leaves.



But who comes to the wood, defiles and leaves?
What twisted thoughts can live within a mind?
What soul could bring such devastation there?
To dig and hurt and kill in peaceful wood,
To drag old brock in terror from the earth
But I could only stand and weep and stare.

As seasons turned I still returned to stare.
Now winter's gone and spring brings forth the
leaves,
As nature mends the scars upon the earth,
But does not heal the scars upon my mind
Could I have foiled Grim Reaper in that wood?
Had I not turned my back upon it there?



Now May has come and life, new life, grows there.
And badger cubs cavort and stand and stare,
As I tread softly through the late spring wood,
And crack the twigs and gently part the leaves,
To pour the soothing balm upon my mind,
That Mother Nature's healed her injured earth.



Now summer's come and fox lies up in earth,
And suckles cubs secreted deep in there.
The badgers sniff, but not one seems to mind
When cubs emerge to blink and stand and stare,
And feel the breeze that ruffles fur and leaves
And cubs know naught of terror in their wood.

And I sit tightly on the earth and stare
At new life there that roots among the
leaves.

My mind at peace in my beloved wood



Writing sestinas is fun and is a really good work-out for your mind!

Why not have a go yourself. Here is a table for you to try out your lines.

Verse 1		Last word
Line 1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
Verse 2		
6		
1		
5		
2		
4		
3		
Verse 3		
3		
6		
4		
1		
2		
5		
Verse 4		
5		
3		
2		
6		
1		
4		
Verse 5		
4		
5		
1		
3		
6		
2		
Verse 6		
2		
4		
6		



5		
3		
1		
Verse 7		
2,5		
4,3		
6,1		



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