

# End Rhyme



## DEFINITION

What is an end rhyme? Here's a quick and simple definition:

End rhyme refers to rhymes that occur in the final words of lines of poetry. For instance, these lines from Dorothea Parker's poem "Interview" use end rhyme: "The ladies men admire, I've **heard**, / Would shudder at a wicked **word**."

Some additional key details about end rhymes:

- End rhyme is so common and noticeable in poetry that some people may not know that other types of rhyme (such as [internal rhyme](#)) even exist!
- End rhyme does not require that two subsequent lines rhyme with each other. Rather, it just requires that rhymes occur in some pattern in the last word of some number of lines of poetry. A poem that alternates rhymes in the last word of *every other* line is still using end-rhyme.
- Another term for end rhyme is "tail rhyme" or "terminal rhyme."

## End Rhyme and Rhyme Scheme

In [formal verse](#) (which is the name given to rhymed poetry that uses a strict meter), end rhymes typically repeat according to a pattern called a [rhyme scheme](#). Rhyme schemes are described using letters of the alphabet, so that each line of verse that corresponds to a specific type of rhyme used in the poem is assigned a letter, beginning with "A." For example, a four-line poem in which the first line rhymes with the third, and the second line rhymes with the fourth has the rhyme scheme **ABAB**, as in the lines below from the poem *To Anthea, who may Command him Anything* by Robert Herrick:

Bid me to weep, and I will **weep**  
 While I have eyes to **see**  
 And having none, yet I will **keep**  
 A heart to weep for **thee**

Not all poems that use end rhymes have a rhyme scheme (it's possible for a poem to have end rhymes that occur only sporadically and without following any pattern), but all poems that are said to have a rhyme scheme *must* use end rhyme.

## Types of Rhymes that Can Appear in End Rhymes

Most people, when they think about what constitutes a rhyme, are actually thinking about just one type of rhyme in particular: perfect rhyme. Perfect rhymes refer only to words with identical sounds like "game" and "tame," or "element" and "elephant." But there are

actually many different types of rhymes, and all of them can be used to create end rhymes. For instance:

- **An example of terminal pararhyme** would be an end rhyme in which all the consonants in two or more words are the same, as in "I look at the **leaves** / and think of past **loves**."
- **An example of terminal semirhyme** would be an end rhyme in which two words share an identical sound but one of the words has an extra syllable at the end, as in "I lived in Cambodia for a long **time**, / and fell in love there with a talented **climber**."

It's worth noting that the vast majority of end rhymes are, in fact, perfect rhymes. And it's also worth noting that there are some sticklers who would argue that, in fact, end rhyme must occur not just in the final word of a line but in the final syllable, and that semirhyme therefore can't ever be an example of end rhyme. But not everyone agrees with that rigid position. You should know that such debates exist, but don't have to worry about "who's right" (unless you feel passionately about one side being right!).

To learn more about the many different types of rhymes that can be used to create end rhymes, take a look at the LitCharts entry on [rhyme](#).



## EXAMPLES

### End Rhyme in Poetry

End rhyme is not as popular in contemporary poetry as it used to be in previous centuries. Nonetheless, because so much poetry from those past years is so well known (and in many cases better known than a lot of modern poetry) end rhyme still *feels* like it's everywhere in poetry. End rhyme, also, still *is* common in poetry for children.

### End Rhyme in Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death"

This poem by Emily Dickinson is written using end rhymes in an alternating **ABCB** rhyme scheme (so that only the second and fourth lines rhyme). The rhyme in this example is a perfect rhyme.

Because I could not stop for **Death** –  
 He kindly stopped for **me** –  
 The Carriage held but just **Ourselves** –  
 And **Immortality**.

### End Rhyme in Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who!*

The children's books of Dr. Seuss are written using perfect end rhymes. Here, the beginning of *Horton Hears a Who!* gives a clear example of the way in which end rhymes can have a singsongy effect that is perfect for stories and children's books.

On the fifteenth of May, in the jungle of **Nool**,  
 In the heat of the day, in the cool of the **pool**,  
 He was splashing... enjoying the jungle's great **joys**...  
 When Horton the elephant heard a small **noise**.

### End Rhyme in John Newton's "Amazing Grace"

The popular Christian hymn "Amazing Grace" was written in what is referred to as "common verse," a metrical pattern often used in lyrical compositions that is comprised of lines of 4 **iamb**s (iambic tetrameter) alternating with lines of 3 iamb (iambic trimeter). The end rhymes are perfect rhymes.

Amazing grace! How sweet the **sound**  
 That saved a wretch like **me**.  
 I once was lost but now am **found**;  
 was blind but now I **see**.

### End Rhyme in Creeley's "The Conspiracy"

The first and second couplets in this poem by Robert Creeley make use of end rhyme in a slightly more subtle, harder-to-identify form known as **slant rhyme** which, in this case, involves the use **assonance** in the final syllables of each line.

Things tend to awaken  
 even through random communication.  
 Let us suddenly  
 proclaim spring. And **jeer**

### End Rhyme in Song Lyrics

End rhyme is very common song lyrics. It's so common in fact that it's almost mandatory for songs to have rhyme in them, a fact that caused the band 21 Pilots to wish "I didn't have to rhyme every time I sang" in the first part of the song "Stressed Out."

### End Rhyme in "Stressed Out" by 21 Pilots

I wish I found some better sounds no one's ever heard  
 I wish I had a better voice that sang some better words  
 I wish I found some chords in an order that is new  
 I wish I didn't have to rhyme every time I sang  
 I was told when I get older all my fears would **shrink**  
 But now I'm insecure and I care what people **think**  
 My name's Blurryface and I care what you **think**  
 My name's Blurryface and I care what you **think**  
 Wish we could turn back time, to the good old **days**  
 When our momma sang us to sleep but now we're stressed **out**  
 Wish we could turn back time, to the good old **days**  
 When our momma sang us to sleep but now we're stressed **out**

Notice that not every line of this song rhymes. Though after the singer wishes he didn't have to rhyme every time he sings, he then rhymes the next eight lines.

### End Rhyme in "California Dreaming" by The Mamas & The Papas

Here's an excerpt from a famous song by The Mamas & The Papas in which every line uses the same rhyme on the sound "ay."

All the leaves are brown and the sky is **grey**  
 I've been for a walk on a winter's **day**  
 I'd be safe and warm if I was in **L.A.**  
 California dreaming on such a winter's **day**

### End Rhyme in "Work" by Rihanna

Often, rhymes in lyrics are not perfect, but rather a type of near rhyme known as **slant rhyme**. The following excerpt of the lyrics from Rihanna's song "Work" give examples of three different kinds of terminal slant rhyme.

Join me I **deserved it**  
 No time to have you **lurkin'**  
 If I got right then you might **like it**  
 You know I dealt with you the **nicest**  
 Nobody touch me, in the **righteous**  
 Nobody text me in a **crisis**  
 I believed all of your dreams are **duration**  
 You took my heart and my keys and my **patience**  
 You took my heart off my sleeve a **decoration**  
 You mistaken my love I brought for you for **foundation**

Notice how "deserved it" and "lurkin'" have the same vowel sounds in the final two syllables ("ur-ih"), as do "like it" and "nicest" ("eye-ih"), and "duration" and "patience" ("ae-uh"). This use of **assonance** makes these words an example of slant rhyme.



## WHY WRITERS USE IT

Poets use end rhyme for many of the same reasons they use rhyme in general: because it makes language sound more beautiful and thoughtfully-composed, like music. End rhymes can also help to increase the sense of rhythm in poetry, especially in **formal verse**, where the use of meter means that all lines have the same number of syllables and that end rhymes therefore occur at highly regular intervals. Furthermore, the last word of every line of a poem is naturally emphasized, so placing a rhyme at the end of the line emphasizes the last word even further. These two facts (the regularity and the increased emphasis of end rhymes) create a sense of a beat within the poem. This heightened rhythmic sense not only makes poetry more pleasant to listen to but easier to both understand and memorize.

The use of rhyme in general has fallen out of favor with many poets writing today. This is especially true of end rhyme, which modern

poets often feel can make poems sound too singsongy. However, despite this trend the use of end rhyme remains popular among songwriters and writers of children's books, who need their compositions to be easy to listen to, understand, and memorize. End rhyme is particularly common in song lyrics, where it is usually used in conjunction with internal rhyme to increase the number of rhymes that can be delivered in a single line, which only increases the effect of making songs more rhythmic and memorable.

- [This short video](#) defines end rhyme briefly and gives a few clear examples from poetry.

## HOW TO CITE

### MLA

Bergman, Bennet. "End Rhyme." LitCharts. LitCharts LLC, 5 May 2017. Web. 31 Aug 2017.

### Chicago Manual

Bergman, Bennet. "End Rhyme." LitCharts LLC, May 5, 2017. Retrieved August 31, 2017. <http://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/end-rhyme>.



## OTHER RESOURCES

- [The Wikipedia Page on Rhyme](#): A somewhat technical explanation of rhyme in general, which touched briefly on end rhyme.
- [The dictionary definition of End Rhyme](#): A basic definition.