

Chinese Poetry

Literary Analysis: Chinese Poetic Forms

Early Chinese poetry makes frequent use of these poetic forms:

- A **song** is a poem originally written to be set to music. Songs usually have a strong rhythm and may include **refrains**, phrases or lines repeated at regular intervals. Sometimes the wording in the refrains changes slightly with each repetition, a technique known as **incremental variation**.
- **Shih poems**, in the original Chinese, have an even number of lines, each with the same number of words.
- A **ballad** is a song that tells a story. It, too, may contain a refrain or an incremental repetition.

DIRECTIONS: Answer these questions on the lines provided.

1. Identify two refrains in “I Beg of You, Chung Tzu” that use exact repetition.

2. Identify an example of incremental variation in “I Beg of You, Chung Tzu.”

3. What does the incremental repetition in “Thick Grow the Rush Leaves” stress about the speaker’s attitude toward her beloved?

4. What element of *shih* poetry does the translation of “Form, Shadow, Spirit” retain?

5. Which of the Chinese poems most clearly qualifies as a ballad? Why?
