

**Performing Arts - An Original Poem - Any Form**  
**Mists Investiture AS LI**  
**A Sestina**

A Sestina is a poem that consists of six six-line stanzas (sextets) and concludes with 3 lines (triplet or tercet) called an envoy (or envoi). The lines are usually unrhymed. Instead it has a set pattern of end words for the sextets. In the triplet each line has 2 of the words, one of which is at the end of the line also in a set pattern; which is under some debate in the current literature.

The pattern is as follows, if we use the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 to represent the word at the end of the row:

1<sup>st</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

2<sup>nd</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3

3<sup>rd</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 3, 6, 4, 1, 2, 5

4<sup>th</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 5, 3, 2, 6, 1, 4

5<sup>th</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 4, 5, 1, 3, 6, 2

6<sup>th</sup> stanza – each line ends in words 2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 1

Triplet – 2 & 5, 4 & 3, 6 & 1 – middle and end words in each line (pattern from Daniel's *Voler*<sup>1</sup>)

There is no restriction on line length. English sestinas have traditionally been done in Iambic Pentameter or another fixed or nonfixed meter<sup>2</sup>; such as blank verse.

A 12<sup>th</sup> C. troubador Arnaut Daniel is credited with inventing this mathematical form. Troubadors were composers and performers of songs in particular styles. Beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> C, they spread through southern France, Italy and Spain. They flourished during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> C. Their works frequently focused on chivalry and courtly love, but included other topics as well.

Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca c. 1304-1374) refers to Daniel as "The Master of Love"<sup>3</sup>. Daniel was also the author of *Lancillotto* (Lancelot of the Lake). Dante (Dante Alighieri c. 1265-1321) refers to this poem and Daniel is a named character in Dante's *Divine Comedy*; in purgatory for lust. In the 16<sup>th</sup> C, the Sestina form undergoes a revival in France and in England Sir Philip Sydney (c. 1554-1586) wrote a double sestina "You Goat-Herd Gods". Petrarch, Dante and Sydney changed the line length and order of end words.

Bibliography: Poetry Form – The Sestina

Poetic Form: Sestina <http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne/form/sestina.htm#form>

The Sestina Page <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5792>

"Lo ferm voler" – The Firm Desire, by Arnaut Daniel (c. 1180-1210), written in Old Provençal French and translated into English, Daniel, Arnaut. "Lo Ferm Voler Qu'el Cor M'Intra." *The Iowa Review* 12.1 (1981): 43-44. <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2818&context=iowareview> &

[http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut\\_daniel/arnaut\\_daniel\\_09.php](http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/arnaut_daniel_09.php)

Arnaut Daniel: Complete Works [http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut\\_daniel/](http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/),

[http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut\\_daniel/](http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/), <http://www.auburn.edu/~bertocr/Lo.html>

Sestina by Alberto Rios <http://www.public.asu.edu/~aarios/formsofverse/reports2000/page9.html>

"The Sestina: An Exploration of the Dynamics of Poetic Structure", by Margaret Spanos, *Speculum*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1978), pp. 545-557. University of Chicago Press.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut\\_daniel/arnaut\\_daniel\\_09.php](http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/arnaut_daniel_09.php) --- Note: I believe it does not follow iambic pentameter.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Sestina>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestina>

<sup>3</sup> pg. 540 – footnote *La Divina Commedia, Vol. 2, Il Purgatorio*, by Dante Alighieri. Published FA Brockhaus, 1875. Commentary by GA Scarazzini. Google Books.