



For our next foray into rhyme, we leave Burma and travel westward through Europe to stop on the banks of the River Seine. We have arrived in France and here will begin with the kyrielle. A kyrielle is a poem made up of quatrains or stanzas with four lines. Each line has eight

syllables and you can have as many verses as you like.

The rhyme scheme is up to you, although we should pause here for a moment and talk about rhyme scheme notation. Basically, lines marked with the same letter rhyme. In the first stanza of William Blake's "Night" we have the following rhyme scheme...

The sun descending in the west	a
The evening star does shine.	b
The birds are silent in their nest,	a
And I must seek for mine.	b
The moon, like a flower,	c
In heaven's high bower,	c
With silent delight	d
Sits and smiles on the night.	d

So the rhyme scheme for this poem is ababccdd.

You get the idea. To return to the Kyrielle, you can use whatever rhyme scheme you wish (abba or abab, abac or aaab etc.). There is only one thing to remember: each quatrain ends with the same line -- a sort of refrain that you keep coming back to. Note the repetition ...

In the moonlight the water's black
As if a squid had inked the green--
The slick reflects the moon-shine back.
I hear so much that is unseen.

Shrill and plaintive cries the gull.
Whales moan hollow - what's it mean?
Like cats at cream, waves lap the hull.
I hear so much that is unseen.



In with a whoosh, out with a fizz
The tide leaves shells and ribbons of green
And I feel part of all that is
And hear so much that is unseen.

The refrain is a useful link for your stanzas, but don't let yourself get hemmed in by it. In the next poem, I occasionally alter the refrain ever so slightly, maintaining its sense of repetition, while giving the line a little twist. Anything like that, anything that veers away from what's expected, will help to add interest to your poetry. Observe....

Knighthood

A boy worked hard as squire and page --
He learned to ride, he learned to fight --
Until, at last, he came of age.
'Tis glorious to be a knight.

He donned his armour, off he rode
To seek adventure, till one night
He met a damsel on the road --
'Tis glorious to be a knight.

“My lord,” said she, “I am afraid,
Of dragon’s fire and poison bite.”
Said he, “No longer be dismayed.”
`Tis glorious to be a knight.

He sought the foul beast in its cave
To make an end of it that night.
He told himself that he is brave --
`Tis glorious to be a knight.

The dragon slithered from its den --
Its charred and putrid nesting site
Littered with bones of many men.
`Tis glorious to be a knight?



“Sir Knight, you need not hide from me,”
The dragon’s tone was most polite.
“Let us now speak here openly.”
`Tis glorious to be a knight.

“What is it that you hope to gain
From such a fatal, reckless fight?”
“I seek renown, eternal fame --
`Tis glorious to be a knight.”

“You might win fame, but do beware
My talons tear, my firelight
Will roast you in your armour there
`Tis tasty when I catch a knight.

“And should you live what will you then?
Wounded, scarred, a hideous sight -
Wouldst thou then tell the other men:

`Tis glorious to be a knight?"

The dragon then unfurled its wings
And leapt to a fantastic height
While the youth pondered all these things.

`Tis glorious to be a knight?

A screech, a swoop, then comes the flame.
Was the good knight slain? No, not quite.
He now cares not who knows his name
`Tis agony to be a knight.

He goads his dying horse to leave
This devil-snake, this demon kite.
`Tis true he no longer believes
`Tis glorious to be a knight.

They say he is a farmer now
In distant valleys green and bright
And would gladly tell you how
He's happy now he's not a knight.

As you can see, the refrain is repeated again and again but with a few variations that add interest to the poem. It is fun verse to write, so here are a few more kyrielles to help get you started....

Beware...

There is a house out on the moor --
Its owner has been dead for years --
But beware should you pass its door
You must not enter, nor draw near.

They say that in the attic dwells

An ancient witch who, stooping low
Over her cauldron, casts her spells --
You must not enter, nor draw near.

The evil-smelling brew she makes,
Concocted to restore her youth,
Is strengthened by the lives she takes --
You must not enter, nor draw near.

In the cellar a coffin rests
Filled with Transylvanian earth.
Its lid stands open -- where's its guest?
You must not enter, nor draw near.

He's handsome and his clothes are fine.
Nonchalant, he holds a glass
Of dark red liquid -- no, not wine.
You must not enter, nor draw near.

He'll smile at you, a toothy grin,
Of hunger, not of courtesy,
Like spider to fly: "Do come in..."
You must not enter, nor draw near.

And on a slab, a pale man strives
To piece together, puzzle-like
Long dead flesh -- "It's alive, ALIVE!"
You must not enter, nor draw near.

His creature rises, moaning low--
Abomination clad in chains,
Doomed to dwell in gloom and shadow.
You must not enter, nor draw near.



A howl then echoes through empty rooms
From yet one more tormented soul
Whose madness comes with each full moon -
You must not enter, nor draw near.

One werewolf bite would doom you too
To blood-lust -- such a tragic fate --
You'd even hunt those dear to you.
You must not enter, nor draw near.

So listen, children, be ye wise
And shun the darkness, steer well clear
And cast a prayer up to the skies
But never enter, nor draw near.

Growing Up

When I was just a little girl
I thought God cried to make the rain
And when He sneezed the wind would whirl
Is it better now I'm grown-up?

Water evaporates to clouds
Which shower us to grow the grain.
I know this fact -- I should be proud.
Is it better now I'm grown-up?

When I was young, good Santa Claus
Would sniggle down my chimney tight
And the wizard still had his Oz.
Is it better now I'm grown-up?

There's no sleigh bells to listen for,
And rainbows are refracted light
I learned all this, then learned some more
Is it better now I'm grown-up?

So children don't grow up too fast --
Don't wish these magic years away.
There'll come the day when you will ask:
Is it better now I'm grown-up?

Now you try your hand at a Kyrielle or two. Good luck!