The ABC of Composing Poetry

Some people may flinch at the thought of writing English poems.

It is, in fact, not so hard as one thinks.

First of all, we must know how to scan a verse, that is, to divide every line of a poem into several "feet" and say the number and kind of those feet. The combination of ONE accented and one or more than one unaccented syllables of a foot cannot be less than two or more than three. Nevertheless, there are a few exceptions. For instance, the accentless syllables at the beginning of a line sometimes do the duty of an entire iambic foot:

Slay the king, hath thrown his war, nor down.

Lines of two feet are hemistichs; of three, trimeters; of four, tetrameters; of five, pentameters, and so on.

Most commonly, the lines of a poem have the same number of metres. But in order to express ourselves more freely, we may use unequal metres in every line. Take Wordsworth's "The Rose" as an example:

My heart leaps up when I behold (tetrameter)
A rainbow in the sky
So was it when my life began (tetrameter)
So is it now I am a man (tetrameter)
So is it when I shall grow old (tetrameter)

Or let me die.

(bi-metres)

T. S. Woolf

PROVERBS

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.

Hans Keesler (Clement Mills School)

A life without a friend is life without a sun.

John Wong (St. V. Xavier's College)

No friend so faithful as a good book.

C. P. Low (Q. Elizabeth School)

There is no friend so faithful as a good book.

C. W. Wong (Kow Yan College)

Knowledge without morality is simply rashness.

Y. S. L.

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge.

R. T. Lau (T. C.)