

## To Write a Villanelle – *Jim Bartlett*

This is not an easy form to write but I think it will be easier if this guide is followed. I am going to create one here using the technique employed in film making, which is that it doesn't have to be written in the order that it is received by the reader. A villanelle is essentially a poem with a repeated refrain. The main poem carries the plot, which builds as it progresses and the two lines of the repeats or refrain state the theme, what the poem is about and that does not change. We start with what we know we can do and from there proceed to the unknown. People struggle because they try to start with the first line and that is one of the repeats. It is difficult to get this right in a vacuum at the outset. So start with a simple quatrain leaving out the first line of your plot and the last two lines. The rhyme scheme is important but you can write in any rhythm you wish including freestyle. There is a tendency for English language writers to go for iambic pentameters but this is not a requirement. With your spaced out quatrain complete you can start to play around with ideas for the repeats. Only when you have found ones that lines that really work should you continue with end and finally the beginning.

	<b>The Villanelle</b>	<b><i>The Instructions</i></b>
17. 19. 18.	With quatrains done, try this alternately, The block you have you'll find you can release; Begin with what you know and then you'll see.	<u>Leave four blank lines at the top of the page.</u>
1. 2. 9.	I bade you write two quatrains here for me; I knew you could write down words that would please. With quatrains done, try this alternately.	<b><u>START HERE</u></b> write two quatrains (8 lines) rhyming alternately abab,abab, leaving a double line space between each pair of lines.
3. 4. 10.	Frustrated by your inability To write the words you wanted to with ease, Begin with what you know and then you'll see.	You are about to start at #9. 9. & 10. are going to be your repeats so feed them alternately after each couplet of your quatrain.
5. 6. 11.	The rhyming scheme just had to be ay be, That over those eight lines must never cease. With quatrains done try this alternately.	This will produce four tercets rhyming aab.
7. 8. 12.	To scan the work, your serendipity Was free to roam as any summer breeze. Begin with what you know and then you'll see.	You have now completed #12 Leave three lines blank and write your two repeats in the order shown to end the poem.
15. 16. 13. 14.	To end, a couplet rhyming ay then be With creativity released from freeze. With quatrains done try this alternately. Begin with what you know and then you'll see.	At #15 write a concluding couplet to follow the original quatrain. Go to the top of the page#17 and write your two concluding repeats there with a line space in between them. That space is #19. Write an original opening line there.
		You're done apart from the revising and editing etc.

**A poem prompted by these notes, written by Cat Ginn, is given on the next page:**

# I Crash Into Your Arms So Willingly

## A Villanelle by Cat Ginn

I crash into your arms so willingly  
then catch my breath... I can't believe you'll stay  
We close our eyes, we're young, we're wild, we're free!

My hands reach out, I'll hold you lovingly  
They say so much I cannot always say  
I crash into your arms so willingly

Create the things that burn inside of me  
I'll mold you gently as if you were clay  
We close our eyes, we're young, we're wild, we're free!

I long to touch and feel you touching me  
Caress each tender curve and gentle sway  
I crash into your arms so willingly

I kiss each inch of you so tenderly  
The whole night long and lull away the day  
We close our eyes, we're young, we're wild, we're free!

To taste your skin... to bring you to your knees  
I beg you please, oh darling, won't you stay?  
I crash into your arms so willingly  
We close our eyes, we're young, we're wild, we're free!

Cat Ginn