

# A Fit of Rhyme against Rhyme

By Ben Jonson

Rhyme, the rack of finest wits,

That expresseth but by fits

True conceit,

Spoiling senses of their treasure,

Cozening judgment with a measure,

But false weight;

Wresting words from their true calling,

Propping verse for fear of falling

To the ground;

Jointing syllabes, drowning letters,

Fast'ning vowels as with fetters

They were bound!

Soon as lazy thou wert known,

All good poetry hence was flown,

And art banish'd.

For a thousand years together

All Parnassus' green did wither,

And wit vanish'd.

Pegasus did fly away,

At the wells no Muse did stay,

But bewail'd

So to see the fountain dry,

And Apollo's music die,

All light failed!

Starveling rhymes did fill the stage;

Not a poet in an age

Worth crowning;

Not a work deserving bays,

Not a line deserving praise,

Pallas frowning;

Greek was free from rhyme's infection,

Happy Greek by this protection

Was not spoiled.

Whilst the Latin, queen of tongues,

Is not yet free from rhyme's wrongs,

But rests foiled.

Scarce the hill again doth flourish,

Scarce the world a wit doth nourish

To restore

Phoebus to his crown again,

And the Muses to their brain,

As before.

Vulgar languages that want

Words and sweetness, and be scant

Of true measure,

Tyrant rhyme hath so abused,

That they long since have refused

Other cæsure.

He that first invented thee,

May his joints tormented be,

Cramp'd forever.

Still may syllabes jar with time,

Still may reason war with rhyme,

Resting never.

May his sense when it would meet

The cold tumor in his feet,

Grow unsunder;

And his title be long fool,

That in rearing such a school

Was the founder.