Sestina: A Poetic Form
Performing Art: Any Period Form of Poem or Song: Topic Beauty
A&S XL

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:

> 1st stanza – each line ends in words 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
> 2nd stanza – each line ends in words 6, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3
> 3rd stanza – each line ends in words 3, 6, 4, 1, 2, 5
> 4th stanza – each line ends in words 5, 3, 2, 6, 1, 4
> 5th stanza – each line ends in words 4, 5, 1, 3, 6, 2
> 6th 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[1])

There is no restriction on line length. English sestinas have traditionally been done in Iambic Pentameter or another fixed meter. [2]

A 12th C. troubador Arnaut Daniel is credited with inventing this mathematical form. Troubadors were composers and performers of songs in particular styles. Beginning in the 11th C, they spread through southern France, Italy and Spain. They flourished during the 12th and 13th 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"[3]. 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 16th 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".

Modern poets who have also used the Sestina are Rudyard Kipling, Ezra Pound, and TS Elliot.

Bibliography:
Poetry Form – The Sestina http://www.baymoon.com/~ariadne/form/sestina.htm#form
Poetic Form: Sestina http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5792
The Sentina Page – http://www.geocities.com/suzstina/sestina.htm
"Lo ferm voler" – The Firm Desire, by Arnaut Daniel (c. 1180-1210), written in Old Provencal French, translated by Craig E. Bertolet http://www.auburn.edu/~bertocr/Lo.html
Sestina by Alberto Rios http://www.public.asu.edu/~aarios/formsofverse/reports2000/page9.html
Wikipedia.org - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestina, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Sidney, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troubadour, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnaut_Daniel, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrarch, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri
Arnaut Daniel: Complete Works http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/

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[1] http://www.cam.org/~malcova/troubadours/arnaut_daniel/arnaut_daniel_09.php
--- Note: copy available for review – I believe it does not follow iambic pentameter.
[2] http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Sestina, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestina
[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnaut_Daniel -