# Audio file – “Hope is the thing with feathers”

[21-Track-21.mp3](https://neagov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/travisd_arts_gov/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/21-Track-21.mp3)

Dana Gioia

One of the basic questions in reciting poetry is how to deal with the line breaks. Should you stop? Should you pause? Should you just run on without regarding them? These questions become especially tricky when the lines rhyme. There is no one answer. Different people choose different solutions, but here's a little advice:

First, let the sense of the poem guide your reading. If the line ends in a period or a comma, then stop or pause as you would in prose. If the sense of the line continues unbroken into the next line then don't pause at all, or at least don't pause for more than a split second. Most traditional rhymed poems will require, or at least permit, a small pause at the end of the line, but you have a great deal of freedom in choosing how long to make it.

Here are a few poems written in traditional rhyme and meter. Notice how the speakers handle the line endings. First, the playwright, David Henry Hwang, reciting “’Hope’ is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson.

David Henry Hwang

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -

And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -

And on the strangest Sea -

Yet - never - in Extremity,

It asked a crumb - of me.