

WTHeck is a Verse Novel?

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/wtheck-verse-novel/>

This entry is part 4 of 5 in the series [Story Types](#)

[Story Types](#)

- [Types of Books with Pictures](#)
- [Genres for Kids Books](#)
- [WTHeck is Monogatari Narrative?](#)
- WTHeck is a Verse Novel?
- [WTHeck is a Cumulative Tale?](#)

This past week, a writer questioned me about a specific detail she found on an agent's Wish List, the Verse Novel. It's a somewhat rare, special type of novel. This year, I've seen this specifically requested by 3 different agents, so it must be something publishers want.

A Verse Novel is something literary [agent Gemma Cooper](#) is keen to get. It's on her Wish List.

Wha-? So what is a *Verse Novel*, exactly?

Is it an epic poem, like **Aeneid**, **Odyssey** and **Iliad**? Nope.

Artwork by Jonny Lindner.

A verse novel (a.k.a. novel in verse) is different from an epic poem. Both are at their core super long poems, possibly even full-novel length. They are both considered a type of **Narrative Poetry**. So what separates the two?

Quickly, let's define the 5 types of Narrative Poetry:

- **Ballad:** a poem that tells a story, put to music.
- **Idyll:** can be a poetic image, or a poem that tells a story, sometimes with or without music, but always the topic is about everyday, rural life (working in the fields, etc.).

- **Lyric Poetry:** not music at all, but formal poetry about feelings, usually [in first person](#).
- **Epic Poetry:** a story told in verse, *usually* about heroic deeds.
- **Novel in Verse/ Verse Novel:** a story told in verse, *sometimes* about heroic deeds.

Looking at these last two abbreviated definitions, epic poetry and the novel in verse still seem a lot alike. I promise they are different!

Verse Novel vs. Epic Poem

An epic poem focuses primarily on the language and form. While there could well be a real plot, the character development aspect of the story takes a backseat to metered verse.

In a verse novel, character development and plot are considerably more important than language or poetry formalities. Verse novels are considered mostly a story, and the poetry aspect is cream.

Verse novels can also be just partially in verse, as the poetry form does not need to carry completely through. The verse novel only needs to be a continuous story with a real character arc, expressed to some degree in verse.

I know - this isn't a pat and dry definition. But that's just how it is – it's a fluid sort of identifier, with degrees where you're just not sure where to draw the line. It's quite possible that you've even read a verse novel and not realized that that's what it was.

The best way to learn is by experience – go look for great examples and glean everything you can from them.

Great Examples

Sarah Tregay, who is an accomplished author of verse novels, has compiled some great reading lists, so I'm sharing those here. [Note: Tregay knows what she's talking about!] You'll find her own verse novels listed on her website, and I do recommend reading those.

[Middle Grade Verse Novels](#)

[YA Verse Novels](#)

[Short Story Verse Novels](#)

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[<< WTHeck is Monogatari Narrative?WTHeck is a Cumulative Tale? >>](#)

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