QUATRAIN

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I burn my matches at both ends,
They're kinda hard to handle.
But, ah, my friends, and, oh, my foes,
I can't afford a candle. (Anon.)

That is a verse of poetry -- right?

Wrong -- it is a stanza, a stave, or even a strophe, but not a verse. Verse, derived from the Anglo-Saxon fers, "a furrow," is a line of poetry. It is sometimes called a monostich.

The simplest stanza is of two lines, called a couplet or distich. Dorothy Parker's immortal contribution

Men seldom make passes
At girls who wear glasses

is closed, in that it is logically and grammatically complete. The first line is said to be run-on since the sense runs over to the second line. This is also called enjambment.

Albert Wilansky's couplet

There lived in our abode a nice lieut.
He moved, and now we're seeking a nieut.

is also closed. But both lines are end-stopped; each has a logical pause at the end.

An open couplet is one in which the second line is run-on and requires the first line of the succeeding couplet to complete its meaning.

A stanza of three lines is a tercet. As a rule, all three lines rhyme, as in this amphibrach hexameter:

Whenever you edit,
You get little credit,
Since you never said it.

The quatrain is the most common of stanza forms. It consists of four lines with fifteen possible rhyme schemes. There are four ways in which two couplets can be combined into a quatrain.
AAAA  Thomas Brown wrote this double couplet paraphrasing a Latin quotation:

I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.

AABB  This double couplet is sometimes called the heroic quatrain or elegiac stanza (from Gray's "Elegy"). Beecham's Pills, a British laxative, is said to have published the world's worst advertisement:

Hark the herald angels sing
Beecham's Pills are just the thing,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
Two for man and one for child.

ABBA  Tennyson used a couplet within a couplet for his "In Memoriam"; hence this type of quatrain is sometimes called the In Memoriam stanza. This one is a Mother Goose rhyme:

As I went to Bonner
I met a pig
Without a wig
Upon my word of honor.

ABAB  The interlaced couplet. I don't know who wrote this; I wish it had been me.

May his clothes be in patches,
On him be a pox
Who puts the burned matches
Back into the box.

There are six ways that two unrhymed lines can be inserted into a couplet, but only one of them is named.

BACA  This is really a couplet written as a quatrain. It is known as the ballad rhyming scheme:

I've never seen my Bishop's eyes,
They may with glory shine;
When he prays, he closes his,
And when he preaches, mine. (Anon.)

AABC  In Dublin's fair city
Where the girls are so pretty
There lived a fishmonger
Named Molly Malone.

ABAC  Ruby Mae, Ruby Mae, you have a ring,
Hey, way, diddle di diddle.
Ruby Mae, Ruby Mae, you have no wedding,
Hey, way, diddle di day.

BAAC
Snails have shells,
Pecans, too.
As also do
Cockles and walnuts.

ABCA
And whom do I speak of?
She looks a fright.
She weighs a ton,
Yet she's the one I love.

BCAA
Whatever I do,
Where ever I go,
I try to write
A poem each night.

Blank verse scans but does not rhyme. This showed up in college humor during the 1930s:

ABCD
I am in love with a girl named Gwendolyn.
Her mother makes wonderful mashed potatoes.
But she is in love with a horse and buggy.
Come, let us go lean against the river.

There are four ways an unrhymed line can be inserted into a tercet to form a quatrain:

AAAB This is also called tailed verse:
I should run each day a mile,
Greet each morning with a smile,
And treat my fellow without guile --
But I don't.

AABA This was used by Fitzgerald in his translation of the "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam", and hence is called the rubaiyat stanza. The following quatrain is a translation of the Latin homophone malo malo malo malo:
I'd rather be
In an apple tree
Than a bad man
In adversity.

BAAA These things I want:
To catch a huge fish,
Create a new dish,
Become nouveau riche.

ABAA I will indulge a small conceit
And brag about it just a bit;
I have accomplished this small feat:  
The quatrain is now complete.  

And this is probably more about quatrains than you ever wanted to know.

WANTED: A CREATIVE WORDSMITH

Brand Group, Inc. (640 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 655, Chicago IL 60610, telephone (312)-951-1616) is a small market consulting firm that since 1968 has specialized in developing brand names for new products, services and companies. According to president Willard Doyle, the services it offers to its clients are unique — no other U.S. company has attempted to fill this marketing niche. They have a large list of governmental and corporate clients (for example, the U.S. Department of Commerce, General Foods, the Brunswick Corporation), and are currently looking for a word-oriented person to work for them full-time in Chicago. More specifically, "creative ability with words and names will be a major consideration ... an M.A., marketing experience or background, and report-writing ability are also desirable ... an attractive salary is offered, based on experience and capability".

What role would such a person play in the selection and evaluation of a brand name? A client-oriented brochure states that "our linguistic staff ... develops lists of words, sounds and elements which contribute to the desired imagery ... some of the many devices we use ... might include"

- Word Parts: prefixes, suffixes, roots, homonyms, synonyms; morphemes (parts of words that have some meaning, as 'Bactine'); phonemes (basic sounds that have no meaning, as 'Darvon')
- Abbreviations/Combinations: 'Amoco'
- Onomatopoeia: 'Crunchies'
- Functional: 'DieHard' (batteries), 'Bee Bop' (insecticide)
- Related Usages: 'Sea & Ski'
- Personality: 'Charlie', 'Mr. Clean'
- Benefit: 'Easy Off'
- Combination: 'Sizzlelean' = sizzle + lean meat
- Fun: 'Screaming Yellow Zonkers'
- Nonsense Words: 'Duz', 'Pringle's'

This search for names is aided by a computer which can cull out names having various attributes (for example, 20000 combinations related to health, beauty, sentiment or naturalness for a retail plant store resulted in 'Nature Nook'). (For related Wordways articles, see "How to Name a Product" (May 1968), "How Not to Name a Product" (August 1968), and "In Search of a Name" (November 1968), by Dmitri Borgmann.)