La Belle Dame sans Merci is a 12 stanza ballad, each stanza a quatrain (four lines), each quatrain having three lines of iambic tetrameter followed by a single line of iambic dimeter.

- The second and fourth lines are in full rhyme, so the rhyme scheme is abcb. (but note the slant rhyme woebegone/done in the second stanza).

**Meter**

This ballad has a classic iambic beat: di-DUM di-DUM di-DUM di-DUM with the stress on the second syllable in each foot:

O what / can ail / thee, knight / at arms, (8 syllables, 4 feet= iambic tetrameter)
Alone / and pale / loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake
And no / birds sing! (4 syllables, 2 feet=iambic dimeter)

This tetrameter/dimeter contrast is unusual for the typical folk ballad so Keats must have wanted the change to place emphasis on that last shortened line in each stanza.

- The last line of each stanza therefore creates a kind of suspension. The reader, being used to the longer tetrameter lines, is then faced with a missing couple of beats, which adds a sense of loss, which in turn suggests mystery.

- In stanzas 2, 3, 4, 9 and 11 the last line has an extra beat, an anapaest foot (di-di-DUM) being employed:

And the harvest’s done (5 syllables, 2 feet= anapaest + iamb)
And her eyes were wild
On the cold hill side
On the cold hill’s side

- Stanza 3 also has 5 syllables in the last line, a spondee foot (DI-DUM) and a following anapaest:

Fast with ereth too. (5 syllables, 2 feet= spondee + anapaest)