

Sonnet and Poetry Vocabulary

Part One: The Rhythm Section

Do you know how to read music? Did you know that you can read poetry in much the same way? There is a specific way of coding poetry called scansion. Scansion is the analysis of the rhythm of the language. It is the combination of **stressed and unstressed syllables** in words and phrases. When we speak, we do so naturally in rhythm. We just do.

Scan the following words and phrases. Put appropriate marks over each syllable.

1. cat 2. banana 3. comet 4. soccer 5. alphabet
6. John Fitzgerald Kennedy 7. Where have you been?

Determining a poem's rhythm or meter is called scanning and there are many different kinds of rhythmic patterns including iambs, trochees, spondees, dactyls, and anapests.

Beats Per Foot	Name of Foot
U/	iamb
/U	trochee
UU/	anapest
/UU	dactyl

MONOMETER:	1	FOOT PER LINE
DIMETER:	2	FEET PER LINE
TRIMETER:	3	FEET PER LINE
TETRAMETER:	4	FEET PER LINE
PENTAMETER:	5	FEET PER LINE
HEXAMETER:	6	FEET PER LINE
HEPTAMETER:	7	FEET PER LINE
OCTAMETER:	8	FEET PER LINE

The following line is *iambic*. Scan this line (un-stress, stress)

He never gave a sign to me.

Draw a box around each iamb. How many iambs are in the line? _____ These are called feet.

Trochees are the opposite of *iambs*. Scan this for example:

Once upon a midnight dreary.

How many trochees? _____ This is the number of feet too.

Anapests and *dactyls* have three syllables. Scan this:

Like the wolf on the fold...

What is the pattern? _____

Hickory Dickory Dock

What is the pattern? _____

Lastly, *spondees* have two stressed syllables. Scan this:

I'm really cool. I left school. I was late.

When a poem is free from rhythm or meter and can't be scanned, it is called *Free Verse*.

Part Two: Rhyme Time

A poem's rhyme scheme can be easily determined. Here's how. The first line of a rhyming poem is called "A". Any other line that rhymes with it is also "A". The next line which isn't "A" is called "B". Any other line that rhymes with it is also "B". The next line is called "C". Get it? Practice on this poem:

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf,
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Approximate rhymes are those that aren't exact, like "hollow" / "mellow" and "look" / "back". What words would rhyme exactly with each of the words in quotes above?

Internal rhymes occur not at the end of lines, but inside them. For example:

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.

What words rhyme? _____

Part 3: Sonnets

Sonnets are 14 line poems that are usually written in Iambic pentameter, which is 10 syllables of iambs. Shakespearean sonnets have the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. A sonnet consists of 3 *quatrains*, which are 4 line units of poetry, and end with a *couplet*, which is a 2 unit line of poetry. The couplet usually resolves the problem presented in the 1st 3 quatrains.

Read this sonnet below by William Shakespeare, and answer the questions that follow.

Prologue to Romeo and Juliet

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean,
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife,
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

1. what is the rhyme pattern of this poem?
2. What is the problem that the poet is trying to pose?
3. How does the couplet attempt to resolve the problem presented?