

Meter

When Rhythm Matters!

or

“What in the *world* is iambic pentameter?!”

Part 1: The Foot

Can poems get poet's foot?

Trochee

- Stressed-unstressed
- Examples
 - **Peter, Peter pumpkin-eater**
Had a wife and couldn't keep her.
 - **Double, double, toil and trouble;**
Fire burn and cauldron bubble
Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

lamb

- Unstressed-stressed
- Examples
 - 'Twas **brillig**, **and** the **slithy toves**
Did **gyre** and **gimble in** the **wabe**.
 - To **strive**, to **seek**, to **find**, and **not** to **yield**.
Tennyson, "Ulysses"
 - Shall **I compare** thee **to** a **summer's day**?
Shakespeare, "Sonnet 18"

Dactyl

- Stressed-unstressed-unstressed
- Examples
 - **This** is the **forest** primeval. The **murmuring pines** and the **hemlocks**
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
“Evangeline”
 - **Just** for a **handful** of **silver** he **left** us
Just for a **riband** to **stick** in his **coat**
(Robert Browning, “The Lost Leader”)

Anapest

- Unstressed-stressed
- Examples
 - I am **out** of humanity's **reach**
I must **finish** my **journey alone**
(William Cowper's "Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk")
 - Twas the **night** before **Christmas** and **all**
through the **house**
 - The **Assyrian** came **down** like a **wolf** on
the **fold** (Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib")

Spondee

- Stressed-stressed
- Quite rare: appear at the end of lines

Practice

- Tell me not in mournful numbers

Practice

- Tell me not in **mournful numbers**
- Trochees

Practice

- And the sound of a voice that is still and at peace

Practice

- And the **sound** of a **voice** that is **still** and at **peace**
- Anapests

Practice

- That time of year thou mayst in me behold

Practice

- That **time** of **year** thou **mayst** in **me** behold
- lambs

Practice

- And today the Great Yertle, that
Marvelous he
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.

Practice

- And **today** the Great **Yertle**, that **Marvelous he** **Is King** of the **Mud**. That is **all** he can **see**.
- Anapests

Practice

- To be or not to be.

Practice

- To **be** or **not to be**.
- lambs

Practice

- Shuffle, duffle, muzzle, muff

Practice

- **Shuffle, duffle, muzzle, muff**
- **Trochees**

Practice

- Go make the Oobleck tumble down
On every street, in every town

Practice

- Go **make the Oobleck tumble down**
On every street, in every town
- lambs

Practice

- Go make the Oobleck tumble down
On every street, in every town
- lambs

Part 2: The Meter

Tetra-what?!

Two Parts of Meter

- Iambic pentameter
- Trochaic trimeter
- Anapestic hexameter

Nouns to Adjectives

- Trochee to trochaic
- Iamb to iambic
- Dactyl to dactylic
- Anapest to anapestic

Number of Feet

- Second part of name tells number of feet.
- Pentameter means “five”
- Dimeter
- Trimeter
- Tetrameter
- Hexameter

Multiplication in English?!

- Knowing the meter tells us
 - Number of syllables per line
 - Pattern of stressed/unstressed

Number of Syllables

- Number of syllables =
 - Number of syllables in foot
 - Multiplied by
 - Number of times the foot is repeated
- Iambic pentameter
 - Iambic = 2 syllables
 - Pentameter = 5 feet (in this case, iambs)
 - $5 \times 2 = 10$

Practice

- Anapestic trimeter
- Iambic tetrameter
- Dactylic hexameter
- Trochaic dimeter
- Anapestic tetrameter
- Anapestic hexameter

(Note: not all of these possibilities actually exist in poetry. In other words, they're not all used even though they exist in theory.)

Determining Meter

1. Figure out what kind of poetic foot is used.
2. Count the number of poetic feet per line

Simple!

Practice

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

Practice

Picture your self in a boat on a river with [...]

Practice

When in disgrace with fortune and men's
eyes

I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,

Practice

Because I could not stop for Death

Practice

Twas the night before Christmas and all
through the house

Practice

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring
pines and the hemlocks

Practice

Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean