

Meter

When Rhythm Matters!
or

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

Part 1: The Foot



Can poems get poet's foot?

a unit of stress
& unstressed syllables

stressed u = foot



1. 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*

SCA

2 Iamb iamb

- 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 human**ty's** **reach**
- I must **fin**ish my **jour**ney **al**one (William Cowper's "Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk")
- Twas the **night** before **Ch**ristmas and **all** through the **house**

The **Assy**rian 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

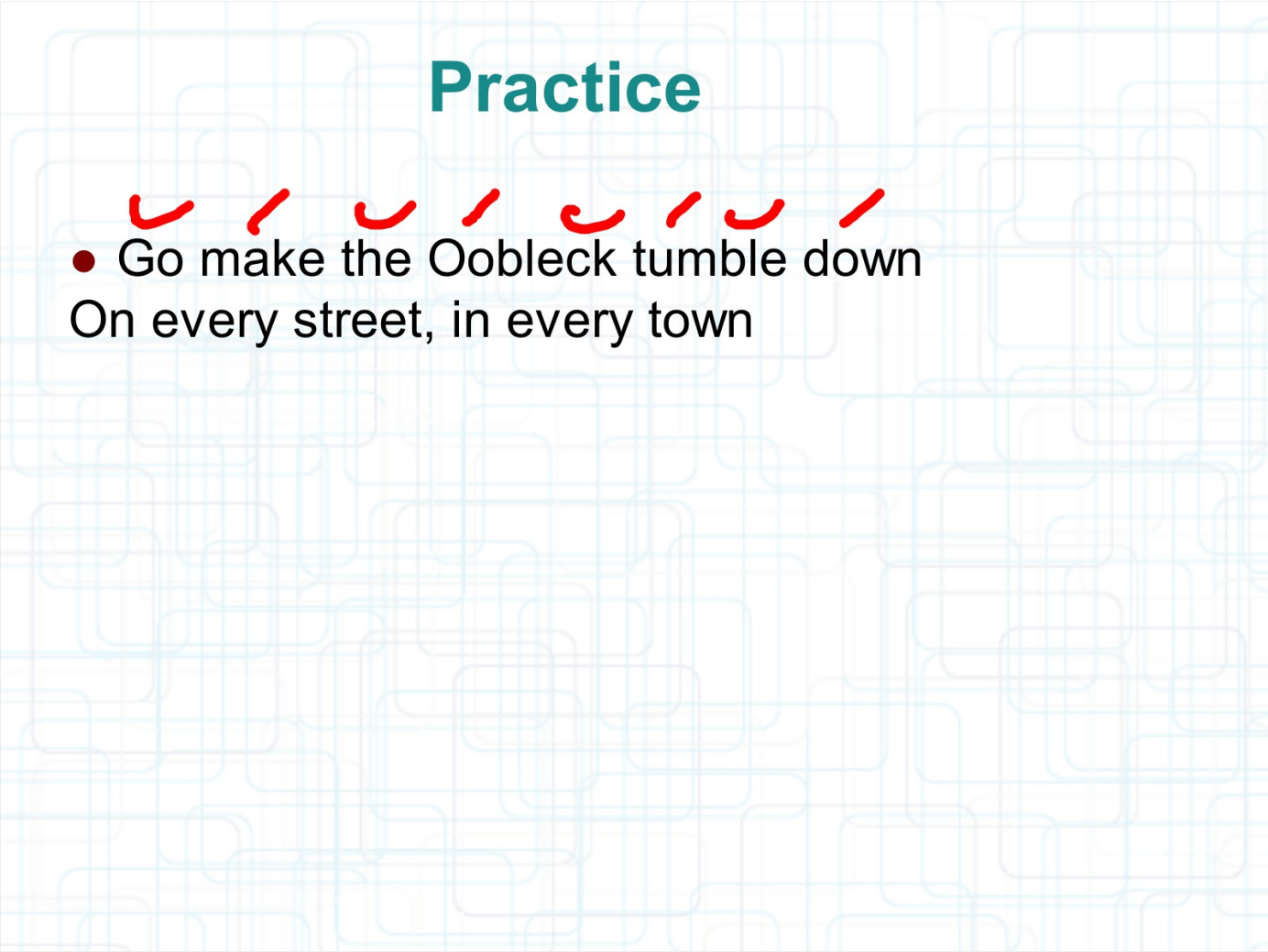

Practice

- 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 2
- Trimeter 3
- Tetrameter 4
- Hexameter 6

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 3 3 9
- Iambic tetrameter 8
- Dactylic hexameter 18
- Trochaic dimeter 4
- Anapestic tetrameter 12
- Anapestic hexameter 18

(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

Figure out what kind of poetic foot is used.
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

Twass 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