

#unstressed #stressed

Shakespearean Sonnets and Iambic Pentameter

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Grade Level	9th Grade	**Time Frame**	1-2 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	120 minutes

Essential Question

How does the meter and rhyme of iambic pentameter help convey Shakespeare's meaning in sonnets? How does it help us compose original sonnets?

Summary

In this lesson, students explore the patterns of rhyme and syllables in Shakespearean sonnets in order to understand iambic pentameter. Students compose their own original sonnets.

Snapshot

Engage

Students collaborate in a discussion and writing activity to brainstorm what constitutes a rhyme and how syllables function in poetic meter.

Explore

Students are given the scrambled lines of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 in the form of a Card Sort. With a group, they sort and organize the lines according to the sonnet's rhyme scheme.

Explain

Students learn about the rhyme scheme iambic pentameter and Why-Light Sonnet 18 to discern the poem's meaning.

Extend

Students compose their own original sonnets using iambic pentameter. Then, students collaborate to peer review a partner's poem.

Evaluate

Students read and display their original sonnets in a Poetry Cafe.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (Grades 9, 10)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5a: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—#unstressed #stressed.pptx
- Peer Review Form—#unstressed #stressed.docx
- Peer Review Form—#unstressed #stressed.pdf
- Sonnet 18 Card Sort—#unstressed #stressed.docx
- Sonnet 18 Card Sort—#unstressed #stressed.pdf
- Sonnet 18 for Why-Lighting—#unstressed #stressed.docx
- Sonnet 18 for Why-Lighting—#unstressed #stressed.pdf

Materials

- Sonnet 18 for Why-Lighting (attached; one per student)
- Sonnet 18 Card Sort (attached; one per group)
- Peer Review Form (attached; one per student)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Sticky notes (one per group of three students)
- Highlighters (optional)
- Pencils or pens

Engage

Begin by engaging students in questions that gauge their understanding of two poetic devices: rhymes and syllables. Using the Elbow Partners strategy, have students find a partner sitting near them. Display **slide 3** of the attached **Lesson Slides,** which shows the following questions:

1. What is a rhyme?
2. What is a syllable?

Possible Student Responses

Students may respond with examples of rhymes and syllables rather than technical definitions. A sample student response could be, "A rhyme is where words or parts of a word sound the same—like 'door' and 'bore,' or 'apple' and 'Snapple.'"

Teacher's Note: Rhyming Round Robin Activity Prep

To prepare for the activity below, use a pad of sticky notes. For each group of three students, prepare a sticky note with a word on it. Students will come up with a number of rhymes for these words with their group.

The words used on the sticky notes may vary depending on the character of the class. Consider using simple words (cat, brother), words that have been used in a previous or current unit, or even crowd-sourcing the words from students as a Bell Ringer or Exit Ticket from the previous class period.

After students have had time to respond to the question and a satisfactory whole-group understanding is established, invite students to participate in an activity called "Rhyming Round Robin."

To begin this activity, display **slide 4**. Put students in groups of three. Pass out one of the prepared rhyming word sticky notes to each group. Give groups *thirty seconds to list as many words as possible on a spare sheet of paper that rhyme with the word on the sticky note.* Once thirty seconds are up, have groups pass their papers and sticky notes to another group. Restart the timer and repeat the thirty-second rhyming exercise with each group adding on to the last group's list of rhymes. Then, have students pass on their sticky notes and papers again. Repeat until each sticky note and paper have cycled through each group. After each group has gone, ask each group to edit their original lists to make sure that all words rhyme. Then, ask each group to read their list out loud to the class.

After students have completed the Rhyming Round Robin, hold a whole-class discussion that connects the activity to the first questions asked on slide 3. Then, display **slide 5,** and engage students in a quick discussion to follow on what qualifies a word as a rhyme by asking them to examine their sticky notes and consider the following questions:

1. Does it have to be spelled the same?
2. Can certain letters sound the same and therefore rhyme?

Display **slides 6-7** and review the lesson's essential question and learning objectives with your students.

Display **slide 6**, and briefly read aloud the essential questions: *How does the meter and rhyme of iambic pentameter help convey Shakespeare's meaning in sonnets? How does it help us compose original sonnets?* Move to **slide 7** and review the lesson objectives.

Explore

Teacher's Note: Card Sort Prep

Before you begin this portion of the lesson, print and cut out the attached **Sonnet 18 Card Sort** activity. You'll need one set of cards for each student group. Consider printing the cards on heavy paper or card stock and storing them in plastic bags or envelopes so they can be used again in the future.

After establishing a few agreed-upon (and accurate) rules regarding rhyming through class discussion, pass out a set of the prepared **Sonnet 18 Card Sort** to each group. Display **slide 8.**

To facilitate this activity, students should read through the fourteen lines of "Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare, as shown in the Card Sort. These lines are out of order. Using the Card Sort strategy, ask students to 1) sort the sonnet lines into categories (by rhyme), and then 2) put the lines in order according to the rhyme scheme.

Teacher's Note: Sonnets

Introduce students to sonnets (or review them) by telling students that a sonnet is a poem composed of 14 lines. Sonnets typically follow the rhyme scheme ABAB-CDCD-EFEF-GG. Shakespeare wrote his sonnets in iambic pentameter.

Give groups some time to complete this task. Consider allowing no more than 10 minutes. Then, invite students to explain how they ordered the lines.

Explain

Next, students should be introduced to the key concept of this lesson: the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet, iambic pentameter.

Display **slide 9,** and inform students that iambic pentameter is a type of meter used in writing poetry. Iambic pentameter is a single line of verse consisting of five metrical feet (10 syllables). Each of these contains one unstressed (or short) syllable, followed by one stressed (or long) syllable. An image illustrating iambic pentameter is shown below, and may help students visualize the pattern used by Shakespeare:



Display **slide 10** to show students a visual of what a line of verse in iambic pentameter looks like. Read the line shown out loud as a class, emphasizing the "unstressed" "stressed" pattern.

Display **slide 11**, and pass out one of the attached **Sonnet 18 for Why-Lighting** handouts to each student. Invite students, using the Why-Lighting strategy, to read Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" and highlight (or underline or circle) five lines that contribute to the message of the sonnet. Students should explain the meaning of those lines in margins of the page.

Extend

Teacher's Note: Sonnet Theme Prep

Before you begin this portion of the lesson, come up with a typically Shakespearian theme, such as love, for students to focus on as they write their own sonnets. Insert the theme you chose into the header of **slide 12**.

Next, invite students to write their own original sonnets. These sonnets should focus on a typical Shakespearean theme like love. To begin this activity, scaffold the writing process by having students break into pairs or small groups.

Display **slide 12**. Instruct each group to write *only half* of a sonnet. To structure this, each group should either write eight lines following the ABAB-CDCD rhyme scheme (the beginning of a sonnet) OR six lines following the EFEF-GG rhyme scheme (the end of a sonnet). Assign groups to be composers of either the beginning lines or ending lines. With this activity, tell them not to worry about perfection, but rather to focus on the theme shown on the slide and the rhyme scheme. This is just practice!

Once groups have composed their beginning or ending lines, pair groups to match their lines (these directions for pairing groups will appear on slide 12 when you click). Ask groups how their sonnets turned out—nonsensical? Beautiful? Both? Ask groups to read their collaborative sonnets, and as they read, to identify the iambic pentameter and rhyme scheme present in their compositions.

After this collaboration, judge whether or not students are ready to write their own sonnets. They may need more practice, or may be ready to go! If students are ready, move to **slide 13**. To begin, students should hand-write their sonnets, practicing writing in iambic pentameter and the ABAB rhyme scheme.

Next, integrate a peer review process into the writing process by having students ask their peers to help them with suggestions on 1) how to change any lines that are not in iambic pentameter, or 2) the ABAB-CDCD-EFEF-GG rhyme scheme. For a formative assessment, consider using the attached **Peer Review Form** for students to complete and turn in after they collaborate.

Once students have hand-written the first draft of their original sonnets and received peer feedback, they should type their sonnets and make edits based on the feedback received from their peers.

Evaluate

To evaluate the original sonnets composed by students, invite students to participate in a Poetry Café, where students can read their sonnet to the class. Sonnets can be posted on the walls of the classroom so that students can read the sonnets of their peers in other classes as well.

Teacher's Note: Poetry Café

Make this Poetry Café fun! Consider creating a coffee-shop environment by rearranging desks in a new, more casual formation, hanging twinkling lights or bringing in lamps, or even having refreshments like hot chocolate, coffee, or tea for students to enjoy while they read and listen to each other's sonnets.

As a final reflection, ask students to write about the process of writing a sonnet. Consider the following questions for an Exit Ticket reflection activity:

- What did you learn about yourself through writing this poem?
- What parts were the most difficult?
- How did you overcome challenges like following iambic pentameter and the ABAB rhyme scheme?

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit strategies. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- William Shakespeare (n.d.). Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?. *Poetry Foundation*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45087/sonnet-18-shall-i-compare-thee-to-a-summers-day
- N.a. (n.d.). Iambic pentameter - Shakespeare. *Mammoth Memory.* https://mammothmemory.net/english/literature/stress/iambic-pentameter-shakespeare.html