

Mastering Literary Analysis – Week 5

Meter, Scansion, & Rhyme

Stress/Accent - a line of metrical poetry is made up of an even pattern of stressed/accented and unstressed/unaccented syllables. Every word is made up of syllables which are either accented/stressed or unaccented/unstressed. Figuring out the meter or rhythm of a line is called **scansion**.

water → WA-ter rainbow → RAIN-bow fortuitous → fort-U-i-tous

Can you guess the stresses in this sentence? → CAN you GUESS the STRESS-es IN this SEN-tence ?

Feet

As I wrote before, a line of metrical poetry is made of a **pattern** of stressed and unstressed syllables. There are different kinds of patterns, called feet:

iamb - two syllables: unstressed, stressed

trochee - two syllables: stressed, unstressed

spondee - two syllables: stressed, stressed

anapest - three syllables: unstressed, unstressed, stressed

dactyl - three syllables: stressed, unstressed, unstressed

NOTE: iambs and trochees are opposite patterns; anapests and dactyls are opposite patterns.

Meter

How many **feet** are in a line of poetry is the **meter** of the line.

monometer - one foot per line

trimeter - three feet per line

pentameter - five feet per line

heptameter - seven feet per line

dimeter - two feet per line

tetrameter - four feet per line

hexameter - six feet per line

octameter - eight feet per line

Rhyme Scheme

Much, but not all, formal poetry rhymes. There are different patterns of rhyming lines that can be easily found by marking the end rhymes with the letters of the alphabet as follows:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments; love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no, it is an ever-fixèd mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come.

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom:

If this be error and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

"A" rhyme = "minds"

"B" rhyme = love

"finds" rhymes with "minds" = A rhyme

"remove" rhymes (well, kind of) with "love" = B

"mark" is a new rhyme, so it is the "C" rhyme

"shaken" is, again, new so it is a "D" rhyme

"bark" rhymes with "mark" = C

"taken" / "shaken" = D

"cheeks" is new = E rhyme

"come" is new = F rhyme

"weeks" / "cheeks" = E rhyme

"doom" / "come" (yes, I know, not very close) = F

"proved" = G

"loved" = B

Meter & Scansion Practice

Mark each of the syllables as either stressed (**ˈ**) or unstressed (**˘**) in the following poetic lines. Then, in the space provided mark the meter (i.e. Trochaic trimeter) for each line. To help you get started, the word in the first few sentences are broken down into syllables.

- 1) A de-cre-pit old gas man named John. _____
- 2) Raid-ing the peo-ple of dig-ni-ty. _____
- 3) It does not mean a thing if it ain't got that swing. _____
- 4) On-ly sweet-ness lies in wait-ing. _____
- 5) For thou must die. _____
- 6) But soft! What light through yon-der win-dow breaks? _____
- 7) It's the time of our lives. _____
- 8) And this same flow'r that smiles today. _____
- 9) Tomorrow will be dyin'. _____
- 10) To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. _____
- 11) Striving for pleasure with all the wrong company. _____
- 12) Strong men tremble when they hear it. _____
- 13) She walks in beauty like the night. _____
- 14) Climbing mountains swiftly. _____
- 15) To the man of the house I do raise my full glass. _____
- 16) Death be not proud for thy menace is weakening. _____
- 17) Emptying minds without prejudice. _____
- 18) Jumping, flying, weeping, crying, living, dying. _____
- 19) In the distance I roam. _____
- 20) And bending down beside the glowing bars _____
- 21) I know that I shall meet my fate. _____