

ELA 10 - Shakespeare

It's now time to try our hand at writing some poetry a la Shakespeare! To do this you must learn some of the basic elements required of a Shakespearean Sonnet.

Shakespeare's sonnets are written predominantly in a meter called iambic pentameter, a rhyme scheme in which each sonnet line consists of ten syllables.

The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs or iambic feet. An iamb is a metrical unit made up of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable.

An example of an iamb would be good BYE. (It mimics a heartbeat.)

A line of iambic pentameter flows like this:

baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM / baBOOM.

Here are some examples from the sonnets:

When I / do COUNT / the CLOCK / that TELLS / the TIME (Sonnet 12)

When IN / dis GRACE / with FOR / tune AND / men's EYES

I ALL / a LONE / be WEEP / my OUT/ cast STATE (Sonnet 29)

Shall I / com PARE/ thee TO / a SUM / mer's DAY?

Thou ART / more LOVE / ly AND / more TEM / per ATE (Sonnet 18)

Shakespeare's plays are also written primarily in iambic pentameter, but the lines are unrhymed and not grouped into stanzas. Unrhymed iambic pentameter is called blank verse.

Sonnet Structure

There are fourteen lines in a Shakespearean sonnet. The first twelve lines are divided into three quatrains with four lines each.

In the three quatrains the poet establishes a theme or problem and then resolves it in the final two lines, called the couplet.

Prologue

1. Two households, both alike in dignity (A)
2. In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, (B)
3. From ancient grudge break to new mutiny (A)
4. Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. (B)
5. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes (C)
6. A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life; (D)
7. Whose misadventured piteous overthrows (C)
8. Doth with their death bury their parents' strife; (D)
9. The fearful passage fo their death-mark'd love, (E)
10. And the continuance of their parents' rage, (F)
11. Which, but their children's end, nought could remove, (E)
12. Is now the two hours traffic of our stage; (F)
13. The which if you with patient ears attend, (G)
14. What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. (G)

ELA 10 - Shakespeare

PROLOGUE- PARAPHRASE

A _____

B _____

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

C _____

D _____

*E _____

F _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

G _____

Sonnet Writing Worksheet

Part I Brainstorming

In the space provided, make a list of people or things you love. If you write about a person, (s)he must remain anonymous. Realize also that you can write about anything you love, such as your backpack, a pair of jeans, etc.

In the space provided, make a list of people or things you loathe. Again, the names of people may not be mentioned in your sonnet. And, again, things you loathe may be abstract, such as homework, school, Monday mornings, etc.

ELA 10 - Shakespeare

Part II

In the space provided, generate a list of descriptive words and phrases about one thing/person you love.

In the space provided, generate a list of descriptive words and phrases about one thing/person you loathe.

ELA 10 - Shakespeare

Part III - Use the following rhyme scheme to compose a Shakespearean Love Sonnet.

A _____

B _____

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

C _____

D _____

*E _____

F _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

G _____

Check that each line contains five iambic feet or ten syllables and that each A line rhymes with the corresponding A line, each B line rhymes with the corresponding B line, and so forth. Check that the first half of your sonnet presents the topic or problem and the second half provides the solution. Provide a twist on line nine (*E). Finally, make sure your couplet (GG lines) rhyme.

ELA 10 - Shakespeare

Part III - Use the following rhyme scheme to compose a Shakespearean Love Sonnet.

A _____

B _____

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

C _____

D _____

*E _____

F _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

G _____

Check that each line contains five iambic feet or then syllables and that each A line rhymes with the corresponding A line, each B line rhymes with the corresponding B line, and so forth. Check that the first half of your sonnet presents the topic or problem and the second half provides the solution. Provide a twist on line nine (*E). Finally, make sure your couplet (GG lines) rhyme.