

Rhythm and Meter

By: Adam Nirella and Ally Baker

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- Rhythm: Any wavelike recurrence of motion or sound
- Meter: The identifying characteristic of rhythmic language that we can tap our feet to. Accents are even intervals of time.
- Accented or Stressed: When one syllable is given more prominence than another.
- For example: toDAY, toMORrow, YESTerday.
- Foot: One basic unit of Meter

Metrical Forms

Examples: Duple Meter	Name of Foot:	Adjective
To-DAY, the SUN	Iamb	Iambic
DAI-ly, WENT to	Trochee	Trochaic

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In-ter-VE-NE, in the	Anapest	Anapestic
MUL-ti-ple, COL-or of	Dactyl	Dactylic

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TRUE-BLUE	Spondee	Spondaic
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Types of Metrical Lines and Diagramming Meters

i.e. number of feet in a line.

Monometer	One foot
Dimeter	Two feet
Trimeter	Three feet
Tetrameter	Four feet
Pentameter	Five feet
Hexameter	Six feet

*Scansion: The process of defining the metrical form of a poem.

Original Line	Scansion*	Metrical Form
“That time of year thou mayst in me behold”	“that TIME of YEAR thou MAYST in ME beHOLD”	
“Tell me not in mounful numbers”	“TELL me NOT in MOURNful NUMbers”	
“And the sound of a voice that is still”	“And the SOUND of a VOICE that is STILL”	
“This is the forest primeval, the murmering pine and the hemlocks”	“THIS is the FOREst priMEval, the MURmuring PINE and the HEMlocks”	

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IMPORTANT!

****Pay attention to shifts in the rhythm and meter, Being able to define the metrical form is important for the Multiple Choice section, but SHIFTS are important when analyzing a poem for the essay; they usually depict some change in tone or meaning that is important to the overall message or experience.**

Concepts to Remember

- **Rhetorical Stresses:** We use to make our intentions clear. For example, saying “I don’t believe **YOU**” may mean something different from saying “I don’t believe you” or “I don’t be**LIEVE** you.”
- **End-stopped Line:** One in which the end of the line corresponds with the natural speech pause. Usually the word on the end of the line has some significance, such as a double meaning.
- **Caesuras:** Pauses that occur within lines, either grammatical or rhetorical.

Metrical Variations

- Metrical Variations*: Calls attention of some of the sounds because they depart from what is regular.
- **Substitution**: One of the three means for varying meter it is when the regular foot is replaced with another.
- **Extrametrical Syllables**: Another one of the three means for varying meter, it is when extrametrical syllables are added at the beginnings or endings of lines.
- **Truncation**: Another one of the three means for varying meter, it is when the omission of an unaccounted syllable at either end of a line.
- *Look for these variations, they are intentional and usually have significance.

To A Daughter Leaving Home

When I taught you
at eight to ride
a bicycle, loping along
beside you
as you wobbled away
on two round wheels,
my own mouth rounding
in surprise when you pulled
ahead down the curved
path of the park,
I kept waiting
for the thud
of your crash as I
sprinted to catch up,
while you grew
smaller, more breakable
with distance,
pumping, pumping
for your life, screaming
with laughter,
the hair flapping
behind you like a
handkerchief waving
goodbye.

Linda Pastan