

Words, Words, Words

Shakespearean Scansion Checklist & Worksheet

The Checklist:

- How many syllables?
- What is the stress pattern?
 - - / (x 10): You're done.
 - Surprisingly strong start to the line or just after the pause?
 - Trochaic inversion
 - Extra syllable at the end of the line, end of the phrase before the pause, or both?
 - Feminine ending
- Look for contractions or elisions
- Double-check for "v" words
- Look for "-ed" and "-tion" words needing expansion
- Consider all names carefully. They can vary from line to line!
- Be aware of possible Elizabethan pronunciation differences.
- Lines split between two characters?
- Lines of prose thrown in?
- Magical character?

How to Decode:

- Standard Iambic line:
 - Point of stasis for the character; normal
- Trochaic Inversion
 - Indicates a word or words that need to be stressed differently
 - Helps to break the monotony of standard iambic rhythm
- Feminine Endings
 - Indicates a character in a state of influx or varying level of crisis
- Caesuras
 - Create a natural break for a thought; a beat
- Elisions and Expanded Words
 - To use the word to help the iambic rhythm
- If you come across one of these variations of the standard iambic pentameter form, it's a clue that you need to do a bit of character development.
 - Figure out what is going on with your character!

Examples:

1. He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
2. The quality of mercy is not strained
3. And live how we can, yet die we must.
4. Now is the winter of our discontent.
5. Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
6. Brutus, I do observe you now of late
7. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him
8. Her dotage now I do begin to pity
9. Free from the bondage you are in Messala.
10. And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep
11. To be or not to be. That is the question.
12. My father's brother, but no more like my father
13. He hath more worthy interest to the state
14. An honest tale speeds best being plainly told.
15. I had rather be a dog and bay the moon

16. His noble kinsman – most degenerate king!
17. She is a virtuous and a reverend lady.
18. From Athens is her house remote seven leagues.
19. And Death's pale flag is not advanced there
20. I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
21. Such tricks hath strong imagination.
22. The brightest heaven of invention
23. But Brutus says he was ambitious
24. And Brutus is an honorable man.
25. Madness in great ones must not unwatched go
26. Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore art thou Romeo?
27. My manors, rents, revenues I forgo;
28. Nor construe any futher my neglect.
29. Orlando: I will not touch a bit.
Duke: Go find him out.
30. If we shadows have offended,