

# *From Syllables to Sonnets:*

## The Basics of Writing Structured Poetry

John Saras, Graduate Fellow in  
Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

Gluck Fellows Program of the Arts at University of California, Riverside



John Saras would like to thank Christine G. Leapman,  
Joseph Santarromana, and Ruth Thompson.

He can be reached at [j.sara015@ucr.edu](mailto:j.sara015@ucr.edu).

## Table of Contents

1. What is a sonnet?
2. Can I write a sonnet?
3. What are syllables?
4. Syllables game!
5. What are lines and stanzas?
6. What are haikus?
7. Write your own haikus!
8. What is syllable stress?
9. Syllable stress game!
10. What is an iamb?
11. Iamb game!
13. What are rhymes? / What are end rhymes?
14. Rhyming game!
16. What is rhyme scheme?
17. Rhyme scheme game #1
19. Rhyme scheme game #2
21. What is a limerick?
22. Write your own limerick!
23. What is a rhyming couplet? / What is meter?
24. Rhyming couplet game!
25. What is iambic pentameter?
26. Iambic pentameter game!
27. What is sonnet structure?
29. Game: let's write a sonnet!
31. Your very own sonnet!
33. Another type of sonnet!
34. Other types of poems!

## What Is A Sonnet?

A sonnet is a type of poem that follows a very specific structure.

The most famous writer of sonnets was William Shakespeare  
(he even has a type of sonnet named after him!),  
whom you might know from his many famous plays  
(such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*).

Below are two poems, one by me, and one by Shakespeare.  
Before you even read them, just take a peek at how they look on the page.  
You might notice that they are a very similar same shape and size.  
That's because both poems are following the sonnet **structure!**

Now, go ahead and read them! It will help if you read them both aloud,  
and don't worry if you're not used to some of the words, just do your best!

The moon shines brightest on the longest night,  
While sparkling snow reflects its silver beams.  
The woods I walk are brilliantly bright;  
The forest might have turned to day it seems.  
This midnight sun that guides me on my way  
Is like a quiet whisper in my sleep:  
A gentle, quiet, beautiful display  
Of hope so very delicate and deep.  
Without this light I'd wander off the trail  
To bleak secluded corners of the wood,  
And left among the darkness, cold and frail,  
Would likely lose my wit, right where I stood.  
But Oh! Reflect your hope upon me Moon,  
That I might leave this dreary forest soon!

(*The Moon* by John Saras)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(*Sonnet 18* by William Shakespeare)

As you might have heard as you read them,  
the two poems are not only the same length (14 "lines"),  
but also follow the same "rhythm" or "meter."

In other words, you could sing or rap both poems to the same exact melody...



# Can I Write A Sonnet?

Yes you can!

...Don't worry if you don't know what a *line* is, or what *meter* means,  
because throughout this workbook,  
we will learn how to write a sonnet step by step!

Writing a sonnet requires an understanding of several basic building blocks of language,  
as well as a willingness to learn the rules and play with words.

In this book we will lead you through exercises that will

- remind you of these basic building blocks (like syllables)
- expand your understanding of these building blocks (with concepts like iambs)
- teach you the vocabulary of poetry (lines and stanzas)
- try other types of structured poetry (like haiku and limericks)
- play with rhymes, rhyme schemes, couplets, meter, iambic pentameter, sonnet structure

In short, this book has explanations, games, and exercises to check your understanding, get your brain moving, and help your creative juices flow!

So, can you *really* write a sonnet?

Yes!!!

We will make it easy.

Just enjoy this workbook one page at a time,  
and by the end, you'll have all the tools you need.



Up first: Syllables...

## What Are **Syllables**?

Syllables are the building blocks of language. You might already know all about them, but they're very important in sonnets, so let's revisit them:

***A syllable is a unit of sound within speech centered around a single vowel sound.***

CAB



"Cab" is just one syllable. It can help if you clap as you say the word. It only takes one "beat" to clap out the sound.

"cab."



CABIN



Clap out the word "cabin."

"cab – in"



As you can hear, there are two "beats," or **syllables**, in cabin!

CABINET



Now clap this word out, "cabinet."

"cab – in – et"



There are three "beats," or **syllables**, in cabinet!

Remember that is not about how many *letters* are in the word, or even how many *vowels*, but how many **vowel sounds** it has.

For example, the long word "**scraunched**" is only one syllable!

Clap it out!

"scraunched"



Meanwhile, the four-letter word "**area**" is three syllables!

Clap it out!

"ar – e – a"



# Syllables Game!

Draw a line between each word in the left column with the word that has the same number of syllables in the right column.

Pumpkin	Egg
Animation	Terrific
Fork	Collaboration
Sensibility	Phenomenal
Mexico	Upon

Word challenge!

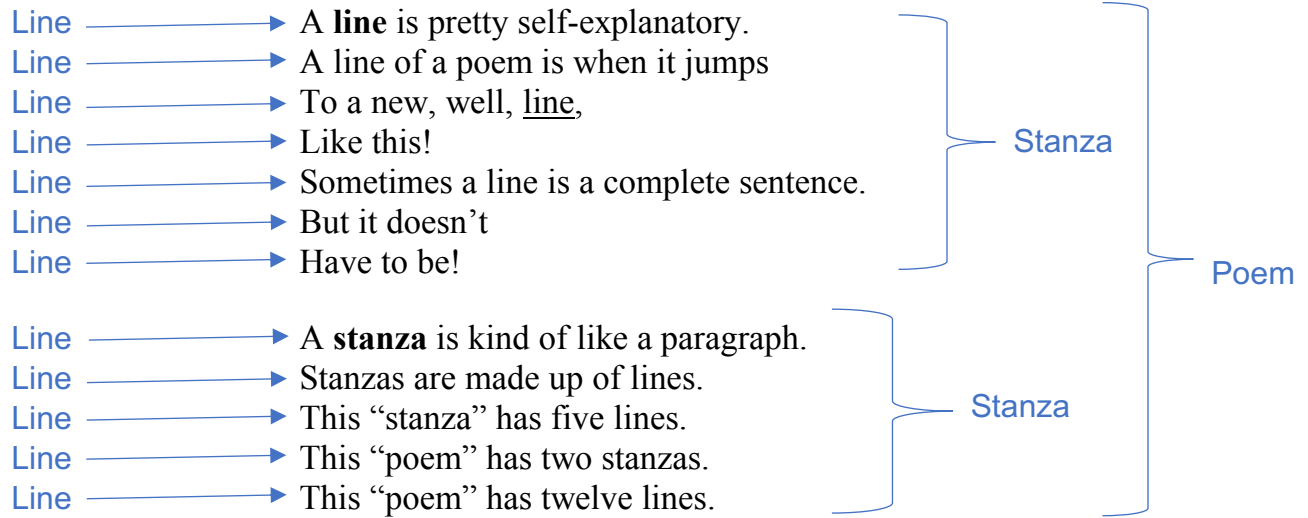
Complete the chart below by thinking up words that start with A, B, and C and have 1, 2, and 3 syllables.

<b>Number of SYLLABLES:</b>	<b>STARTING WITH:</b>		
	A	B	C
1 Syllable	_____	_____	_____
2 Syllables	_____	_____	_____
3 Syllables	_____	_____	_____

**Answers to the matching game (with number of syllables in parenthesis):**

- (1) Fork — Egg      (2) Pumpkin — Upon      (3) Mexico — Terrific  
(4) Animation — Phenomenal      (5) Sensibility — Collaboration

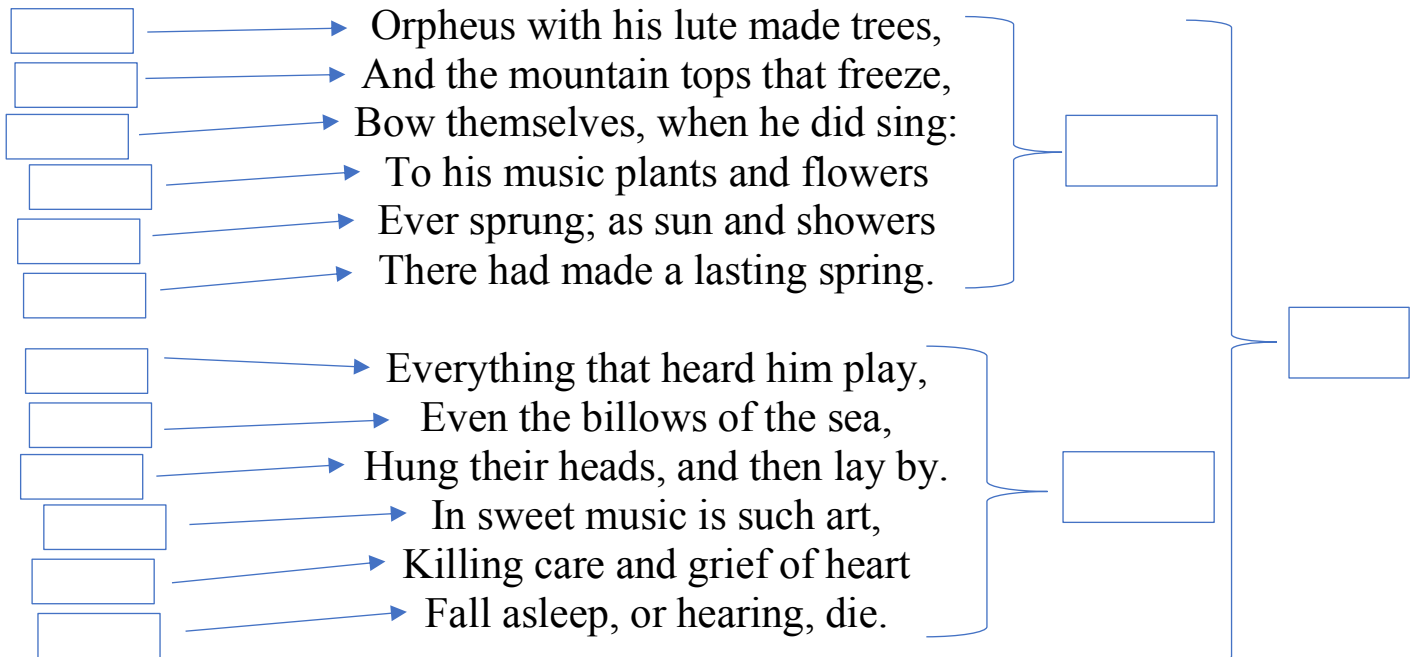
## What Are Lines And Stanzas?



## Label The Lines And Stanzas!

Fill in the boxes below with the correct label: **Line**, **Stanza**, or **Poem**.  
Does it seem too easy? It's also an exercise in reading poetry. Enjoy the poem!

*Orpheus With His Lute Made Trees*  
by William Shakespeare



# What Are Haikus?

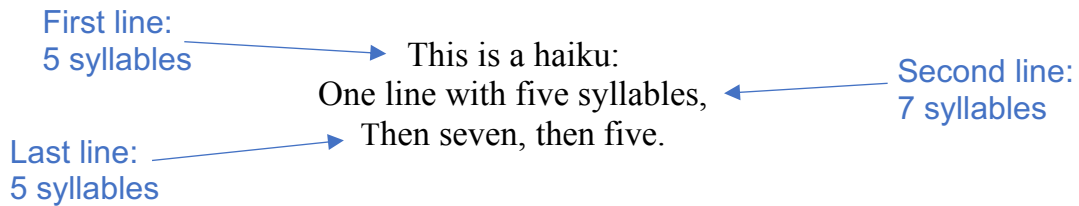
A **haiku** is a type of poem that relies entirely on its use of syllables.  
They originated in Japan in the 1200s!

They are always three lines long.

**The first line has five syllables.**

**The second line has seven syllables.**

**Then the last line has five syllables again.**



Here are some more examples:

Where is the blue sky?  
Covered in blankets of clouds  
Like it's sleeping in.

Fish are in the sea.  
Birds are flying in the air.  
Bugs crawl on the ground.

I like to play sports.  
My favorite is basketball.  
I'm not very good.

Got caught by the rain.  
Then it turned and ran away.  
"Tag! It said. "You're it!"



Haikus are most often about nature:  
animals,  
plants,  
landscapes,  
times of day,  
bodies of water,  
etc.



But you can write a haiku about anything you'd like!

They are great for practicing with syllables.



# Write Your Own Haikus!

Use the sheet below to write your own haikus!

TITLE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

TITLE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

TITLE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

## What Is Syllable Stress?

The words “desert” and “dessert” look the same, aside from one extra S in “dessert.”

DESSERT



DESERT

So, what makes these words *sound* so different?

Well, the word “desert” has the **emphasis** on the first syllable

DES – ert

Whereas the word “dessert” has the **emphasis** on the second syllable.

des – SERT

Another term for “emphasis” is “**syllable stress**.” Every word has specific syllable stress, but sentences and phrases do as well! Below are several words, phrases, and sentences with the **emphasis**, or **syllable stress**, underlined. Say them aloud!

Cal-i-for-nia

Huck-le-ber-ry - Finn

The - Un-i-ted - States - of - A-mer-i-ca

Pan-cakes

French - Toast

How - are - you - do-ing?

How are you - do-ing??

(As you can see, you can sometimes say the same sentence with an **emphasis** on different words!)

## Syllable Stress Game!

For each word or phrase, write down the number of syllables.

Then write down which syllables are emphasized, or stressed.

Lastly, think of another word or phrase that has the same number of syllables and same syllable stress!

(Tip: It might be helpful to underline the stressed syllables!)

Word or Phrase	Number of Syllables	Which Syllables Are Stressed	Matching Word or Phrase Challenge!
0 Here is an example	6	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup>	That was pretty easy
1 peanutbutter			
2 cranberry bog			
3 hamster wheel			
4 Where is the party?			
5 the clock			
6 forget			

**Answers:** 1) 4 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>      2) 4 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>  
 3) 3 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>      4) 5 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>  
 5) 2 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>      6) 2 syllables / 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>

## What Is An iamb?

An “**iamb**” (pronounced “eye-am”) is what we call any two syllables that have the stress (or emphasis) on the second syllable

An easy way to think of them is that they go “de-DUM.”



“Desert” is not an iamb, since the emphasis is on DES.

DES-ert



“Dessert,” on the other hand, is an iamb!

Des – SERT  
(de – DUM)

Some other things to know about iambs:

**An iamb does not have to be a single word.**

In the last game, both “forget” AND “the clock” were iambs!

For – GET  
(de – DUM)

the – CLOCK  
(de – DUM)

**There can be multiple iambs in one word**, such as “America.”

a – MER – i – CA  
(de – DUM – de – DUM)  
(two iambs)

**There can also be iambs spread throughout a phrase or sentence**, like in the phrase “my better half.”

my – BET – ter – HALF  
(de – DEM – de – DUM)  
(two iambs)

**This sentence has five iambs in a row!**

(this – SENT – ence – HAS – five – I – ambs – IN – a – ROW)

# Iamb Game!

In each bubble, write how many iambs the adjacent word or phrase has.  
If the word or phrase is not made of all iambs, cross out the bubble.  
Then, connect the bubbles, starting at 1 and ending at 6!

Examples:

1 Forget

X Mustard

2 The Symphony



My friend is such a funny girl.

It's the last night of the summer.

I haven't had dessert in seven days.

Below the crescent moon

That is my worst nightmare.

Has the sun set?

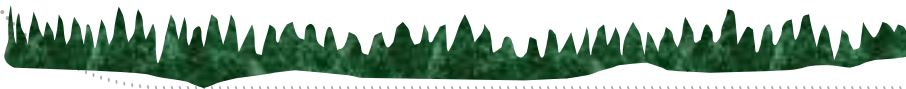
Eggplant

You might remember her  
from several years ago.

I will go get ice cream  
for everyone.

Vermont

Beyond the hill



## lamb Game ANSWERS!



④ My friend is such a funny girl.

✗ It's the last night of the summer.

⑤ I haven't had dessert in seven days.      ③ Below the crescent moon

✗ That is my worst nightmare.

✗ Has the sun set?

✗ Eggplant

⑥ You might remember her  
from several years ago.

✗ I will go get ice cream  
for everyone.

① Vermont

② Beyond the hill



## What Are rhymes?

A **rhyme** is a similarity in end sounds between words.

This seems pretty simple. Hat and Cat rhyme – they both end in “at”

Rhymes don't have to end with the *same letters* to rhyme:



I  
Sky  
High  
Pie  
Guy  
Eye  
Goodbye  
French Fry  
Occupy



All of the above words **rhyme**, ending in the sound “I.”  
As you can see, rhyming words can also be a different number of syllables.

Ireland or Eyeball do NOT rhyme with the above words,  
even though they *start* with the sound “I.”  
Rhyming words have to *END* with the same sound.

## What Are End Rhymes?

An **end rhyme** is when the lines of a poem end in rhyming words.

My name is Kate.  
That game is great.

While “name” and “game” rhyme, they are not **end rhymes**,  
because those words aren't at the end of the line!

“Kate” and “great” rhyme, and they're both at the end of the lines,  
therefore they are **end rhymes**!

## Rhyming Game!

Find two **rhyming** words that match each description below.

Example: A rad place to learn: cool school

An unfriendly monarch: \_\_\_\_\_

Hilarious dollars and cents: \_\_\_\_\_

Adorable apples and oranges: \_\_\_\_\_

Someone who slices Land O' Lakes: \_\_\_\_\_

A secret about the ancient past: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Sky-colored hair product: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Higher than romance: \_\_\_\_\_

\*A challenging grownup: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Hint: these rhyming words have different number of syllables from each other!

*Answers are on the next page, so try to solve them all before you peek!*



## Rhyming Game Answers!

1. mean queen

2. funny money

3. cute fruit

4. butter cutter

5. history mystery

6. blue shampoo

7. above love

8. difficult adult

## What is Rhyme Scheme?

**Rhyme scheme** is what we call the rhyming pattern of a poem.

For example, let's look at the following poem:

My friend, the turtle, has a shell  
Which covers him up very well.  
Whenever he thinks he's been spied,  
He tucks his body up inside.

Let's underline the **end rhymes** and mark the different sounds with letters:

My friend, the turtle, has a shell **A** } "ell" sounds  
Which covers him up very well. **A** }  
Whenever he thinks he's been spied, **B** } "ide" sounds  
He tucks his body up inside. **B** }

Therefore, we call the **rhyme scheme** of this poem is "AABB."

Here's another example:

My sister has an orange cat  
Who really likes to meow.  
I wish he spoke English so we could chat,  
But he just doesn't know how.  
If only my sister's cat could speak,  
Then I could tell him about my week.

"Cat" and "chat" rhyme, as do "meow" and "how," and "speak" and "week."  
Let's mark the end rhymes with letters again:

My sister has an orange cat **A**  
Who really likes to meow. **B**  
I wish he spoke English so we could chat, **A**  
But he just doesn't know how. **B**  
If only my sister's cat could speak, **C**  
Then I could tell him about my week. **C**

Therefore, we call the **rhyme scheme** of this poem is "ABABCC."

## Rhyme Scheme Game #1!

Below is a poem with the rhyme scheme “**AABB**,”  
but with the last word in some lines missing!

Circle the correct word in each line to make the poem follow the rhyme scheme!

### AABB

My dog likes to run, (A)

He thinks it is GOOD FUN SILLY . (A)

But if he wants to go far, (B)

He'd rather ride in a PLANE BOAT CAR . (B)

Below is another poem, with the rhyme scheme “**ABAB CDCD**,”  
but with the last word in some lines missing!

Circle the correct word in each line to make the poem follow the rhyme scheme!

### ABAB CDCD

If I could be anything in the SKY WORLD OCEAN , (A)

I'd choose to be a CROW STINGRAY BIRD . (B)

I'd fly from my nest with wings unfurled (A)

And make the prettiest sounds you'd ever heard. (B)

I'd fly over the ocean and hunt for FISH EELS WORMS , (C)

Then go back to my nest. (D)

To be a bird is my greatest wish! (C)

To be a bird would be the BOMB DISH BEST ! (D)

## Rhyme scheme Game #1 ANSWERS!

### AABB

My dog likes to run, (A)

He thinks it is GOOD (FUN) SILLY . (A)

But if he wants to go far, (B)

He'd rather ride in a PLANE BOAT (CAR) . (B)

### ABAB CDCD

If I could be anything in the SKY (WORLD) OCEAN , (A)

I'd choose to be a CROW STINGRAY (BIRD) . (B)

I'd fly from my nest with wings unfurled (A)

And make the prettiest sounds you'd ever heard. (B)

I'd fly over the ocean and hunt for (FISH) EELS WORMS , (C)

Then go back to my nest. (D)

To be a bird is my greatest wish! (C)

To be a bird would be the BOMB DISH (BEST)! (D)

## Rhyme Scheme Game #2!

Below is the same poem written twice, but with several blank words.

Complete the poem on the top with the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD  
and the poem on the bottom with the rhyme scheme AABB CCDD

### AABB CCDD

Today I saw a car go through **A**  
A tunnel that was painted \_\_\_\_\_. **A**  
It then passed by a really big \_\_\_\_\_. **B**  
Where it stopped for a moment, and then drove on ahead. **B**

The man in the car was wearing a \_\_\_\_\_. **C**  
That had lots of big holes and was covered in dirt. **C**  
He rolled down the window and said “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_.” **D**  
And I said to him “\_\_\_\_\_!” **D**

### ABAB CDCD

Today I saw a car go through **A**  
A tunnel that was painted \_\_\_\_\_. **B**  
It then passed by a really big \_\_\_\_\_. **A**  
Where it stopped for a moment, and then drove on ahead. **B**

The man in the car was wearing a \_\_\_\_\_. **C**  
That had lots of big holes and was covered in dirt. **D**  
He rolled down the window and said “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_.” **C**  
And I said to him “\_\_\_\_\_!” **D**

## Rhyme Scheme Game #2 EXAMPLE ANSWERS!

It's ok if your poems aren't exactly the same as the answers below,  
so long as your end rhymes match the rhyme scheme!

### AABB CCDD

Today I saw a car go through A

A tunnel that was painted BLUE. A

It then passed by a really big SHED. B

Where it stopped for a moment, and then drove on ahead. B

The man in the car was wearing a SHIRT. C

That had lots of big holes and was covered in dirt. C

He rolled down the window and said "Hi, I'm JOHN." D

And I said to him "I'M SORRY, I HAVE TO MOVE ON!" D

### ABAB CDCD

Today I saw a car go through A

A tunnel that was painted RED. B

It then passed by a really big ZOO. A

Where it stopped for a moment, and then drove on ahead. B

The man in the car was wearing a HAT. C

That had lots of big holes and was covered in dirt. D

He rolled down the window and said "Hi, I'm MATT." C

And I said to him "I LIKE YOUR SHIRT!" D

## What Is A Limerick?

A **limerick** is a poem that has the rhyme scheme AABBA.

The “A” lines are usually longer (around 8-11 syllables) and the “B” lines are usually shorter (around 5-6 syllables).

**Limericks** are often written about people.

Here are some examples:



There once was a boy from Mars *A*  
Who would spend all night looking at stars. *A*  
His favorite of all *B*  
Was a blue and green ball. *B*  
Yes, that planet he looked at was ours! *A*



My cousin is from California. *A*  
He usually wears a fedora. *A*  
And under his hat, *B*  
He keeps his pet rat! *B*  
Don't tell me that I didn't warn ya! *A*



There once was a queen named Jane *A*  
Who went a little insane. *A*  
She held a balloon *B*  
And flew off to the moon, *B*  
And that was the end of her reign! *A*



As you can see, limericks are supposed to be fun!  
They are often comedic and can end in a punch line.

# Write Your Own Limerick!

Write your own limerick in the template below.

*If you need help, try using words and phrases in the box at the bottom.*

TITLE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

(Long line)

A

(Long line)

A

(Short line)

B

(Short line)

B

(Long Line)

A

## IDEA BOX:

who had a very smart brain

he

there once was a girl from

there once was a boy from

was followed by geese

but he

Ohio

never had to wonder why, though

but she

he

but it still didn't work in the rain

she

who never gave her peace

Maine

that was powered by the sun

built an Xbox One

she

whose arms were both covered in pie dough



## What Is A Rhyming Couplet?

A **rhyming couplet** is a pair of lines, one after the other, that rhyme!

They also express a single thought or idea.

Also, they usually have the same rhythm

Here are some examples:



There's nothing more amazing to me  
Than how a seed grows into a tree.



My very favorite time of day  
Is when the sun first goes away.



I miss my cousins terribly  
Because they are my family.

## What Is Meter?

As you might have noticed, the lines in rhyming couplets usually have the same “rhythm” or “cadence” – in other words, they usually have the same amount of syllables, with the same syllable stress.

This is what we call “**meter**.” *The **meter** of a line is simply its number of syllables and how they are each stressed.*

Let's look back at the first rhyming couplet, count the syllables, and underline the stressed syllables:

There's nothing more amazing to me. 9  
Than how a seed grows into a tree. 9

Both lines have the same number of syllables (9), with stress on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> syllables.

Even without counting out the syllables, you can hear that they have the same rhythm by reading each aloud. They both go “*de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM-de-de DUM, de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM-de-de DUM.*”

This is what makes both lines have the same **meter**.

# Rhyming Couplet Game!

Finish the below rhyming couplets yourself.

Some require just one or a few words to complete,  
others need a whole second line.

**Remember:**

- 1) Both lines must rhyme.
- 2) Both lines *should* have the same “meter, or at least be a similar rhythm
- 3) Both lines together should express one idea or thought.

My favorite part of night  
Is turning off the \_\_\_\_\_.

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

My brothers think it’s really lame,  
But still I like \_\_\_\_\_.

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

I’ll never understand exactly why  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

\_\_\_\_\_  
And that is why I love my \_\_\_\_\_.

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

What is a \_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of  
syllables  
per line:

# What Is Iambic Pentameter?

**Iambic pentameter** is a specific *meter* in which a line has five iambs in a row.

Remember, an iamb is a pair of syllables in which the stress goes on the second syllable: “de-DUM.”

Therefore, a line written in iambic pentameter goes “de-DUM de-DUM de-DuM de-DUM de-DUM.”

Here are some examples:

My sister never listens to my mom.



Banana, apple, orange, kiwi, plum



I’ll wait for you forever and a day.

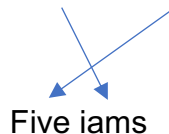
The moon shines brightest on the longest night.



But thy eternal summer shall not fade.



Why is it called **iambic pentameter**?



Since an iamb is two syllables long, lines in iambic pentameter have ten syllables.

But don’t forget: it’s important which syllables are stressed.

“Everybody I know is from Kansas” is ten syllables,  
but the stress is not on every other syllable.  
Therefore, it’s not written in iambic pentameter.

Reread the examples above and get a good sense of the rhythm!  
*de-DUM de-DUM de-DuM de-DUM de-DUM*

## Iambic Pentameter Game!

Finish each line so that it is written in iambic pentameter:

My uncle has a really fluffy \_\_\_\_\_.

Hint: There are 9 syllables already, so you know you only need to add **one** more syllable! (9 + 1 = 10)

That dinosaur just ate a \_\_\_\_\_ pig.

Hint: There are 8 syllables already, so you know you only need to add **two** more syllable! (8 + 2 = 10)

The \_\_\_\_\_ is my favorite place to go.

Can someone tell me \_\_\_\_\_?

I \_\_\_\_\_ tell my friends that \_\_\_\_\_.

### BONUS CHALLENGE!

For the next two, make each pair of lines into a **rhyming couplet**, written in **iambic pentameter**.

Each line should therefore be 10 syllables for a total of 20 syllables in each couplet!

I want write a poem about \_\_\_\_\_

Because \_\_\_\_\_.

A lot of things on Planet Earth are \_\_\_\_\_,

Like \_\_\_\_\_ and everything between.

## What Is Sonnet Structure?

We did it! You now know everything you need to know to write your own sonnet.

Just like limericks, a sonnet has a specific structure to follow. It has a specific number of line, a specific rhyme scheme, and a specific meter.

So, what is sonnet structure?

- A sonnet always has 14 lines.
- Each line is written in iambic pentameter.
- The last two lines form a rhyming couplet.
- There are a few kinds of sonnets, but a Shakespearean Sonnet follows this rhyme scheme: *ABAB CDCD EFEF GG*.



Let's look back to our original examples:

The moon shines brightest on the longest night,  
While sparkling snow reflects its silver beams.  
The woods I walk are brilliantly bright;  
The forest might have turned to day it seems.  
This midnight sun that guides me on my way  
Is like a quiet whisper in my sleep:  
A gentle, quiet, beautiful display  
Of hope so very delicate and deep.  
Without this light I'd wander off the trail  
To bleak secluded corners of the wood,  
And left among the darkness, cold and frail,  
Would likely lose my wit, right where I stood.  
But Oh! Reflect your hope upon me Moon,  
That I might leave this dreary forest soon!

*(The Moon by John Saras)*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

*(Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare)*

*How many lines does each poem have?*

*What is the rhyme scheme of each poem?*

*What is the meter of each poem?*

*Do they follow all the above rules of a sonnet?*

*(Answers on the next page.)*

**The stressed syllables have been underlined in both poems,  
And the rhyming words have been colored and lettered.**

The moon shines brightest on the longest night, A  
 While sparkling snow reflects its silver beams. B  
 The woods I walk are brilliantly bright; A  
 The forest might have turned to day it seems. B  
 This midnight sun that guides me on my way C  
 Is like a quiet whisper in my sleep: D  
 A gentle, quiet, beautiful display C  
 Of hope so very delicate and deep. D  
 Without this light I'd wander off the trail E  
 To bleak secluded corners of the wood, F  
 And left among the darkness, cold and frail, E  
 Would likely lose my wit, right where I stood. F  
     But Oh! Reflect your hope upon me Moon, G  
     That I might leave this dreary forest soon! G

10 syllables per line,  
5 iambs in each.

(The Moon by John Saras)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? A  
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate: B  
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, A  
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date; B  
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, C  
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed; D  
 And every fair from fair sometime declines, C  
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed; D  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade, E  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st; F  
 Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade, E  
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st: F  
     So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, G  
     So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. G

10 syllables per line,  
5 iambs in each.

(Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare)

How many lines does each poem have? **FOURTEEN**  
 What is the rhyme scheme of each poem? **A B A B C D C D E F E F G G**  
 What is the meter of each poem? **IAMBIC PENTAMETER**  
 Do they follow all the above rules of a sonnet? **YES!**

## Game: Let's Write A Sonnet!

Don't worry, we won't jump right into your own sonnet just yet.

Instead, let's use the skills we've learned to write one together, Mad-Libs style.

Fill out the blanks below as instructed:

a **place** or **location** with one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_  
1

an **adjective** and a **noun** that rhyme (one syllable each): \_\_\_\_\_  
2 4

another **adjective** with one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_  
3

another **noun** with one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_  
5

a **food** with one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_  
6

A **noun** with one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_  
7

Any **iamb** (two syllables!): \_\_\_\_\_  
8

A **list of things** written in iambic pentameter (ten syllables!):

\_\_\_\_\_  
9

Any **word** or **name** that's one syllable and rhymes with #9: \_\_\_\_\_  
10

Any **two verbs** that rhyme (one syllable each): \_\_\_\_\_  
11 12

**Noun** = a person, place, or thing (cat, Steve, bathroom, London)  
**Adjective** = describing word (little, purple, hungry, normal)  
**Verb** = action word (jump, write, remember, eat)

Great job! Now, transfer the answers into their corresponding places by number!

A SONNET by \_\_\_\_\_  
your name

My favorite thing to do at \_\_\_\_\_  
1 is cook.

It's something that I've done since I was \_\_\_\_\_.  
2

The recipes I get from a \_\_\_\_\_ book  
3

Or from a \_\_\_\_\_ of paper on the \_\_\_\_\_.  
5 4

My very favorite dish to make is \_\_\_\_\_.  
6

Because there are so many different kinds.

It's great if you are cooking for a \_\_\_\_\_,  
7

Because if there's \_\_\_\_\_, nobody minds!  
8

The tastiest \_\_\_\_\_ that I've ever tried  
6

Is one that I created, called "The \_\_\_\_\_!"  
10

Here is a list of what I put inside:

\_\_\_\_\_  
9

Those are a few ingredients I \_\_\_\_\_.  
11

But you can put in anything you \_\_\_\_\_!  
12



# Your Very Own **Sonnet!**

Congratulations! It's now time to write your own sonnet, about anything you'd like!  
Below is a helpful guide to help you remember the rules and structure,  
but you can write your sonnet anywhere you'd like.

## 14 LINES IN IAMBIC PENTAMETER

*iam*: 2 syllables, with the stress on the second syllable (de-DUM)

*iambic pentameter*: 5 iams (de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM)

(Optional) Title: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Rhyme  
Scheme:

_____	A
_____	B
_____	A
_____	B
_____	C
_____	D
_____	C
_____	D
_____	E
_____	F
_____	E
_____	F
_____	G
_____	G

rhyming  
couplet!

**That's all there is to it!**

**You now know how to write a Shakespearean Sonnet!**



However...there are other types of sonnets and poems, too.

Once you have tackled the above material as best you can,  
and written a Shakespearean Sonnet or two (or more),  
you might want to move onto the next few pages  
to explore other kinds of poems!

## Another Type Of Sonnet!

The type of sonnet we have looked at is called the Shakespearean Sonnet, which has the rhyme scheme **ABAB CDCD EFEF GG**

**Petrarchan Sonnets** (also known as Italian Sonnets) are also 14 lines of iambic pentameter, but they have the rhyme scheme:

**ABBA ABBA CDCCDC**

or the rhyme scheme:

**ABBA ABBA CDECDE.**

Petrarchan Sonnets are a bit more challenging than Shakespearean Sonnets, because you need to rhyme so many words with each other, but they are a lot of fun!

Below is a diagram to help you write one yourself!

(Optional) Title: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Rhyme  
Scheme:

A

B

B

A

A

B

B

A

C

D

C or E

C

D

C or E

## Other Types Of Poems!

Now that you know how to write sonnets, you can easily apply the same knowledge to write other kinds of poems!

---

### TANKAS

A **tanka** is similar to a haiku, but it has five lines. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, the third has five syllables, and the fourth and fifth lines have.

Below is a diagram to help you write one yourself!

TITLE (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ BY: \_\_\_\_\_

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

(FIVE SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

(SEVEN SYLLABLES)

---

---

### LIMERICKS

Remember **limericks**? Those types of poems followed the rhyme scheme **A A B B A**.

Look back to page 21 for a diagram to help you write a limerick yourself!

## VILLANELLES

A **villanelle** is made of nineteen lines, split into five stanzas,  
and uses the following rhyme scheme:

**ABA ABA ABA ABA ABAA**

What makes a villanelle interesting is that you repeat the first line  
in lines 6, 12, and 18, and you repeat the third line in lines 9, 15, and 19.

Below is a diagram to help you try writing a villanelle yourself!

(Optional) Title: \_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_

		Rhyme Scheme:
S T A N Z A	1	A
	2	B
	3	A
S T A N Z A	4	A
	5	B
	6 (repeat line 1)	A
S T A N Z A	7	A
	8	B
	9 (repeat line 3)	A
S T A N Z A	10	A
	11	B
	12 (repeat line 1)	A
S T A N Z A	13	A
	14	B
	15 (repeat line 3)	A
S T A N Z A	16	A
	17	B
	18 (repeat line 1)	A
S T A N Z A	19 (repeat line 3)	A

**Thank you so much for following along!**

We hope this has allowed you to harness your creativity and helped you build your language and critical thinking skills.



If you'd like to learn more about poetry,  
whether it's writing it *or* reading it,  
look for resources offered by your school,  
your local library, or the web!

*The end.*