

Poetic Forms & Sonnets

1. Introduce and distinguish concepts.

Rhyme Scheme:

With the associated handouts, have students read the definitions of rhyme, lines, and meter.

Review **rhyming** words from a previous lesson. With elementary students, practice rhyming with a short game. Choose a starting word from the list below and have them pass the rhyme around until the next student cannot think of a new rhyming word, and then choose the next word on the list. Words become more difficult to rhyme as the list goes.

Starting words: Cat, sit, day, tree, last, race, light, save.

Read with the students the poem "Forgive and Forget" (page fourteen of *A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks*.) Review **line breaks** by asking students how many lines there are. Ask if all the lines are the same length and if students see a pattern in the length of the line. (Two short, one long, one short, one long, one short, one long, one short.) For middle school students, discuss why some lines end with a period, and other lines end with a comma.

Have a student read the directions for "Forgive and Forget" and mark the rhyming words to reveal pattern ABABACAC.

Scansion:

Explain to students that finding the meter of a poem is called "scanning" or "scansion." Finding the meter can be more difficult than finding rhyme scheme because people in different parts of the country sometimes emphasize different parts of words. Have each student with a multiple syllable name say their name, and pronounce it back to them with a different syllable emphasized, ex: courtNEY or tifFANY to help them hear the how some syllables are naturally stressed and others are not.

As a class, complete the exercise in finding the pattern. Explain that the scoop symbol is a "breve" and represents an unstressed syllable, and the other is an accent mark that represents a stressed syllable. There should be 5 feet in the pattern. Explain the term "foot" and the names of meters on the corresponding worksheet for elementary or middle school students, the middle school worksheet includes additional terms and meters. Point out the prefixes of meters match the prefixes of shapes, ex. Trimeter, triangle; pentameter, pentagon.

2. Putting it together.

Turn to "the children of the poor—sonnet #2" in the *A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks*. Have students divide the syllables with one syllable in each box on the worksheet. Then read the poem together to hear the meter. Optional: have students tap their knuckles on desk on each

stressed syllable to hear the rhythm. Explain that just like alliteration and assonance, poetic forms are meant to create rhythm and add musicality to the poetry. Remind students that it's about sound, not visual syllables. They may stumble over "admirable," so note that many would pronounce it as "ad-mur-ble" rather than "ad-mire-a-ble".

Have them also notate the rhyme Scheme: ABBAABBACDCDEE and note that this is also common to most sonnets.

3. Writing prompts.

Discuss with students why poets use poetic form to express themselves—why not use any words to say what you mean? Explain that poetic form "rules" can be broken and bent, but that the best poets know when to follow the rules and when to break them, and can do both!

Give the students the following short list of poem prompts for a sonnet of fourteen lines:

- Fondest memory
- Something that made you angry once
- A love note to a favorite possession
- A thank you to someone who has guided you.

For middle school students, challenge them to try to follow the rhyme scheme as well.

Sonnets—Elementary Option

Poets sometimes choose a set form in which to express their ideas. Poetic forms are determined by a set number of **lines** or **stanzas**, a **rhyme scheme**, and **meter**.

- **Lines** are groups of words on a single line, and a **stanzas** are groups of lines together. The end of a line is called a **line break** and a line break can occur in the middle of a sentence.
- **Rhyme scheme** is the pattern of rhyming words at the end of lines.
- **Meter** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Marking meter is called scanning, and notes the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Consider the following pattern of shapes. Circle the series in the pattern that is repeated.



Each time the pattern is repeated is called a “foot.” How many feet in the above pattern? _____
There are different types of feet. The above type of foot is called an **iamb**, with the pattern of unstressed followed by a stressed.



Stressed followed by unstressed is a trochee



Two unstressed followed by a stressed is an anapest

The number of feet per line is determines the line length and together that becomes meter.

Number of feet	Meter type
1	Monometer
2	Dimeter
3	Trimeter
4	Tetrameter
5	pentameter
6	Hexameter
7	Heptameter
8	Octameter

Sonnets—Middle School Option

Poets sometimes choose a set form in which to express their ideas. Poetic forms are determined by a set number of **lines** or **stanzas**, a **rhyme scheme**, and **meter**.

- **Lines** are groups of words on a single line, and a **stanzas** are groups of lines together. The end of a line is called a **line break** and a line break can occur in the middle of a sentence.
- **Rhyme scheme** is the pattern of rhyming words at the end of lines.
- **Meter** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Marking meter is called scanning, and notes the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Consider the following pattern of shapes. Circle the series in the pattern that is repeated.

∨ / ∨ / ∨ / ∨ /

Each time the pattern is repeated is called a “foot.” How many feet in the above pattern? _____

There are different types of feet based on the pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. The number of feet per line is determines the line length and together that becomes meter.

Foot Pattern	Name of foot
/ ∨	Trochee
∨ ∨ /	Anapest
/ ∨ ∨	Dactylic
∨ /	Iamb

Number of feet	Meter type
1	Monometer
2	Dimeter
3	Trimeter
4	Tetrameter
5	pentameter
6	Hexameter
7	Heptameter
8	Octameter

Together, foot pattern and number of feet make poetic meter. What would the meter be of the pattern above? _____

Sonnets and Rhyme Scheme

Poets sometimes choose a set form in which to express their ideas. Poetic forms are determined by a set number of **lines** or **stanzas**, a **rhyme scheme**, and **meter**.

- **Lines** are groups of words on a single line, and a **stanzas** are groups of lines together. The end of a line is called a **line break** and a line break can occur in the middle of a sentence.
- **Rhyme scheme** is the pattern of rhyming words at the end of lines.
- **Meter** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Read the poem below from *A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks*. Note that each line ending in “you” is marked with an A. Find the word that rhymes with “sigh” and mark it with a matching B. Find another pair of rhyming lines and mark with each a C.

FORGIVE AND FORGET

___A___ If others neglect you,
___B___ Forget; do not sigh,
___A___ For, after all, they'll select you
_____ In times by and by.
___A___ If their taunts cut and hurt you,
_____ They are sure to regret.
___A___ And if in time, they desert you,
_____ Forgive and forget.

What pattern emerges from the poem's rhyme scheme? _____

Now, write your own poem with the same rhyme scheme:
