



SHAKESPEARERIENCE!

Poetry of the Bard!

*Shakespeare wrote his plays and poems to be said, not read. Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't read them, just ***READ THEM OUT LOUD!***

Speaking and hearing the words are very different from reading them to yourself.

SHAKESPEARE'S STRUCTURE:

He mainly wrote within a structure called “**iambic pentameter**” (fingers up!)

- IAMB= two syllables, unstressed then stressed, bum-BUM.
- PENTA= Greek word for 5.
- METER= Measurement

STYLES OF POETRY:

There are many different sounds in his poetry, some rhyme, some do not. Often, that meant different things about the character speaking. Here are the names of those styles:

- **PROSE** is ordinary speech, not necessarily rhyming.
- He used prose often to show social status – So, more common people spoke in prose.
- However! Higher status characters often break into prose as well, to change up the rhyme patterns of the play.

**For example*, Hamlet (even though he is a prince) breaks into prose in certain moments throughout the play, which informs the audience that he is being more truthful or vulnerable:

“I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises, and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. This most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire – why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.”

~ “Hamlet”, Act 2, scene 2

- **RHYMED VERSE** is usually in “couplets” or two lines at a time, of which the final words rhyme.
- This is the style of poetry that usually makes us think of what poems are supposed to sound like – rhyming.

**For example*, Helena has a lot of couplets in her speeches, try speaking this out loud:

*Love looks not with the eyes, but with the **mind**;
And therefore is winged Cupid painted **blind**.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment **taste**;
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy **haste**;
And therefore is Love said to be a **child**,
Because in choice he is so oft **beguiled**.*

~ “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, Act 1, scene 1

- BLANK VERSE is a little like prose because the final words of the lines DO NOT rhyme in any **regular pattern**.
- However! Sometimes a couplet is thrown in!
- It’s different than prose because there is a very clear pace and meter.

**For example*, Lady Macbeth has clear structure here, but it’s not noticeably rhyming:

*Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane, you
do unbend your noble strength to think so brainsickly
of things. Go get some water and wash this filthy
witness from your hand.*

***Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there. Go, carry them and smear the
sleepy grooms with blood!***

~ "Macbeth", Act 2, scene 2

YES, BUT WHY?

- Shakespeare wrote his plays and poems in verse for two reasons:
1. Tradition 2. Memorization.
- Plays and poems have been written in verse forever by A LOT of different writers... The ancient Greeks used verse...though Shakespeare did rebel a bit by using prose!
- Verse is a lot easier to memorize than prose...It's like memorizing a song, you can use the rhythm to help you remember which word comes next.
- Real people don't ordinarily speak in verse (they didn't then either) But! It sounds fabulous, it's good on the actors or speakers, all around brilliant.

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