

## SYLLABLE STRESS

Look at the following words. Say them out loud if you need to, and find the syllables in each word with the most stress. Above those syllables, a little droop (u). Above the weaker syllables, place short, straight line (-).

teacher      denim      German      father      understanding  
anapest      monometer      poem      guitar      pentameter  
rhythm      iambic      sequence      scansion      meter

Now that you've tried this with single words, try these phrases:

This living hand, now warm and capable  
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold  
And in the icy silence of the tomb,  
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights  
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood  
So in my veins red life might stream again,  
And thou be conscience calmed see here it is  
I hold it toward you.

--"This Living Hand", John Keats.

Once you have all your syllables marked, go back through and mark the feet in the poem. Do this by drawing a line to separate every two syllables. Don't worry if a line cuts a word in half; they often will.

Now that you've marked your feet, the first line will look something like this:

This liv\ing hand,\ now warm\ and cap\able

Maybe you marked the feet [now warm] and -[able] differently; that's ok, since either [now] or [warm] could receive a slightly weaker stress when spoken, and the first syllable in -[able] might be stressed just a little more than the second. No matter which way you marked these feet, you probably have a pattern that looks like this:

- u \ - u \ - u \ - u \ - u \

( Remember- all the feet won't look exactly like this. A change in the meter is what gives a poem its own unique rhythm.)

Congratulations! You've just scanned a poem written in iambic pentameter!