*What is a sonnet?*

A sonnet is a lyric poem consisting of fourteen lines.

**Structure:**

A Shakespearean or Elizabethan sonnet contains:  
 a) three quatrains (four lines each)

b) final rhyming couplet (two lines)

A **quatrain** is: One of three four-line stanzas.

A **couplet** is: The final two rhyming lines.

The Shakespearean sonnet rhyme scheme is: abab, cdcd, efef, gg

**Meter:**  
The type of meter used in Shakespearean sonnets is called **iambic pentameter**.

a) An **iamb** means a two-syllable unit, one accented and one unaccented.

b) **Pentameter** means five feet (pent is Greek root for five). So, each line in a sonnet contains **five** iambs.

An unaccented syllable is identified with a:

An accented syllable is identified with a: /

Eg. Shall I/ compare/ thee to/ a sum/mer’s day?

Therefore, if an iamb contains two syllables, and there are five total iambs in each line, the total number of syllables per line in a Shakespearean sonnet is **10.**

\*Why do we use iambic pentameter?

* -  Because it reflects the natural rhythm of the human heartbeat
* -  Because it is the rhythm most common to our natural way of speaking.

**Analyzing the Building Blocks of a Sonnet:**

1. Number the lines on the blanks provided on the right.

2. Put a box around the quatrains.

3. Put a double box around the couplet.

4. Identify the rhyme scheme by writing the letter on the left hand side of the line. For each new rhyme use a new letter.

5. Identify the stress pattern, by splitting up the feet and marking stressed and unstressed syllables.

**The Prologue**

***Romeo and Juliet***

\_\_\_ Two households, both alike in dignity,\_\_\_

\_\_\_ In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,\_\_\_

\_\_\_ From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. \_\_\_

\_\_\_ From forth the fatal loins of these two foes \_\_\_

\_\_\_ A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life; \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Whose misadventured piteous overthrows \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Do with their death bury their parents' strife. \_\_\_

\_\_\_ The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love, \_\_\_

\_\_\_ And the continuance of their parents' rage, \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage; \_\_\_

\_\_\_ The which if you with patient ears attend, \_\_\_

\_\_\_ What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. \_\_\_