Dissecting Shakespearean Sonnets

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Poetry (ancient Greek: ποιεω (poieo) = I create) is an art form in which human language is used for its aesthetic qualities in addition to, or instead of, its notional and semantic content. It consists largely of oral or literary works in which language is used in a manner that is felt by its user and audience to differ from ordinary prose.
A Sonnet is a poem of an expressive thought or idea made up of 14 lines, each being 10 syllables long.

Its rhymes are arranged according to one of the schemes = the most common is English which is three *quatrain* followed by a *rhyming couplet* = Shakespearean Sonnet.
Sonnet

The Basics

- 14 lines EXACTLY
- 3 quatrains, 1 couplet
- Iambic Pentameter
- Shakespearean rhyme scheme
  - ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
- Theme within the ending couplet
Iambic pentameter refers to a certain kind of line of poetry, and has to do with the number of syllables in the line and the emphasis placed on those syllables.

When we speak, our syllables are either stressed (stronger emphasis) or unstressed (weaker emphasis). For example, the word remark consists of two syllables. "Re" is the unstressed syllable, with a weaker emphasis, while "mark" is stressed, with a stronger emphasis.

In poetry, a group of two or three syllables is referred to as a foot. A specific type of foot is an iamb. A foot is an iamb if it consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, so the word remark is an iamb.

Pent means five, so a line of iambic pentameter consists of five iambs – five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables = 10 syllables per line.
Practice labeling stressed and unstressed syllables

Stressed

Unstressed

Each line in a Shakespearean Sonnet has five sets of unstressed/stressed syllables.

So... how many total syllables does a Shakespearean Sonnet contain?
Apply it to Sonnet 116

For every Sonnet we study, do the following:
• Annotate the poem
• Divide and Label quatrains and the couplet (chunking)
• Find rhyming scheme (hint... Shakespearean Sonnets all follow the same rhyming scheme...)
• Divide each foot/iamb for each line of poetry
• Label the unstressed and stressed syllables in each Foot/iamb
Apply it to Sonnet 116

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Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove: