

A Shakespearean Sonnet is a poem expressive of thought, emotion or idea. It is usually 14 lines which are formed by three quatrains with a rhyming couplet for the last two lines. (See Sonnet 130 below)

Shakespeare's sonnets are written predominantly in a meter called iambic pentameter, a rhyme scheme in which each sonnet line consists of ten syllables.

The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs or iambic feet. An iamb is a metrical unit made up of one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable.

An example of an iamb would be good BYE.

A line of iambic pentameter flows like this:

ba**BOOM** - ba**BOOM** - ba**BOOM** - ba**BOOM** - ba**BOOM**.

Here are some examples from the sonnets:

When **I** - do **COUNT** - the **CLOCK** - that **TELLS** - the **TIME** (Sonnet 12)

When **IN** - dis**GRACE** - with **FOR** - tune **AND** - men's **EYES**
I **ALL** - a**LONG** - be**WEEP** - my **OUT** - cast **STATE** (Sonnet 29)

Shall **I** – com**PARE** - thee **TO** - a **SUM**-mer's **DAY**?
Thou **ART** - more **LOVE**-ly **AND** more **TEM**- per**ATE** (Sonnet 18)

The scansion of the examples above can be notated as follows:

× / × / × / × / × /
When I do count the clock that tells the time

× / × / × / × / × /
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

BEWARE OF A WEAK (aka feminine) ending!.....

A Shakespearean Sonnet Poem - Sonnet 130

- (a) My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
- (b) Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
- (a) If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
- (b) If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

- (c) I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
- (d) But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
- (c) And in some perfumes is there more delight
- (d) There in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

- (e) I love to hear her speak; yet well I know
- (f) That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
- (e) I grant I never saw a goddess go;
- (f) My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground

- (g) And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
- (g) As any she belied with false compare.