

STRESSING THE IAMBS

Grade: 2-12

Goal: To explore iambic pentameter, the metered rhythm of Shakespeare's language

Materials: Shakespearean text for each actor.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide actors into small groups of 5 to 7.
2. Distribute a copy of the text from *Romeo and Juliet* (see below) to each member of the group.
3. Have the actors in each group stand shoulder to shoulder in a line. Actors should hold the text in hand.
4. Each actor reads a syllable, in order, out loud. If they have a stressed syllable they must rise on their toes, if their syllable is unstressed they must squat. For example, "Two" would be said while squatting. "House" would be said while raising up on one's toes. "Two" is a syllable with no stress. "House" is a syllable that is stressed. Text 2 has the stressed syllables underlined (_).
5. Once the actors are comfortable with the rhythm, keep the established rhythm while speaking as quickly as possible.

SUGGESTED VARIATIONS:

- Have groups use different text from various scenes and speeches within the same play.
- Raising The Bar:
 - Have one actor speak the text while raising and lowering on each iamb.
 - How fast can one speak the text and still move correctly?

TEXT: *Romeo and Juliet* (Act 1, Scene 1)

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.

TEXT 2

Two-house\u00b9 holds-both\u00b9 a-like\u00b9 in-dig\u00b9 ni-ty,
In-fair\u00b9 Ver-on\u00b9 a-where\u00b9 we-lay\u00b9 our-scene.
From An\u00b9 cient-grudge\u00b9 break-to\u00b9 new-mu\u00b9 ti-ny,
Where-civ\u00b9 il-blood\u00b9 makes-civ\u00b9 il-hands\u00b9 un-clean.



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