



**Engage:** Students view the gravedigger scene of "Hamlet".

**Explore:** Students break into groups of 4-6 and each group is given a copy of a sonnet. Discuss among the group what is sonnet? What makes them so special? How many lines? Does it rhyme? What do you notice about the rhythm? What do you think this sonnet is about?

**Explain:** Talk about what each group came up with. Brief lecture on the properties of a sonnet vs. the plays (couplets vrs. blank verse) what makes is iambic pentameter

**Elaborate:** Q: what is iambic pentameter?

Q: why is it so special that Shakespeare wrote this way?

Q: Why do you think he wrote this way?

**Energize:**

- Student from each group reads their sonnet, and the rest of the class pounds out the rhythm with fingers on their desk
- Split the class in half. Each group chooses one line from a sonnet- each person has one word in that line to say out loud. Unstressed words stand one step back, stressed stand one step forward. Say your line as a team.

**Evaluate:** I can look at how the groups set up the lines to see if they understand the concept of iambic pentameter. I will also be assessing the class's grasp of the concept through out the lesson by listening to group discussion, and asking questions.

**Extended Learning/Enrich:** I have combined their homework with the closing story. During Shakespeare's time when church graveyards became full, old corpses were often dug up and the bones burned in large fireplaces to make room for the burial of more bodies. Also, it was not uncommon for grave robbers to dig up and strip a corpse after burial, particularly if the deceased was known to have been wealthy. Shakespeare hated this type of treatment of the body after death, so he wrote his own epitaph, engraved upon his stone at the Stratford church.

"Good Friends, for Jesus' sake forbear,  
To dig the bones enclosed here!  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones."

Even to the end, Shakespeare knew his audience, and this little rhyme did the trick. People of the time were extremely superstitious, and no one ever bothered his corpse. The irony to this story, of course, is that while his epitaph served its purpose, it is little more than doggerel, hardly better than verse even the worst poetic hack could write. Who knows, maybe Shakespeare--with his boundless humor and heightened sense of the ridiculous--got a chuckle out of his little rhyme as some kind of self-deprecating joke.

Regardless of the original intent of the epitaph, however, it is time for us to right the wrong. The greatest writer known to the English language deserves a better epitaph, one which pays appropriate tribute to his genius and honors his literary contributions to all mankind. Your assignment is to compose a more suitable epitaph for Shakespeare's headstone now that the danger of grave robbers is over.

It can be argued that for such a genius poet, this is a terrible poem for his last words! Your mission tonight is to re-write his epitaph using iambic pentameter. Follow these guidelines: Please follow these assignment guidelines:

- Write a minimum of six lines in iambic pentameter.
- The first four may be in blank verse (or rhymed if you so choose), but you must end your poetic epitaph as Shakespeare did a scene--in an heroic couplet.
- The tone of your epitaph must be eloquent and formal, paying serious homage to the literary contributions which Shakespeare made to the world. How you do this, however, is up to you. For example, you might choose to write your tribute using a metaphor, such as a golden pen. Or you could employ a simile, comparing Shakespeare's plays to the arias of heaven. Be as creative as you choose.
- If you need to fudge to make the iambic pentameter work, you can cheat in the same manner Shakespeare did. Use elisions (word contractions) to eliminate a beat, or accent a silent syllable to add an extra beat.
- Write out two versions of your final work: one regular copy and one divided into syllables and scored with the soft/stressed beats in iambic pentameter.
- You may work on this assignment in groups of three.
- Each group will be reading its completed epitaph to the class
- Scoring--20 points:  
10 points for appropriateness of content: grace, meaning, and creativity  
10 points for the technical accuracy of the iambic pentameter/heroic couplet

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forbear,  
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**What is a sonnet?**

**How is it special? What do you notice about the way this is written?**

**Does it rhyme?**

**How many lines does it have?**

**What do you notice about the rhythm?**

**What do you think this sonnet is about?**