

Poetry, Prose, and Puns

Part A.

Shakespeare wrote his plays in a form of poetry called blank verse. The natural rhythm of English speech is stressed or unstressed indicated by \cup for unstressed or \sloperight for stressed syllables. This is an iambic beat. Five beats or stresses to a line is called pentameter. Thus, iambic pentameter is a natural English line. If rhyme is not used, the poetry becomes blank verse.

1. Read the following line, and mark the stressed syllables.

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

2. Who says this line?

3. What is his rank or position?

Part B.

Skim through the scene. While some characters speak in blank verse, others speak in prose.

1. Who speaks only in prose?

2. Give an example.

3. What is the rank or position of this character?

4. What might you assume from this example?

As you go through the play, note who uses poetry and who uses prose. Also note the occasions when poetry is used and when prose is used.

Part C.

The use of a word to suggest two or more meanings at the same time, or the use of two different words that sound alike to create humor, is called a pun.

1. What two meanings are in the word *cobbler*?

2. What is the word that sounds like *awl* and completes the pun?

3. Find another example.

4. Why does Shakespeare use puns in this scene?