

Scan the poem "Sonnet 18".

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Scanning a poem involves identifying its meter and rhyme scheme. William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) "Sonnet 18" (1609) is written in iambic pentameter, the most common meter in his sonnets. This means each line typically contains 10 syllables, with a pattern of alternating unstressed (˘) and stressed (ˈ) syllables (da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM). Here's the scanned version of Sonnet 18:

˘Sháll Ĩ / ˘compáre / ˘thee tó / ˘a súm / ˘mer's dáy?
˘Thou árt / ˘more lów / ˘ly ánd / ˘more tém / ˘peráte:
˘Rough wínds / ˘do sháke / ˘the dárl / ˘íng búds / ˘of Máy,
˘And súm / ˘mer's léase / ˘hath áll / ˘too shórt / ˘a dáte;
˘Some-tímes / ˘too hót / ˘the éye / ˘of héav / ˘en shínes,
˘And óft / ˘en ís / ˘his góld / ˘com-pléx / ˘ion dímm'd;
˘And év / ˘ery fáir / ˘from fáir / ˘some-tíme / ˘declínes,
˘By chánce / ˘or ná / ˘ture's cháng / ˘íng cóurse / ˘untrímm'd;
˘But thy / ˘etérn / ˘al súm / ˘mer shall / ˘not fáde,
˘Nor lóse / ˘pos-séss / ˘ion of / ˘that fáir / ˘thou ow'st;
˘Nor sháll / ˘death brág / ˘thou wán / ˘der'st ín / ˘his sháde,
˘When ín / ˘etérn / ˘al lín / ˘es to tíme / ˘thou grow'st;
˘So lóng / ˘as mén / ˘can breáthe / ˘or éyes / ˘can sée,
˘So lóng / ˘lives thís, / ˘and thís / ˘gives lífe / ˘to thée.

Prosodic Name: This scansion shows the metrical structure of the poem, which is written in iambic pentameter. The rhythm is composed of iambs (metrical feet with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, ~´). Each line has five feet (pentameter means "five measures"). Thus, the full prosodic name is Iambic Pentameter. This meter is a hallmark of Shakespeare's poetry and much of English Renaissance verse.

LxNotes