

Ling 103: Language Structure and Verbal Art

Trochaic, anapestic and dactylic strict meter

Although most 'serious' English verse is written in a strict iambic meter, other meters are frequently used in songs, nursery rhymes, light verse, as well as in more 'serious' works by certain 19th century poets (Longfellow, Tennyson).

1. Review

Foot types

x	x	x	x	line 1
x x)	(x x	x x x)	(x x x	line 0

iamb trochee anapest dactyl

dimeter = two feet per line

trimeter = three feet per line

tetrameter = four feet per line

pentameter = five feet per line

hexameter = six feet per line

heptameter = seven feet per line

2. The Blossom trochaic trimeter

Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my bosom.

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom

William Blake

3. Formal analysis of trochaic meter.

Trochaic meter is almost exactly like iambic meter, *except that* the feet are left-headed and the parsing algorithm goes from *left-to-right*.

In an iambic meter it is permitted to have a 'missing' syllable at the beginning of the line; in trochaic meter the opposite is true: very frequently there is a 'missing' syllable at the end of the line. In other words, in many trochaic lines the line ends on a stressed syllable (or, at least, a strong position):

```
x    x    x
(x  x (x  x (x  x
Merry Merry Sparrow
x    x          x
(x  x (x      x (x
Under leaves so green
```

And, whereas in iambic meter there can be an 'extra' syllable at the end of the line, in trochaic meter there can be an 'extra' syllable at the beginning of the line

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. (x x (x x
A happy Blossom
(x    x (x x (x x
Hears you sobbing sobbing
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Thus, we leave the Correspondence Rule the same as for iambic verse. The only thing that changes is the parsing algorithm (the footing of the lines). Projection of line 0 is the same. The direction changes to left-to-right, and the inserted parenthesis changes to (.

Line 0 footing

Scan *left-to-right*.

- a. Insert (and move across one mark.
If no further marks, halt. Otherwise:
- b. Move across one mark.
If there aren't any more marks, halt. Otherwise:
Go to step a.

Line 1 projection

The head of each line 0 foot is its leftmost element.

The heads of each line 0 foot project a mark to line 1.

Effects of phrase breaks on the meter

We have seen that in iambic verse phrase breaks may introduce certain types of exceptionality; an important observation is that the *privileges that occur at phrase breaks are exactly like those that occur at line breaks*.

1. Stressed syllable of polysyllabic word in W position after break:

|| Mewling) and pu)king in) the nur)ses arms)
Appear) in per)son here) in court.) || Silence.)

2. Extrametrical syllable before break:

The fresh) springs, brine-) pits, bar)ren place) and fert)ile ||
That is) the mad) man || The lov)er all) as frant) ic ||

3. Initial 'W' missing (rare in Shakespeare):

Ø I) am dy)ing, Eg)ypt, dy)ing on)ly
Under) my bat)tle ments.) || Ø Come,) my spir)its Mac.I.iv.40
The cur)tain'd sleep;) || Ø Witch)craft ce)lebrates) Mac.II.i.51

A missing 'W' at phrase-boundary is extremely rare in Shakespeare, but some examples can be found in *Macbeth*.

In **trochaic** verse privileges are found corresponding to some of these, although examples are sometimes difficult to find.

1. Stressed syllable in **final** weak position.

I'm not familiar with any examples with a polysyllabic stress, but monosyllabic stresses occur in Longfellow:

(Warning, (chiding, (spake in (this wise :
(Saying (to it, ("Run in (this way!" *Song of Hiawatha*

I know of no cases with stress before a phrase-break line-medially.

2. Extrametrical syllable at phrase beginning

To (dew her (orbs up(on the (green

Line-medial cases are extremely rare. A possible example:

(When thou (wakest, || if (she be (by
(Beg of (her for (reme(dy *Midsum.*

3. Final 'W' missing:

(I do (wander (every (where Ø ||
(Over (park Ø || (over (dale
(Toad, Ø || (that un(der cold (stone Ø

Macbeth IV.i.4-37

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw;
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelt' red venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmèd pot.

!!

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of pow'rful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' th' dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruèl thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chawdron,
For th' ingredience of our cau'dron.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

4. Anapestic dimeter

The Ecchoing Green

The Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring.
The sky-lark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bell's chearful sound.
While our sports shall be seen
On the Ecchoing Green.
Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
"Such, such were the joys,
When we all girls & boys,
In our youth-time were seen,
On the Ecchoing Green."

Till the little ones weary
No more can be merry
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end:
Round the laps of the mothers,
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in the nest,
Are ready for rest:
And sport no more seen,
On the darkening Green.

William Blake

The Defense of Fort McHenry

Francis Scott Key

O! say) can you see,) by the dawn's) early light),
What so proud)ly we hail'd) at the twi)light's last gleam)ing,
Whose broad stripes) and bright stars) through the per)ilous fight,)
O'er the ram)parts we watch'd) were so gal)lantly stream)ing?
And the rock)ets red glare,) the bombs burst)ing in air,)
Gave proof) through the night) that our flag) was still there —)
O! say,) does that star-spangled ban)ner yet wave)
O'er the land) of the free,) and the home) of the brave?)

Stress clashes generally permit the stressed syllable of a polysyllabic word to occur in the foot-initial weak position:

On the shore,) | dimly seen) through the mists) of the deep) 9

Where the foe's) haughty host) in dread sil)ence repos)es 10

Iambic-Trochaic ambiguity

The famous line from King Lear

Never, never, never, never, never

highlights the inherent ambiguity in iambic verse: nearly all lines which are trochaic can be considered iambic as well.

1. iambic line missing initial 'W' with final extrametrical σ

x) x x) x x) x x) x x) . iambic
| / | / | / | / |
Never, never, never, never, never

(x x (x x (x x (x x (x x trochaic
| / | / | / | / | /
Never, never, never, never, never

1. trochaic line with missing final 'W' & initial extrametrical σ

x x) x x) x x) x x) iambic
| | | | | / | \
To dew her orbs upon the green

. (x x (x x (x x (x x trochaic
| | | | / | |
To dew her orbs upon the green

A great many songs in Shakespeare are ambiguous between iambic and trochaic verse. The principal requirement appears to be that the line end in a strong position.

From the standpoint of metrical theory it does not much matter if we analyze a sample of verse as iambic or as trochaic, provided that the verse is metrical on *some* analysis.

A verse type which is ambiguous between iambic and trochaic can simply be referred to as a *binary* or *duple* verse type, since the feet — whether construed as iambs or as trochees — have *two* xs.

Midsummer Night's Dream 2.2.66-83

(Through the (forest (have I (gone,
(But A(thenian (found I (none,
(On whose (eyes I (might ap(rove
This (flower's (force in (stirring (love.
(Night and (silence — (Who is (here?
(Weeds of (Athens (he doth (wear:
(This is (he, my (master (said,
De(spisèd (the A(thenian (maid;
And (here the (maiden, (sleeping (sound,
(On the (dank and (dirty (ground.
(Pretty (soul, she (durst (not lie
(Near this (lack-love, (this kill-(courtesy
(Churl, u(pon thy (eyes I (throw
(All the (power this (charm doth (owe.
(Sleep his (seat on (thy eye(lid.
(So a(wake when (I am (gone,
For (I must (now to (Obe(ron.

Through) the for)est have) I gone),
But) Athen)ian found) I none),
On) whose eyes) I might) approve)
This flo)wer's force) in stir)ring love).
Night) and sil)ence — Who) is here?)
Weeds) of Ath)ens he) doth wear:)
This) is he), my ma)ster said,)
Despis)ed the) Athen)ian maid);
And here) the maid)en, sleep)ing sound,)
On) the dank) and dirt)y ground.)
Pret)ty soul,) she durst) not lie)
Near) this lack)-love, this) kill-cour)tesy
Churl,) upon) thy eyes) I throw)
All) the power) this charm) doth owe.)
Sleep) his seat) on thy) eyelid.)
So) awake) when I) am gone,)
For I) must now) to O)beron.)

Ling 103: Language Structure and Verbal Art Loose Meter

Loose iambic meter is a type of meter used by a number of poets in English, including William Blake, Herman Melville, Thomas Hardy, William Butler Yeats, and Robert Frost.

The fundamental differences between loose meter and strict meter are that in loose meter:

1. The phonological (pronunciation) properties of the line of verse itself generate the metrical grid directly. There is no Correspondence Rule.
2. Extra syllables are permitted more freely in the middle of the line. They do not have to be licensed by a phrase boundary.

Informally, a poem written in loose meter seems to have a certain (fixed or patterned) number of 'strong' or 'stressed' syllables in each line, but the number of 'weak' syllables separating each such strong/stressed syllable varies. In loose iambic meter there may be from 0 to 2 'weak' syllables between each 'strong' syllable in most cases; in *strict* iambic meter, however, there is ordinarily one and only one syllable between strong syllables.

Another important difference is that the stress of monosyllables *is* important in loose meter. Therefore it is sometimes not entirely clear how best to scan loose verse, and a number of variant readings are frequently available.

The Sick Rose

Oh <u>Rose</u> thou art <u>sick</u> .	u / u u /
The <u>invisible</u> <u>worm</u> ,	u u / u u /
That <u>flies</u> in the <u>night</u>	u / u u /
In the <u>howling</u> <u>storm</u> :	u u / u /

Has <u>found</u> out thy <u>bed</u>	u / u u /
Of <u>crimson</u> <u>joy</u> :	u / u /
And his <u>dark</u> <u>secret</u> <u>love</u>	u u / / u /
Does thy <u>life</u> <u>destroy</u> .	u u / u /

William Blake

There are ordinarily two 'strong' syllables per line. But the poem is not uniformly iambic or anapestic. However, even though there are only two strong syllables per line, there is a limit on the number of syllables that separate the strong syllables: here it ranges from 1 to 2. Note that it's never 3 or 4, so we *can't say that all that is going on is that there are two strong syllables per line*.

Formal analysis of loose iambic meter

Formally, we analyze loose meter in a similar fashion to strict meter, but we add an additional type of rule. This rule inserts a parenthesis to the right (or left, as the case may be) of any "**inherently accented**" syllable in the line.

For the purpose of *English loose iambic verse*, the following types of syllables are considered to be inherently accented:

1. The syllable having primary stress in a polysyllabic content word.
2. A stressed monosyllable *when followed by two stressless syllables (in the same phrase)*.

Oh Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

The inherently accented
are now underlined.

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

In the algorithm for building the metrical grid, counted syllables again project marks onto line 0, but we now add the following rule:

Inherent Accent Marking

Insert) to the right of any line 0 mark associated with an inherently accented syllable.

Note: to make the grids easier to read, I will use] for a parenthesis inserted by Inherent Accent Marking. This is simply a notational variant of) and there is in fact no difference between square brackets and parentheses technically.

x x] x x x
Oh Rose thou art sick.

x x x]x x x
The invisible worm,

x x] x x x
That flies in the night

x x x] x x
In the howling storm:

Next the remaining parentheses are inserted in the line as follows:

The scan is *right-to-left* just as in strict iambic verse. The difference is that instead of), in loose iambics the parenthesis (is inserted. In addition, (is not inserted if] is present at that place in the line.

Line 0 Parse

- a. If no more marks, halt.
 Otherwise, if], cross].
 Otherwise, cross mark.
- b. If no more marks, halt.
 Otherwise, if], cross] and return to step a.
 Otherwise cross mark, insert (and return to step a.

Example:

Oh Rose thou art sick.	start
 x x x x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 projection
 x x] x x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 Inherent accent marking
 x x] x x _x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (a) cross mark
 x x] x _ (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (b) cross mark, insert (
 x x] _x (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (a) cross mark
 x x_] x (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (b) cross]
 x _ x] x (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (a) cross mark
 _(x x] x (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (b) cross mark, insert (
 (x x] x (x x Oh Rose thou art sick.	 line 0 parse (a) No more marks, so halt.

The **well-formedness condition** requires only that there be a certain number of feet (or, equivalently line 1 marks) in the line. But unlike strict meter, in loose meter *unfooted syllables frequently appear line-medially*.

Stress clashes in loose meter

Under conditions of stress clash and at phrase boundaries poets vary, as expected, in the 'exceptions' to inherent accent marking that they admit.

For example, Blake very frequently exempts stressed syllables in polysyllabic words from being inherently accented when the preceding syllable is stressed.

And (his dark] se(cret love

dárk sécret

dark get inherent accent;
the accent on *secret* is ignored for the meter

(Oh Róse] thou (art sick.
The (invis]i(ble worm,
(That flíes] in (the night
In (the hówl] (ing storm:
(Has foun]d out (thy bed
(Of crím] (son joy:
And (his dárk] se(cret love
Does (thy life (destróy].

We now see that this poem has two iambs per line. It is a loose iambic dimeter.

Because the equivalent of stress maxima, i.e. inherently accented syllables, are directly marked by], *the well-formedness condition for loose meter requires only that each counted syllable is associated with a unique line 0 mark, and that a certain number of feet appear in each line.* It is not necessary in loose meter for line-medial marks to all be inside feet.

Elision and syncope occur much less frequently in loose meter than in strict meter.

Because unfooted syllables are permitted freely in the middle of the line, loose iambic verse often sounds like anapestic verse, rhythmically, but with iambs occurring in the middle of the line (as well as at the beginning, as is possible for strict anapestic verse).

Summary of exceptions to inherent accent assignment.

Recall that the following types of syllables are inherently accented in *loose iambic verse*:

1. The syllable having primary stress in a polysyllabic content word.
2. A stressed monosyllable *when followed by two stressless syllables (in the same phrase)*.

Recall that the following exceptions were observed for stress maxima in *strict iambic verse*:

- A. At the beginning of a line.
- B. At the beginning of a phrase indicated by punctuation
- C. At the beginning of a syntactic phrase (e.g. verb phrase, adjective phrase) where the phrase edge is not indicated by punctuation.
- D. When the primary stress is retracted by the Rhythm Rule
- E. 'Miltonic' exception: The left edge of the word in which the stress occurs coincides with the left edge of a foot.
- F. 'Shelleyan' exception: When in stress clash.

Which of these exceptions apply in *loose iambic verse*?

- A. Permitted, but uncommon. In other words, if required for the meter a line-initial accent *can* be ignored if necessary, but usually is not.
- B. Rare.
- C. Very rare.
- D. Permitted.
- E. No analogue in loose meter.
- F. Permitted.

Example.

Nurses song

(loose iambic tetrameter/trimeter)

traditional scansion

I = iamb, A = anapest

When (the voic]es (of chil]dren (are heard] on (the green	A A A A
(And laugh]ing (is heard] on (the hill,	I A A
My heart] is (at rest (within (my breast	I A I I
(And ev]ery (thing else (is still	I A I

"(Then come] home (my chil]dren, (the sun] is (gone down	I A A A
And (the dew]s (of night (arise];	A I I
Come come] leave (off play, (and let] us (away	I A I A
Till (the mor]ning (appears] in (the skies."	A A A

"(No no] let (us play, (for it] is (yet day
And (we can](not go (to sleep];
(Besides] in (the sky, (the lit]tle (birds fly
And (the hills] are (all cov]ered (with sheep."

"Well well] go (& play] till (the light] fades (away	<i>light fades</i> clash
(And then (go home (to bed."	
(The lit]tle (ones leaped (& shou]ted (& laugh'd	
(And all] the (hills ec](choèd.	<i>hills ecchoèd</i> clash

-William Blake

Note that on the 'traditional scansion' there is no pattern to the arrangement of anapests and iambs. The correct generalization is simply that there are couplets (groups of two lines) consisting of 4 and then 3 *loose iambs*.

Examples of Blake's loose iambs

The Little Boy Lost

"Fa](ther, fa](ther, where] are (you go]ing
(O do (not walk (so fast.
(Speak fa](ther, speak] to (your lit](tle boy
(Or else (I shall (be lost."

(The night (was dark, (no fa]ther (was there.
(The child (was wet (with dew.
(The mire (was deep], & (the child (did weep
And (away (the vap](our flew.

The Little Boy Found

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry, but God ever nigh,
Appear'd like his father in white.

He kissed the child & by the hand led
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro' the lonely dale
Her little boy weeping sought.

Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily,
With their sweet round mouths sing Ha, Ha, He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread
Come live & be merry and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of Ha, Ha, He.

WB Yeats' loose iambs

Easter 1916

I (have met] them (at close (of day
Com]ing (with viv](id fac]es
(From count]er (or desk] am(ong grey
Eigh](teenth-cen]tu(ry hous]es.
I (have passed] with (a nod] of (the head
Or (polite] mean]ing(less words,
Or (have ling]ered (awhile](and said
(Polite] mean]ing(less words,

Line-initial accent optionally ignored
among = preposition
Line-initial accent *must* be counted

clash does not cancel accent

clash does not cancel accent

(And thought] be(fore I (had done
of (a mock]ing tale] or (a gibe
(To please] a (compan](ion
(Around (the fire] at (the club,
(Being cer]tain (that they (and I
(But lived (where mot]ley (is worn:
(All changed, (changed ut](terly:
(A terr]i(ble beau]ty (is born.

-ion disyllabic
fire monosyllabic

(That wo](man's days (were spent
(In ig](norant (good-will,
(Her nights (in ar](gument
(Until (her voice (grew shrill.
(What voice (more sweet (than hers
(When, young (and beau](tiful,
(She rode (to harr](iers?
(This man (had kept (a school
(And rode (our wing](èd horse;
(This oth]er (his help]er (and friend
(Was com]ing (into (his force;
(He might] have (won fame] in (the end,
(So sen]sitive (his na](ture seemed,
(So dar]ing (and sweet (his thought.
(This o](ther man] I (had dreamed
(A drun]ken, (vainglor](ious lout.
He (had done (most bit](ter wrong
(To some] who (are near (my heart,
Yet (I num]ber (him in (the song;
(He, too,] has (resigned] (his part
In (the cas]u(al co](medy;
(He, too,] has (been changed] in (his turn,
(Transformed] ut](terly:
(A ter]ri(ble beau]ty (is born.

sensitive is syncopated

stresses in *transformed* and
útterly not cancelled

Yeats

The Wild Swans at Coole (1917)

(The trees] (are in (their aut][umn beaut]y,	4 loose iambs
(The wood][land paths (are dry,	3
(Under (the{Octo][ber twigh]light (the wa]ter	4
Mir][rors a (still sky	3
(Upon (the brim][ming wa]ter (among][the stones	5
(Are nine-][and-fif]ty swans	3
(The nine][teenth au]tumn (has come] (upon] me	4
(Since I (first made (my count	3
(I saw, (before] (I had (well fin]ished	4
All] (sudden]ly mount	3
(And scat][ter wheel][ing in (great bro][ken rings	5
(Upon (their clam]o[rous wings.	3
I (have looked][upon][those bril][liant crea]tures,	4
(And now (my heart (is sore.	3
(All's changed (since I, (hearing (at twi]light,	4
(The first (time on (this shore,	3
(The bell][(-beat of (their wings (above (my head,	5
Trod] with (a light][er tread.	3
Unwearied still, lover by lover,	4
They paddle in the cold	3
Companionable streams or climb the air;	4
Their hearts have not grown old;	3
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,	5
Attend upon them still.	3
But now they drift on the still water,	4
Mysterious, beautiful;	3
Among what rushes will they build,	4
By what lake's edge or pool	3
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day	5
To find they have flown away.	3

Robert Frost's Loose Iambics

(Two roads (diverged] in (a yel](low wood,
(And sor]ry (I could (not trav](el both
(And be (one trav]e(ler, long (I stood
(And looked (down one (as far] as (I could
(To where (it bent] in (the un](dergrowth;
(Then took (the oth]er, (as just (as fair,
(And hav]ing (perhaps] (the bet](ter claim,
(Because] it (was gras]sy (and want](ed wear;
(Though as (for that (the pas](sing there
(Had worn (them real]ly (about (the same,
(And both (that mor](ning e]qual(ly lay
(In leaves (no step (had trod](den black.
Oh, (I kept (the first] for(ano](ther day!
(Yet know]ing (how way (leads on (to way,
(I doubt]ed (if I (should e]ver (come back.
(I shall (be tel]ling (this with (a sigh
Some](where ag]es (and ag](es hence:
(Two roads (diverged] in (a wood, (and I —
(I took (the one (less trav](eled by,
(And that (has made] all (the dif](ference.

—Robert Frost

Ambiguous lines

(And sor]ry (I could (not trav](el both	<i>could</i> is stressed or <i>I</i> is not stressed
(And sor](ry I] could (not trav](el both	<i>I</i> is stressed <i>could</i> is unstressed
Oh, (I kept (the first] for(ano](ther day!	<i>kept</i> is stressed or <i>I</i> is not stressed
(Oh, I] kept (the first] for(ano](ther day!	<i>I</i> is stressed and <i>kept</i> is unstressed
(And that] has (made all (the dif](ference	<i>that</i> is stressed and <i>made</i> is not
(And that (has made] all (the dif](ference.	<i>made</i> is stressed and <i>all</i> is not