

Music Lab

Working With Meter In Lyrics — Unit Four

Evaluate the following poem by Lord Byron. Pick one stanza and mark the strong and weak syllables.

SHE walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meets in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress
Or softly lightens o'er her face,
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek and o'er that brow
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,—
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.

- Are there the same number of poetic feet in each line?
- Do the lines match each other in terms of stress?
- Do the lines that rhyme match each other in feet and stress?

If the following exist —

- Identify the rhyme scheme.
- Identify any alliteration.
- Identify any internal rhymes.
- Identify any other poetic devices a composer should observe

Examine the other two stanzas.

- How does each relate to your initial analysis?
- Is the entire poem rhythmically the same?

Select three songs from the show you chose to model from the list in Unit One and type the lyrics out double spaced on a page. Print the page, then go back through and identify strong and weak syllables in each line. Consider the same questions as above on the right.

Next, select two new lyrics you do not know from one or more of the following sources:

- Songs from a second show you do not know from the list in Unit One.
- Select a song or songs you do not know from a collection of lyrics by a lyricist you do know
(Such as Alan Jay Lerner, Frank Loesser, or Stephen Sondheim)

Follow the same pattern as above:

- Identify the strong and weak syllables;
- Identify the poetic feet;
- Determine the similar lines;
- Identify any kind of rhyme, alliteration, or other scheme that a composer would need to observe.