# RAP Like Shakespeare



EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

***Learn about word stress and consonant pronunciation and practice.***

**Activity One - Ask and Answer with your partner or teacher.**

1. What do you know about the English playwright William Shakespeare?
2. In the UK, schoolchildren are often made to study Shakespeare. Do you think this is a good idea? Why?
3. How many of Shakespeare's plays can you name?
4. Do you often go to the theatre?
5. Do you listen to rap music?
6. How many rap artists can you name?
7. Do you think there is a connection between Shakespeare and rap?

**Today** we are going to learn some techniques which will help you with your pronunciation. If you want to speak in public, rap in public or just feel more confident in oral English in general, this will help!

**Activity Two - Word stress** means pronouncing one syllable of a word with greater emphasis (stress) than the other syllables in that word. This is also important for poetry, especially for limericks. Place the following words into the correct columns , based on where the stress of the word is! If the stress is on the first syllable, put it in column 1. If the stress is on the second syllable, put it in column 2.

**empty, guitars, against, alarm, argue, bathroom, control, crowded, event, improve, retired, jumper, lawyer, lovely, pavement, prefer, prevent, protect, routine, scissors, stomach, towels, wedding, without,**

| Column 1 - stress on the first syllable | Column 2 - stress on the second syllable |
|---|---|
| • Empty<br>• ... | • Guitars<br>• ... |

Now read the limerick and see if you can get the word stress right.
This page is dedicated to limericks about Shakespeares plays.
https://kingoflimericks.com/honey-tongued-limericks-about-shakespeare/

Here's an example of one of them:



**Romeo and Juliet**
There's a melodramatic persona
Who played tricks on the boys of Verona
But her message came late
And such was their fate
To be star-crossed by fears of corona



This detail from the tragic tale of the star-crossed lovers is especially pertinent in the age of COVID-19. Spoiler alert: In the climactic action, Juliet fakes her death to trick the people of Verona. Romeo is supposed to be in on the ruse, but he never gets the memo from his scheming sweetheart.

In Act V, scene i, Friar John explains that he could find no one to deliver the message, "So fearful were they of infection." This too was a time of plagues in Europe, and his audience would have understood the reference. So here's one more tragedy we can blame on the quarantine!

**Activity Three - Watch the following video on pronunciation and stress, and answer the questions.**

**Why Shakespeare Could Never Have Been French- Tom Scott**

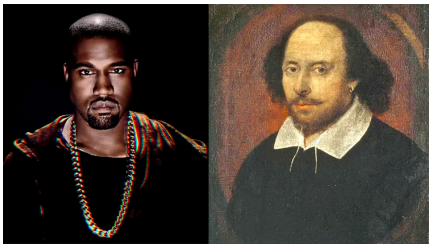
**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUnGvH8fUUc&ab_channel=TomScott**

1. What words did he mispronounce at the beginning? How should they be pronounced?
2. What is the difference between prosodic and lexical stress, according to the video?
3. What type of stress does the french language use, according to the video?
4. Where does the emphasis (stress) fall on most french words?
5. What did Shakespeare write in?

**Activity Four More about word stress.**
As you saw above, of a word has more than one syllable, you give stress to one of the syllables. To give it stress you do one or more of these things:
Make it **longer**, **louder** or **higher** in pitch.
Try making this syllable longer, louder or higher - or several of those effects:

**SATurday…**

So different words have different stress patterns, or stressed and unstressed syllables. Stress patterns can help you to distinguish the meaning of similar words. Here are some examples, try getting the stress patterns right:



- **Thirteen - thirty**
- **Fourteen - forty**
- **Sixteen - sixty**
- **Eighteen - eighty**
- **Nineteen - ninety**

Let's have a look at stress in two-syllable words.
In **most** two syllabe **nouns** and adjectives the stress is on the **first** syllable although there are some exceptions - here are some examples exceptions: machine, alone, superb, asleep, mistake etc…

Again, word stress can help you to distinguish the meaning of similar words. Here are some examples:

Record is a noun if you put the stress on the **first** syllable and a verb if you put the stress on the **second** syllable.



Try pronouncing each of these words as a verb and a noun:

**Record, contrast, desert, export, object, present, produce, protest, rebel,**

What about stress in compound words? (Words made up of two words either separate for joined with a hyphen).

Here are some examples that you can try pronouncing again:

**Photocopy, car park, bedroom, road sign, half-price, art gallery, supermarket, sunglasses, check-in desk, boarding card, window seat, travel agent.**

**Activity Six: Consonant pronunciation tips:**

When you pronounce consonants your **air flow is interrupted** or limited by the position of your teeth, lips, or tongue.

Voiced and voiceless sounds
Some sounds are made using our voices, and some are not. Vowels are always voiced, but not all consonants are. To tell which is which, simply place your fingers gently on your neck over your voice-box as you speak and feel the vibrations there.

These are sounds voiceless, or unvoiced: p, t, s, k, h, f, th, sh, ch
(you do not feel a vibration when you say these sounds)
These sounds are voiced: b, d, g, z, m, n, l, r, w, y, j
Also the "-si-" in "television", the "ng" in "sing". There is also a voiced version of "th" in words like "this" and "the".
(you should feel a vibration when you say these sounds)

Try saying these words:
"bath" and "bathe": The "th" in the first word is unvoiced, in the second one it is voiced.
"cloth" and "clothes."
"the," "then" and "that": The "th" is voiced at the beginning of these common words, but in "thanks," "theory" and "thick" the sound is unvoiced.
There is no easy rule about when to voice the sound, it is simply a case of becoming familiar with the words.

Consonants are affected by the sounds around them, because there are some situations where it is very difficult to pronounce an unvoiced consonant next to a voiced consonant or surrounded by vowels.

For example, the simple past tense verb ending is "-ed," but when spoken it doesn't always have the voiced "d" sound. If the verb ends in an unvoiced consonant (e.g. "wash," "pick"), the "-ed" sounds like "-t" (although it is still written the same). So "washed" sounds like *washt,* and "picked" sounds like *pickt.*
If the word ends in a voiced consonant sound or a vowel sound (which are always voiced), the "-ed" sounds like "-d". For example "played" sounds like *playd,* and "manned" sounds like *mand.*
If the word already ends in a t or a d (e.g. "need", "want"), it's impossible to pronounce *needd* or *wantt* so, we add an extra vowel sound, and "needed" is pronounced *needid* and "wanted" is pronounced *wantid.*

The same thing happens with the "-s" in plural nouns and third-person singular verbs:

When the previous sound is voiceless, the "-s" is voiceless:
"cats" *cats*
"picks" *picks*
However, if the previous sound is voiced, the "-s" also becomes voiced, and is pronounced *z*
"dogs" *dogz*
"runs" *runz*
Lastly, if the word already ends in an *s* or *z* sound, it's impossible to pronounce - so we add an extra vowel (this is called "epenthesis")
"horses" *horsiz*
"rises" *raiziz*

Listen to some fake rapper Shakespeare here -https://uncrate.com/video/jay-z-deepfake-shakespeare-rap/



Now put the words into the correct categories.

-t:

-d:

-id:

-s:

-z:

-iz:

**defended, thinks, months , catches, fades, visits, repeated, introduced, sealed, weaknesses, tracked, slipped, departed, considers, videos, performances, carved, restored,**

**Activity Five: How to rap fast.**

The main trick to rapping fast is **creating a healthy balance** of consonants and vowels along with stressed and unstressed words and syllables. Your consonants and vowels is your sound and your stressed and unstressed words and syllables determine your speed and volume level.
You've probably heard the phrase "it rolls off your tongue" which basically means that the selection of words within a sentence uses a healthy balance of vowels, consonances, stressed and unstressed words and syllables which allows your mouth to more easily make transitions from one syllable to the next. For example "bet-ter watch out what you think" uses B,T,W,O,W,Y,T. But the sentence would be much more difficult to say if it read "bet-ter bring back my blue base-ball bat" which uses B,T,B,B,M,B,B,B,B.
Watch the video about how to rap fast! https://colemizestudios.com/how-to-rap-fast/
**Resume what you learned from the video.**

**Activity Six - Reading comprehension activity.**

**Shakespeare Was, Like, The Ultimate Rapper**

**A**s an English teacher, I have to make **The Bard** resonate with today's youth. I get the same questions every year: "Shakespeare? What does this dead white guy have to do with me? He doesn't know where I come from, what I'm all about. He's not from the streets."

Well, what's totally **fresh** about Shakespeare is that he wrote for ordinary people. His **homies**. My students say, "Then why did he write in this boring poetry that no one can understand?" Well, that's just it. His poetry was the best street rhyming of his time. And Shakespeare was the best "player" of them all! Even today, 400 years later, Shakespeare is the world's ultimate rapper!

Shakespeare had the **tight**est **flow** in the history of the English language. His iambic pentameter couldn't be touched by the other MCs, . In fact, were he alive today, I'm convinced he would be a rapper.

You see, Shakespeare never intended for his works to be read in some dusty old study! They were performed before a **rowdy** audience who interacted with the players and even threw things on stage. Sounds a lot like a rap show, doesn't it? The Globe truly was the Apollo Theater of the day.

Rap is important because it talks about our lives, and tells stories of love, violence, sex —the things that get our blood racing. Well, word to your mother: Shakespeare may have worn tights and big lace collars, but he addressed the same questions as 50 Cent or Tupac Shakur. **Are you feeling me?** .

Big Willie Shakes rapped in his Big Willie style about everyday life, too. He rapped

about friendship: consider Prince Hal and Falstaff, Hamlet and Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He rapped about race issues: Othello, anyone?

Back when Papa Tony's Pizza had those rapping TV commercials 10 years ago, I would recite a soliloquy from Hamlet in the exact same rhythm, and it never failed to **crack up** the class! One year, there was even a student who accompanied me with the mouth-drumming noises, and we actually sounded very impressive together.

I've been teaching English for nearly 18 years, and even today, I'm still amazed at how fresh and current Shakespeare remains. Back when I was in college, I found so many parallels between Shakespeare and James Taylor. Then when I started teaching, I was struck at how Shakespeare explored the same themes as R.E.M. And boy, how my students from the '90s **perked up** when I played Kurt Cobain during the Hamlet unit!

Well, I hope that I've demystified the Bard Of Avon a little. I mean, trust me, I'm not some old **fuddy dud** who sits around watching PBS! I was **down with** Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet as much as you were! In fact, it happens to be in my personal DVD library, right in between Boyz N The Hood and Colors. **How do you like those apples?**

1. **Do you think Shakespeare is similar to rap?**
2. **What differences and similarities are mentioned in the article?**
3. **Do you agree? Which do you prefer?**

**Activity Seven: Rap or Shakespeare guessing game! Look at the following lines - some are from rap songs, some are from Shakespearean plays, can you tell which is which?**

1. "To destroy the beauty from which one came."
2. "Maybe it's hatred I spew, maybe it's food for the spirit."
3. "Men would rather use their broken weapons than their bare hands."
4. "I was not born under a rhyming planet."
5. "The most benevolent king communicates through your dreams."
6. "Socrates, philosophies and hypotheses can't define."



**Activity Eight: Can you rap Shakespeare?**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvvUv5oxGqE - Watch the video
Now try to rap the sonnet! (How to Rap Shakespeare CBBC.)



Shall **I** com**pare** thee **to** a **sum**mer's **day**?
Thou **art** more **love**ly **and** more **tem**per**ate**.
Rough **winds** do **shake** the **dar**ling **buds** of **May**,
And **sum**mer's **lease** hath **all** too **short** a **date**.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And **ev**ery **fair** from **fair** some**time** de**clines**,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor **lose** po**sses**sion **of** that **fair** thou **ow'st**,
Nor **shall** death **brag** thou **wand**'rest **in** his **shade**,
When **in** eternal **lines** to **Time** thou **grow'st.**
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So **long** lives **this**, and **this** gives **life** to **thee**

