

The metrical structure of poetry:

English and German (and other languages) are essentially iambic; an iamb is a foot of language, composed of accented and unaccented syllables. Here is a partial list of common feet in English:

name of foot + number of syllables	placement of accented and unaccented syllables	sample words and phrases
iamb = two syllables	unaccented U + accented /	today = U /
trochee = two syllables	accented / + unaccented U	never = / U
anapest = three syllables	unaccented U + unaccented U + accented /	understand = U U /
dactyl = three syllables	accented / + unaccented U + unaccented /	exercise = / U U
amphibrach = three syllables	unaccented U + accented / + unaccented U	appearance = U / U
spondee = two syllables	accented / + accented /	stop that! = / /

Feet are combined into metrical units; here is a partial illustration:

dimeter = two feet  
trimeter = three feet  
tetrameter = four feet  
pentamter = five feet  
hexameter = six feet

So for example, "Marlowe's mighty line" is typical of iambic pentameter:

"Is this the face that launched a thousand ships..." =

Is this = U / the face = U / that launched = U / a thou = U / sand ships = U /