

Poetry: Stressed and Unstressed Syllables

Name: _____

Just like music, poetry has rhythm. To learn more about how the rhythm works in a poem, we determine the strong, or stressed, syllables and the weak, or unstressed, syllables. A stressed syllable or word is marked with a / over it. An unstressed syllable or word is marked with a ^ over it.

The stress of single syllable words depends on the words in the line or sentence.

/ ^ / ^ / ^ /

Example 1: Jack and Jill went up the hill.

For multi-syllable words, we mark each syllable with a sign.

/ ^ / ^ / ^ /

Example: Twinkle, twinkle little star.

If you have trouble determining what syllable is stressed, a dictionary with a pronunciation guide may help you.

Hint: Many, but not all, English words are stressed on the first syllable.

Part 1. Write the stressed and unstressed symbols above the words below.

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. jumping | 6. thoughtful |
| 2. today | 7. reviewed |
| 3. purple | 8. champion |
| 4. hotel | 9. fortunate |
| 5. because | 10. disturbing |

Part 2. Write the stressed and unstressed symbols above the words from the first lines of common nursery rhymes.

1. Little Miss Muffet
2. Mary, Mary, quite contrary
3. Patty cake, patty cake
4. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
5. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

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