

"Shakespeare and Star Wars": Lesson Plan Day 2  
by Adam Watson (NBCT)

*Academic Goals:*

- Define iambic pentameter.
- Analyze Shakespearean lines for use of iambic pentameter.
- Create an original line of iambic pentameter.

*Core Content Standards (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading):*  
CCRA.R.5

*Handout:*

[Iambic Lightsabre](#)

*Instructional Plan:*

1. Discuss and define iambic pentameter. Explain that an "iamb" is two syllables, unstressed followed by stressed. "Pentameter" is five of these "iambs." The resulting rhythm sounds like a galloping horse, and mimics the up and down motion of your body in the saddle: da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM. To write in iambic pentameter was a creative and poetic challenge for writers of Shakespeare's time; it shows up in sonnets as well as plays. (You might even say it was an elegant poetic device for a more civilized age.) Royal, refined, and intelligent characters in Shakespearean plays would talk in iambic pentameter, whereas "low" characters (clowns, servants, etc.) might often speak in blank verse to distinguish their differences in social class. For more on iambic pentameter (and for a wonderful teacher companion text to WSSW), see "The Language" section of Ian Doescher's "*William Shakespeare's Star Wars* Educator Guide": [http://www.iandoescher.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ShakespeareStarWars\\_EducatorsGuide.pdf](http://www.iandoescher.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ShakespeareStarWars_EducatorsGuide.pdf)
2. Hand out the [Iambic Lightsabre](#) sheet. Point out the handle side (with the button on the right) and the blade side (with the "iamb" information on the left). Give students a few minutes to make their lightsabre personal by coloring the blade side.
3. Have students roll up their lightsabre with the bottom copy information still visible. If you want, have students pass around a roll of tape; one piece of tape across the handle portion should be enough to keep the lightsabre intact.
4. In unison following you -- like John Williams and his baton in front of the London Symphony Orchestra -- have students move down for unstressed ("da"), up for stressed ("DUM"). Do this several times. Remind them they have just "made" an iamb.
5. Read aloud the opening Prologue of WSSW, moving the lightsabre up and down across the iambs. Make sure the "da DUM" sounds of the words are exaggerated for effect. Point out that words like "vict'ry" are only two syllables to make the pentameter fit! You might want to do the first few lines yourself as a model, then have the students do it with you in unison for the rest.

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6. Move on to C-3PO's opening lines of I:i. Note how lines 6 and 7 ("beep beep," "We're doomed") look different. Ask students for guesses why this may be so. Explain that this is a writing convention to "carry over" the iambic pentameter.

7. For a grade (or extra credit, as I did), have students tweet out an original line of iambic pentameter. The example I have on the lightsabre ("This IS the BEST thing WE have EVer DONE") is a model of using capital letters to indicate the stressed syllables. So that you can easily find the tweets, have them use a unique hashtag. I told students to use #WatsonForce. Encourage them to have fun and perhaps add pictures -- take selfies with their lightsabres, or simply take a snapshot of their book.

*Suggested Extensions and/or Alterations :*

In a later scene from Act One, have students rewrite one or more lines in the "unstressed/STRESSED" format above to demonstrate their knowledge of iambic pentameter.

Have two students face each other in front of the class. Picking a scene where two characters talk back and forth, have the first student read his/her lines aloud and clash against the second's student's lightsabre on every "DUM" (stressed syllable). As student #2 replies, he/she does the same. The clashing rhythm created could be a great kinesthetic learning tool to learn iambic pentameter!

*Post-Lesson Reflection:*

Many of my students enjoyed tweeting their iambic pentameter, although several revealed some snarky feelings about the book so far! To make the original line of iambic pentameter more meaningful and creative, I should have given them more specific perimeters, such as "Tell me about your pet, sport, or hobby."

At least half of the tweets revealed students did not correctly understand the iambic pentameter rhythm, so I should have extended this lesson a bit with more practice and application. I discussed it more on a later day whole class, and did an exit slip to assess their understanding (see Day 9).

For the full unit overview, [click here](#).