

Nanta for Iambic Pentameter in the English Language Arts Class

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Cross-Cultural Comparison between South Korea and the U.S.: Understanding and Teaching Culture Through Music

Grade 9, English I, approximately 3 class periods

In this lesson, students will explore Korean nanta and use improvised janggu to accompany their recital of Shakespearean drama written in iambic pentameter.

Introduction:

The Cross-Cultural Comparison Conference has changed my perspectives and increased my knowledge about Korea, Korean poetry, and Korean music.

Dr. Daniel Hsieh's session "Poetry and Music" gave an in-depth comparison of Korean, Chinese, and American poetry and music, including elements of prosody that exist across different languages and cultures. This inspired me to begin thinking about how I can incorporate Korean music to teach American and British literature.

Grace Kyung Hee Na, in her session "Arirang: A Musical Bridge to Korean Culture and Understanding" engaged participants in a dance experience emphasizing the rhythmic nature of traditional Korean music.

This was extended in my chosen session with Chansoo Lee, "Learning Korean Mask Dance." As he accompanied our dance moves on janggu, I pondered how I could use the rhythm of this musical style in my upcoming Shakespeare unit.

In our breakout session "Lesson Plan Discussion," another participant made a comment that gave me a breakthrough moment: classroom nanta with janggu would easily lend itself to teaching iambic pentameter. By engaging students with videos explaining and demonstrating Korean percussion instruments, I could segue into Shakespeare's prosody (a lesson typically dull and uninteresting to modern high school students.)

That evening's performances by SoriBeat Indiana of "Beoldalgeori & Hwimori Samul Nori" and Lee's performances including "Seonban Seoljanggu with Sangmo" further reinforced my decision to develop this lesson plan.

This conference shifted my perceptions of Korean and English multi-modal texts and forms of representation from being completely foreign and distinct to having commonalities that I can exploit in my classroom.

Standards:***Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English I:***

7B Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--genres. The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts. The student is expected to analyze the structure, prosody, and graphic elements such as line length and word position in poems across a variety of poetic forms.

Texas English Language Proficiency Standards:

3H The EB (emergent bilingual) student reads a variety of texts for different purposes with an increasing level of comprehension in all content areas. The student is expected to read with fluency and prosody and demonstrate comprehension of content area text.

Learning Target:

- Students will analyze prosody in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by using Korean nanta techniques to emphasize iambic pentameter.
- Students will be able to recite or perform a chosen scene from the play while accompanying themselves on improvised janggu percussion instruments.
- Students will demonstrate increased awareness of Korean culture and literature and differences and similarities with American and British literature.

Prior Instruction:

Students have been studying *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* for about one week. This lesson takes place as they are beginning Act II. Students have briefly studied South Korea from a historical and geographical perspective in their social studies class.

Warm-Up:

Which words do you think are most important in these two lines from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*?

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet it the sun!

Why did you choose those words? How can actors show that those words are most important?

Lesson:

Textbook p. 336 (attached)

Prosody Language has its own natural rhythms, created by the stressed and unstressed syllables of words. Prosody is the art of organizing those rhythms to create beautiful or powerful sound qualities and to emphasize meaning. When the rhythm of a text follows a pattern, it is called meter. Shakespeare's prosody, which features blank verse, is a defining quality of his work. Blank verse is unrhymed poetry that uses a meter called iambic pentameter. An iamb is a metrical foot, or unit, that consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Iambic pentameter includes five such feet in each line. This passage from Act II of *Romeo and Juliet* is an example. Each (/) symbol indicates a metrical foot: Būť sóft! / What líght / thrōugh yón / dēř wín / dōw bréaks? Íť ís / the eást, / ańd Jú / liēť ís / the sún! In all of Shakespeare's plays, high-ranking characters speak in blank verse.

Hook Video:

"Korean Percussion and World Music – Janggu" from the Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lfxw4wy3HsE>

Additional video clips from the 2025 PCCU Conference Music & Dance from South Korea and the U.S. performance, October 11, 2025.

Depending on time and student interests, students may also view this bilingual video about the Peruvian cajon box drum: "Exploring el Cajon, an instrument from Peru" from SF Loves Learning SFUSD https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcVxW8edY_o

Independent Practice:

Students improvise janggu from classroom materials and their belongings (water bottles, supply bins, pencil cases, pencils, pens, markers, etc.)

Each group of 2-6 students chooses one scene from Act II of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* to dramatize. They accompany their recitation on their improvised rhythm instruments.

- One class period to choose scene
- One period to practice
- One class period for performance

School and community members from the areas of English language arts, fine arts, languages other than English, and social studies departments are invited to serve as an authentic audience (i.e., campus administration, department chairs, District Service Center/Central Office staff, school board members, local college faculty.)

Assessment:

Short Constructed response (Paired texts: Drama and Multi-modal text)

In *Romeo and Juliet*, what is Shakespeare's purpose for using blank verse in iambic pentameter? How did students emphasize this in their performance? Support your answer with evidence from the *Romeo and Juliet*.

Short Constructed Response Rubric**Score: 2**

A complete response will provide, but is not limited to, one of the following explanations about Shakespeare's use of blank verse in iambic pentameter.

- The stressed syllables emphasize certain important words in the characters' speech.
- The use of iambic pentameter clarifies the characters' status and contributes to the elevated tone of the scene.

A complete response will include at least one piece of supporting evidence from the text. A complete response may include, but is not limited to, the following evidence cited or paraphrased from the text:

- "Romeo: Can I go forward when my heart is here? / Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out." (Scene i)
- "Romeo: But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" (Scene ii)
- "Juliet: What have I spoke; but farewell compliment!" (Scene ii)

Evidence is accurately used to support the response.

The response and the evidence to support it are based on the text.

Score: 1

A partial response may include one of the answers expected in the complete response. However, the evidence included does not support the answer stated, or no evidence is provided.

A partial response may cite or paraphrase relevant text evidence, but the student does not include an accurate answer about Shakespeare's use of blank verse in iambic pentameter.

Score: 0

- The response is incorrect.
- The response is not based on the text.
- No response is provided.

References

English I Constructed-Response Scoring Guide Spring 2025. Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division, 2025.

Kim, Byoung Sug, Roman, Brent, and Choi, Gina. “Korean Percussion and World Music – Janggu.” *Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago* [youtube.com/watch?v=Lfxw4wy3HsE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lfxw4wy3HsE), January 4, 2021.

Mr. Omar. “Exploring el Cajon, an instrument from Peru.” *SF Loves Learning SFUSD* [youtube.com/watch?v=gcVxW8edY_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcVxW8edY_o), February 26, 2021.

myPerspectives English Language Arts I Texas Student Edition. 2021. New York: Pearson Education, 2021.

ANALYZE AND INTERPRET



THE TRAGEDY OF
ROMEO AND JULIET, ACT II

KEY CONCEPT

Scansion The action of scanning a line of verse to determine its meter is called *scansion*. Readers identify meter by counting the number and types of stresses in each line. Stressed syllables are marked with an accent symbol (´), and unstressed syllables are marked with a horseshoe symbol (˘).



TEKS

5.E. Interact with sources in meaningful ways such as note-taking, annotating, freewriting, or illustrating.

5.H. Respond orally or in writing with appropriate register, vocabulary, tone, and voice.

7.B. Analyze the structure, prosody, and graphic elements such as line length and word position in poems across a variety of poetic forms.

Literary / Text Elements



Prosody Language has its own natural rhythms, created by the stressed and unstressed syllables of words. **Prosody** is the art of organizing those rhythms to create beautiful or powerful sound qualities and to emphasize meaning. When the rhythm of a text follows a pattern, it is called **meter**. Shakespeare's prosody, which features blank verse, is a defining quality of his work.

Blank verse is unrhymed poetry that uses a meter called *iambic pentameter*. An *iamb* is a metrical foot, or unit, that consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Iambic pentameter includes five such feet in each line. This passage from Act II of *Romeo and Juliet* is an example. Each (/) symbol indicates a metrical foot:

Bút sóft! / Wát líght / thrúgh yón / dër wín / dôw bréaks?

Ít ís / the cást, / ánd Jú / liét ís / the sún!

In all of Shakespeare's plays, high-ranking characters speak in blank verse. By contrast, comic characters or those of low rank usually speak in prose, which is not divided into poetic lines and does not follow a set meter. These two distinct aspects of Shakespeare's prosody clarify characters' status and contribute to the tone and mood of their interactions.

PRACTICE Complete the activity and answer the questions.

- Analyze** Rewrite the following passages in your notebook. Then, mark the pattern of accented (´) and unaccented syllables (˘) in each line: **(a)** Act II, Scene ii, lines 43–51 **(b)** Act II, Scene vi, lines 3–8
- Use a chart like the one shown to complete the activity. **(a) Analyze** Identify the stressed and unstressed syllables in each line shown in the chart. **(b) Analyze** Identify the words that the meter stresses in each line. **(c) Interpret** Explain how the meter, in its creation of emphasis, adds to the meaning of each line.

PASSAGE	WORDS EMPHASIZED	MEANING
Romeo. Can I go forward when my heart is here?		
Juliet. But my true love is grown to such excess.		

- (a) Analyze** Identify the aristocratic and low-ranking characters in Acts I and II based on the nature of the prosody used in their speeches—blank verse or prose. **(b) Interpret** Why do you think Shakespeare chose to have aristocratic characters speak in blank verse? Explain your thinking.