Can you write like Shakespeare?

Shakespeare’s plays are famous for the type of rhythm his characters speak in. This rhythm is called iambic Pentameter.

Iambic what?
An iamb sounds like one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable. Pentameter roughly means five in the line. So iambic Pentameter is five iambs added together to make a line with ten beats.... Five stressed, five not stressed.

How does that sound?
When read aloud it creates a rhythm. Try saying this, putting the stress only on the words in bold.

\[ \text{da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum da-dum} \]

People use iambic Pentameter without even knowing. Look at these normal sentences:

- Can you please buy a bag of sweets today
- I saw an old man with a walking stick

Try saying them stressing the bold syllables.

Now try a few lines written by Shakespeare. Again the stress goes on the bits in bold.

- He is no less than what we say he is. (From Taming of the Shrew)
- Lord Titus, by your leave, this maid is mine. (From Titus Andronicus)
- Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May (From Sonnet 18)

Get Writing
Now you know how iambic Pentameter works, why not try making some. Fill in the drawing below if that helps. The dots will be the stressed syllables and the dashes will not be stressed. There should be ten beats in total.

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Now you can make your own iambic Pentameter, write a short poem and send it to us at playground@shakespearesglobe.com The Beasts might even put it in the share gallery.