

We begin to see the depth of creativity in poetry: the words simultaneously use both sound and meter. “Now cracks a noble heart” is an essentially iambic line, but in the iamb is a brilliant use of sound, with the soft and low *now noble* encasing the shock of the *k* sounds in *cracks*:

Little Richard used the same strategy with “Whole lotta SHAKIN goin on.”

now CRACKS noble

The *n*'s are the opposite of the harsh *k* sounds, and the *o*'s are the opposite of the *ah* sound of *cracks*. By surrounding *cracks* with beautiful, low sounds, Shakespeare brought the meaning of *cracks* (Hamlet's death) to the front.

The angelic softness of the sounds in the second line, “And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,” emphasize the tenderness and deep feeling of the moment; look at the soft consonants:

And flights / of an / gels sing / thee to / thy rest

This two-line passage is a good illustration of the way that poets can write a passage predominately in iambics, while still varying from perfect iambics when they want to place emphasis or break up a too-regular rhythm. Shakespeare established a clear iambic framework, but emphasized Hamlet's death and Horatio's deep regard for him.

NOW CRACKS SWEET PRINCE