

DACTYLIC HEXAMETER

Here are the first five lines of the Iliad-- first in Greek, second in English directly below the Greek word, third parsed in dactylic hexameter. The slant (\) divides the metric feet. The underline is the long (accented) syllable, the other syllables being short.

1

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος

wrath sing Goddess of the son of Peleus, Achilles,

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεᾶ Πη\ληϊά\δεω Ἀχι\ληος

2.

οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,

cursed\destroying (wrath) which a myriad to the Achaeans of pains placed (caused)

οὐλομέ\νην, ἣ \ μυρί' Ἀ\χαιοῖς \ ἄλγε' ἔ\θηκε,

3.

πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν

and many mighty souls to Hades sent (prematurely)

πολλὰς \ δ' ιφθι\μους ψυ\χας Ἀ\ι\δι προ\ιαψεν

4.

ἥρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν

of heroes them also prey made for dogs

ἥρω\ων, αὐ\τους δὲ ἐ\λωρια \ τευχε κυ\νεσσιν

5.

οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,

And birds of prey, all, and of Zeus was fulfilled the will

οιω\νοισι τε \ πᾶσι, Δι\ὸς δ' ἐτε\λειετο \ βουλη,

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie is written in dactylic hexameter. The opening is:

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,

Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinguishable,
From the dim twilight, stand as the Druids of eld, with voices
Sad and prophetic, and catch, in their arms, the hoarse, autumnal
Winds; and the region, from afar, is mountainous, and forest,
And with the beauty of the sea.

Rodney Merrill's translation in dactylic hexameter:

Sing now, goddess, the wrath of Achilles the scion of Peleus,
ruinous rage which brought the Achaians uncounted afflictions;
many the powerful souls it sent to the dwelling of Hades,
those of the heroes, and spoil for the dogs it made of their bodies,
plunder for all of the birds, and the purpose of Zeus was accomplished—
sing from the time when first stood hostile, starting the conflict,
Atreus' scion, the lord of the people, and noble Achilles.