

POETRY. Robert Louis Stevenson. MotherGooseCaboose.com
Grades 3 and up. A GOOD PLAY. Directions. Print out. Read the poem.
Do the activities. Note: For younger children, just read the poem, talk
about it, illustrate it or part of it, and act it out.

A GOOD PLAY

1 st stanza:	<u>rhyme pattern</u>	<u>syllables</u>
We built a ship upon the stairs	a	8
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,	a	8
And filled it full of sofa pillows	b	9
To go a-sailing on the billows.	b	9
2 nd stanza:		
We took a saw and several nails,	c	8
And water in the nursery pails;	c	8
And Tom said, “Let us also take	d	8
An apple and a slice of cake”; -	d	8
Which was enough for Tom and me	e	8
To go a-sailing on, till tea.	e	8
3rd stanza:		
We sailed along for days and days,	f	8
And had the very best of plays;	f	8
But Tom fell out and hurt his knee,	g	8
So there was no one left but me.	g	8

- Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1895).
Scottish essayist, novelist, poet.
A Child's Garden Of Verses.

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Grades 3 and up. A GOOD PLAY cont'd. p.2.**

Directions. Print out. Read the poem. Answer the questions using the “Blank Lined Poetry Answer Form” on page 6. Print out as many pages as you need to answer the questions. Make sure you number your answers. Check what you have written with the answers on page 5. Do the activities.

Questions About The Poem, “A GOOD PLAY”:

1. What does the title of the poem tell you?
2. What did the boys build? And what was it made of? (Read the 1st stanza.)
3. What are some of the things they took with them? (Read the 2nd stanza.)
4. What was the name of one of the boys? (Read the 2nd stanza.)
5. What happened to one of the boys after they had been sailing for a while? (Read the 3rd stanza.)
6. Who was left in the boat when that happened? (Read the 3rd stanza.)
7. Have you ever pretended to sail in a boat? Where would you go?
8. What would you take with you? Who would you take with you?
9. What does “billows” mean? (See definitions, line 4, 1st stanza.)
10. What does “till” mean? (See definitions, line 6, 2nd stanza.)
11. Is “A Good Play” a good title for this poem? Why?
12. What is a couplet, a stanza, & a quatrain? (See definitions, p.4.)

Activities: 1. Illustrate the part of the poem you liked best. 2. Write a story or poem about sailing or boats. Illustrate your story or poem.

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Grades 3 and up. A GOOD PLAY cont'd. p.3.**

Directions. Print out. Read the poem. Do the activities, review the rhyming words, rhyme pattern, the syllables, and meter of the poem.

Rhyming words: 7 rhyming closed couplets. See poem.

1st stanza: (lines 1 & 2) stairs, chairs; (lines 3 & 4) pillows, billows.

2nd stanza: (lines 1 & 2) nails, pails; (lines 3 & 4) take, cake; (lines 5 & 6) me, tea.

3rd stanza: (lines 1 & 2) days, plays; (lines 3 & 4) knee, me.

Rhyme pattern: 3 stanzas - 2 quatrain stanzas (1st & 3rd stanzas) containing 2 rhyming closed couplets, and the 2nd stanza containing 3 rhyming closed couplets. The 2nd stanza is a sextain or six-line stanza; also called "sestet." 1st stanza: aabb; 2nd stanza: ccddee; 3rd stanza: ffgg. Lines 1 & 2 rhyme and lines 3 & 4 rhyme in the 1st & 3rd stanzas. Lines 1 & 2 rhyme, lines 3 & 4 rhyme, and lines 5 & 6 rhyme in the 2nd stanza. See poem. *Examples:* 1st stanza: stairs (a), chairs (a), pillows (b), billows (b). 2nd stanza: nails (c), pails (c), take (d), cake (d), me (e), tea (e).

Syllables: Each stanza has a line containing 8 syllables, except for lines 3 & 4 in the 1st stanza that have 9 syllables. Read the poem to get the rhythm. See definitions for "syllables," p. 5; "Meter," p. 3 & "meter," p. 4.

Meter: Accented words or parts of words are underlined; Unaccented words or parts of words are not underlined. See the 1st stanza of the poem below for the cadence. The slashes below the 1st stanza represent the accented words or parts of words; the dots represent the unaccented words or parts of words. (iambic.) See "Syllables," p. 3. See definitions for "iambic," "iamb," "syllables," and "meter," p.4. See poem.

A GOOD PLAY

1 st stanza:	<u>rhyme pattern</u>	<u>syllables</u>
We <u>built</u> a <u>ship</u> upon the <u>stairs</u>	a	8
All <u>made</u> of the <u>back-bedroom</u> <u>chairs</u>,	a	8
And <u>filled</u> it <u>full</u> of <u>sofa</u> <u>pillows</u>	b	9
To <u>go</u> a-sailing <u>on</u> the <u>billows</u>.	b	9

iambic. (See definitions.)

. / . / . / . / (line 1; 4 iambs.) . / . / . / . / (line 3; 4 iambs.)

. / . / . / . / (line 2; 4 iambs.) . / . / . / . / (line 4; 4 iambs.)

Directions. Print out. Read the poem. Review the definitions. Check your answers.

Definitions From The Poem, “A GOOD PLAY”:

billows – *n.* Large ocean waves. (Line 4, 1st stanza.)

couplet – *n.* Two lines of verse that form a unit alone or as part of a poem, especially two that rhyme and have the same meter. They may be open or closed. See poem. *Example of two closed couplets from the poem, “A Good Play.”* (Lines 1 & 2 rhyme and lines 3 & 4 rhyme.)

1 st stanza:	<u>rhyme pattern</u>	<u>syllables</u>
We built a ship upon the stairs	a	8
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,	a	8
And filled it full of sofa pillows	b	9
To go a-sailing on the billows.	b	9

iamb – *n.* A metrical foot in poetry, consisting of one short or unstressed syllable or group followed by one long stressed syllable or group, for example, the word “today” has one iamb (. /). Also called iambus and iambic. See “Meter,” p. 3 & “meter,” p. 4; “Syllables,” p. 3 & “syllables,” p. 5.

iambic – *n.* Relating or consisting of iambs. See iamb.

meter – *n.* An arranged pattern of natural rhythm in a line of verse, having accentual patterns of long and short syllables. See “Meter,” p. 3; “Syllables,” p. 3 & “syllables,” p. 5. See poem.

till – *prep.* until. Up to the time of. (Line 6, 2nd stanza.)

quatrain – *n.* Any stanza unit of 4 lines, whether rhymed or unrhymed. The quatrain is the most common stanza form in English poetry. See example under “couplet.” See poem.

sixain – *n.* A six-line stanza in poetry. See poem.

stanza – *n.* A number of lines of verse forming a separate unit within a poem. See example under “couplet.” See poem.

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Grades 3 and up. A GOOD PLAY cont'd. p.5.**

Directions. Print out. Read the poem. Continue studying the definitions.
Check your answers.

Definitions From The Poem, “A GOOD PLAY” cont'd:

syllable – *n.* **syllables** – *n.pl.* 1. A unit of spoken language that consists of one or more vowel sounds alone, a syllabic consonant alone, or any of these with one or more consonant sounds. 2. One or more letters in a word that roughly correspond to a syllable of spoken language. Syllables are accented or unaccented words or parts of words. See “Syllables,” p. 3; “Meter,” p. 3 and “meter,” p. 4.

Answers To The Questions About The Poem, “A GOOD PLAY”:

1. Something is going to give someone fun and pleasure.
2. A ship made of chairs and pillows. (1st stanza.)
3. A saw; several nails; water in pails; an apple; a slice of cake. (2nd stanza.)
4. Tom. (Lines 3 & 5, 2nd stanza.)
5. Tom fell out and hurt his knee. (Line 3, 3rd stanza.)
6. The person telling the poem. (Line 4, 3rd stanza.)
- 7, 8, & 11. You have to answer these questions.
- 9, 10, & 12. See definitions, “billows,” “till,” “couplet,” “stanza,” & “quatrain” (p. 4).

