

# ROMEO AND JULIET

## Spoiler Alert!

### Task 1: The prologue

Read Shakespeare's prologue, which the audience hears at the very beginning of the play:

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Here, Shakespeare chooses to foreshadow the events of the play. Analyse the text above by highlighting and annotating your thoughts directly onto it.:

- What do you predict will happen/how it will happen?
- How does the extract make you feel?
- Circle or highlight out all the words that give a sense of foreboding.
- Who do you predict the victims of the play will be? Why?

Check our [ten events summary](#) to see if your predictions are correct:

1. Two feuding families brawl in public and incur the wrath of their city's ruler.
2. Romeo Montague crashes a Capulet party for a glimpse of Rosalind, and meets Juliet Capulet.
3. Tybalt recognises Romeo at the party, and plans to challenge him, but is prevented by Lord Capulet.
4. Romeo returns to visit Juliet after the party and the couple marry in secret, despite their feuding families.
5. Tybalt quarrels with Mercutio and kills him – in response, Romeo kills Tybalt, and is banished from Verona.
6. Lord Capulet arranges Juliet's marriage to Count Paris. She and Friar Lawrence plot her escape.
7. Juliet drinks a powerful sleeping potion, which makes her appear dead, but the truth of the plot fails to reach Romeo.
8. Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo returns to kill himself at her graveside.
9. Juliet wakes to discover Romeo dead at her side, so she uses his dagger to kill herself.
10. The Capulets and Montagues are reconciled in mutual grief.

**What do you notice?**

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## Task 2: Word nerds

Challenge yourself to name some of the literary devices Shakespeare uses. Look at the techniques listed in the table below. Some (but not all) appear in the Romeo and Juliet prologue.

1. Identify which ones appear in the prologue, using the definitions to help.
2. Think about what the effect is. How does it steer the expectations of Shakespeare's audience about the story they're about to hear?

Technique	Definition	Effect
Prose	The usual form of spoken or written language, with ordinary sentences and paragraphs.	
Verse	As in poetry, writing with a rhythmic pattern or meter where each line is a deliberate length.	
Iambic Pentameter	A verse line made up of ten syllables, in a rhythm of five 'de-DUM's – i.e. 'de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM'.	
Alliteration	Series of words begin with the same consonant sound, e.g. 'Juliet just enjoys jam.'	
Assonance	Series of words share vowel sounds, e.g. 'Oh Romeo knows'.	
Antithesis	A rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect, e.g. 'My only love, sprung from my only hate.'	
Repetition	The same words or phrases occur more than once.	
Metaphor	One thing is stated to be another thing for the purpose of comparison e.g. 'Juliet is the sun'.	

Go back to the prologue and identify the literary devices that Shakespeare uses and identify why he might have done this at the beginning of the play.

### **Task 3: Teaser Campaign**

Imagine your theatre is putting on the very first production of Romeo and Juliet. No one in the audience knows what's going to happen in the story! You are planning a teaser marketing campaign, which intrigues people and hooks them in without giving away too much detail. Design a poster to be part of this campaign.