

ESCALUS, Prince of Verona

PARIS, a young Nobleman, Kinsman to the Prince

ROMEO

MONTAGUE, Head of one of the two Houses at variance with each other

LADY MONTAGUE, Wife to Montague

ROMEO, son to Montague

MERCUTIO, Kinsman to the Prince

BENVOLIO, Nephew to Montague, Friends to Romeo

BALTHASAR, Servant to Romeo (Balthazar in some books)

ABRAHAM, Servant to Montague

JULIET

CAPULET, Head of one of the two Houses at variance with each other

LADY CAPULET, Wife to Capulet

JULIET, Daughter to Capulet

AN OLD MAN, Capulet's kinsman

Uncle to Capulet

TYBALT, Nephew to Lady Capulet

Nurse to Juliet

SAMPSON, GREGORY, ANTONY, & POTPAN, Servants to Capulet

PETER, Servant to Juliet's Nurse

FRIAR LAURENCE, a Franciscan

FRIAR JOHN, of the same Order

Citizens of Verona; male and female *Kinsfolk to both Houses*

An Apothecary

Three Musicians

Page to Mercutio; Page to Paris; another Page; an Officer

Masquers, Guards, Watchmen and Attendants

Chorus announcer

Because Shakespeare wrote nearly four hundred years ago, some of the conventions that he uses in his plays present problems for modern readers. Most of Shakespeare's lines are written in poetry. Although these lines don't usually rhyme, they do have a set rhythm (called *meter*). To achieve the meter, Shakespeare arranges words so that the syllables, which are stressed or said more loudly than others, fall in a regular pattern: dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM. For Example, read the following lines from *Romeo and Juliet* aloud:

*Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this. (I,v)*

Because you are familiar with the words the Shakespeare uses here, you naturally stressed every second syllable:

Good **PIL**'grim, **YOU** do **WRONG**' your **HAND**' too **MUCH**',
Which **MAN**'ner**LY**' de**VO**'tion **SHOWS**' in **THIS**'.

The pattern of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed (sic) one, dah DUM, is called an *iamb*. Each pattern is referred to as a foot. Shakespeare uses five iambic feet to a line. This pattern is known as *iambic pentameter*.

In order for Shakespeare to maintain the set meter of most lines, he often structures the lines differently than normal English speech. He may change the normal order of words so that the stressed syllables fall in the appropriate place. For example, the following sentence has no set meter:

This MORN'ing BRINGS' WITH' it a GLOOM'ing PEACE'.

However, Shakespeare turns these words around a bit to maintain the meter in *Romeo and Juliet*:
a GLOOM'ing PEACE' this MORN'ing WITH' it BRINGS'.

He may also shorten words by omitting letters so that a two-syllable word is one syllable. as a result, *over* often appears as *o'er* and *'tis* in place of *it is*.

Shakespeare also uses forms of words that we rarely use today, four hundred years later. Among these are the personal pronouns *thou* (you), *thine* (your, yours), *thee* (you as in "to you"), and *thyself* (yourself). Often Shakespeare uses verb endings that we no longer use. For example, *hath* is an old form of *has* and *art* is an older form of *are*. You're also likely to encounter several words or phrases that we no longer use at all: *anon* instead of *soon* or *shortly* or *prithiee* meaning *I pray to thee* (you).

Angelfire (<http://www.angelfire.com/hi/romeoetjuliet/rjvocab.html>)

PROLOGUE

enter chorus

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.

[exit]