

**The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, Act II**, by William Shakespeare  
**Literary Analysis: Blank Verse**

**Blank verse** is unrhymed poetry written in a meter called iambic pentameter. A line written in iambic pentameter includes five stressed syllables, each preceded by an unstressed syllable, as in the following example:

˘Tis but thy name that is my enemy.  
Thou art thyself though not a Montague.

Much of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is written in blank verse. Shakespeare uses its formal meter to reinforce character rank. Important or aristocratic characters typically speak in blank verse. Minor or comic characters often do not speak in verse.

**DIRECTIONS:** Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in these lines from Act II, Scene v. Put a check mark next to any line that has one extra syllable or any line not written in iambic pentameter. The first line has been marked for you.

JULIET. The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse,  
In half an hour she promised to return.  
Perchance she cannot meet him. That's not so.  
O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,  
5 Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams  
Driving back shadows over low'ring hills.  
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,  
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.  
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill  
10 Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve  
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.  
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,  
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;  
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,  
15 And his to me.  
But old folks, many feign as they were dead—  
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.

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**Reading: Reading in Sentences to Summarize**

**Summarizing** is briefly stating the main points of a piece of writing. Stopping periodically to summarize what you have read helps you to check your comprehension before you read further.

Summarizing is especially useful when reading a play that has long passages of blank verse. When you encounter one of these passages, **read in sentences**, just as if you were reading a poem. Pause according to punctuation and not necessarily at the end of each line.

Once you have grasped the meanings of individual sentences in blank verse, you can more easily and more accurately summarize long passages.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following passage, and then answer the items on the lines provided.

- 1 Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
- 2 Having some business, do entreat her eyes
- 3 To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
- 4 What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
- 5 The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
- 6 As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
- 7 Would through the airy region stream so bright
- 8 That birds would sing and think it were not night.

1. At the end of which line(s) should you make no pause at all?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. At the end of which line(s) should you make a major pause?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. At the end of which line(s) should you make a minor pause?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Write a brief summary of the main points in this passage.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Vocabulary Builder**

**Word List**

intercession    lamentable    predominant    procure    sallow    unwieldly

**A. DIRECTIONS:** For each of the following items, think about the meaning of the italicized word and then answer the question.

1. Would an *unwieldy* burden be easy or difficult to carry? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you received *lamentable* news, how would you feel?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Is *intercession* typically something you undertake on your own behalf or for the sake of someone else?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If a species of tree is *predominant* in your neighborhood, are there many or few of that species?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What might cause a person with a normally rosy complexion to suddenly look *sallow*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you need film for your camera, where might you try to *procure* it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**B. WORD STUDY:** The **Latin prefix *pro-*** means “before,” “forth,” or “forward.” Answer each of the following questions using one of these words containing *pro-*: *procure*, *profound*, *profuse*, *protrude*, *provoke*.

1. What would be difficult to *procure* in the desert?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What can you do to fix teeth that *protrude*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How might someone react if you *provoke* that person?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What might be the subject of a *profound* discussion?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If a critic is *profuse* in her praise of a movie, how well did she like the movie?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Open-Book Test**

**Short Answer** Write your responses to the questions in this section on the lines provided.

1. In the Prologue to *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, the Chorus indicates that it is hard for Juliet to find a way to meet Romeo (lines 11–12). From what you know so far of the world of the play, why would this be true?

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2. Read this sentence from Benvolio's speech in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene i, lines 31–32.

Come, he hath hid himself among these trees  
To be consorted with the humorous night.  
Blind is his love and best befits the dark.

Summarize Benvolio's meaning in this speech.

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3. Copy this line spoken by Romeo in his response to Juliet on her balcony in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene ii, line 49. Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables. Is the line in iambic pentameter? Why or why not?

I take thee at thy word.

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4. Read the following speech by Romeo to Juliet in Act II, Scene ii, lines 82–84 as a single complete sentence. Then write a summary in your own words.

I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far  
As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea,  
I should adventure for such merchandise.

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5. Blank verse is unrhymed iambic pentameter. Describe what is special about the verse throughout Act II, Scene iii, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. How are the speeches of Friar Lawrence and Romeo different from those of other characters in earlier scenes?

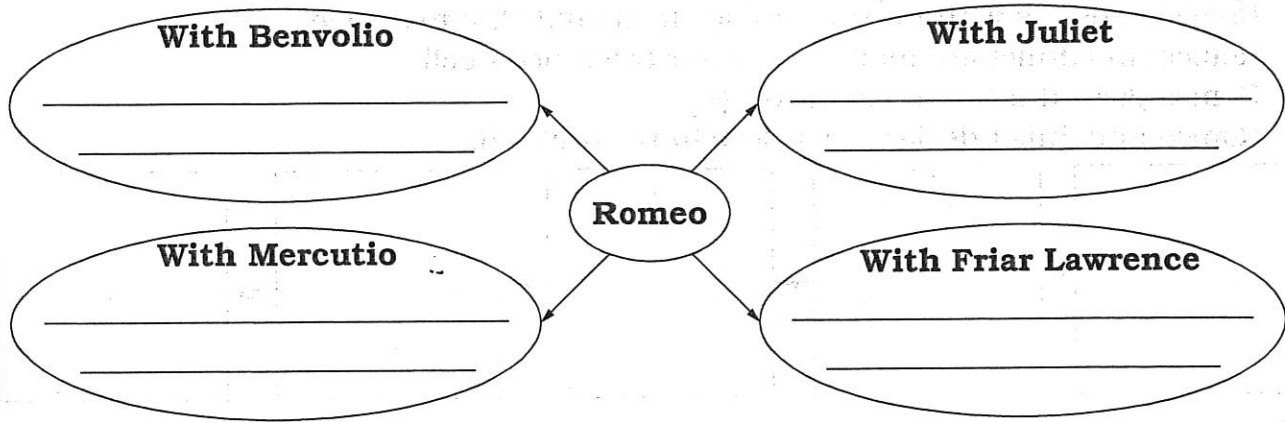
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6. Fill in the cluster to show how Romeo acts around different characters in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II.



7. Describe how Nurse and Mercutio respond to each other in Act II, Scene iv, lines 96–145 of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Why do you think Shakespeare included this exchange in his play?

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8. In Shakespearean drama, characters who speak in blank verse are likely to be important and aristocratic. Describe the characters who do not speak in verse.

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9. What hints have you noticed so far in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* to indicate that the love between Romeo and Juliet may have a lamentable outcome? Base your answer on the meaning of *lamentable*.

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10. Fill in the timeline by putting the following events of Romeo and Juliet's courtship into the correct order.

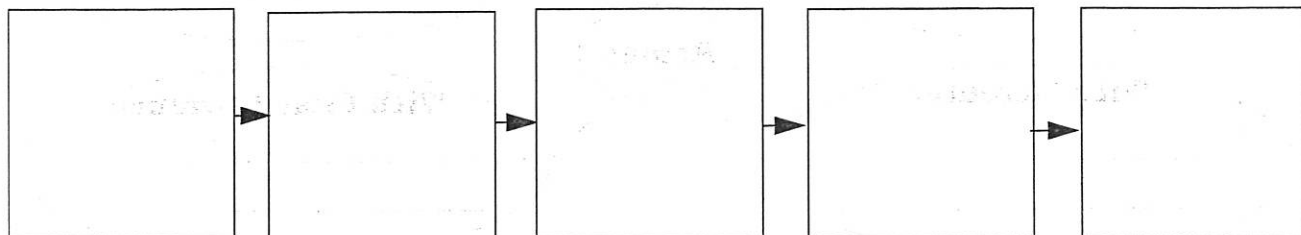
The Nurse brings the message to Juliet.

Romeo consults with Friar Lawrence to arrange the marriage.

Romeo and Juliet are married in Friar Lawrence's cell.

Romeo gives the Nurse his message.

Romeo and Juliet declare their love in the orchard.



**Essay**

Write an extended response to the question of your choice or to the question or questions your teacher assigns you.

11. Cite two lines in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, that suggest violence and death. Identify the speaker of each line. Then, in an essay, explain the effect the lines have in the context of a happy event.
12. Write an essay in which you discuss Friar Lawrence's character and abilities, as well as his relationship with Romeo and Juliet in Act II, Scenes iii and iv. Explain why Friar Lawrence agrees to secretly bind the lovers in marriage.
13. Reread the exchange between Juliet and her Nurse in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene v, lines 18–76. Then, in an essay, summarize and explain their conversation using contemporary language. Be sure to keep the humor of the situation in mind as you write.
14. **Thinking About the Big Question: Do our differences define us?** While Juliet is still talking to Romeo from her balcony in Act II, Scene ii, she introduces a note of caution. Romeo satisfies himself with vows of love, but not of marriage, and agrees to send word the next morning. Friar Lawrence, in Act II, Scene iii, line 94, counsels Romeo, "Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast." In an essay, explain the three different attitudes about love displayed by these three characters in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Support your statements with details and examples from the play.

**Oral Response**

15. Go back to question 6, 7, 8, or to the question your teacher assigns you. Take a few minutes to expand your answer and prepare for an oral response. Find additional details in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, that support your points. If necessary, make notes to guide your oral response.