

0 Literary Analysis: Dramatic Speeches

In most plays, the dramatic action takes place through **dialogue**—the conversations between characters. Some playwrights, however, make use of specialized dialogue in the form of **dramatic speeches**.

- **Soliloquy:** a lengthy speech in which a character—usually alone on stage—expresses his or her true thoughts or feelings. Soliloquies are unheard by other characters.
- **Aside:** a character revealing his or her true thoughts or feelings in a remark that is unheard by other characters.
- **Monologue:** a lengthy speech by one character. Unlike a soliloquy or an aside, a monologue is addressed to other characters.

Characters' speeches reflect their individual character traits, and Shakespeare often uses dialogue and action to emphasize differences between characters. As you read, look for **foils**, or characters whose words and actions show you clear personality contrasts.

1 Reading Skill: Summarize

Summarizing is briefly stating the main points in a piece of writing. Before you summarize a passage of a play by Shakespeare, **paraphrase** it, or restate the lines in your own words. Compare these two versions of a speech by Romeo:

Shakespeare's version: "This gentleman, the Prince's near ally, / My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt / In my behalf. . . ."

Paraphrase: My good friend, a close relative of the prince, has been fatally wounded in defending me.

Once you have paraphrased small portions of text, you can more easily and accurately summarize an entire passage.

2 Using the Strategy: Summarizing Chart

Use a chart like this one to paraphrase and summarize the text.

Text	Paraphrase	Summary
"I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire. The day is hot, the Capulets abroad, And, if we meet, we shall not 'scape a brawl, For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring."	Please, Mercutio, let's leave. It's hot out, and the Capulets are around. And if we meet up with them, we will most likely fight, because on these hot days we have fight in us.	Benvolio is trying to convince Mercutio to leave the public place they are meeting in, because he is afraid a brawl with the Capulets is inevitable.

Extended Study: The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet 861