

Teaching Shakespeare Workshop

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Form and Structure Activity

Part 1: Verse and Prose

Directions: During the fight scene between Mercutio and Tybalt in Act 3 Scene 1, some characters speak in verse and others in prose. Interestingly, Mercutio switches his style of speech within the scene. After you have read the scene below, please

1. Identify when characters are speaking in verse or prose.
2. Note the moment when Mercutio switches from verse to prose or vice versa.
3. Develop a theory about why Shakespeare alters Mercutio's style of speech in this scene.

TYBALT

What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO

Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives; that I mean to make bold withal, and as you shall use me hereafter, drybeat the rest of the eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pitcher by the ears? make haste, lest mine be about your ears ere it be out.

TYBALT

I am for you.

Drawing

ROMEO

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

MERCUTIO

Come, sir, your passado.

They fight

ROMEO

Draw, Benvolio; beat down their weapons. Gentlemen, for shame, forbear this outrage! Tybalt, Mercutio, the prince expressly hath Forbidden bandying in Verona streets: Hold, Tybalt! good Mercutio!

TYBALT under ROMEO's arm stabs MERCUTIO, and flies with his followers

MERCUTIO

I am hurt.

A plague o' both your houses! I am sped. Is he gone, and hath nothing?

BENVOLIO

What, art thou hurt?

MERCUTIO

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch; marry, 'tis enough. Where is my page? Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

(3.1.146-165)

Part 2: Forms of Verse

Shakespeare often included rhyme throughout the dialogue in *Romeo and Juliet*. On almost every page of the play, you can find examples of end-rhyme, when the words at the ends of lines rhyme. Notice that these lines with end-rhyme are also in iambic pentameter.

1. Can you finish the rhyme scheme chart for these lines (1.5. 85-98) in the play?

ROMEO [To JULIET.]

If I profane with my unworthiest <u>hand</u>	A
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:	B
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready <u>stand</u>	A
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.	B

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,	C
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;	B
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,	—
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.	—

ROMEO

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?	—
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JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.	—
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ROMEO

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;	—
They pray — grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.	—

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.	—
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ROMEO

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.	—
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Shakespeare also disguised sonnets within the dialogue of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the above example, this conversation between Romeo and Juliet forms a Shakespearean or English sonnet. Based on this passage below, what can we learn about the structure of a Shakespeare sonnet?

2. How many lines are in a sonnet?
3. What patterns are created through the rhyme scheme? Do the lines form any groupings?
4. Why do you think Shakespeare used a sonnet for this scene? Develop a theory.