



ROMEO AND JULIET

Lesson 3: Main activity (25 mins approx.)

Explain to students that they are going to be working in pairs, using rehearsal room activities to unlock meaning in the Prologue. The first activity involves students taking it in turns to speak alternate lines of the Prologue to each other. On each line, before they start reading, they will need to repeat a key word or phrase from the previous line spoken by their partner before saying their own, phrasing this key word or phrase as a question. It is up to each student to decide what the key word or phrase in their partner's line is, and how many times they repeat it, and in what tone of voice - there are no right or wrong answers. An example might look like this:

Student A:

Two households, both alike in dignity –

Student B:

Alike in dignity? Alike, in dignity? (In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),

Student A:

Our scene? From ancient grudge break to new mutiny

Student B: New mutiny? Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

Student A: Unclean? Unclean? Unclean? From forth the fatal loins of these two foes

And so on. Make students aware that normally lines are spoken by actors all the way through to the final punctuation mark without breaking them up like this, but as this prologue is so short, and the actual lines very long, we are doing the activity this way to allow us to focus more closely on word choices.





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Ask students to do this activity a couple of times before swapping and saying the lines previously spoken by their partner - encourage them to try out different key words/phrases each time and experiment with how they say them and how many times they repeat them. Once they have finished, bring them together as a class to discuss their findings. What did this activity illuminate for them from the Prologue? What key themes are coming out of it? What perspective do they think the speaker of the Prologue has on the events?

Now ask students to go back to the Prologue and highlight every adjective they can find that implies a judgement or emotion. Words they should find include:

- fair
- unclean
- star-crossed
- misadventured
- piteous
- fearful
- death-marked

Ask students to share their findings until you have a complete list - adding in any yourself that students might have missed - and ask them why they think the speaker of the Prologue is using these emotive words to describe the events of the play. What purpose does using these words serve? How does it make the audience feel about what they are about to watch? Who do these words encourage us to feel sympathy for, and who are we encouraged to dislike or blame for the events? What is interesting about this? What do they think Shakespeare is trying to do by introducing the play in this way? What questions might they have about the Prologue and its purpose?





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Ask students to go back to the Prologue again armed with their additional ideas and questions, and in discussion with a partner, underline the one word from each line they think is most important in expressing the Prologue's message. Once they have decided on this, choose three or four pairs to perform the Prologue, with each pair splitting into A and B and speaking the alternate lines as before, but instead of saying the whole line, just saying the key word that they have highlighted. Once each pair chosen to perform has finished, ask the whole class to compare and contrast the choices of words chosen - which Shakespeare's Globe Romeo and Juliet Scheme of Work KS4 were the same and which were different? What words do they agree are important? Which do they disagree with? Why? What meaning has doing this exercise helped students to see in the text?

