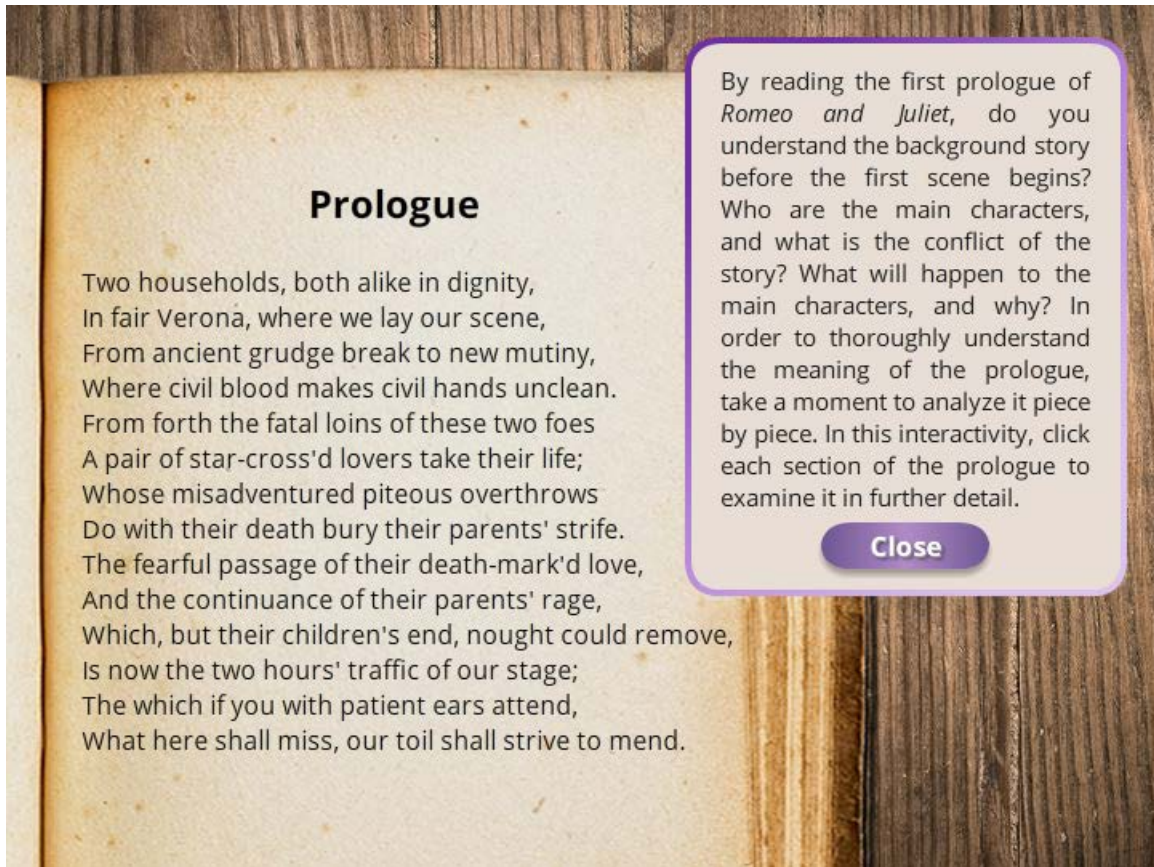


Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*

Topic 2 Content: Prologue Analysis

Introduction



Prologue

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.

By reading the first prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*, do you understand the background story before the first scene begins? Who are the main characters, and what is the conflict of the story? What will happen to the main characters, and why? In order to thoroughly understand the meaning of the prologue, take a moment to analyze it piece by piece. In this interactivity, click each section of the prologue to examine it in further detail.

Close

By reading the first prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*, do you understand the background story before the first scene begins? Who are the main characters, and what is the conflict of the story? What will happen to the main characters, and why? In order to thoroughly understand the meaning of the prologue, take a moment to analyze it piece by piece. In this interactivity, click each section of the prologue to examine it in further detail.

Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*

Topic 2 Content: Prologue Analysis

First Quatrain

Prologue

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 ren
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.

The first quatrain, or four lines, states that the play takes place in Verona (*In fair Verona, where we lay our scene*). The characters are from two families of equal social status (*Two households, both alike in dignity*). Next, you are told there is a long-standing feud between the families, and a recent fight has broken out between them (*From ancient grudge break to new mutiny*). In the last line, you find out that the citizens of Verona are involved in the bloodshed. In a double meaning, "civil" here refers both to *citizens* as well as *civility*, or politeness.

Close

*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.*

The first quatrain, or four lines, states that the play takes place in Verona (*In fair Verona, where we lay our scene*). The characters are from two families of equal social status (*Two households, both alike in dignity*). Next, you are told there is a long-standing feud between the families, and a recent fight has broken out between them (*From ancient grudge break to new mutiny*). In the last line, you find out that the citizens of Verona are involved in the bloodshed. In a double meaning, "civil" here refers both to *citizens* as well as *civility*, or politeness.

Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*

Topic 2 Content: Prologue Analysis

Second Quatrain

Prologue

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 rem-
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.

In the second quatrain, the plot thickens. The two warring families produce unlucky children (*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes*) who will fall in love with each other and commit suicide (*A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life*). Those two lines deliver a devastating story ending, but the lovers' deaths will not be in vain. Their tragic demise will cause the families to reconcile and finally put an end to the feud (*Whose misadventured piteous overthrows / Do with their death bury their parents' strife*).

Close

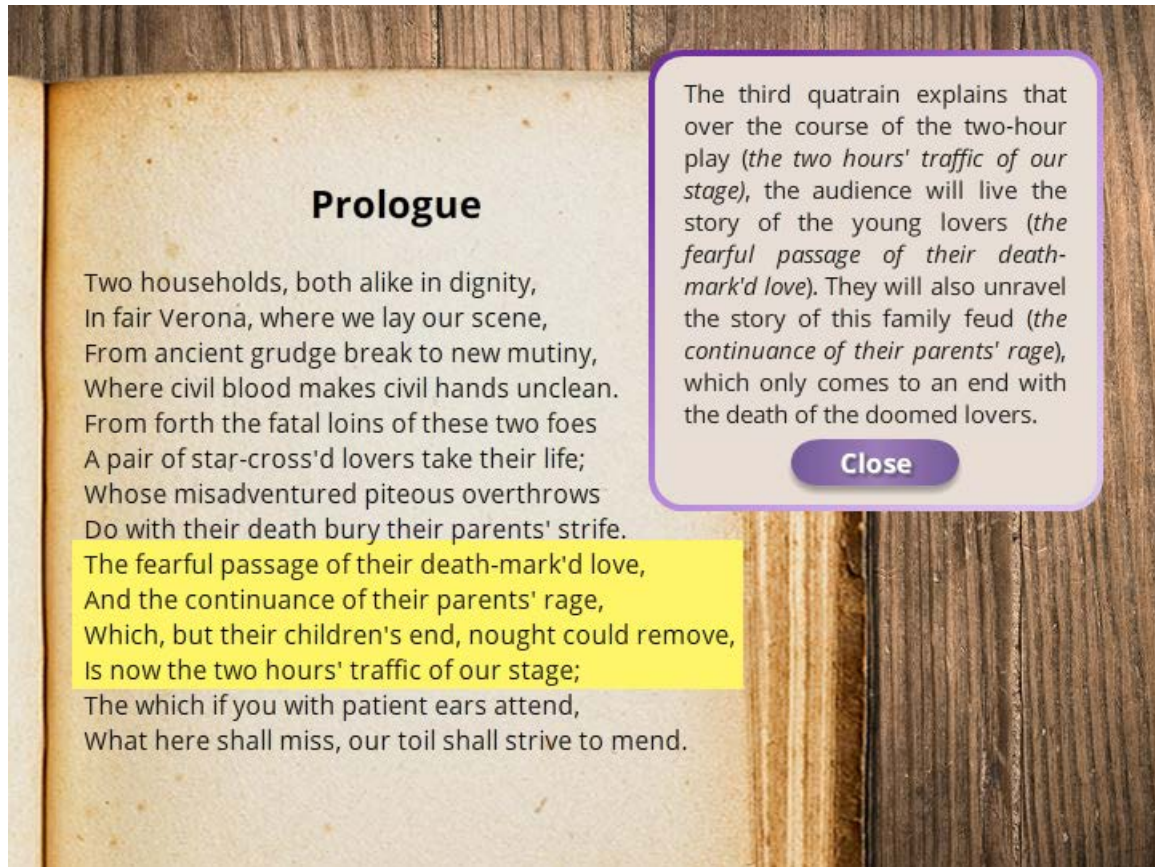
*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.*

In the second quatrain, the plot thickens. The two warring families produce unlucky children (*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes*) who will fall in love with each other and commit suicide (*A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life*). Those two lines deliver a devastating story ending, but the lovers' deaths will not be in vain. Their tragic demise will cause the families to reconcile and finally put an end to the feud (*Whose misadventured piteous overthrows / Do with their death bury their parents' strife*).

Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*

Topic 2 Content: Prologue Analysis

Third Quatrain



Prologue

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.

The third quatrain explains that over the course of the two-hour play (*the two hours' traffic of our stage*), the audience will live the story of the young lovers (*the fearful passage of their death-mark'd love*). They will also unravel the story of this family feud (*the continuance of their parents' rage*), which only comes to an end with the death of the doomed lovers.

Close

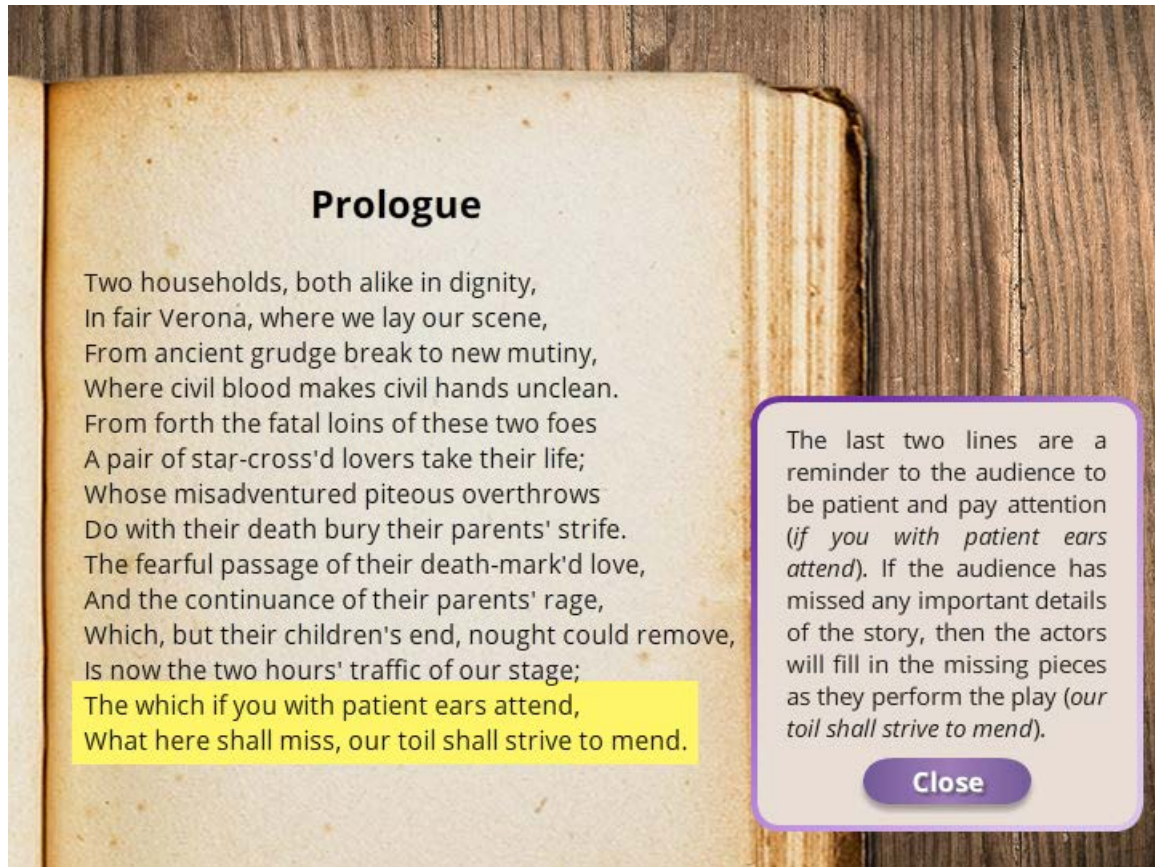
*The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;*

The third quatrain explains that over the course of the two-hour play (*the two hours' traffic of our stage*), the audience will live the story of the young lovers (*the fearful passage of their death-mark'd love*). They will also unravel the story of this family feud (*the continuance of their parents' rage*), which only comes to an end with the death of the doomed lovers.

Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*

Topic 2 Content: Prologue Analysis

Final Couplet



Prologue

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.

The last two lines are a reminder to the audience to be patient and pay attention (*if you with patient ears attend*). If the audience has missed any important details of the story, then the actors will fill in the missing pieces as they perform the play (*our toil shall strive to mend*).

Close

*The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.*

The last two lines are a reminder to the audience to be patient and pay attention (*if you with patient ears attend*). If the audience has missed any important details of the story, then the actors will fill in the missing pieces as they perform the play (*our toil shall strive to mend*).