

The Tragedy of Romeo & Juliet

Prologue Annotation Activity

Step 1 Directions: Closely read and annotate the prologue to William Shakespeare’s drama, “The Tragedy of Romeo & Juliet.” Use the **Annotation Guide** to help with your annotations.

Prologue Facts:

- The Prologue is the opening of the play. In the Prologue, the chorus tells the audience what will happen.
- The Prologue is a sonnet.

Annotation Guide

Label

The poem’s rhyme scheme.

Underline

Words or phrases you do not know. Look up their meaning and write in the margins.

Star and Identify

Figurative language such as simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, etc.

Box

Words that depict setting

Write

Any connects you make in the margins

Circle

All uses of the word “two” and words or phrases that reinforce the idea of “two”.

Squiggle Line

Phrases and images associated with death.

Highlight

Phrases that explain the relationship between the two households.

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
 Doth with their death bury their parent’s strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-mark’d love,
 And the continuance of their parent’s 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.

When you are done, move on to Step 2 →

Step 2 Directions: After you are done annotating the prologue, please answer the following questions in complete sentences based on your annotations.

1. What is the place setting of the play?

2. What is the relationship between the two households?

3. What does Shakespeare mean by “star-cross’d lovers”? What happens to the lovers?

4. What does the chorus ask of the audience in the last two lines? Why?

5. Look back at the usage of the word “two” and references to the idea of “two.” Why are they used so frequently?

6. Look back at the phrases and images associated with death. How many are there? Why are they used?

Step 3 Directions: Once you are done answering the questions, the last part of this assignment is to rewrite the Prologue on a separate piece of paper, line for line, in modern English.

The finished product must be:

- A 14-line poem that is written in modern English and
- Has no more than 25% of the original words.

The object is to use the knowledge you gain from annotating and answering the questions to rewrite the Prologue in your own words.

Modern English Prologue Grading Rubric

	10	8	6	4
Length Requirement	Meets the length requirement. Prologue is written line-by-line for all 14 lines.	Almost meets length, line-by-line requirement. Student may be off by 1-2 lines.	Attempts to meet length/ line-by-line requirement. Student is off by several lines (3-5 lines).	Does not follow the line-by-line format. Student is off by more than 6 lines.
Translation to Modern English	Prologue is translated into modern English and includes no more than 25% of the original words.	Prologue is translated into modern English and includes no more than 35% of the original words.	Prologue is translated into modern English and includes no more than 50% of the original words.	Prologue translation included approximately 50% or more of the original words.
Demonstrating Understanding	Student demonstrated a full, thorough understanding of the prologue.	Student demonstrated an understanding of the prologue.	Student attempts to demonstrate an understanding of the prologue.	Student does not demonstrate an understanding of the prologue.

