

Romeo and Juliet - Prologues

Pre-Show Activity for Grades 6-12

Goals

- Students will collaboratively research the plot, themes, and characters of *Romeo and Juliet* to build a foundational understanding of its narrative and purpose.
- Students will utilize their research and textual evidence to create an original prologue (or alternative creative project) that reflects the central conflict, themes, and style of the chosen play.

NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). TEKS can be found at the end of this document. [Artful Thinking Routines](#) are regularly referenced and utilized to encourage critical thinking.

Materials

- *Romeo and Juliet Prologue* handout with play summary (included).
- Chart paper or whiteboard space for each group.
- Research devices.
- Access to [Alley Re-Sourced](#) guide.
- Creative supplies (markers, paper, etc., for visual projects).
- Optional: Video editing tools or software for movie trailers.

Step 1: Introduce the Prologue

- Begin by introducing William Shakespeare, using the information outlined on Alley Re-Sourced.
 - Discuss: “The play we are going to see is one of Shakespeare’s most famous plays.”
- Project Overview:
 - Introduce the focus of the project: “The play begins with a prologue, which is a part at the beginning that tells the audience what is going to happen.”
- Defining Prologue:
 - A prologue is an introductory section that provides background information, sets the scene, or introduces key themes and conflicts. It may include spoilers, aiding the audience in understanding the “how” and “why” instead of merely the “what.”
- Breaking Down a Prologue:
 - With the class, read through the text of the Prologue from *Romeo and Juliet*. You can find the text here from [Folger Shakespeare Library](#), or use the printed version included in this document.
 - You can supplement the reading with a video or performance of the prologue, such as this version from [Baz Lurhman’s Romeo + Juliet \(1996\)](#).

Step 2: Analyze the Prologue

- Discuss: What can we learn about the play just from the prologue? What does it tell us about the characters and plot? Themes? What can the audience expect about *Romeo and Juliet*?
- In pairs or small groups, have students circle, highlight, or notate key information given in the prologue.
 - Key information includes answers to the classic 5 W's: Who, What, When, Where, and Why?
- Have each pair or small group translate the prologue, line-by-line, into their own words.

Step 3: Create an Original Prologue

- Each pair or group will create their own prologue of the play. They can choose from various formats, including:
 - A silent, mimed scene set to music.
 - A recorded trailer for the play.
 - A comic strip with 5-10 frames.
 - A visual essay that combines images, quotes, and explanations.
- Each prologue should communicate the same information as the original prologue.

Note for UDL alignment: Use a visible timer while students are creating and give them verbal warnings.

Step 4: Share and Reflect

- Designate a stage area and have each person or group present their work, sharing their summaries and themes from each play.
- If time allows, students can display their work in a gallery walk.
- During presentations, use "See / Think / Wonder" to encourage reflection from the rest of the class:
 - What did you see in this prologue? Objectively, without interpretation. Just visual details.
 - What do you think is happening in this prologue? What do you see that makes you think that?
 - What do you wonder? What questions come up for you as you look at this?

Note for UDL alignment: Encourage multiple expression modes: oral presentations, visual charts, digital slides, 1-on-1 reports.

TEKS

- ELA 6–12
 - (6A–C), (7A–B), (8A–C), (11A), (13A) – Analyze how authors use literary elements to develop themes; analyze characters, including their motivations; compose written texts using appropriate strategies; evaluate the relevance of sources and analyze information gathered.
- Theatre I–IV
 - (2A–B), (3A–C), (5A–B), (12A) – Create theatrical performances that incorporate elements of playmaking; analyze how historical and cultural contexts influence characters and themes; reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of performances and visual displays in conveying themes.

Romeo and Juliet - Prologues

Read the original text from the play on the left. Highlight, underline, or note any important information the prologue tells the audience. In the space on the right, re-write each sentence in your own words.

Prologue, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Translation</i>
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.	

Our Notes

- Where is the play set?
- What seems to be the overall tone or vibe of the play?
- Who are the main characters?
- What can I guess or infer about the main message of the play?

Our Version

Create your own prologue of the play. You can choose from various formats, including:

- A silent, mimed scene set to music.
- A recorded trailer for the play.
- A comic strip with 5-10 frames.
- A visual essay that combines images, quotes, and explanations.

Each prologue should communicate the same information as the original prologue. Use the space below to help you plan.

Chosen Format:
Notes: