#4 Shakespearean Language CN /5
Blank Verse vs. Prose

- Characters with status and intelligence speak in verse, while characters from the “lower classes” speak only in prose. This creates a contrast between them.

- **Blank Verse** - poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter

- **Prose** - Natural flow of speech rather than rhythmic structure; ordinary language people use in speaking or writing.
Iambic Pentameter

- A sound pattern
- Makes the words rhythmic and the dialogue in the play more engaging
- Helped the actors remember their lines (like a song)
Iambic

- IAM: one unaccented (or unstressed) syllable with one accented syllable

- Unstressed: ſ

- Stressed: ñ

- Example: goodBYE

- Each IAM of two syllables is called a foot

- It’s like a heartbeat:
  - ba-bum | ba-bum | ba-bum | ba-bum | ba-bum
  - I AM | I AM | I AM | I AM | I AM
Pentameter

◊ Penta = 5, Meter = sound

Iambic Pentameter

◊ Five “feet” per line
◊ Ten syllables total per line
◊ he WENT to TOWN toDAY to BUY a CAR
◊ In SOOTH / I KNOW / not WHY / I AM / so SAD
Examples of Iambic Pentameter

When I / do COUNT/ the CLOCK/ that TELLS/ the TIME

When IN/ dis GRACE/ with FOR/ tune AND / men’s EYES

How many syllables per line?

Pattern?
• How many syllables per line?
  • 10

• Pattern
  • Unstressed stressed
Features of a Shakespearean sonnet?

• 14 lines
  – 3 quatrains (4 lines each)
  – 1 couplet (2 lines)

• Follows a specific rhyme scheme: ABAB CDC DEF G

• Each line is written in iambic pentameter
  – Each line consists of 10 syllables.
  – The syllables are divided into five pairs called iambs.
  – An iamb = unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable
Shakespearean Sonnet Structure

A
B
A
B

1st Quatrain: Establishes the **subject**, **main theme**, or **main metaphor** of the sonnet.

C
D
C
D

2nd Quatrain: Develops the sonnet’s theme and/or **Extends** the metaphor.

E
F
E
F

3rd Quatrain: Often contains a **turn or twist** called a **volta**, introduced with the word “but.”

G
G

Couplet: **Rhyming pair** of lines. Conclusion to the sonnet.
Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
The Prologue

Meaning ‘before speech,’ it gave the audience hints about what they were about to see and asked them to try and understand even if it didn’t all make perfect sense.
Romeo and Juliet 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.
Modern Translation

Two families, both of the same eminent status,
In the fair city of Verona, Italy, where this play takes place
A long-standing grudge will erupt into new violence.
The violence stains civilized hands with blood.
These two deadly enemies bore offspring.
These children are fated to fall in love and commit suicide.
Whose unfortunate struggles and tragic actions inspires pity
When the lovers die, the families finally stop fighting.
The thrilling story leading to their doomed love that will cause their deaths
And their parents’ ongoing feud
Which would never have ended without the death of their children
Is what we will perform over the course of this two-hour play
And if you listen carefully and patiently,
What was left out in this prologue, we will work hard to fill in the details.
In your notes, explain the R+J Prologue Structure

1st Quatrain: What is the subject established?

2nd Quatrain: How is the subject developed or elaborated?

3rd Quatrain: What is the volta explained to be?

Couplet: What is the concluding message of the sonnet?
Something that is becoming clear to me about Shakespearean language is...