



THE POWER OF PROLOGUE

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- ✓ **POST-VIEWING LESSON/ACTIVITY**
- ✓ **TYPE:** CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT/PROJECT
- ✓ **SUITABILITY:** ENGLISH 9-11, DRAMA 10, ACTING 11&12, DIRECTING AND SCRIPTWRITING 12
- ✓ **RECOMMENDED TIME:** 1 FULL CLASSES (1 HR 15 MIN)

POST-VIEWING

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the play begins with a prologue that outlines the basic plot-line for the play, as told by the chorus. Using poetic structure and iambic pentameter, Shakespeare beautifully "sets the stage" for what is to come in the play. In different productions of the play, directors explore many different ideas for how to present the prologue to the audience. It is a crucial piece to any production of the play.

Assignment:

Your task is to write a prologue for *The Fantasticks* similar to the prologue that Shakespeare uses at the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*. Use Shakespeare's prologue as a guide, or map, to help you craft your own. While you do not have to follow the iambic pentameter structure that Shakespeare uses, I encourage you to create a distinct flow to the piece as it should be easily understood and effortlessly delivered to create the proper impact on the audience.

Your prologue should tell the basic plot-line of *The Fantasticks* without bluntly giving away all the exciting drama and events of the play. You want to pique the interest of the audience and grab them, without spoiling the whole piece.

Prologue to *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

Chorus: *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* 5
*A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whole 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,* 10
*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. [Exit]*

Extensions for this assignment:

1. If you are reading the actual play *The Fantasticks* before viewing the staged production, then I recommend having students complete this assignment **before** viewing, allowing for reflection and revisions following the production.
2. If you are teaching this as a Drama/Acting lesson, have students physically bring to life their prologues by having them dramatize the reading of the prologue (choral reading) while simultaneously acting out 5-7 tableau frames (freeze frames) to accompany the reading.
3. If you want to make this assignment more challenging, require that students follow Shakespeare's iambic pentameter pattern for the whole prologue.

For Directing and Scriptwriting students, explore the concept of a prologue and have them research their function and purpose. Have them write a few sample ones for their own original pieces, and then from these, have them choose one to turn into a short 1 act play.

Please note:

Part 1: Story, Background, Paraphrasing, Creators, Characters, Glossary... is available for downloading at

VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM

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Contact: Stasa Andric at **604 637 3094** / sandric@vancouverplayhouse.com

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