

## 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-crossed lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
With their death bury their parents' strife.

The fearful passage of their death-marked 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.

Summarise what you think the Prologue says will happen in the play

Write down your ideas and compare them with a partner to see if you have written similar summaries.

Look through the Prologue again and find all the references to death. How many are there? What does this suggest about the play?

How many references to violence can you find? What does this add to your ideas above?

How many references to love can you find? What does this suggest about the play?

What do you think the words 'star-crossed' means?

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How many references can you find to families, parents or children? What does this suggest about the play?

All the words you have searched for in the Prologue are themes: that is ideas about love, violence; death; and families appear throughout the play.

Having considered the meaning of the Prologue and the themes that it alludes to, discuss why you think Shakespeare included it at the beginning of the play. Doesn't it just 'give away' the plot? What reasons can you find for having a Prologue?