**Ms. Smith’s English I Honors/Gifted**

***Romeo and Juliet***

***Prologue***

[*Enter* CHORUS]

**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

A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,

Whose misadventured piteous overthrows

Doth 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, naught 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.]*

Directions: Complete the following analysis questions/

1. Read and annotate the *Prologue* to Act I of *Romeo and Juliet*.
2. Note ever use of “two’s” or parallelism and make a note of its importance in the margin.
3. What themes are introduced through the use of “two’s” or parallelism?
4. Note the Shakespearean sonnet structure of the Prologue. How does the fixed sonnet form reveal the plot of the tragedy?

**Parallelism**

**Definition of Parallelism**

Parallelism is the usage of repeating words and forms to give pattern and [rhythm](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhythm/) to a passage in literature. Parallelism often either juxtaposes contrasting images or ideas so as to show their stark difference, or joins similar concepts to show their connection. Parallelism encompasses all these possibilities of [repetition](http://www.literarydevices.com/repetition/) and contrast.

The definition of parallelism can also refer to a grammatical construct, which we use commonly in everyday speech, for example “She enjoys gardening and cooking” instead of “She enjoys gardening and to cook.” The grammatical parallelism in the former sentence is a matter of using two gerunds instead of the second sentence’s use of one gerund and one infinitive. Most English speakers thus use grammatical parallelism all the time without realizing it.

**Common Examples of Parallelism**

Parallelism is popular in proverbs and idioms, as the parallel structure makes the sayings easy to remember and more rhetorically powerful. Here are some examples of parallelism in English:

* What you see is what you get.
* If you can’t beat them, join them.
* A penny saved is a penny earned.
* Easy come, easy go.

There are many famous quotes that also show parallelism:

* “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” —Dalai Lama
* “Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.” —Dale Carnegie
* “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” —Winston Churchill
* “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” —John F. Kennedy
* “Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.” ― Bernard M. Baruch

**Significance of Parallelism in Literature**

Parallelism has been an important literary device for cultures of oral storytelling from around the world. Many different poetic traditions have examples of parallelism. Some languages from around the world use parallelism as the primary aesthetic construction for poetry. The term “parallelism” comes from an eighteenth-century scholar of Hebrew poetry, while the Russian literary theorist Roman Jakobson pioneered the study of parallelism in non-religious texts. Parallelism remains a popular technique in poetry, [prose](http://www.literarydevices.com/prose/), and plays.