

## Reading Strategy: Read Blank Verse

As modern-day readers, we tend to view the **blank verse** of Shakespeare's plays as literature because books are more readily available to us than acting companies that can perform the plays. Gaining full meaning from reading the text, however, is more difficult than hearing it performed. The rhythm, the line endings, and the rhymes can all combine to make the *meaning* of the text a little difficult to comprehend, especially for someone who is new to Shakespeare.

**A. DIRECTIONS:** Study this passage from Act II, Scene ii, in which Juliet continues her conversation with Romeo from her bedroom window. Reread the passage a number of times. Answer the questions that follow the passage to help you unravel the meaning of some of the more difficult lines.

**JULIET.** What man art thou, thus bescreened in night,  
So stumblest on my counsel?

**ROMEO.** By a name  
I know not how to tell thee who I am.  
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself  
Because it is an enemy to thee.  
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

**JULIET.** My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words  
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.  
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?

**ROMEO.** Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.

**JULIET.** How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?  
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,  
And the place death, considering who thou art,  
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

**ROMEO.** With love's light wings did I o'er perch these walls;  
For stony limits cannot hold love out,  
And what love can do, that dares love attempt.  
Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.

1. Look at Juliet's first question. What would be an easier way to say "What man art thou, . . . So stumblest on my counsel?" (The footnote indicates *counsel* means "secret thoughts.")

---
2. Examine the lines: "The orchard walls are high and hard to climb./And the place death, considering who thou art./If any of my kinsmen find thee here." The first line is easily understood. Rephrase the rest of the sentence here to make sure you know what Juliet says.

---
3. The line "And what love can do, that dares love attempt" is missing several words that we would add in modern-day speech. Rephrase this line.

---