*Romeo and Juliet* Prologue to Act I – **STUDY ONLY ACT I SONNET FOR THURSDAY.**

A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem divided into three quatrains of four lines each and one couplet of two lines. The meter is iambic pentameter; iam = 2 syllables, one stressed and one unstressed; pentameter = 5 metrical feet, so 2 x 5 = ten syllables per line.

A Two households, both alike in dignity First Quatrain

B In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

A From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,

B Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

C From forth the fatal loins of these two foes Second Quatrain

D A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,

C Whose misadventured, piteous overthrows

D Doth, with their death, bury their parents’ strife.

E The fearful passage of their death-marked love Third Quatrain

F And the continuance of their parents’ rage --

E Which but their deaths, naught could remove --

F Is now the two-hours traffic of our stage;

G The which if you with patient ears attend, Couplet

G What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

First Quatrain

Montagues and the Capulets are the two families. “two households”

Romeo is a Montague; Juliet is a Capulet.

The two families are alike in wealth and status. “alike in dignity”

The setting of *Romeo and Juliet* is Verona, Italy. “in fair Verona, where we lay our scene”

The families have been feuding/fighting for centuries. “ancient grudge”

A new fight breaks out in the city streets between them. “new mutiny”

Civilized people become uncivilized when they shed each other’s blood. “Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.”

Second Quatrain

Capulets’ love makes Juliet; Montagues’ love makes Romeo, but their hate plays a role in their children ending their lives. “From forth the fatal loins of these two foes a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life …” (Love makes life; hate takes life.)

When Romeo and Juliet end their lives, the family feud also ends. “Doth, with their death, bury their parents’ strife” (conflict, feud).”

Third Quatrain

Lord and Lady Capulet and Lord and Lady Montague realize their hatred played a role in the end of their children’s marriage and lives. “The fearful passage of their death-marked love and the continuance of their parents’ rage, which but their deaths naught (nothing) could remove (end) –” Three things end with Romeo and Juliet’s deaths: their lives, their marriage, and the family feud.

The play lasts two hours. “is now the two-hours traffic of our stage”

If you pay attention to the sonnet, you can understand the plot summary. What you miss in the sonnet, the actors will try to act out for you in the play. “The which if you with patient ears attend, what here shall miss, our toil (work, acting) shall strive (try) to mend.

*Romeo and Juliet* Prologue to Act II

Now old desire doth in his deathbed lie,

And young affection gapes to be his heir.

That fair for which love groaned for and would die,

With tender Juliet matched, is now not fair.

Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,

Alike bewitched by the charm of looks;

But to his foe supposed he must complain,

And she steal love’s sweet bait from fearful hooks.

Being held a foe, he may not have access

To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,

And she as much in love, her means much less

To meet her new beloved anywhere.

But passion lends them power, time means to meet,

Temp’ring extremities with extreme sweet.