

## Literary Analysis: Blank Verse

**Blank verse** is unrhymed poetry written in a meter called iambic pentameter. A line written in iambic pentameter includes five stressed syllables, each preceded by an unstressed syllable, as in the following example:

Tis but thy name that is my enemy.

Thou art thyself though not a Montague.

Much of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is written in blank verse. Shakespeare uses its formal meter to reinforce character rank. Important or aristocratic characters typically speak in blank verse. Minor or comic characters often do not speak in verse.

**DIRECTIONS:** Mark the stressed and unstressed syllables in these lines from Act II, Scene v. Put a check mark next to the line that has one extra syllable and the line not written in iambic pentameter. The first line has been marked for you.

- JULIET. The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse,  
In half an hour she promised to return.  
Perchance she cannot meet him. That's not so.  
O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,  
5 Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams  
Driving back shadows over low'ring hills.  
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,  
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.  
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill  
10 Of this day's journey, and from nine to twelve  
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.  
Had she affections and warm youthful blood  
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;  
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,  
15 And his to me.  
But old folks, many feign as they were dead—  
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.