



talk like
Shakespeare!

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Chicago Shakespeare Theater

Finding Shakespeare's Verse

Read aloud the verse passage below that's been stripped of all punctuation. Read it again several times aloud, listening for the rhythm and to find the sense of the verse. When you feel you have grasped the meaning, add punctuation and compare it with your printed text. Why did you punctuate where you did?

Punctuation is one of the "tools of the trade" for writers, like a case full of carpenter's tools. Every editor of Shakespeare makes some different choices, based on his or her "take" on Shakespeare's meaning. How would other punctuation alter what the character is saying? Juliet speaks the words below in 2.2. If time allows, try this with other passages.

(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2a, 3ab)

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face
else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
for that which thou hast heard me speak to-night
fain would I dwell on form fain fain deny
what I have spoke but farewell compliment
dost thou love me I know thou wilt say 'Ay'
and I will take thy word yet if thou swear'st
thou mayst prove false at lovers' perjuries
they say Jove laughs o gentle Romeo
if thou dost love pronounce it faithfully
or if thou think'st I am too quickly won
I'll frown and be perverse an say thee nay
so thou wilt woo but else not for the world
in truth fair Montague I am too fond
and therefore thou mayst think my behavior light
but trust me gentleman I'll prove more true
than those that have more cunning to be strange
I should have been more strange I must confess
but that thou overheard'st ere I was ware
my true love's passion therefore pardon me
and not impute this yielding to light love
which the dark night hath so discovered