Act 1, scene 4 – The Importance of Diction

**Queen Mab, the fairies’ midwife**

A change in the language used to describe something can significantly change the tone, and therefore, the meaning of what’s being said. During Mercutio’s Queen Mab speech, he goes from joking and light-heartedly making fun of Romeo’s dream, indicating that dreamers only dream what they want to, to a more dark and sinister view of dreams that also reflect a nightmarish view of reality.

Read the speech again (1.4.53-95) and find examples of this change in diction, and therefore tone.

1. Based on his physical description, how do you picture Queen Mab?
2. What types of dreams does he refer to in 1.4.71-74?
3. What’s the tone of this speech from line 53 – 74?
4. The tone begins to change in line 75, why?
5. What picture of dreams does he end with? Provide some examples as proof.
6. Make a list of words from the end of the speech that indicate the tone has changed.
7. Mercutio is talking about dreams here, but what do you think he’s saying about them?

**Warnings of impending doom**

There are many warnings throughout the play that should keep Romeo and Juliet apart, yet all are ignored, contributing to the tragedy that is the play.

1. Read the beginning of the scene again, and list the warnings about the party that Romeo ignores.
2. Read Romeo’s speech at the end of the scene.
   1. What references to fate are present in this speech? Quote the lines that suggest fate will control what Romeo does.
   2. Make a list of words that evoke a negative tone and suggest something bad will happen.

Act 1, scene 5- Romeo and Juliet’s meeting

Romeo and Juliet’s meeting is set to poetry. Not only are there many poetic/literary devices in their meeting, but it is also structured like a sonnet, which is a traditional love poem.

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| **Poetic devices – find an example (quotation) of each:**  Light and dark imagery:  Religious metaphor:  Diction: | **Romeo, oh Romeo**  Romeo professes endless love for Rosaline, but then sees Juliet and instantly forgets her. What do you make of this?  Are Romeo’s actions forgivable because he has found his true love, or is Romeo just a fickle young man who will fall in love with the next beauty he sees? Support your answer with specific details from the text. |