

# 16 - VERSE AND PROSE

What are the dramatic effects of verse and prose?

## WHAT YOU NEED

- A piece of note paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to watch [this clip](#).
- A copy of Act 4 Scene 1, to read either on the page or onscreen.

## ACTIVITY

- Watch [this video](#), explaining the rhythm (Iambic Pentameter) behind Shakespeare's verse.
- Read the beginning of Act 4 Scene 1 and determine if the characters are speaking in verse or prose. Tap out the rhythm whilst reading the words.  
*NB Notice that sometimes characters may share a line of regular iambic pentameter; as is the case with the first three lines of this scene.*
- In *Othello*, Shakespeare intermingles the two styles verse and prose frequently, often using this shift to represent a shift in emotions.
- Keep reading the scene. Where does the verse form begin to break down into prose? Why?
- Notice what happens to Othello's language specifically during the course of the scene. How does his pattern of speech reflect his emotional state? Early on, Othello uses verse to create a metaphor "As doth the raven o'er the infectious house" - compare this to his speech moments later before he falls down, overcome with rage. What effect does 'devolving' from verse to prose have?
- Find and write down some quotes that best example this for Othello in this scene.

## EXTENSION

- Find examples of Iago switching back and forth between verse and prose. Why may this be?
- Iago seems to move between each form intentionally and with ease. What does this indicate? Think back to activities 8 and 14 when we looked at *rhetoric* and *manipulation*.