

### Sonnet from *Romeo and Juliet*

William Shakespeare

**Romeo:**

If I profane with my unworhiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

**Juliet:**

- 5 Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmer's<sup>1</sup> kiss.

**Romeo:**

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

**Juliet:**

- 10 Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

**Romeo:**

O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.  
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

**Juliet:**

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

**Romeo:**

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

—from Act 1, Scene 5, Lines 104-117

**Sonnets** are an important traditional genre of poem. Their characteristics include the following:

- iambic pentameter (each line has five pairs of unstressed/stressed syllables)
- a length of fourteen lines
- a definite rhyme pattern (for Shakespearean sonnets: abab cdcd efef gg)
- a focus on classic themes such as love and mortality
- strong emotional content
- emphatic imagery and sharp contrasts
- distinct stages and shifts in tone
- a final rhyming couplet that often sums up the theme of the poem

Note how this poem's form and content fit this pattern, then analyze the meaning of Romeo and Juliet's exchange, including their clever plays on words. What action is implied at the end of the poem?

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<sup>1</sup> palmer: a religious pilgrim