

Writing Activity: In My Own Words

Directions: A *paraphrase* is a rewriting of an original passage.

Paraphrases are not intended to replace the original. Instead, they restate the original in a less complex style using common language and familiar word order. Sharpening your paraphrasing skills can enable you to decode outdated or difficult language.

continued

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Compare the following original passage and paraphrase from Act II, Scene II of Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. Juliet is agonizing about Romeo being a member of the Montague family, which is despised by her own family, the Capulets. Notice how the message is similar, yet the wording is easier to understand.

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Original Passage	Paraphrase
O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet.	O Romeo! Why are you called Romeo? If you can't forsake your family and your name, at least swear that you love me, and I'll give up my family name for you.

Write a paraphrase of “Portia’s Speech” to make the monologue easier for modern readers. Feel free to use a dictionary or other resource.

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Original Speech	My Paraphrase
The quality of mercy is not strain'd.	
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven	
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd:	
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.	

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Original Speech	My Paraphrase
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes	
The throned monarch better than his crown.	
His scepter shows the force of temporal power	
The attribute to awe and majesty,	

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Original Speech	My Paraphrase
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;	
But mercy is above this scepted sway;	
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;	
It is an attribute to God himself,	

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Original Speech	My Paraphrase
And earthly power doth then show likest God's	
When mercy seasons justice.	