



IDX G9 English H+
Study Guide S1 Midterms
By Cheese 9(8), Michelle 9(10),
Edited by Caitlin 9(2)

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Romeo and Juliet Summary

Shakespeare

- William Shakespeare, baptized April 26, 1564, died April 23, 1616 (note, he was born and died in the same place: Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England)
- He was a poet, dramatist, and actor often called the English national poet.
- His works include *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and many more.
- His plays were not published while he was alive; only after he was dead did his works come before the public's eyes.

Act 1.1

- Gregory and Sampson, from the house of Capulet, start off the play. As they speak, the readers learn about the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, with the grudges of the two men. This is important because even the serving men of the two houses carry their master's displeasures with them, revealing the deep loathing between the opposing clans.
- Abraham and another serving man of Montague enters, and Sampson draws his sword and urges Gregory to do so too. Though hesitant, they perform rude actions (as in biting one's

thumb). Abraham was provoked, and a quarrel broke out. Though Greg and Sampson privately talk and fight the Montagues, they seem too nervous to actually start a fight.

- Biting one's thumb is seen as an obscene gesture in Elizabethan England, which is why Abraham was so easily provoked.
- Benvolio, Tybalt, and their men enter the fight. Tybalt claims that he "hate[s]" peace—just as he hates "hell, all Montagues, and thee."
- Capulet, Lady Capulet, Montague, Lady Montague join the chaos as well, just in time to catch Prince Escalus. This is the third time the Montagues and Capulets have broken the peace of Verona, so the prince, whoever breaks it again, shall face execution.
- This passage illustrates that though the feud originates from the two old men, the burden of the feud has to be carried by their young servants and kinsmen.
- Montague and his wife remain behind with Benvolio, who explains the reason for the fight. Lady Montague says that she is relieved that Romeo was not in the fight, followed by Benvolio and Montague, who introduce to the readers the grief of Romeo. "Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,/ and makes himself an artificial night".
- Romeo, who enters the three standing, explains to them the reason for his grievance. It is because of love, unsuccessful love, of Rosaline, who had sworn herself to be forever chaste. "She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair" is a quote that Romeo describes her as, and note the change of attitude towards her after Romeo had met Juliet.
- This is a long scene, and it describes the background information of the feud and of Romeo's grief (lost love). Through the fight between the two families, Shakespeare established one of the central themes of the play: public conflict versus private love. How might that be?

Act 1.2

- Capulet and Paris enter, followed by Peter, Capulet's servant. After they discussed the penalty established by the prince, they chatted about the marriage between Juliet and Paris. Capulet's tone is soft as he says "My child is yet a stranger in the world", asking Paris to wait for a few years until the marriage, for Juliet is young. Capulet then asks Peter to invite the nobles from Verona to a party at his house tonight.
- Benvolio and Romeo enter, still talking about Romeo's broken heart. As Benvolio urges him to find a new girl, Romeo helps Peter read off the list of names and asks where this assembly would be. Not knowing who they were, Peter invited them to the party. Benvolio tells Romeo that Rosaline will be at the party, urging him to go, but he actually wants him to find a new girl there. Even though Romeo believes he'll never love again, Benvolio is determined to help his

friend get out of his lovesick depression. As the wheels begin to turn, it does start to seem as if fate has had a hand in Romeo and Benvolio securing an unlikely invitation to the Capulet feast.

Act 1.3

- Capulet's wife, Juliet, and her nurse enter the scene. Lady Capulet tells the nurse that Juliet is 14, and the nurse says that she is aware of it because her daughter, now deceased, was born on the same day as her. The nurse recalls the day Juliet stopped nursing at her breast—it was the same day of a terrible earthquake, and Juliet had a cut on her forehead about which the nurse's husband (now also dead) made an off-color joke. Lady Capulet tells the nurse to hush up. The nurse continues with her story until Juliet, too, asks her to stop. The nurse claims that if she lives to see Juliet married, she would die a happy woman.
- Lady Capulet then announces that Paris will marry Juliet, and the nurse starts rambling about how nice a person Paris is. Juliet says that she will take a look at Paris and decide whether she likes him or not.

Act 1.4

- Mercutio, Romeo, and Benvolio, and several of the house's men, enter wearing party masks and carrying torches. The torches here symbolize a certain theme in the play. What could it be? Romeo says he doesn't want to go in at all, but Mercutio urges him to dance and be merry by "borrowing Cupid's wings" and soaring to new heights. Romeo, sad as ever, claims that he is sunk under love's heavy burden.
- Romeo claims that he had a portentous dream last night, and Mercutio says he had a dream the night before, too, of Queen Mab. In this lengthy speech, he spins a tale about an incredibly small person who comes to people while asleep on a small chariot to make them dream of sweet things and play pranks on those who make her jealous/cross.
- So, how might this speech matter?
- Mercutio's Queen Mab speech is important because it shows the difference between dreams and reality. While Romeo is a hopeless romantic who believes in perfect love, Mercutio tells a funny but dark story about a fairy who brings dreams to people. He explains that dreams and fantasies are absurd and can be dangerous. This speech warns us that Romeo's dreamy view of love is naive and won't survive in the violent world of their feuding families.

Act 1.5

- As the Capulets proceed in their party, Romeo and his kinsmen sneak into the house. The moment Romeo sees Juliet across the room, he forgets his past love for Rosaline and falls instantly in love with her. "ne'er saw true beauty till this night." They meet, touch hands, and

share a sonnet (wow). However, Juliet's cousin Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice and wants to fight him, but Lord Capulet stops him to keep the peace. By the end of the scene, Romeo and Juliet each discovered that the other is from their family's hated enemy. Despite this, their attraction is too strong, and their love is set against a backdrop of danger and conflict.

- This is direct evidence of the absurdity of the two teenagers' love.

Act 2

- Act 2 is where Romeo and Juliet's secret love quickly deepens. Due to time constraints, this study guide will only focus on the most important details.
- As Romeo hides from Mercutio and Benvolio (Act 2.1), he comes out of hiding just as a light in a nearby window flicks on and Juliet exits onto her balcony.
- 1. Romeo and Juliet's position relation
 - Traditionally, a male lover would idolize a distant, unattainable woman from below. Here, the positions are reversed. As Juliet stands above on the balcony, he listens from below. When he was in love with Rosaline, his words were filled with exaggerated metaphors. Upon hearing Juliet, his language becomes genuine and reverent.
- 2. Language
 - "What's in a name?" As Juliet asks about the artificial barriers that define their world, she states that the name is meaningless, and the essence of the person is what truly matters. This is the play's central statement that individual identity should triumph over what society regards it as.
 - Romeo, of course, lovesick, offers to abandon the name. This shows his commitment to love, but also shows how he is willing to deny himself.
- 3. Light and Dark
 - Romeo describes Juliet as the sun, a bright angel, and stars. She is the source of light glowing over the dark gardens of the Capulet house.
 - This light and dark elevate their love into a value that is chaste and bright, setting them apart from the conflict between the two families.
- How is lightning similar to love?
 - Sudden and Unpredictable; extreme light; powerful and destructive; short-lived
- Frair Laurence (Act 2.3) picks up flowers to brew medicine. Romeo enters, and the Friar asks him if he has been with Rosaline or not. Romeo explains that he fell in love with "the fair

daughter of rich Capulet.” Friar Laurence, in spite of his reservations, admits that perhaps the marriage between Romeo and Juliet will be a reasonable choice to end the feud.

- Benvolio and Mercutio (Act 2.4), who were worried, meet up with Romeo, making jokes as they go back to the Montague house. Juliet’s nurse arrives looking for Romeo, and he tells the nurse of his plans.
- Juliet waits (Act 2.5) anxiously in the Capulet orchard for the Nurse to return with news from Romeo about their secret wedding plans. Frustrated by the Nurse’s slow return, Juliet impatiently complains about how long she is taking. When the Nurse finally arrives, she delays sharing the message, instead complaining about her aches and pains and teasing the desperate Juliet. After drawing out the suspense, the Nurse finally reveals that Juliet should go immediately to Friar Lawrence’s cell, where Romeo is waiting to marry her, ending the scene with a joyful announcement of the impending wedding.
- Romeo and Juliet (Act 2.6) meet at Friar Lawrence’s cell to be secretly married. Romeo arrives first, and the Friar warns him that violent, passionate delights have violent ends, comparing their love to a consuming fire and gunpowder. Juliet arrives, and she and Romeo greet each other with intense joy and devotion. The Friar, acknowledging he cannot hold them back, agrees to marry them immediately to make their bond official, leading them away to the ceremony as the scene ends.
- On a hot day in a public square, Mercutio and Benvolio are talking when Tybalt arrives, looking to fight Romeo for crashing the Capulet party. When Romeo appears, Tybalt insults him, but Romeo, now secretly married to Juliet, refuses to fight and speaks of love. An enraged Mercutio, disgusted by what he sees as Romeo’s cowardly submission, draws his sword and duels with Tybalt. As Romeo steps between them to stop the fight, Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo’s arm. Mercutio dies after cursing both families. “A plague o’ both your houses!”. Overcome with rage and guilt, Romeo confronts and kills Tybalt. The Prince arrives and, learning the truth, exiles Romeo from Verona instead of sentencing him to death, declaring that if he returns, “that hour is his last.”

Act 3

(Note: Act 3 is a very important part of the play, as it is full of drama and marks the spot where Romeo & Juliet really start to become a tragedy, where comical relief comes to an end.)

- The act starts with violent tension in Verona’s streets as Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt, who is seeking Romeo to challenge him for crashing the Capulet party. When Romeo arrives, he refuses to fight, since his secret marriage to Juliet has made Tybalt his kinsman.

Mercutio, disgusted by what he sees as cowardice (as he doesn't know Romeo's reasons for not dueling Tybalt), steps in to defend Romeo's honor and ends up dueling Tybalt. The fight turns deadly when Romeo intervenes to stop them, giving Tybalt the opportunity to fatally wound Mercutio. Enraged and guilt-ridden, Romeo kills Tybalt in revenge, setting off the chain of tragic consequences that follow.

- The Prince appears and, though pressured by the Montagues and Capulets, ultimately decides to banish Romeo from Verona rather than sentence him to death. This punishment devastates both Romeo and Juliet, as their short-lived happiness is abruptly replaced with fear and despair. Juliet's emotional reaction is complex—she first condemns Romeo for killing her cousin but soon realizes that her loyalty lies with her husband. Their love becomes even more desperate when Romeo secretly visits her that night, knowing it will be their last meeting before his exile to Mantua.
- The act ends with a new source of tension: Lord Capulet, unaware of Juliet's marriage, decides to speed up her wedding to Paris in hopes of easing her grief. This decision traps Juliet between duty to her family and devotion to Romeo, setting up her coming acts of defiance.

Theme:

Impulsiveness + Violence → Because of Mercutio's rashness (dueling with Tybalt), he died; and because Romeo killed Tybalt, he was banished from Verona. This reflects the theme that acting on emotion rather than reason has severe consequences.

Act 4

- Act 4 begins with Paris visiting Friar Lawrence to discuss his upcoming marriage to Juliet. When Juliet arrives, she speaks vaguely (avoiding clarifying her true thoughts) to avoid revealing her secret marriage to Romeo. Once Paris leaves, Juliet confides in Friar Lawrence, declaring that she would rather die than marry Paris. Moved by her determination and passion, the Friar devises a risky plan: Juliet will drink a potion that will make her appear dead for forty-two hours, during which time he will send word to Romeo in Mantua so that Romeo can return and rescue her from the Capulet tomb when she awakens.
- In Scene 2, Juliet returns home and pretends to submit to her father's will, agreeing to marry Paris. Her apparent obedience delights Lord Capulet, who moves the wedding up by a day, unknowingly disrupting Friar Lawrence's careful timing. Later, in Scene 3, Juliet faces her most emotionally intense moment. Alone in her bedroom, she delivers a powerful soliloquy

expressing her fears—the potion might kill her, fail to work, or trap her in the tomb surrounded by corpses. Despite her fear, she drinks it.

- Scene 4 shifts tone as the Capulet household bustles with wedding preparations. The act ends in Scene 5, where the Nurse discovers Juliet's seemingly lifeless body. The joyful mood turns to grief and chaos as the Capulets, Paris, and Friar Lawrence lament her death. This builds suspense and sets the stage for how Romeo truly thought Juliet had died.

Theme:

Lover or Family → Juliet has to choose between the hope that her true love, Romeo, would reunite with her, or follow her father and mother's orders to marry Paris.

Act 5

Act 5 is where everything falls apart, as the entire tragedy hinges on a single, failed delivery.

- The act starts with Romeo in Mantua, feeling hopeful after a dream. But his friend Balthasar shows up and, having seen Juliet's funeral, tells Romeo she is dead. Romeo doesn't question it; he just acts. He buys a fast-acting poison and heads straight back to Verona to die beside Juliet.
- Meanwhile, we learn why things went wrong. Friar Laurence's letter, which explained that Juliet was only in a drugged sleep, never reached Romeo. The messenger was delayed by a quarantine.
- The final scene takes place in the Capulet family tomb. Paris is there, mourning Juliet, and when Romeo arrives, they fight. Romeo kills him. He then goes inside, sees Juliet (who looks perfectly lifeless), and, heartbroken, drinks the poison and dies.
- Right after that, Juliet wakes up. The Friar rushes in, but it's too late—he finds Romeo dead and Juliet awake. She panics and leaves her. Juliet, seeing Romeo's body and realizing his cup is empty, knows what she has to do. She kisses his lips, hoping for a last drop of poison, then stabs herself with his dagger.
- The sun comes up, and the families find their children dead together. The Friar has to confess the whole story: the secret marriage, the fake death, the missed message. The Prince lays the blame squarely on their feud, saying, "All are punished". Finally, seeing the horrible cost of their hatred, the Montagues and Capulets call a truce.

Theme

Miscommunication: The tragedy hinges on miscommunication because Romeo did not receive Friar Laurence's letter. Dramatic irony intensifies the tragic impact, as the audience knows more than the characters.

“For there was never a sadder story than this one of Juliet and her Romeo.”

END OF PLAY (summary)

Iambic Pentameter

- According to Britannica, “**iambic pentameter**, in poetry, a line of verse composed of ten syllables arranged in five metrical feet (iambs), each of which consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.”
- E.g. in the prologue: “Two **house** | holds **both** | a **like** | in **dig** | ni **ty**”
- E.g. Romeo seeing Juliet for the first time: “But **soft!** | What **light** | through **yon** | der **win** | dow **breaks?**”
- Then why does Shakespeare use it?
- It can mimic the rhythm of English speech and a human heartbeat, making the words of the characters more fluent and musical.
- It gives his plays a poetic and elevated feel.
- It was easier for the actors to remember their lines.
- It naturally stresses the most important words in a line.