

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

The following questions should be used to guide you in your reading of the play and to insure that you recognize important parts of the play. As you read independently, try to answer the questions as best you can and plan to come to class seeking the answers you could not get on your own. During our class discussions, *be sure to record the answers*. It is your responsibility to ask what you do not understand.

*These lines may be on a test. Be able to identify the speaker, describe the circumstances, and be able to interpret or paraphrase the quotation.

Words in **bold** print are vocabulary words that may also appear on a test.

PROLOGUE

1. Who speaks the Prologue?

2. **What is the purpose of the Prologue?**

3. **In what poetic form is this Prologue?**

*4. Highlight lines 5 and 6. Explain the importance of these two lines.

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,

5. Why does Shakespeare tell us how the story is going to end?

6. What themes are established in the Prologue?

ACT 1 SCENE 1

1. How does Shakespeare start the play so that he gains the attention of the “groundlings?”

***2. Highlight lines 58-59. Our first introduction to Benvolio comes when he says these words. What do they reveal about his character?**

Benvolio states that “I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword or manage it to part these men with me.”

***3. Highlight lines 64-65. Our first impression of Tybalt occurs in these lines. What do we learn about his character?**

Tybalt states in return to Benvolio: “What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word. As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee. Have at thee, coward!”

*4. Highlight lines 90-91. What is the tone of the Prince's speech? In these lines he makes a new decree. What is it, and why is it important?

If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.

For this time, all the rest depart away.

You, Capulet, shall go along with me,

And, Montague, come you this afternoon

To know our farther pleasure in this case,

6. When describing his feelings to Benvolio, Romeo uses **Oxymorons—pairs of contradictory words** in lines 170-177 and 184-188. Why does he speak in contradictions and paradoxes?

Here's much to do with hate but more with love.
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,

O anything of nothing first created!

O heavy lightness, serious vanity,

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

This love feel I, that feel no love in this.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

1. In this scene Lord Capulet talks to Paris about marrying his daughter Juliet. What two reasons does he give for not wanting Juliet to marry at this time (lines 8-14)?

My child is yet a stranger in the world.
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.

Let two more summers wither in their pride

Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

***2. On what condition will Lord Capulet agree to Juliet's marriage with Paris?**

But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart.

My will to her consent is but a part.

An she agreed within her scope of choice,

Lies my consent and fair according voice.

3. What does this reveal about Lord Capulet's love for his daughter?

4. From the servant who cannot read we learn that Rosaline, with whom Romeo believes he is in love, will be at the Capulet party. Why does this excite Benvolio? What is his plan (lines 84-89)?

At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Supps the fair Rosaline whom thou so loves

With all the admired beauties of Verona.

Go thither, and with unattainted eye

Compare her face with some that I shall show,

And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.

***5. Highlight lines 86-89. Explain Benvolio's analogy:**

Benvolio:

Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning;

One pain is lessened by another's anguish;

Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning

One desperate grief curses with another's languish.

Take thou some new infection to thy eye,

And the rank poison of the old will die.

6. Why does Romeo agree to go to the party (lines 102-103)?

Romeo tells Benvolio,

I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,

But to rejoice in splendor of mine own.

7. What coincidence takes place in this scene? Explain what theme is being developed.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

In this scene Lady Capulet is informing Juliet and her nurse of Count Paris' proposal of marriage.

1. What is the nurse's relationship with Juliet?

1. How would you describe the nurse's personality?

*3. Highlight lines 62-63. What is the nurse's one wish for Juliet and why?

An I might live to see thee married once,
I have my wish.

4. **When Lady Capulet asks Juliet how she feels about being married, what is Juliet's answer (line 67), and what does it reveal about her character?**

"It is an honor that I dream not of"

5. The nurse and Lady Capulet are both excited and pleased by Paris' proposal but for different reasons.

The nurse says Paris is "a man of wax" and at the end of the scene encourages Juliet to "Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days." What does the nurse see in Paris, and what does it reveal about her attitude toward love and marriage?

6. Lady Capulet's lines 82-95 compose a **conceit**. **A conceit is an extended, exaggerated comparison or metaphor between two unlike things**—in this case, between Paris and a book that needs to be bound. What does Lady Capulet see in Paris that would make him a good match for Juliet? What is Lady Capulet's attitude toward love and marriage?

What say you? Can you love the gentleman?
This night you shall behold him at our feast.

Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face

And find delight writ there with beauty's pen.

Examine every married lineament

And see how one another lends content,

And what obscured in this fair volume lies

Find written in the margin of his eyes.

This precious book of love, this unbound lover,

To beautify him only lacks a cover.

The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride

For fair without the fair within to hide.

That book in many's eyes doth share the glory

That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.

So shall you share all that he doth possess

By having him, making yourself no less.

***7. Highlight lines 98-100. Explain Juliet's answer to her mother when asked if she can love Paris. What does it reveal about her knowledge of being in love? What is her attitude toward love and marriage?**

I'll look to like, if looking liking move,

But no more deep will I endart mine eye

Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

***1. Highlight lines 106-111. Why does Romeo feel uneasy about going to the party? What dream-like premonition has he had?**

I fear, too early; for my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of despised life, closed in my breast,
By some vile forfeit, of untimely death.
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentleman!

2. Comment on this speech in terms of the Elizabethan attitude toward the stars and astrology.

3. What decision does Romeo make in lines 112-113, and what is the thematic importance of this decision?

But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentleman!

ACT 1 SCENE 5

1. We learn from Romeo's soliloquy (a speech delivered while the speaker is alone, calculated to inform the audience of what is passing in the character's mind) that he is struck by love at first sight when he sees Juliet at the party. Paraphrase Romeo's speech (lines 43-53). To what does he compare Juliet?

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear,

Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.

The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,

And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

2. How does this speech about his love for Juliet compare to his speeches about being in love with Rosaline?

3. Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice and tries to start a fight. What two reasons does Lord Capulet give for stopping him (lines 65-69)?

Content thee, gentle coz. Let him alone.
He bears him like a portly gentleman,

And, to say truth, Verona brags of him

To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.

I would not for the wealth of all the town

Here in my house do him disparagement.

Therefore be patient. Take no note of him.

It is my will, the which if thou respect,

Show a fair presence and put off these frowns,

An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast.

*4. Highlight lines 90-91. What threat does Tybalt make as he agrees to withdraw?

Patience perforce with willful choler meeting
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.

I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall

Now seeming sweet, convert to bitterest gall.

5. In lines 92-105 Romeo and Juliet speak to each other. Their lines form a sonnet. Paraphrase the lines of the sonnet.

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
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 palmers' kiss.
Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do!
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake
Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

6. Dramatic Irony is when the audience knows something the characters do not.

What is ironic about Juliet's line 134?

Go ask his name. If he is married, my grave is likely to be my wedding bed.