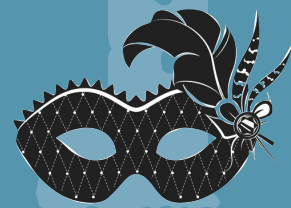


ACT 1

IN THIS ACT, YOU WILL...



- ... quickly appreciate the violent world of Verona as the play opens with a fight between servants of the two feuding families: the Montagues and Capulets.
- ... meet the 'star-crossed lovers', Romeo and Juliet, who fall deeply in love at first sight.
- ... be introduced to Romeo's cousin, Benvolio: a more level-headed young man when compared to those around him.
- ... meet Juliet's fiery cousin, Tybalt, and Romeo's larger than life friend, Mercutio.
- ... discover that this is a play full of conflict, passion and excitement.

**What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.**

**My only love sprung
from my only hate!**

**Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning dew.
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.**

***A man, young lady! Lady, such a man
As all the world – why, he's a man of wax.
...my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
...But He that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail!***

**Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin!**



PROLOGUE

Enter Chorus

CHORUS

Two households, both alike in dignity¹,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge² break to new mutiny³,
Where civil blood⁴ makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes⁵
A pair of star-crossed⁶ lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured⁷ piteous overthrows⁸
Do with their death bury their parents' strife⁹.
The fearful passage¹⁰ of their death-marked¹¹ love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end¹², nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic¹³ of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend¹⁴.

[Exit]

¹ **both...dignity:** equally noble

² **ancient grudge:** old feud

³ **new mutiny:** fresh violence

⁴ **civil blood:** the death and/or injury of civilians

⁵ **From forth...two foes:** Born to these two bitter enemies

⁶ **star-crossed:** ill-fated

⁷ **misadventured:** unfortunate

⁸ **piteous overthrows:** sad and tragic downfall

⁹ **strife:** feud

¹⁰ **passage:** journey

¹¹ **death-marked:** doomed

¹² **but...children's end:** except for their children's deaths

¹³ **traffic:** duration

¹⁴ **What here...to mend:** whatever is lacking will be made up for by the actors' hard work



A: GROUP READING

A prologue is an introduction to a book, film or play. As a class you are now going to read the Prologue together.

- The first student reads from the beginning, but stops when a comma or full stop appears.
- The next student then takes over, but stops when he/she reaches a comma or full stop.
- The third student then takes over and so on.

It is important to listen during this exercise so that you know when it is your turn to read. If somebody fails to stop at the right moment, or doesn't start reading when they should, the class starts reading again from the beginning.



B: EXPLORING THE SCENE

1. According to the Prologue, where is *Romeo and Juliet* set?
2. The Prologue tells us about 'Two households' and an 'ancient grudge'. What does this tell you about the background to this story?
3. The Prologue describes Romeo and Juliet as 'star-crossed lovers'. What does this tell you about these two characters?
4. (a) The Prologue reveals the ending of the play. How does the play end?
(b) Why do you think Shakespeare chose to reveal the end of the story in the Prologue?

**C: LITERARY DEVICE - SONNET**

- The Prologue is in the form of a sonnet.
- A sonnet is a **fourteen-line poem** that often discusses the theme of love.
- It is interesting to note that the last fourteen lines of the play are also a sonnet.
- Sonnets are usually written in iambic pentameter (see box below).
- Shakespearian sonnets are divided into three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. A quatrain is a group of **four** lines; a couplet is a group of **two** lines.

**D: LITERARY DEVICE - IAMBIC PENTAMETER**

- Much of *Romeo and Juliet*, including the Prologue, is written in iambic pentameter.
- **Meter** refers to the rhythm of a line. **Pentameter** means there are five parts to the line (**pent** means five). For example: **1:** What here **2:** shall miss **3:** our toil **4:** shall strive **5:** to mend
- **Iambic** means there are two syllables for each part of the line: an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For example: A **pair**, From **forth**, **attend**.
- **Iambic pentameter** means a line with five parts, each part having two syllables. Perfect iambic pentameter will sound like: da DUM | da DUM | da DUM | da DUM | da DUM
- The following two lines from the Prologue are good examples of iambic pentameter. Clap your hands to the rhythm as you read the lines.

From forth	the fa	tal loins	of these	two foes
da DUM	da DUM	da DUM	da DUM	da DUM
A pair	of star	-crossed lov	ers take	their life
da DUM	da DUM	da DUM	da DUM	da DUM

**E: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

- © The Prologue sets the scene, summarises the plot and establishes some of the play's themes.
- © The audience learns that this is a story about young lovers from feuding families who die at the end of the play.
- © As well as dealing with love, the Prologue also introduces the idea of fate (destiny or pre-determined future). The audience learns that the play tells the story of two 'star-crossed lovers'.
- © The setting is also established here: we learn that the drama takes place in 'fair Verona', an Italian city. This would have been an exotic, romantic setting for an audience in London during Shakespeare's time.

**F: PORTFOLIO**

Go to p.6 of your Portfolio to explore this Prologue in greater depth.

- **Iambic Pentameter:** explore how iambic pentameter works by completing A: Understanding Iambic Pentameter, p.6
- **Understanding the Prologue:** work out the meaning of the Prologue in groups by completing B: Understanding the Prologue, p.7

SETTING
Verona

ACT 1 SCENE 1





Verona. A public place.

*Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY armed with swords and bucklers.*¹

SAMPSON

Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.²

GREGORY

No, for then we should be colliers.³

SAMPSON

I mean, an we be in choler,⁴ we'll draw.⁵

GREGORY

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of the collar.⁶

SAMPSON

I strike quickly, being moved.⁷

GREGORY

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMPSON

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY

To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand:⁸
therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.

SAMPSON

¹⁰ A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I will take the wall⁹ of any man or maid of Montague's.

GREGORY

That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.¹⁰

SAMPSON

'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker vessels,¹¹ are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.¹²

¹ **bucklers:** small round shields

² **we'll not carry coals:**

1. we won't tolerate insults
2. we won't do menial work

³ **colliers:** coal-miners

⁴ **choler:** angry

⁵ **we'll draw:** we'll draw our swords

⁶ **collar:** hangman's noose/rope for hanging people

⁷ **being moved:** when angered

⁸ **stand:** stand your ground/stand to fight

⁹ **take the wall:** avoid the gutter

¹⁰ **the weakest...wall:** the weakest are pushed aside

¹¹ **the weaker vessels:** the weaker sex

¹² **thrust...the wall:** push the women against the wall, i.e. be sexually aggressive



ROMEO & JULIET

¹³ **tyrant:** cruel ruler

¹⁴ **maidenheads:** virginities

¹⁵ **poor John:** cheap dried fish

¹⁶ **tool:** weapon/sword

¹⁷ **naked:** unsheathed

¹⁸ **Fear me not:** Have no fears about me

¹⁹ **marry:** by the Virgin Mary

²⁰ **Let us...sides:** Let's stay on the right side of the law

²¹ **as they list:** as they like

GREGORY

The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

SAMPSON

'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant.¹³ When I have
²⁰ fought with the men, I will be cruel with the maids, and cut off their heads.

GREGORY

The heads of the maids?

SAMPSON

Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads¹⁴ – take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY

They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMPSON

Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

GREGORY

'Tis well thou art not fish: if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor John.¹⁵ Draw thy tool!¹⁶ Here comes two of the
³⁰ house of the Montagues.

[Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR]

SAMPSON

My naked¹⁷ weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back thee.

GREGORY

How? Turn thy back and run?

SAMPSON

Fear me not.¹⁸

GREGORY

No, marry.¹⁹ I fear thee!

SAMPSON

Let us take the law of our sides:²⁰ let them begin.

GREGORY

I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.²¹

**SAMPSON**

Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb ²² at them, which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.

²² **bite my thumb:** an insulting gesture at the time

ABRAHAM

⁴⁰ Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAHAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

[*Aside to GREGORY*] Is the law of our side, if I say ay?

GREGORY

[*Aside to SAMPSON*] No.

SAMPSON

No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY

Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAHAM

Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMPSON

⁵⁰ If you do, sir, I am for you.²³ I serve as good a man as you.

²³ **I am for you:** I am ready to fight you

ABRAHAM

No better.

SAMPSON

Well, sir –

GREGORY

[*Aside to SAMPSON*] Say 'better', here comes one of my master's kinsmen.²⁴

²⁴ **kinsmen:** relatives

SAMPSON

Yes – better, sir.



²⁵ **swashing:** slashing

ABRAHAM

You lie!

SAMPSON

Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing²⁵ blow.

[They fight]

[Enter BENVOLIO]

BENVOLIO

Part, fools!

⁶⁰ Put up your swords! You know not what you do!

[Beats down their swords]

[Enter TYBALT]



**TYBALT**

What, art thou²⁶ drawn among these heartless hinds?²⁷
Turn thee, Benvolio. Look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,
Or manage²⁸ it to part these men with me.

TYBALT

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.
Have at thee,²⁹ coward!

[They fight]

*[Enter several of both houses who join the fray;
then enter Citizens, with clubs]*

CITIZEN

Clubs, bills,³⁰ and partisans!³¹ Strike! Beat them down!
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

[Enter CAPULET in his gown, and LADY CAPULET]

CAPULET

⁷⁰ What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, a crutch!³² Why call you for a sword?

CAPULET

My sword, I say! Old Montague is come,
And flourishes³³ his blade in spite³⁴ of me.

[Enter MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE]

MONTAGUE

Thou villain Capulet – *[To LADY MONTAGUE]* Hold
me not, let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

Thou shalt not stir a foot to seek a foe.³⁵
[Enter PRINCE, with Attendants]

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
Profaners³⁶ of this neighbour-stained steel³⁷ –
Will they not hear? What, ho! You men, you beasts,

²⁶ **thou:** i.e. Benvolio

²⁷ **heartless hinds:** 1. cowardly peasants
2. frightened female deer. The fighters are all servants.

²⁸ **manage:** use

²⁹ **Have at thee:** Let's fight

³⁰ **bills:** weapons with hook-shaped blades and long handles

³¹ **partisans:** spears with long handles

³² **crutch:** Lady Capulet mocks her husband's age by saying that he should ask for a crutch rather than his sword

³³ **flourishes:** waves

³⁴ **in spite:**
1. to spite
2. to challenge

³⁵ **Thou shalt...foe:** You will not move a foot to find an enemy

³⁶ **Profaners:** abusers

³⁷ **neighbour-stained steel:** i.e. the weapons are stained with neighbours' blood



- ³⁸ **that quench...rage:** that put out the fire of your destructive rage
- ³⁹ **mistemperd:** 1. bad tempered
2. made to do bad things
3. badly made
- ⁴⁰ **moved:** angry
- ⁴¹ **civil brawls:** public fights
- ⁴² **bred of an airy word:** born from a careless comment
- ⁴³ **thrice:** three times
- ⁴⁴ **ancient:** elderly
- ⁴⁵ **Cast by:** throw down
- ⁴⁶ **grave beseeeming ornaments:** articles fitting their age (e.g. walking sticks)
- ⁴⁷ **partisans:** spears with long handles
- ⁴⁸ **Cankered with peace:** rusted by lack of use
- ⁴⁹ **cankered hate:** 1. ulcerous hatred
2. corrupting hatred
- ⁵⁰ **Your lives...peace:** your lives will be the price you have to pay for disturbing the peace
- ⁵¹ **our further pleasure:** what else

That quench the fire of your pernicious rage³⁸
⁸⁰ With purple fountains issuing from your veins!
 On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
 Throw your mistemperd³⁹ weapons to the ground,
 And hear the sentence of your moved⁴⁰ prince.
 Three civil brawls,⁴¹ bred of an airy word,⁴²
 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
 Have thrice⁴³ disturbed the quiet of our streets,
 And made Verona's ancient⁴⁴ citizens
 Cast by⁴⁵ their grave beseeeming ornaments,⁴⁶
 To wield old partisans,⁴⁷ in hands as old,
⁹⁰ Cankered with peace,⁴⁸ to part your cankered hate:⁴⁹
 If ever you disturb our streets again,
 Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace!⁵⁰
 For this time, all the rest depart away.
 You Capulet, shall go along with me;
 And Montague, come you this afternoon,
 To know our further pleasure⁵¹ in this case,
 To old Freetown, our common judgement-place.
 Once more, on pain of death, all men depart!
 [Exeunt all but MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE and BENVOLIO]



**MONTAGUE**

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?⁵²

100 Speak, nephew. Were you by when it began?

BENVOLIO

Here were the servants of your adversary,⁵³

And yours, close fighting ere⁵⁴ I did approach.

I drew to part them. In the instant came

The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,⁵⁵

Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,

He swung about his head and cut the winds,

Who, nothing hurt withal,⁵⁶ hissed him in scorn.

While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,

Came more and more and fought on part and part,⁵⁷

110 Till the prince came, who parted either part.

LADY MONTAGUE

O, where is Romeo? Saw you him today?

Right glad I am he was not at this fray.⁵⁸

BENVOLIO

Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun

Peered forth the golden window of the east,

A troubled mind drove me to walk abroad,

Where, underneath the grove of sycamore

That westward rooteth⁵⁹ from the city's side,

So early walking did I see your son.

Towards him I made, but he was ware⁶⁰ of me

120 And stole⁶¹ into the covert⁶² of the wood.

I, measuring his affections⁶³ by my own,

That most are busied when they're most alone,

Pursued my humour not pursuing his,⁶⁴

And gladly shunned⁶⁵ who gladly fled from me.

MONTAGUE

Many a morning hath he there been seen,

With tears augmenting⁶⁶ the fresh morning's dew,

Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.

But all so soon as the all-cheering sun

Should in the furthest east begin to draw

130 The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,⁶⁷

Away from the light steals home my heavy⁶⁸ son,

And private in his chamber pens himself,⁶⁹

Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out

And makes himself an artificial night.

Black and portentous⁷⁰ must this humour⁷¹ prove,

Unless good counsel⁷² may the cause remove.

52 **Who set...abroad?:** Who reignited this old feud?

53 **adversary:** enemy

54 **ere:** before

55 **prepared:** ready, i.e. drawn

56 **nothing hurt withal:** was not hurt by this

57 **fought on part and part:** fought for one side or the other

58 **fray:** fight/brawl/riot

59 **rooteth:** is rooted/grows

60 **ware:** 1. aware
2. wary

61 **stole:** sneaked

62 **covert:** cover

63 **measuring his affections:** judging his emotions

64 **Pursued...pursuing his:** followed my inclination by not following him

65 **shunned:** avoided

66 **augmenting:** increasing

67 **Aurora's bed:** i.e. dawn. Aurora is the Roman goddess of dawn

68 **heavy:** sad

69 **And private...pens himself:** and shuts himself in his room

70 **portentous:** foreboding/ominous

71 **humour:** mood

72 **counsel:** advice



ROMEO & JULIET

⁷³ **importuned:** questioned

⁷⁴ **But he...to himself:** but he only discusses his feelings with himself

⁷⁵ **close:** guarded/secretive

⁷⁶ **sounding:**

1. expression

2. discovery

⁷⁷ **envious:** greedy

BENVOLIO

My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

MONTAGUE

I neither know it nor can learn of him.

BENVOLIO

Have you importuned⁷³ him by any means?

MONTAGUE

¹⁴⁰ Both by myself and many other friends,
But he, his own affections' counsellor,
Is to himself⁷⁴ – I will not say how true –
But to himself so secret and so close,⁷⁵
So far from sounding⁷⁶ and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious⁷⁷ worm
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun.
Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow,
We would as willingly give cure as know.

[Enter ROMEO]



**BENVOLIO**

150 See, where he comes. So please you, step aside.
I'll know his grievance⁷⁸, or be much denied.

⁷⁸ **grievance:** problem

MONTAGUE

I would thou wert so happy by thy stay,
To hear true shrift.⁷⁹ Come, madam, let's away.
[*Exeunt MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE*]

⁷⁹ **I would thou...shrift:** I hope that by staying you will hear Romeo's true confession

BENVOLIO

Good morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO

But new⁸⁰ struck nine.

⁸⁰ **But new:** Just now

ROMEO

Ay me! Sad hours seem long.
Was that my father that went hence⁸¹ so fast?

⁸¹ **hence:** from here/away

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO

Not having that, which having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO

In love?

ROMEO

160 Out –

BENVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favour, where I am in love.

BENVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!⁸²

⁸² **Alas, that love...in proof!:** Unfortunately, love can appear so pleasant but prove to be so violent and rough



ROMEO & JULIET

- ⁸³ **muffled:** blindfolded. Cupid (the Roman god of desire) is often pictured wearing a blindfold
- ⁸⁴ **see pathways to his will!:** find ways to get what he wants!

- ⁸⁵ **of nothing first create:** created from nothing

- ⁸⁶ **well-seeming forms:** pleasing shapes

- ⁸⁷ **oppression:** sadness

- ⁸⁸ **transgression:** wrongdoing

- ⁸⁹ **propagate:** spread/increase
- ⁹⁰ **pressed:** oppressed

- ⁹¹ **purged:** cleansed/purified
- ⁹² **vexed:** angered/bothered
- ⁹³ **nourished:** fed

- ⁹⁴ **discreet:** cautious
- ⁹⁵ **gall:** poison

- ⁹⁶ **Soft!:** Hold on!

- ⁹⁷ **in sadness:** seriously

ROMEO

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled⁸³ still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!⁸⁴
Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was here?
¹⁷⁰ Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.
Why, then, O brawling love, O loving hate!
O anything, of nothing first create!⁸⁵
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!⁸⁶
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.
Dost thou not laugh?

BENVOLIO

¹⁸⁰ No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO

Good heart, at what?

BENVOLIO

At thy good heart's oppression.⁸⁷

ROMEO

Why, such is love's transgression.⁸⁸
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
Which thou wilt propagate,⁸⁹ to have it pressed⁹⁰
With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.
Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged,⁹¹ a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
¹⁹⁰ Being vexed,⁹² a sea nourished⁹³ with lovers' tears.
What is it else? A madness most discreet,⁹⁴
A choking gall⁹⁵ and a preserving sweet.
Farewell, my coz.

BENVOLIO

Soft!⁹⁶ I will go along;
An if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

ROMEO

Tut, I have lost myself. I am not here.
This is not Romeo: he's some other where.

BENVOLIO

Tell me in sadness,⁹⁷ who is that you love?

**ROMEO**

What, shall I groan and tell thee?

BENVOLIO

200 Groan? Why, no –
But sadly tell me who.

ROMEO

Bid a sick man in sadness make his will⁹⁸ –
Ah, word ill urged to one that is so ill.
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

BENVOLIO

I aimed so near, when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO

A right good mark-man!⁹⁹ And she's fair I love.

BENVOLIO

A right fair mark,¹⁰⁰ fair coz, is soonest hit.

ROMEO

Well, in that hit you miss: she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit,¹⁰¹
210 And, in strong proof of chastity¹⁰² well armed,
From love's weak childish bow she lives uncharmed.¹⁰³
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,¹⁰⁴
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,¹⁰⁵
Nor ope¹⁰⁶ her lap to saint-seducing gold.
O, she is rich in beauty, only poor,
That when she dies, with beauty dies her store.¹⁰⁷

BENVOLIO

Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?¹⁰⁸

ROMEO

She hath, and in that sparing¹⁰⁹ makes huge waste,
For beauty starved with her severity,
220 Cuts beauty off from all posterity.¹¹⁰
She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair,
To merit bliss¹¹¹ by making me despair.
She hath forsworn¹¹² to love, and in that vow
Do I live dead that live to tell it now.

BENVOLIO

Be ruled by me,¹¹³ forget to think of her.

⁹⁸ **Bid a sick...his will:** That's like asking a dying man to make out his will

⁹⁹ **A right good mark-man!:** You're a good marksman (archer)

¹⁰⁰ **fair mark:** good target

¹⁰¹ **Dian's wit:** Diana's good sense (not to fall in love). Diana is the Roman goddess of hunting. She is associated with virginity

¹⁰² **chastity:** virginity/sexual purity

¹⁰³ **From love's...uncharmed:** i.e. she is unaffected by love

¹⁰⁴ **She will not...loving terms:** She will not succumb to words of love

¹⁰⁵ **Nor bide...assailing eyes:** nor put up with loving glances

¹⁰⁶ **ope:** open

¹⁰⁷ **store:** 1. treasure of beauty
2. chastity 3. potential for having children

¹⁰⁸ **still live chaste:** always be a virgin

¹⁰⁹ **sparing:** saving (of her virginity)

¹¹⁰ **Cuts beauty...posterity:** her beauty will not be passed down to future generations

¹¹¹ **merit bliss:** earn eternal bliss (in heaven)

¹¹² **forsworn:** sworn not to

¹¹³ **Be ruled by me:** Do as I say/
Listen to me



ROMEO & JULIET

¹¹⁴ **liberty:** freedom

¹¹⁵ **'Tis the way...question more:**
A sure way to show her beauty, is
to question how beautiful she is

¹¹⁶ **passing fair:** very beautiful

¹¹⁷ **I'll pay...in debt:** 1. I'll teach you
that lesson or die trying
2. I'll teach you that lesson or
else end my life owing you

ROMEO

O, teach me how I should forget to think.

BENVOLIO

By giving liberty¹¹⁴ unto thine eyes:
Examine other beauties.

ROMEO

'Tis the way

²³⁰ To call hers exquisite, in question more.¹¹⁵

These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,
Being black, put us in mind they hide the fair.

He that is stricken blind cannot forget
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost.

Show me a mistress that is passing fair,¹¹⁶

What doth her beauty serve, but as a note
Where I may read who passed that passing fair?
Farewell. Thou canst not teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO

I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.¹¹⁷

[Exeunt]



A: ACT 1 SCENE 1 - SUMMARY

The points below summarise what happens in this scene. However, the points are in the wrong order. Rewrite the summary, putting the events in the correct order.

1. The Prince stops the fighting.
2. Benvolio says he will find out what is troubling Romeo.
3. The Capulets and Montagues brawl on the streets of Verona.
4. Romeo's parents wonder where Romeo is and say they are worried about him.
5. Benvolio and Tybalt fight each other.
6. Benvolio tries to break up the fight.
7. Romeo tells Benvolio that he is in love with a girl but she does not love him back.
8. The Prince proclaims that if anybody fights on Verona's streets again the culprit will pay with his own life.



B: ACT IT OUT

Choose two members of your class to play the parts of Romeo and Benvolio for the following two sections of the scene.

FIRST SECTION

- The actors will perform lines 154-179.
- At line 179 the actors should stop.
- The class may now ask questions of the characters. The actors will answer from the perspectives of Romeo and Benvolio.

SECOND SECTION

- The same or different actors should now perform lines 202-238.
- At the end of this section, the class may again ask questions of the characters. Again, the actors should try and answer as if they are Romeo and Benvolio.

CLASS DISCUSSION

- What did you learn from these performances about the reasons for Romeo's sadness?
- How does Romeo describe love in these two sections?
- What kind of relationship are Romeo and Benvolio shown to have here?
- What is Benvolio's solution to Romeo's problem?
- Do you think this solution is a sensible one? Give reasons for your answer.



C: EXPLORING THE SCENE

1. Explain what sparks the fight in this scene.
2. What is your impression of Tybalt from this scene? Support your answer by using quotations.
3. What is your impression of Benvolio? Support your viewpoint by using quotations.
4. The characters who fight in this scene are all young men. Do you think this scene is a realistic reflection of the way some young men behave? Why / why not?
5. What impression of Romeo is given to the audience (a) by his parents and (b) by Benvolio?
6. Romeo explains to Benvolio why he is so sad. What is his explanation?
7. What advice does Benvolio offer Romeo towards the end of the scene?



D: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- ☉ The feud between the Montagues and Capulets establishes the **violent backdrop** to the play.
- ☉ Tybalt is revealed as a particularly hot-headed individual.
- ☉ Benvolio is shown to be a **peacemaker** as he attempts to avoid a confrontation. However, after being attacked by Tybalt, he too becomes involved in the fight.
- ☉ The reactions of the Prince and the citizens show that Verona is unwilling to tolerate the violence between the two families.

- ☉ Romeo's brooding love is in stark contrast to the energised violent atmosphere created by the feuding families.
- ☉ Romeo is suffering from **unrequited** (unreturned) **love**. He loves a girl who doesn't feel the same way. In the next scene we learn that this girl's name is Rosaline.



E: LITERARY DEVICE - OXYMORON

An **oxymoron** is a word combination that contains opposite ideas. For example: **an open secret, seriously funny, the sound of silence**. An oxymoron is used to:

- Entertain or amuse
- Add drama or colour to a sentence
- Intensify an idea

When we are introduced to Romeo in this first scene of the play he uses oxymoron as he describes his feelings. At this point of the play, Romeo believes he is in love but that the girl he loves doesn't feel the same way. He tells Benvolio '**O brawling love, O loving hate!**' Here the contradictory feelings of love and hate are held together to create an oxymoron.



F: PORTFOLIO

Go to p. 9 of your Portfolio to deepen your understanding of this key scene.

- **Quotations:** explore the language used by the characters and familiarise yourself with key quotations. A: Exploring the characters, p.9.
- **Newspaper Article:** write a tabloid newspaper article based on this scene. B: Stop Press! p.10.
- **Oxymoron:** discover how Romeo uses oxymoron in this scene. C: Oxymoron, p.11.
- **Reading Journal:** write the first of six entries in your Reading Journal. This will help you to learn more about the play's key scenes, p.92.
- **Timeline:** add to your Timeline to help you keep an overview of the plot, p.90.
- **Character Log:** add to your Character Log which you will maintain throughout your reading of the play: Romeo, p.104, Benvolio, p.110 and Tybalt, p.111.

