

Romeo and Juliet

Study Guide

Prologue

Vocabulary

mutiny – strife, rivalry

piteous – passionate

1. In the prologue, Shakespeare tells his audience what they are to expect in the play. Why do you suppose Shakespeare chooses to use this technique?

2. Where is the play set?

3. Put the following lines into your own words:

“From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life;”

4. What does the term "star-cross'd lovers" suggest?

5. Put these lines into your own words:

"Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth, with their death, bury their parents' strife."

6. Do you think this prologue is necessary or unnecessary?

Act I, Scene I – Verona. A public place.

Vocabulary

colliers – people who dig or sell coals

valiant – brave

fray – brawl

partisans – weapons

pernicious – vindictive, wicked

beseeming – becoming

adversary – enemy, nemesis

ere – before

drave – drove

covert – thicket

augmenting – increasing

importuned – inquired, questioned

tyrannous – cruel, vicious

siege – the act of being encircled

ope – open

posterity – future generations

1. What are Sampson and Gregory discussing in the first eleven lines of this scene?
2. Sampson and Gregory are bragging, vulgar-mouthed men who engage in word games. What bawdy comment does Sampson make? What kind of 'love' is this an example of?
3. Who are the two Montagues Gregory and Sampson meet on their way? The Capulets draw their weapons, but what indicates that they are not as brave as they say they are?

4. Why do you suppose biting a thumb is offensive to the Capulets?

5. Who is Benvolio and what does he attempt to do?

6. How does Tybalt, a Capulet, misinterpret Benvolio's action? What does Tybalt say to him?

7. Why is Tybalt considered hot-tempered?

8. What does Lady Capulet say about Lord Capulet's age and condition?

9. What do you suppose prompts Lady Montague to hold her husband back from the fight?

10. The Prince appears, and he is angry. Why is he angry, and what is the promise and threat he makes?

11. Lady Montague, glad that Romeo has missed the fight, asks Benvolio if he has seen Romeo. What is Benvolio's response?

12. Montague, when speaking of Romeo's recent depression, states:

“...But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself, ...”

Interpret these lines. What is Montague saying about his son, Romeo? Who is Aurora? Why do you think Shakespeare includes her in these lines? What literary term is employed by the use of Aurora?

13. Romeo enters and tells Benvolio the problem. What is his problem?

14. Romeo's lines can be seen as presenting the paradox of love or simply as romantic nonsense. What indication is there that Romeo recognizes his sentiments could be viewed as romantic nonsense?

15. What is Benvolio's response?
16. "Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lover's eyes;
Being vex'd, a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears:..."
- What literary term is illustrated here?
17. Although Benvolio and Romeo are saddened by unrequited love, what joke are they able to make?
18. What is the nature of Romeo's desire toward Rosaline? According to the tradition of courtly love, how is Romeo expected to respond to her rejection?
19. What practical advice does Benvolio give Romeo?
20. "O, she is rich in beauty, only poor
That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store."
What are these two lines an example of?

5. Compare Capulet's speech at the beginning of this scene to Sampson and Gregory's conversation at the beginning of Act I, Scene I. How are the speeches different? Why do you think Shakespeare chose to write the speeches so differently?

6. In his conversation with Romeo, Benvolio says:

"Take thou some new infection to the eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die."

Interpret these lines.

7. What does the "poison" Benvolio mentions symbolize?

8. Romeo, lamenting his unrequited love, is approached by an illiterate servingman. In reading his list he finds that Rosaline, his love, is going to attend the Capulet party. What suggestion does Benvolio make?

9. When Romeo responds that Rosaline is the most beautiful woman since time began, what is Benvolio's response?

Act I, Scene IV – A street.

Vocabulary

prolixity – overly lengthy

Tartar – a warrior

lath – wood

burthen – burden

visage – face

wantons – tomboys

mire – mud

agate-stone – a stone with small figures cut into it

alderman – city ruler

traces – harnesses

gossamer – sheer, light filmy substance

benefice – secular lifestyle

ambuscadoes – traps

anon – promptly, soon

vile – wicked, heinous

steerage – direction

1. Why does Romeo say he is unable to dance?
2. How do the Montagues expect to be able to enter a Capulet house?
3. Romeo is apprehensive about going to the masquerade because of the dream he had the night before. Romeo seems to believe (as did many in Shakespeare's day) that dreams have something to do with life. Perhaps Romeo believes dreams act as omens. What is Mercutio's opinion of dreams?

Act I, Scene V – A hall in Capulet's house.

Vocabulary

- nuptial** – wedding ceremony
ward – dependent
rapier – a small sword
solemnity – festivities
disparagement – affliction, injury, harm
scathe – hurt, injure
princox – a rude, impolite boy
perforce – is a requirement; is essential
choler – fury, anger
gall – detest, disgust
prodigious – threatening, ominous

1. Lord Capulet and a relative stand, unmasked, on one side of the room. Romeo, masked, standing on the other side, asks a servingman who Juliet is. How does Romeo describe the girl, and what does he conclude?

2. What is Tybalt's reaction when he hears Romeo's voice?

3. What does Lord Capulet say to Tybalt in reference to Romeo's attendance at the party?

4. Tybalt obeys his uncle, but what does he foresee?

5. Romeo, approaching Juliet, begins a conversation, and ends up kissing her twice before the Nurse comes to tell Juliet that her mother requests her. Romeo and his friends leave. How does the audience know that Juliet feels as strongly about Romeo as he does for her?