



Notes and Quotes

Plot Summary

This plot summary includes useful notes for further analysis of Romeo and Juliet and should be used as a reference document. There are also notable quotes from throughout the play on pages 4-9.

Prologue: The Chorus tells, in a Sonnet, that the play will concern a pair of lovers whose deaths will end the conflict between their feuding families.

Act I, Scene 1: Sampson and Gregory, servants of the Capulet family, encounter Abram and Balthazar, of the Montague household, in a street in Verona. They fight; Benvolio appears and tries to stop them, but Tybalt enters and insists on dueling with him. Some Citizens attempt to break up the brawl, as Capulet and Montague join in, to the dismay of their wives, Lady Capulet and Lady Montague. The Prince arrives and warns both families to stop. He declares that any further fighting will be punished with death. The Prince and the Capulets depart, and the Montagues discuss with their nephew Benvolio the mysterious sadness that afflicts their son Romeo. As Romeo approaches, his parents leave Benvolio to talk with him to try to learn what is wrong. Benvolio learns that Romeo is in love with a woman who ignores him. Benvolio recommends that his cousin consider other women, but Romeo declares that his love's beauty will eclipse all others.

Act I, Scene 2: Paris seeks Capulet's permission to marry his daughter Juliet. Capulet argues that Juliet is too young, but he says that, if Paris can win Juliet's affections at the banquet planned for the coming night, he will give his consent. He gives a Servant a list of guests with instructions to deliver invitations, and he and Paris depart. Romeo and Benvolio pass by, and the Servant seeks their assistance, for he is illiterate. Romeo reads the list of guests, which includes the name of his beloved, Rosaline. He and Benvolio decide to attend the banquet in disguise, Romeo wishing to see Rosaline and Benvolio hoping that the sight of many beautiful women will cure his friend's love sickness.

Act I, Scene 3: Lady Capulet tells Juliet about her father's plans for her marriage, and Juliet coolly agrees to 'consider Paris out of duty.

Act I, Scene 4: Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio arrive at the banquet. Romeo asserts that he will not dance, due to his melancholy, and he is teased by Mercutio. The group proceeds to the party, although Romeo expresses darkly ominous feelings.

Act I, Scene 5: While the guests dance, Romeo first notices Juliet and is enthralled by her beauty. Tybalt recognizes him and rages against his presence. Capulet orders him to be peaceful, and he leaves in disgust. Romeo addresses Juliet, and their love immediately blossoms as they kiss. Juliet is called to her mother, and Romeo learns who she is from the Nurse. He is dismayed to learn that her family is his family's rival, and she, when learning his identity from the Nurse, is similarly distressed.

Act II, Scene 1: Romeo separates himself from his friends as they leave the party. Presuming he has gone in search of Rosaline, they depart.

Act II, Scene 2: Juliet appears on her balcony and Romeo, in the garden below, admires her beauty. Believing herself to be alone, she soliloquizes about her love for Romeo, regretting that he is a Montague. He reveals himself, and they speak of their love and exchange vows. Juliet is called away by the Nurse, but she returns to say that she will send a messenger to Romeo the next day, to whom he can convey a plan for them to marry. She leaves but returns once more, and they exchange loving farewells.

Act II, Scene 3: Romeo arrives at Friar Lawrence's cell and tells him of his new love and asks his help in marrying her. The Friar cautions him about his haste but agrees, hoping that their alliance will end their families' feuding.

Act II, Scene 4: Benvolio and Mercutio discuss Tybalt, who has challenged Romeo to a duel. Meeting their friend, they banter with him about his love. The Nurse appears; Romeo's friends depart. Romeo gives the Nurse a message for Juliet: she is to go to Friar Laurence that afternoon, and they shall be married.

Act II, Scene 5: The Nurse returns to an impatient Juliet. She teases her charge by withholding the message briefly; when she delivers it, Juliet departs at once.

Act II, Scene 6: Juliet comes to Romeo in Friar Laurence's cell, and they greet each other joyfully. The Friar prepares to marry them.

Act III, Scene 1: Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt, and Mercutio begins to pick a fight. Romeo appears and is immediately insulted by Tybalt, who wishes to challenge him to a duel. Romeo excuses himself, citing mysterious reasons why he and Tybalt should be friends, but Mercutio cannot tolerate such conciliatory behavior and draws his sword on Tybalt. Romeo attempts to separate the combatants, and Mercutio is mortally wounded by Tybalt, who flees. Mercutio, after bravely jesting about his wound and cursing both Montagues and Capulets for their feuding, is carried away by Benvolio, who returns to report his death. Tybalt returns, and Romeo fights and kills him. At Benvolio's urging,

Romeo flees. The Prince appears and interrogates Benvolio. Judging Tybalt to be guiltier than Romeo, he spares the latter the death sentence but banishes him from Verona.

Act III, Scene 2: Juliet longs for night, when Romeo is to come. The Nurse brings her word of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. Juliet is upset and the Nurse volunteers to bring Romeo to her.

Act III, Scene 3: Romeo, in hiding with Friar Laurence, learns of the Prince's edict and raves that death would be more merciful than life without Juliet. The Nurse arrives with word of Juliet's distress, and Romeo's grief reaches new heights; he speaks of suicide. The Friar chastises him for his weakness and proposes that, after a night with Juliet, Romeo should flee to Mantua, where he can live until his marriage becomes known, the families reconciled, and he is pardoned. Romeo recovers his spirits and leaves to go to Juliet.

Act III, Scene 4: Capulet decides that Juliet will be married to Paris in three days.

Act III, Scene 5: Romeo and Juliet reluctantly bid farewell, regretting that dawn is near. The Nurse warns that Lady Capulet is coming, and Romeo departs for Mantua. Her mother tells Juliet of the proposed marriage, and Juliet refuses, objecting to the hastiness of the plan. Her father enters and flies into a rage on hearing of her refusal. Her parents leave angrily, and the Nurse advises that Juliet ignore her marriage to Romeo, which no one else knows about, and marry Paris. When the Nurse leaves Juliet declares that she cannot trust her anymore and goes to seek aid from Friar Laurence.

Act IV, Scene 1: Paris confers with a reluctant Friar Laurence about his coming wedding. Juliet arrives and coolly deflects Paris' advances. Once alone with the Friar, she desperately asks for his help. She talks about suicide and this helps him come up with a plan: he will provide her with a potion that will make her seem to be dead. She will be placed in the family crypt, where Romeo will meet her so that they can flee together. He will send a letter to Romeo to tell him what is happening.

Act IV, Scene 2: As the Capulet household is busy with her wedding arrangements, Juliet appears and apologizes to her father, promising to obey him and marry Paris. Capulet moves the wedding up a day to the next morning.

Act IV, Scene 3: Juliet, dismisses her Nurse with excuses of needing to pray and then, alone in her bedroom, is afraid that the Friar's potion may actually kill her. But she steels herself and drinks the potion.

Act IV, Scene 4: The next morning, the wedding day, the Capulet household is astir with last-minute preparations. Capulet sends the Nurse to awaken Juliet.

Act IV, Scene 5: The Nurse, unable to rouse Juliet, raises the alarm that she is dead. Her parents and Paris—who arrives with Friar Laurence—grieve for her. Friar Laurence

counsels acceptance of God's will and tells everyone to prepare to take her body to the family vault.

Act V, Scene 1: Balthasar arrives at Romeo's refuge in Mantua with the news that Juliet has died. Romeo immediately plans to return to Verona and join his beloved in death; he buys a fast-acting poison from an Apothecary.

Act V, Scene 2: Friar John reports to Friar Laurence that he has been unable to deliver Laurence's letter to Romeo. Laurence sends John to fetch a crow bar, planning to open the vault and take Juliet into hiding in his own cell until Romeo can be summoned.

Act V, Scene 3: Paris visits Juliet's tomb at night. His page, posted as a lookout, whistles a warning that someone is coming, and Paris hides. Romeo appears with Balthasar, whom he sends away with a letter to Montague. Balthasar leaves but hides nearby to observe. Romeo breaks into the tomb, and Paris steps forth to challenge him. They fight, as the Page leaves to call the watchman, and Romeo kills Paris. He addresses Juliet, whom he believes to be dead, saying that he will remain with her forever. He drinks the poison and dies. Friar Laurence arrives and views the carnage just as Juliet awakens. He tells Juliet what has happened and begs her to flee, for he can hear the Watchmen coming. She refuses and stays. She kisses her dead lover and stabs herself with his dagger, as the Watchmen appear. They arrest the Friar as the Prince arrives, followed by Juliet's parents and Romeo's father, all of them drawn by the news of the tragedy. The Friar gives an account of Juliet's feigned death and Romeo's misinformation. The Prince points out that the feud between the two families has led to this moment, and Montague and Capulet end their hostility and vow to erect golden statues of the two lovers. The Prince declares that there never was a tale of more sadness than that of Juliet and her Romeo.

Notable Quotes

“A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life.”

(Chorus, Prologue)

“Abraham: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?”

Sampson: I do bite my thumb, sir.”

(act 1, scene 1)

“O teach me how I should forget to think!”

Romeo (act 1 scene 1)

“Under loves heavy burden do I sink.”

Romeo (act 1 scene 4)

“Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.”

Romeo (act 1 scene 5)

“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.”

Romeo (act 1 scene 5)

“But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.”

Romeo (act 2, scene 2)

“O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?”

Juliet (act 2 scene 2)

“That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet.”

Juliet (act 2, scene 2)

“See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.

O, that I were a glove upon that hand

That I might touch that cheek!”

Romeo (act 2, scene 2)

“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.”

Juliet (act 2, scene 2)

“O, swear not by the moon, th’ inconstant moon,

That monthly changes in her circle orb,

Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.”

Juliet (act 2, scene 2)

“Good night, good night! parting is such sweet sorrow,

That I shall say good night till it be morrow.”

Juliet (act 2, scene 2)

“Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.”

Friar Laurence (act 2, scene 3)

“For this alliance may so happy prove,

To turn your households’ rancour to pure love.”

Friar Laurence (act 2, scene 3)

“These violent delights have violent ends

And in their triumph die, like fire and powder”

Friar Laurence (act 2, scene 6)

“And so, good Capulet – which name I tender As dearly as my own – be satisfied.”

Romeo (act 3, scene1)

“O calm, dishonourable, vile submission! Tybalt you rat-catcher, will you walk?”

Murcutio (act 3, scene 1)

A plague o’ both your houses!”

Mercutio (act 3, scene 1)

“Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.”

Prince (act 3, scene 1)

“Oh, I am fortune’s fool!”

Romeo (act 3, scene 1)

“Give me my Romeo, and, when I shall die,

Take him and cut him out in little stars,

And he will make the face of heaven so fine

That all the world will be in love with night,

And pay no worship to the garish sun.”

Juliet (act 3, scene 2)

“But, wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin? That villain cousin would have killed my husband.”

Juliet (act 3, scene 2)

“Hence from Verona thou art banished. Be patient for the world is broad and wide.”

Friar Lawrence (act 3, scene 3)

Where is she? And how doth she? And what says My concealed lady to our cancelled love?"

Romeo (act3, scene 3)

"Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day. It was the nightingale, and not the lark."

Juliet (act 3, scene 5)

"I must be gone and live, or stay and die."

Romeo (act 3, scene5)

"Then, window, let day in, and let life out."

Juliet (act 3, scene5)

"I doubt it not, and all these woes shall serve For sweet discourses in our times to come."

Romeo (act 3, scene5)

"O God, I have an ill-divining soul! Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low, As one dead in the bottom of a tomb. Either my eyesight fails, or thou lookest pale."

Juliet (act 3, scene 5)

"O, shut the door, and when thou hast done so, Come weep with me, past hope, past cure, past help!"

Juliet (act 4, scene1)

"Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink: I drink to thee."

Juliet (act 4, scene 3)

"There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,

Doing more murder in this loathsome world,

Than these poor compounds that thou mayest not sell.

I sell thee poison, thou hast sold me none.”

Romeo (act 5, scene 1)

“Death, that hath suck’d the honey of thy breath,

Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:

Thou art not conquer’d, beauty’s ensign yet

Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,

And death’s pale flag is not advanced there.

Romeo (act 5, scene 3)

“O true apothecary,

Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.”

Romeo (act 5, scene 3)

“Tempt not a desperate man”

Romeo (act 5, scene 3)

“O happy dagger,

This is thy sheath: there rust, and let me die.”

Juliet (act 5, scene 3)

“Capulet! Montague! See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,

That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love”

Prince (act 5, scene 3)

“For never was a story of more woe

Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”

Prince (act 5, scene 3)

Characters

Juliet

Our first impression of Juliet is very different from our final view of her because, during the course of the play, she changes from a carefree girl to a serious woman.

What we first learn about Juliet is that she is a 14-year-old heiress who reveals the immaturity and naivety one would expect of one so young. She is also very beautiful as it is her radiant beauty which overwhelms Romeo.

We feel sympathy for Juliet because of her sweet, innocent nature and because of the thoughtless, cruel way her parents treat her. She is bullied by her parents, deserted by her nurse and left alone.

At the start of the play, Juliet is the obedient, respectful daughter expected of a noble family. Later, however, after she has fallen in love with Romeo, she begins to be more independent.

She is set up as a contrast to Romeo: she is not as impulsive but is practical (it is she who proposes marriage to Romeo). But, like Romeo, she is loyal, defying the whole world for him.

Later Juliet's practicality and cleverness allow her successfully to deceive her family. For example, when she goes to marry Romeo she makes them believe she is going to confession. When she is supposed to be mourning Tybalt, she is actually crying for Romeo. And, the ultimate, she pretends her own death in the scheme to be reunited with Romeo.

The final scene of the play confirms the courage and determination of Juliet.

Romeo

Romeo is the only son of Lord Montague. Our first view of him is as a young man (most probably about 17 years old) in love with the idea of love and wallowing in self-pity due to unrequited love for a girl called Rosaline. However, this is not the Romeo known to his friends and family as they make comments which show they are concerned about this behaviour.

It becomes apparent that this love for Rosaline is fleeting (perhaps superficial) because that very evening, Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet. (For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. Act I, Sc 5, line 21)

The depth of his love for Juliet, which he expresses in beautiful poetry, makes us overlook his faults:

- he is impulsive/a risk taker, shown by his decision to visit Juliet in enemy territory and rush into marriage with her.
- he has a swift passion, positively shown by how swiftly he falls in love with Juliet but then negatively when he seeks revenge for Mercutio's death.
- although he does try to avoid quarrelling with Tybalt at first, this passion and impulsiveness lead to disaster.

Over the course of the play, Romeo grows from a passionate boy into manhood. He changes from the light-hearted youth-about-town to a determined adult who executes his own death without fear.

Minor Characters

Friar Laurence

The friar is a sympathetic, kindly, unworldly character. He plays an important role throughout the play. Firstly he acts as an adviser to Romeo, and later Juliet. He promotes careful, considered action and his advice is always respected by the two young people. The gentle friar also plays a linking role in the play. He is known by all characters and is neutral in the feud. This neutrality allows Romeo and Juliet a common meeting place and ally. His intentions are always good and he agrees to the marriage as he truly believes it will end the feud and unite the families. In the end he is the only ally of Romeo and Juliet and it is his plot that miscarries and hastens the final tragedy.

Mercutio

Mercutio is a witty and worldly man-about-town. Being a kinsman of the Prince he is welcome at both Capulet and Montague events. At the same time as being

best friend he also offers a contrast to the melancholy Romeo. He attempts to draw Romeo out of his depression and enjoy himself at the Capulet's dance. He is loyal to Romeo and fights on his behalf. However Mercutio's quickness to anger and his intense dislike of Tybalt bring about his downfall. Mercutio's death becomes the pivot of the play — where romance runs to tragedy, the beginning of the end. His curse 'a plague on both your houses' can be read as foreshadowing the end of the play.

The Nurse

The nurse is a close and trusted member of the Capulet household. In Shakespeare's time it was usual for rich parents to give over the up-bringing of their children to a nurse (the equivalent to today's nanny). It is not surprising that the nurse has a close relationship with

Juliet, having been responsible for her since she was a baby. Juliet seems to have taken the place of her own daughter (who has died) and everything she does is intended for Juliet's benefit. She is willing to help her marry Romeo even though this means going against Capulet's wishes. She is truly concerned about Juliet's well-being, such as when she warns Romeo not to play games with her. Juliet relies on the Nurse as her friend and confidante and when the nurse advises she marry Paris, Juliet feels betrayed; this is the final blow.

Themes

By theme we refer to the ideas presented in a play. What does the playwright think about certain topics? What message is he or she trying to communicate to us about the world and about how people behave? One of the values of studying Shakespeare is that his messages are still relevant to today's society.

Theme 1: Conflict

All drama involves conflict. It helps make the story interesting by using the opposition of people and/or ideas. There are two main types of conflict:

Internal: Where a character is torn between two courses of action, two beliefs or two people. **EXAMPLE:** When Romeo is in the orchard during the balcony scene he is in danger. Juliet wants him to stay but also to go.

External: Where two or more characters, or groups of characters, are wanting different things. **EXAMPLE:** Tybalt vs Mercutio.

The central conflict in Romeo and Juliet is the feud. No reason is given for this ancient grudge but many people die because of it. Members of each family seem to be governed by a macho code of honour that require them to hate, insult and fight each other.

Theme 2: Think before you Act (Choice & Consequence)

An important lesson we can learn from the play is to 'think before we act'. Both Romeo and Juliet were too blinded by their love to think of the consequence of their actions. They married only days after their first meeting, failing to consider that their different family background would be a major obstacle to their love. There are many occasions in the play where characters make hasty decisions or ill-considered choices. Even so-called wise characters like the Nurse and Friar Lawrence make decisions based on their own motivations without fully considering the outcomes. **EXAMPLE:** When Friar Lawrence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet, he cautions Romeo for his haste but still goes ahead with the plan because he considers the union to be the best way of reconciling the two houses. He fails to realise that his agreement will lead to unforeseen consequences that will end the two lovers' lives. He is correct that the eventual outcome is the end of the feud, but at what cost?

Glossary

abroach: open

airy region: sky

all as hot: just as angry

alliance: marriage (but also an association between the two families)

ancient grudge: an old disagreement
anon: soon

augmenting: adding to

bade me inquire you out: find you by asking around

baggage: hussy

bandying: quarrelling

Benedicite: God bless you

bent: intentions

bescreened: hidden

bier: open coffin

bite my thumb: an insulting gesture.

blaze: announce publicly

borne: carried

bound: required to keep the peace

boy: an insult

but new: only just

hut: except for

by and by: immediately

chances: happens

chide: tell off

chid'st me oft: told me off often
churl: selfish person

civil brawls: fights between citizens

civil: they are civilians, not soldiers

concludes: brings to an end

confidence: private conversation

conjunction: earnest appeal

consequence: outcome

consortest: associate

contract: promise of love

corse: corpse

counsel: private thoughts

countervail: outweigh

covert: cover/shelter

crave: beg

dual doublewith her: deceive her

decreed: arranged

devise: imagine

discourses: speaks discover reveal
dishclout: dishcloth

dispatch you straight: kill you immediately

disposition: inclination

doff: take off

doom thee death: sentence you to death

doom: sentence

doth: does

doting: being infatuated drift: plans

ducat: a gold coin, which was worth a lot of money

endure: put up with

ensign: flag

envious: spiteful

Ethiop: a black African

even: afternoon

fearful date: time of fear

feign: act

fettle: prepare

foe: enemy

foot it: dance

forfeit: penalty

forswear: deny

gall: poison

gentle sin: mild wrongdoing

ghostly: spiritual

go to: behave yourself

God gi' god-den: God grant you good evening

goodly gear: fine clothing

green-sickness carrion: white faced corpse

gross: wicked

hap: thing

haply: perhaps

hath: has

hence: from here

humour: fluid

impeach: accuse

import: threaten

importune: question

inconstant: always changing and therefore unreliable

infectious pestilence: plague

jaunt: tiring journey

jocund: happy

jointure: marriage settlement (money and goods given by the groom's family to the bride at the time of the wedding)

laid upon: caused by

list: wish

long sword: heavy, old fashioned sword

makes dainty: makes excuses

mannerly: courteous

marred: spoiled

match: equal

mattock: pickaxe

maw: stomach

minstrels: travelling musicians
misadventured: unfortunate

miscarried: went wrong

misgives: fears

mistempered: used for the wrong purpose

monument: tomb

moved: angry

my dear hap: the wonderful thing that has happened to me

native progress: natural movement
new mutiny: a new conflict

newly entertained revenge: only then allowed thoughts of revenge to possess him

nice: trivial

night's candles: stars

nought: nothing

o'erperch: fly over

orisons: prayers

overthrows: deaths; mishaps

pass: go along

passado: a fencing thrust

perchance: perhaps

post-horses: hired horses for a fast journey

powder: gunpowder

privy: taking part in something secret
procure: arrange

profane: show disrespect.

prologue: a speech made by an actor before the play begins.

prosperous: successful

put up: sheath

rancour: hatred

reckoning: reputation

resolution: decision

rite: wedding ceremony

scourge: punishment

shrift: confession

shrived: given forgiveness

slug-a-bed: lazybones

so please you: if you please

solemnity: festivities

soon-speeding: quick acting

spheres: orbits

stout: bold, strong, proud

suit: request to marry

supple government: the power of movement

surcease: stop

tallow-face: pale faced wretch

tender: value

testify: show that

the watch be set: at night the gates of the city were closed and the streets patrolled by watchmen

thee: you

thither: there

thou: you

tilts: thrusts

'twixt: between

unattainted: unprejudiced

undone: lost, ruined

unhallowed toil: unholy work
unplagued: untroubled

utters: sells

Verona: a town in the northeast of Italy

vial: small bottle

walk a bout: dance

waverer: person who keeps on changing their mind

well-a-day: alas

wherefore: why

whither: where

will none: will have nothing to do with it

winking **at:** turning a blind eye to

wot: know

wrought: arranged