

Romeo & Juliet

Two Example Sections



Quick Text

Featuring a translation into quick modern English.

Created to support the teaching of two set sections for a particular English Test in the UK, this document can be used for more general study of the play. This document is presented as linework to allow fast downloading and easy printing.

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ROMEO AND JULIET

(The Condensed Story)

Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet are the children of two feuding families in the Italian city of Verona. After the initial Prologue, the play opens with a street fight between the Montagues and the Capulets. Escalus, Prince of Verona, announces that anyone caught feuding in the future will be given the death penalty.

Count Paris is related to the Prince; and Juliet's father is anxious for his daughter to marry Paris, who is keen to marry Juliet. However, as a good father, he first wants to make sure Paris' feelings are true. As a test, he organises a party, to which he invites every eligible lady in Verona. If Paris still wants to marry Juliet after that, then his feelings must be true.

Romeo is in love with Rosaline, but she is not interested in a relationship. Romeo and his friends see the guest list for the Capulet party and, seeing Rosaline on that list, decide to attend in disguise - after all, it is on "enemy territory". There, Romeo meets Juliet and they instantly fall in love - but soon they find out that they are members of opposing families and their love for each other will not be permitted.

Being much in love, they decide to marry in secret. Friar Laurence, Romeo's friend and teacher, agrees to carry out the service, hoping that the wedding will end the long running feud between the two families.

In the meantime, there is more fighting – Tybalt (Juliet's cousin) kills Mercutio (Romeo's friend and a relative of Prince Escalus). In revenge, Romeo then kills Tybalt and is banished from Verona. He escapes to Mantua after spending a single night with his bride.

Juliet's father, unaware of his daughter's secret marriage to Romeo, decides that Juliet must marry Paris later that week. Distraught, Juliet turns to Friar Laurence, who gives Juliet a potion that will simulate death for a short time. The idea being that she will be taken to the family tomb, where she will awake and escape to Mantua with Romeo.

Romeo inadvertently hears that Juliet is dead, even though she is not. He risks his life and returns to Verona, buying some poison from an apothecary on the way. Romeo arrives at Juliet's burial chamber and opens the mausoleum. Paris finds him there and, thinking he is desecrating the grave, attacks him. They fight and Romeo kills Paris. Romeo then takes the poison and dies beside his wife.

Friar Laurence arrives too late to stop the suicide. Juliet wakes up and finds Romeo dead. She is grief-stricken and stabs herself with Romeo's dagger, falling dead upon his body.

Prince Escalus arrives, along with the Montagues and the Capulets. Friar Laurence explains what has happened. The Prince blames the families, who, united in grief, finally decide to end their feud. The play ends with the Prince summarising this tragic story of love and hate.

SECTION 1

Act 1, Scene 1, lines 98 to 232.

Background

Romeo & Juliet is arguably the greatest love story ever told. Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is a Capulet – these two aristocratic families have been bitter enemies for many years, so any love between Romeo and Juliet is completely out of the question.

At the beginning of the play, an actor (Chorus), delivers a Prologue, explaining the enmity between the two families and a brief synopsis of the plot – how the “star-cross’d lovers” are doomed (“their death-marked love”) but also how their deaths bring about the reconciliation of the two families.

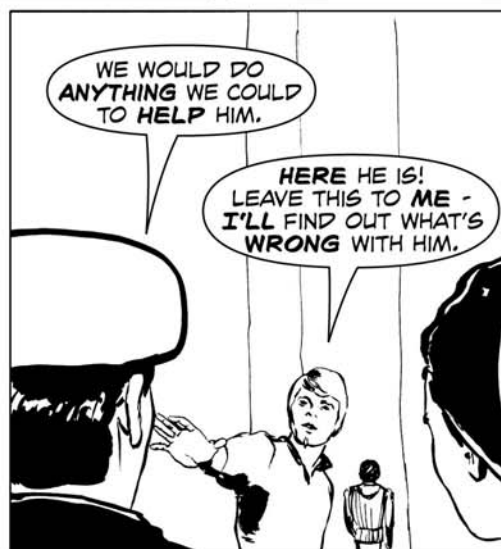
Act 1 of the play begins with a brawl in a public place, between servants of the house of Montague (Abraham and Balthasar) and the house of Capulet (Sampson and Gregory). Romeo’s cousin, Benvolio, tries to break up the fight, but Juliet’s cousin, the fiery Tybalt, enters and fights with Benvolio. More members of each house arrive, along with citizens and peace-officers, and the brawl quickly escalates into a riot. Old Montague and Old Capulet, the heads of each house, hear the commotions and they, too, want to get involved; but they are each restrained from doing so by their wives, who seem to have more sense than their husbands.

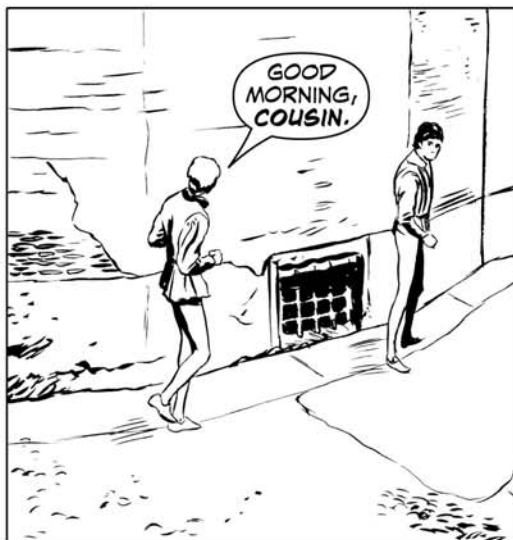
Escalus (the Prince of Verona) and his soldiers eventually break up the riot. The Prince is extremely angry, as this is the third time the Montagues and Capulets have fought in public. The Prince warns Old Montague and Old Capulet that whoever disturbs the peace again will be sentenced to death.

The crowd disperses and Old Montague tries to find out who started it from Benvolio - thus, the scene is set for love to enter where, before, there was only hate.



















SECTION 2

Act 2, Scene 2, lines 1 to 157

Background

Before this famous orchard scene, Romeo is oblivious to the fighting in Act 1. He is deeply in love with a lady called Rosaline (who is never actually seen in the play). Rosaline doesn't reciprocate Romeo's love and as we saw in the previous section, he mopes about, saying things like, "this is not Romeo, he's some other where". He meets Benvolio, who tries to cheer him up, without much success.

Meanwhile, Old Capulet is discussing his daughter Juliet with Count Paris, a relative of Prince Escalus. Paris wants to marry Juliet, but Capulet thinks she may be too young. He decides to host a great party, to which he intends to invite all the eligible young ladies of Verona for Paris to view. If Paris still wants Juliet after seeing them, and if Paris can succeed in winning Juliet's heart, then Capulet will agree to the marriage. Capulet sends his servant round Verona, with a list of people to invite.

The servant meets Romeo and Benvolio and asks them to read the list for him. Romeo sees Rosaline's name on the list and, when the servant invites them to come along too (as long as they're not Montagues, which of course they are!), Benvolio thinks it would be a good idea for Romeo to compare Rosaline to the most beautiful women in Verona – that way, he'll realise she's not quite as wonderful as he thinks she is.

In the Capulet house, Juliet's mother tells her about Paris' intentions. Juliet seems happy, at this stage, to welcome his attentions.

The party begins. Romeo is spotted by Tybalt as a Montague in the Capulet house, but Capulet instructs him to keep the peace and not spoil the party. Despite being on "enemy territory", Romeo Montague meets Juliet Capulet. They kiss, and instantly fall in love.

After the party, the love-struck Romeo scales the wall of Capulet's orchard...






















DRAMATIS PERSONAE

	ESCALUS <i>Prince of Verona</i>
	MERCUTIO <i>Kinsman to Escalus, Prince of Verona, and friend of Romeo and Benvolio.</i>
	PARIS <i>A young nobleman, kinsman to Escalus, Prince of Verona.</i>
	MONTAGUE <i>Head of the Montague house (a Veronese family), at feud with the Capulet family.</i>
	LADY MONTAGUE <i>Wife to Montague.</i>
	ROMEO <i>Son of Montague</i>
	BENVOLIO <i>Nephew to Montague and friend of Romeo and Mercutio.</i>

	ABRAHAM <i>Servant to Montague.</i>
	BALTHASAR <i>Servant to Romeo.</i>
	CAPULET <i>Head of the Capulet house (a Veronese family), at feud with the Montague family.</i>
	LADY CAPULET <i>Wife to Capulet.</i>
	JULIET <i>Daughter to Capulet.</i>
	TYBALT <i>Nephew to Lady Capulet.</i>
	NURSE <i>A Capulet servant and Juliet's foster-mother.</i>

	PETER <i>A Capulet servant, attending on the Nurse.</i>
	SAMPSON <i>Servant to Capulet.</i>
	GREGORY <i>Servant to Capulet.</i>
	FRIAR LAURENCE <i>A monk of the Franciscan Order</i>
	CHORUS <i>Introduces each Act of the play.</i>

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

Shakespeare based *Romeo and Juliet* on the 1562 poem *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke. This in turn was based on an Italian novella by Matteo Bandello (1554) and most likely made known to Shakespeare through an English Translation by William Painter in 1567, which he called *Palace of Pleasure*. Shakespeare added much to the pace of the plot, and in turn intensified the emotional development of the play. It is this basis of an intricate, intertwined plot, coupled with Shakespeare's beautifully poetic lines, set against a backdrop of conflict and forbidden love, that makes this tragedy one of the most famous and enduring stories to come from the great Bard.