

Romeo and Juliet
Content and Analysis Questions

Prologue

1. In what city does this play take place?
2. Based on this prologue, what do you believe is the cause of the major conflict of this play?

Act I

Scene i

1. What should a playwright try to accomplish with the first scene of his/her play? Does Shakespeare do this with this scene?
2. What is the mood on the streets of Verona?
3. How do the servants try to provoke a fight without being the one to actually start it?
4. What does Benvolio do when he sees the servants fighting? What does Tybalt do when he sees the servants fighting?
5. What punishment does Prince Escalus threaten for the next person to start a fight?
6. Use two words to describe Tybalt, Benvolio, Escalus, and Romeo. Be prepared to explain your choice of words when we take these up.
7. What is Romeo's emotional state, and why? What suggestions does Benvolio make to help Romeo?

Scene ii

1. How old is Juliet? Should someone her age be allowed to get married? Why or why not?
2. Who is Paris? Why is he meeting with Capulet? What is Capulet's answer to Paris's suit?
3. How does Romeo find out about the Capulet's party? Why does Benvolio want Romeo to go with him to the party? Why does Romeo want to go?

Scene iii

1. Based on how they interact with each other, describe the type of relationship Juliet has with her mother, and with her nurse.

2. What does Lady Capulet tell Juliet about, and what is Lady Capulet's thoughts on the matter?

Scene iv

1. Character names are often an indication of the character's personality. Look up the word "mercurial" and based on that explain what you expect Mercutio to be like.
2. Why does Romeo (and friends) feel they can show up at the Capulet party without being caught?
3. Why does Mercutio talk about his dream of Queen Mab?

Scene v

1. When Romeo sees Juliet for the first time he falls in love. Is this true love? Why or why not?
2. When Juliet meets Romeo for the first time she falls in love. Is this true love? Why or why not?
3. Re-read Romeo's description of Juliet (I.v.43-52). The literary term "imagery" means using words to create pictures (or images) in the reader's mind. Explain the two best (in your personal opinion) examples of imagery in this speech.
4. Why does Lord Capulet stop Tybalt from attacking Romeo? What problems might this cause in the future?

Act II

Scene i and ii

1. How does Mercutio try to get Romeo to reveal where he is hiding?
2. Why does Romeo hide from his friends?
3. In the famous balcony scene, Romeo (again) uses a great deal of imagery to describe Juliet. Explain the two best (in your opinion) literary analogies he uses.
4. The scene is staged that Juliet does not see Romeo, but he sees and overhears her vows of love for him. Why is this important for the plot? What would happen if they saw each other right away?
5. Explain what Juliet means when she says:

- A) “Deny thy father and refuse they name;/Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,/And I’ll no longer be a Capulet” (II.ii.34-36).
- B) “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other word would smell as sweet” (II.ii.43-44). [**BONUS:** Explain why this line would have a double, joke meaning when this play was first performed, but the joke no longer works]
6. Romeo and Juliet actually have very different personalities. What are Juliet’s concerns when she finds Romeo on her property? What is Romeo’s response to these concerns?
7. Why does Juliet not want Romeo to swear by the moon (II.ii.109-112)?
8. What do the two plan to do the next day? Who “proposes” this plan?

Scene iii

1. Often times when a character is introduced in a piece of literature, he/she is shown to possess a unique ability or knowledge. This often seem random at the time, but turns out to be very important later on in the text. What special knowledge does Friar Lawrence have?
2. Why is Friar Lawrence doubtful about Romeo’s love for Juliet?
3. Why does Friar Lawrence agree to perform the marriage?
4. What is ironic about the Friar’s last line in the scene (II.iii.94)?

Scene iv

1. What has Tybalt sent to Romeo’s house?
2. What is Tybalt’s nickname? According to Mercutio, what kind of person is Tybalt?
3. Before the Nurse arrives, we see the “normal” Romeo (what he was like before his hormones made him a love-sick poet) as he talks with Mercutio and Benvolio. What is this Romeo like?
4. What fear does the Nurse voice to Romeo concerning Juliet?
5. Why do you think the Nurse is helping the young couple?

Scene v

1. Why is Juliet frustrated with the Nurse in this scene? How does this characterize both Juliet and the Nurse?

Scene vi

1. Paraphrase two pieces of advice Friar Lawrence gives Romeo.
2. How do you think Romeo and Juliet will announce their marriage? What do you think will be the outcome of this marriage?

ACT III

Scene i

1. Describe the mood Mercutio is in. What does he want to happen when he talks with Tybalt?
2. Tybalt is looking to challenge Romeo in the town square
 - a) How does Romeo respond to Tybalt's insults?
 - b) Why is Mercutio upset with Romeo's response?
 - c) Is Mercutio right or wrong to defend his friend's honour?
 - d) How does Mercutio become wounded in the fight with Tybalt?
3. As he dies, what curse does Mercutio repeat three times? What is the significance of this curse?
4. What happens to Tybalt? Who/what does Romeo blame for all of this (see line III.i.132)?
5. Why is Romeo only exiled instead of executed? Why is this such a terrible punishment for him? What is your opinion of the Prince's decision?

Scene ii

1. What does the Nurse bring into the scene with her?
2. What misunderstanding does the Nurse create as she tries to explain to Juliet what happened?
3. A) How does Juliet react to the news of Romeo's actions?
B) How does her attitude change when the Nurse says "Shame come to Romeo" (III.ii.90)?

Scene iii

1. What is Romeo's reaction when he learns he is banished? Why is Friar Lawrence angered by this reaction?
2. What is the Friar's plan to fix the situation?

3. Should the Friar and Nurse continue to help Romeo and Juliet? Are they doing more harm or more good?

Scene iv

1. How does Capulet seem to be affected by Tybalt's death?
2. How has Capulet's attitude about marriage and Paris changed from I.ii to this scene?
3. What day is it in this scene? What day will the marriage take place?

Scene v

1. Romeo and Juliet wake up on their first morning of being legally married. What do you think they should do at this point? What do you think would happen if they announced the marriage at this point? (Keep in mind: In the 1500s there is no legal way to break a marriage, especially if both people in the marriage don't want it broken. And, as his wife, Juliet is now under Romeo's authority, not Capulet's)
2. What does Lady Capulet say she plans to do to get revenge on Romeo? How does Juliet ask to help with this revenge? What would Juliet really be thinking when she asked to help?
3. What news does Lady Capulet deliver to Juliet? How does Juliet react to the news?
4. Lord Capulet acts very differently towards his daughter than he has in previous scenes. Why do you think he is this angry? Choose the two nastiest phrases (in your opinion) he uses towards Juliet.
5. What choice does Lord Capulet give to his daughter? How do Lady Capulet and the Nurse each react to Lord Capulet's treatment of Juliet?
6. What does the Nurse suggest Juliet do given the situation? How does this change the relationship between Juliet and the Nurse?
7. What does Juliet decide to do at the end of the scene?

ACT IV

Scene i

1. According to Paris, why did Capulet set the wedding date so soon?
2. What does Juliet say she will do if Friar Lawrence cannot figure out a solution to her problem?

3. Outline Friar Lawrence's plan to fix this situation. What might go wrong with this plan?

Scene ii

1. When Juliet asks her father's forgiveness he is thrilled. What change to the plan does he declare to celebrate? How will this cause problems for Juliet's real plan?

Scene iii

1. Before drinking the potion, Juliet worries about several "worst case scenarios." What things does she worry about?

Scene iv

Lord Capulet continues to get everything ready for the wedding. No questions needed for this brief scene.

Scene v

1. When they discover Juliet is "dead" Lady Capulet says: "O me, my child, my only life!/Revive, look up, or I will die with thee" (IV.v.19-20), and Lord Capulet says: "Alack, my child is dead,/And with my child my joys are buried" (IV.v.63-64). How does this compare to how they treated her in III.v? Is their grief sincere?
2. How does Friar Lawrence tell them to react to Juliet's death?
3. Why do you think this scene ends with the clownish musicians?

Act V

Scene i

1. What news does Balthasar bring to Romeo, and what does Romeo immediately decide to do?
2. Who does Romeo seek out before he leaves Mantua? Why?

Scene ii

1. What important job did Friar Lawrence ask Friar John to do? Why was Friar John unable to do it?
2. What does Friar Lawrence decide to do?

Scene iii

1. Why is Paris at Juliet's tomb?
2. When Paris sees Romeo at the tomb why does he believe Romeo came? What does Paris do? What are the results?

3. Who do we find out Paris is related to? What does this tell us about the “ancient feud”?
4. What does Romeo do when he gets into the tomb? How does he do this?
5. What does Friar Lawrence do when Juliet wakes up? What is your opinion of his actions?
6. What does Juliet do when she finds Romeo? How does she do this?
7. What has happened to Lady Montague? Why do you think Shakespeare would add fact?
8. What do Montague and Capulet plan to do to honour each other’s children? Does this mean that the feud has ended?
9. At the end of the play Prince Escalus says “Some shall be pardon’d, and some punished” (V.iii.308). List the characters who are still alive and for each state whether he/she should be one that the Prince pardons or punishes.