



The Plays of William Shakespeare



Romeo and Juliet

Study Guide

by Bethine Ellie



CD Version



Progeny Press

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Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Bethine Ellie

with Andrew Clausen, Michael Gilleland

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Table of Contents

Note to Instructor	4
A Special Note on Shakespeare's Plays	5
Synopsis	6
About the Author	8
Background Information	9
Ideas for Pre-reading Activities	10
Act I	11
Act II	21
Act III	30
Act IV	40
Act V	45
Summary Questions	52
After-you-read Activities	58
Additional Resources	59
Answer Key	60

Synopsis

Caught in the trap of a long-standing family feud, the members of the two distinguished Veronese houses of Capulet and Montague engage in bickering, quarreling, and occasional bloodshed when they encounter each other in the streets of Verona. To put a halt to these disturbances, the Prince of Verona enacts a law making street brawling punishable by death.

Tempers flare when Tybalt, of the house of Capulet, discovers that Romeo, heir of the Montagues, has come uninvited and disguised to a great banquet given by old Lord Capulet. Unseen by others, Romeo encounters Juliet, heiress of the Capulets, and is charmed by her beauty and grace. Romeo and Juliet talk briefly and share a clandestine kiss. After the banquet, Romeo climbs into the orchard of the Capulets and overhears Juliet, standing on her balcony, confess her love for him. Romeo speaks, making his presence known, and confesses his love for Juliet. The lovers decide to take quick and decisive action. The next day they are secretly married in the cell of the good Friar Laurence, who hopes the marriage will end the family quarrel.

Following the wedding, Juliet hurries home, while Romeo and his friends Mercutio and Benvolio encounter trouble in the streets. Tybalt, still angry that Romeo and his friends attended the Capulets' party the previous evening, provokes Mercutio to fight. Romeo tries to halt the dispute, but Tybalt manages to kill Mercutio. In anger Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince of Verona then arrives at the scene and banishes Romeo from the city.

Meanwhile, Juliet's father, knowing nothing of the secret marriage, decides that Juliet shall marry Count Paris. Upset, Juliet turns to Friar Laurence for help. The friar gives Juliet a potion that will give her the appearance of death. The friar tells Juliet that after she is placed in the ancient tomb of the Capulets she will awaken, and he and Romeo will come and take her to Mantua where she can live in peace with Romeo.

The friar promises to send a letter to Romeo explaining the plan. Unfortunately, the letter does not arrive before Romeo receives news of Juliet's death. Grief-stricken, Romeo buys enough poison to kill 20 men. Planning suicide, Romeo

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heads for the Capulet tomb so he can die by Juliet's side. When Romeo arrives at the tomb he encounters Count Paris. Romeo kills Paris and drags his body into the Capulet tomb. Seeing Juliet, Romeo promises his love, swallows the poison, and dies.

Friar Laurence hurries to the tomb at the time when he knows Juliet will awaken. He discovers the bodies of Paris and Romeo. Juliet awakens and Friar Laurence encourages her to seek refuge in a convent. Instead she thrusts Romeo's dagger into her heart and falls across his body, dead.

As both families gather at the tomb, Friar Laurence tells them the entire story. Seeing what sorrow their feuding has brought, the two families vow to bury their grudge.

Act III

Romeo is banished!

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence.

1. Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee doth much excuse the appertaining rage.
2. Come, sir, your passado.
3. O sweet Juliet, thy beauty hath made me effeminate.
4. Here from Verona thou art banished.
5. Affliction is enamored of thy parts.
6. Thou art wedded to calamity.
7. More courtship lives in carrion-flies than Romeo.

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8. These times of woe afford no time to woo.

9. Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

10. O fortune, all men call thee fickle.

Paraphrasing:

To *paraphrase* means to reword something, yet maintain its original meaning. Write a paraphrase of each of the lines below, simplifying the wording but maintaining the original meaning. Line references have been given so that you may check the context of the original. One has been done as an example.

Example: (Scene i, lines 61, 62)

Tybalt Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford
No better term than this: thou art a villain.

Tybalt: Romeo, The nicest thing I can say to you is this: you are a villain.

1. (Act III, scene i, lines 94, 95)

Mercutio A plague o' both your houses! I am sped.
Is he gone and hath nothing?

2. (Act III, scene i, lines 124, 125)

Romeo This day's black fate on more days doth depend;
This but begins the woe others must end.

Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

3. (Act III, scene iii, lines 152–155)

Friar Happiness courts thee in her best array;
But, like a misbehaved and sullen wench,
Thou pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love.
Take heed, take heed, for such die miserable.

Questions:

1. In scene i, Romeo encounters Tybalt on the street. How does Romeo first respond to Tybalt's challenge? Why?
2. What does Romeo do when Mercutio and Tybalt begin fighting? What does this tell you about Romeo's character?
3. Why does the wounded Mercutio say "A plague o' both your houses!"
4. Why does Romeo fight with Tybalt?

Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

5. What is the Prince's punishment? What is the purpose of the punishment?

6. Circle all the paradoxes Juliet uses to describe Romeo after she hears the news of Tybalt's death.

Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou seemst—
A damned saint, an honorable villain!

7. How does Juliet react to the news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment?

8. In scene iii Friar Laurence tries to comfort Romeo after telling him he is banished. The Friar says: "Be patient, for the world is broad and wide." What does the Friar mean?

9. How does Romeo's reaction to his banishment compare to Juliet's reaction?

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10. How have Romeo and Juliet initially reacted to difficulty and adversity?

11. Read the following passage (scene iii, lines 114–117):

Romeo O tell me, friar, tell me,
In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack
The hateful mansion.

What stage direction immediately follows this line? What does it indicate?

12. Friar Laurence tells Romeo, “Thy noble shape is but a form of wax.” Why do you think the friar describes Romeo as wax? Are there any similarities between Romeo and the properties of wax?

13. For what reasons does Friar Laurence suggest Romeo should be happy?

14. Earlier Lord Capulet told Paris he could marry Juliet only if Juliet approved. Why does Lord Capulet now agree to let Paris marry Juliet?

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15. Lord Capulet says, “I think she [Juliet] will be ruled in all respects by me.” Explain what Lord Capulet means by this.
16. In scene v, Romeo and Juliet part before the morning’s light. Romeo says: “More light and light: more dark and dark our woes!” (line 36) Explain what Romeo means.
17. Juliet speaks to Romeo in following passage (lines 54–57):

Juliet O God! I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
Either my eyesight fails or thou look’st pale.

What is being foreshadowed?

18. In scene v, lines 69–130, (“Why, how now, Juliet? . . .”) Juliet chooses her words carefully so that she may appear to be saying what seems appropriate to her mother without really attacking Romeo. Give two examples of the double meaning in Juliet’s words.

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19. How does Juliet react to the news that she is to be married to Paris? How do her parents respond to Juliet's refusal?
20. What advice does the nurse give Juliet? From whom does Juliet decide to seek advice at the end of Act III?

Character Study

1. In scene ii, the nurse begins to tell Juliet the news of Tybalt's death. How is Juliet confused by the nurse's words?
2. Write a two- or three-sentence character description of Juliet's nurse. Consider everything you have learned about her in the play so far.
3. In scene v, Lady Capulet tells Juliet of her plan of revenge. Read the following passage (scene v, lines 92–97)

Lady Capulet We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not.
Then weep no more. I'll send to one in Mantua,
Where that same banished runcat [Romeo] doth live,
Shall give him such an unaccustomed dram

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That he shall soon keep Tybalt company;
And then, I hope, thou wilt be satisfied.

Write a two- or three-sentence character description of Juliet's mother. Consider everything you have learned about her in the play so far.

Dig Deeper:

1. In his despair, Romeo seeks the counsel of Friar Laurence. Juliet's nurse is her counselor and confidant. Read Proverbs 12:5, 15; 13:14, 20; 19:20. Why do you think it's important to have someone you can go to for advice? Do you think it's important who our advisors are? Why or why not?
2. What sort of qualities should one look for in an advisor or counselor?
3. Who do you go to for advice? Why?

Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

4. Read the following passage (scene iii, lines 145–155).

Friar What, rouse thee, man! Thy Juliet is alive,
For whose dear sake thou wast but lately dead.
There art thou happy. Tybalt would kill thee,
But thou slewest Tybalt. There art thou happy.
A pack of blessings lights upon thy back;
Happiness courts thee in her best array;
But, like a misbehaved and sullen wench,
Thou poutst upon thy fortune and thy love.
Take heed, take heed, for such die miserable.

What is the intent of Friar Laurence's admonishment?

5. Like Romeo and Juliet, we often let our emotions determine how we respond to a situation. If we are discouraged we may give up. If we feel down we may not be willing to help others in need. When we are facing adversity we can not always depend on our emotions in making wise decisions. Read Hebrews 10:32–36, James 1:2–4, 12, and 1 Peter 4:12–16, 19. What should be our attitude toward suffering? Why?
6. What do you think are some causes of adversity? What are some benefits of adversity?

Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

7. Think of a difficult situation in your life. How did you respond to the situation? Could a different response have been better?

Summary

Summarize the main action in each scene in Act III. Use only two or three sentences for each scene.

scene i

scene ii

scene iii

scene iv

scene v

Romeo and Juliet Study Guide

5. Answers will vary. We should consider that troubles are temporary, that they produce growth and perseverance. Therefore, we should look upon suffering with joy because we can see the growth and reward at the end. We should not let our personal suffering keep us from doing good.

6. Answers will vary. In a sinful world we can expect adversity. Adversity can come because we are belligerent or foolish. Adversity can also come to us simply because we are Christians. Adversity builds perseverance. None of this means it is easy to go through adversity.

7. Answers will vary.

Summary:

Scene i: Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio meet Tybalt on the street. Romeo attempts to break up a duel between Mercutio and Tybalt. Mercutio is slain, and Romeo kills Tybalt. As punishment, the Prince banishes Romeo from Verona.

Scene ii: Juliet hears of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. She is grief-stricken. The nurse promises to bring Romeo to Juliet before he leaves Verona.

Scene iii: Romeo is distraught over the news that he has been banished. The nurse finds Romeo and asks him to go to Juliet to comfort her.

Scene iv: Hoping that a wedding will make Juliet forget her sorrow, Lord Capulet tells Paris that Juliet will marry him in three days.

Scene v: Romeo and Juliet part at dawn. Juliet's parents tell her that she is to be married to Paris. Horrified, Juliet seeks the help of Friar Laurence.

Act IV

Vocabulary:

1. d; 2. c; 3. a; 4. d; 5. c; 6. a; 7. c; 8. d.

Similes and Metaphors:

1. S; 2. M; 3. M; 4. S; 5. M.

Questions:

1. Juliet tells Friar Laurence that if he can give no help, she will kill herself.

2. The friar gives Juliet a potion to take that will make her appear to be dead. He tells Juliet to pretend that she is willing to marry Paris. Juliet must take the potion that night. Her family will think she is dead and will place her in the family tomb. She will sleep for 42 hours. The friar will write to Romeo to tell him of the plan. Romeo and the friar will go to the tomb at the time Juliet awakens, and she will be free to spend the rest of her life with Romeo.

3. Juliet's father assumes Juliet is still being defiant when she returns. Juliet asks her father for forgiveness. Juliet claims to have repented of her disobedience and says she agrees to the marriage.

4. Juliet tells the nurse that she must spend time in prayer before the wedding.

5. Juliet fears that the potion may be poison. She fears that she might waken in the tomb before Romeo comes and die suffocated by the bad air. She fears that she may be driven mad by spirits or ghosts that may be present in the tomb, or by her own fears. Ironically, she fears that in her madness she might kill herself.

6. Answers will vary, but it does seem strange to have a comic scene immediately following the mourning. The effect might be that the family's sorrow is made to appear ridiculous or exaggerated to a comic extreme. It is also a stark contrast to the end of the play.

7. Answers will vary. Consider the question of whether Paris is mourning Juliet, or that he has been cheated out of marriage by death ("Beguiled, divorced, wronged, spited, slain! Most detestable Death, by thee beguiled, . . ."). Consider that Lord and Lady Capulet might be more upset that their plans were foiled ("All things that we ordained festival turn from their office to black funeral . . ."). The friar's words of comfort are as cheerful as the family's are sorrowful. Both seem exaggerated. Also, the following comic dialogue between the servants hints that this sorrow should not be taken too seriously.

Character Study:

Answers will vary.

Lord and Lady Capulet: They mourn loud and long, but perhaps more so for the wedding that will not take place.

Paris: Paris is upset, but perhaps more that he has been cheated out of marriage by the death of his future wife.

Juliet's Nurse: The nurse doesn't have much to say for a change. It is rare to find her speechless. Her sorrow may be the most genuine.