

# Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare  
circa: 1594



Joseph Fiennes – *Shakespeare in Love* '98



W. Shakespeare in his 20s

## the World of William Shakespeare's Words

I have done a lot of writing in my day but nowhere near as much as “the Bard”.  
It's hard for me to imagine, *as I sit here at a computer using a computer and fancy word processor to produce this document you are reading*, that Shakespeare wrote all of his dozens of plays and poems containing tens of thousands of words, using a **goose quill pen**.

**How many times** did he have to clip and scrape the quill's end?  
How many **times did he have** to dip in inkwells and blot ink from all those wonderful words and **turns of phrase**- some of which you will now have ownership of...  
**poetic measures** that you will now recognize for the rest of your life:

*“... a pair of Star-crossed lovers...”*  
*“... she doth teach the torches to burn bright...”*

Imagine how it was for Shakespeare while writing.

He scratches his head then quickly writes  
*“... if I profane with my unworthiest hand...”*  
he scribbles, and then stops to sharpen his pen and continue to write passionately  
*“... O, that I were a glove upon that hand.”*  
then quickly dips the quill pen in the ink, blots and continues,  
*“That I might...”*

Tee Read 2009.09.05  
L. Read 1992.01.22

**:: Setting ::**

**Verona a city-state in North- Eastern Italy -**  
ruled by a prince; his word was law  
**“... on pain of death”.**

**:: Time ::**

Late 1400's – 500+ years ago.

**:: Synopsis ::**

Romeo and Juliet were in their early teens when they first gazed upon each other. He has “crashed” a party at the Capulet house disguised in a mask. He sees Juliet dancing and falls in love at first sight. Their love becomes inter-twined in a terrible family quarrel. Tragedy and death await all in the end.

**:: Main Characters ::**

**Juliet** Capulet

**Romeo** Montague

**Tybalt** - cousin to Juliet

**Benvolio**- cousin to Romeo

**Mercutio** - Romeo's closest friend (and goofy “nut case”)

**Friar Laurence** - Franciscan monk & alchemist

**Guidelines:**

Underlined words have been defined in brackets for help.

A sequence of dots ... before or after a line denotes that portions of the speech have been omitted.

**Definition**- add precise, accurate, apt meaning for words that have been ‘**bolded**’.

**Sequencing**- put the phrases or sentences in the order the events happened in the story.

**Interpretation**- Tell what the meaning is in modern words.

**Scope**- based on what you know of the story relate events that support the statement

**Pun**- humorous use of a words to suggest a different meaning.

**Line Completion**- fill in the blanks with missing words or phrase. Extra marks for accuracy.

**UNIT Warm UP** – Getting used to Shakespeare’s language/lingo is a matter of decoding. Here’s a warm up.

**Juliet's** mother has urged her to look upon the handsome **Paris** as a future husband, but Juliet says:

*“I'll look to like, if looking liking move:  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.”*

Which in today’s lingo might be something like:

*I'll try to like him, but only if when I look at him this moves me / arouses some attraction.  
I will look at him again but only because you want me to.  
I'll give it a shot but I'm not guaranteeing anything.*

**A. PROLOGUE (Introduction)**

*“ Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. (civil = public AND decent, i.e. civilized)  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death-marked love,  
And the continuance of their parents’ rage  
Which, but their children’s end, naught could remove... ”*

**Definitions:** (as used by Shakespeare)

**dignity** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**mutiny** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**civil (explain two meanings)** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**star-crossed** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sequencing Events:** (translated into modern English) put into order then rewrite neatly below

- the off-spring (children) of the two quarrelling families \_\_\_\_
- in Verona Italy, sometime in the 15th Century. \_\_\_\_
- even common members of the public are involved in blood shed \_\_\_\_
- only their deaths could end the fighting between families \_\_\_\_
- a long time bloody quarrel is about to flare up again \_\_\_\_
- two teens whose love for each other was not meant to be \_\_\_\_
- two families of the same wealthy status \_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** There has been another fight between servants of the Montagues and Capulets in the town market. Prince Escalus has warned both families that this being the third public fight, he will order the death of those involved in the fighting:

**PRINCE:**

“Three civil brawls, bred of an **airy** word,  
By thee, olde Capulet, and Montague,  
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our citizens...

. . .

If you ever disturb our streets again  
Your lives shall pay the **forfeit** of the peace...

. . .

Once more, on pain of death, all men depart !”

**Definitions:** (as used by Shakespeare)

**airy** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**forfeit** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Romeo, although he was an excellent swordfighter and soldier, has seen enough of death and fighting and longs for something more meaningful in his life. He has reached an age (16) when he looks for love. He explains to his cousin that days seem so long without it.

**BENVOLIO:** Good morrow, cousin.

**ROMEO:** Is the day so young?

**BENVOLIO:** But new struck nine.

**ROMEO:** *Ah me! Sad hours seem long.* (1)

Was that my father that went hence so fast?

**BENVOLIO:** It was. *What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?* (2)

**ROMEO:** *Not having that which, having, makes them short.* (3)

**BENVOLIO:** In love?

**ROMEO:** Out...

**BENVOLIO:** Of love?

**ROMEO:** Out of favour where I am in love.

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Paris, a young merchant, approaches Juliet's father about marrying her.  
Mr. Capulet is hesitant to discuss her marriage so young.

**PARIS:** ... But now, my lord, what say you to my **suit**

**CAPULET:** And too soon marred are those so early made.

The earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she; (1)

She's the hopeful lady of my earth... (2)

... **woo her**, gentle Paris, get her heart ...

and, she agreed, lies my consent and fair according voice.

**Definitions:** (as used by Shakespeare)

**suit** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**woo her** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interpretation:** Why is Capulet hesitant towards the marriage?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E.** Juliet’s mother tries to talk to her about marriage but she cannot do it without the Nurse being there. The Nurse lost her daughter in child birth and was hired to “wet-nurse” (breast feed) the new born Juliet. The custom of the day was that it was undignified for wealthy women to engage in the actual breast feeding and raising of their children. Thus we learn that Juliet is much more closely attached to the Nurse.

**Scope:** How do you know Juliet is close to the Nurse? (give 2 examples)

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**F. Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio** and several other young men decide to sneak into a party at the Capulet's house. On the way Romeo tries to tell Mercutio he has had a foreboding dream:

**ROMEO:** I dreamt a dream tonight.

**MERCUTIO:** And so did I.

**ROMEO:** Well what was yours?

**MERCUTIO:** That dreamers often **lie**.

**ROMEO:** In bed asleep, while they do dream things true.

**MERCUTIO:** Oh, then I see **Queen Mab** hath been with you...

Mercutio goes on to explain that this tiny fairies midwife, **Queen Mab** comes in the night to go up men’s noses and into their brains where she fills them with silly ideas about love and happiness. Mercutio forgets that Romeo was trying to tell him about his dream. Benvolio tells Romeo to hurry up and the crazy incident is over.

**Definition:**

**foreboding** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interpretation:** What is the pun (play on words) between Mercutio and Romeo involving the word **lie**? \_\_\_\_\_

**MERCUTIO** This is that very Mab  
That plats the manes of horses in the night,  
And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs,  
Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes:  
This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,  
That presses them and learns them first to bear,  
Making them women of good carriage:  
This is she ...

**Interpretation:**

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**G. BENVOLIO:** ... we shall arrive too late.

**ROMEO:**

I fear, too early; for my mind misgives  
some consequence yet hanging in the stars  
shall bitterly begin his fearful date  
With this night's revels, and expire the term  
Of a despised life closed in my breast  
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.  
But He that hath the steerage of my course  
Direct my suit!

**Sequencing Events:** (modern English)

- **I am going to meet an early death**
- **something fateful is about to happen very soon**
- **whoever watches over me has control of my life**
- **I'm worried any time we arrive will be too early**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Romeo and friends put on masks and go into the party. Romeo sees Juliet for the first time as she dances slowly around the floor. Leaning against a pillar he speaks to himself:

**ROMEO:** O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! (1)  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an **Ethiop's ear**- (2) \*black skinned person

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**H.** The song “*What is a Youth*” in **Zefferelli’s** movie is not from the original script for the play by Shakespeare. However, Shakespeare makes several references to these classic descriptions “fire & ice” in several of his minor poems and gives credit to ancient Greek drama for these descriptive characteristics of youthful desire:

What is a youth, *impetuous fire* (1)  
What is a maid, *ice and desire* (2)

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

After Romeo and Juliet dance for a brief moment they now search for each other. He grabs her hand from behind a curtain next to a pillar and because they are so light-headed at their first touch they begin to speak lovers “gobbledygook”:

**ROMEO:** If I profane with my un-worthiest hand  
This holy shrine (1), the gentle sin is this:  
My lips two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss (2)

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**JULIET:** Good pilgrim you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

**Interpretation:** What is Juliet hinting at here?

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*The silly nonsensical lover's dialogue*

**ROMEO:** Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

**JULIET:** Aye, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

**ROMEO:** O, Then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do,  
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

**JULIET:** Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

**ROMEO:** Then move not, while my prayers effect I take.

(He kisses her) Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged.

**JULIET:** Then have mine lips the sin that they have took?

**ROMEO:** Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!  
Give me my sin again. (He kisses her again)

In Modern English they might be saying

**ROMEO:** I love holdin' your hand; 'can' I kiss it?

**JULIET:** (amused, cautious, teasing): I like you holding my hand.

**ROMEO:** Pilgrims have lips, and they kiss too. Please let me kiss you.

**JULIET:** Pilgrims use their lips for praying, not kissing.

**ROMEO:** I'm praying that you will let me kiss you.

If you don't let me I might lose my religious faith.

**JULIET:** I won't kiss you, but you can kiss me.

**ROMEO:** Hold still. (He kisses her.) I am rid of my sin by kissing you.

**JULIET:** (excited, amused): Now I've got your sin.

What are you going to do about it?

**ROMEO:** You want me to kiss you again? OK I will! (Kisses her again.)

**JULIET:** You don't have to go through all of this just to kiss me. Just do it.

**Interpretation:** How, would you translate their words another way?

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(con't next page)

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I. After the dance Romeo wants to be alone to think of his love and escapes Mercutio et al, accidentally ending up in Juliet's courtyard. He sees her on the balcony.

**ROMEO:**

It is my lady, O it is my love!  
O, that she knew she were!  
She speaks...  
... I will answer.  
I am too bold.  
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes (1)  
To twinkle in their spheres till they return  
... See how she leans her cheek upon her hand,  
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

Complete this line - *That I might* \_\_\_\_\_ (2)

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Juliet is wishing that Romeo was not a Montague. She has suggested his name is not a part of him like an arm. It's just a word, not a thing.

**JULIET:** What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other word would smell as sweet;

**Interpretation:**

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**Romeo** steps out of the darkness and speaks out loud.  
**Juliet** recognizes his voice and they talk for a while -

**JULIET:** If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.  
Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,  
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay, **(1)** (uninterested)  
... In truth fair Montague, I am too fond,  
And therefore thou mayst think my behaviour light.  
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
Than those that have more coyness to be strange. **(2)**  
I should have been more strange I must confess,  
But that thou overheardest, ere I was aware,  
My true-love's passion. **(3)**

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**JULIET:** Good night good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow  
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.

**Interpretation:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**J.** Mercutio and Benvolio enter the plaza on a particularly hot day. Tybalt and friends follow shortly after. Tybalt is looking for Romeo because he thinks his cousin Juliet and Romeo are becoming friends and he wants to stop it.

**TYBALT:** Romeo the love I bear thee can afford  
No better term than this: Thou art a villain.

**ROMEO:** Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee  
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage  
To such a greeting, Villain am I none.

Therefore, farewell. I see thou knowest me not.

**TYBALT:** Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries

That thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw.

**ROMEO:** I do protest I never injured thee,

But love thee better than thou canst devise  
'Til thou shalt know the reason for my love.

**Interpretation:** What is going on here between these two? What is Romeo hiding?

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**Mercutio** is stabbed in the heart by **Tybalt** when **Romeo** steps between them trying to stop a sword fight. Tybalt flees. Everyone starts to celebrate Mercutio's victory. Mercutio speaks and then dies.

**MERCUTIO:** I am hurt.

**BENVOLIO:** What, art thou hurt?

**MERCUTIO:** Aye, Aye, a scratch, a scratch; marry, 'tis enough.

Where is my page? Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

**ROMEO:** Courage, man, the hurt cannot be much.

**MERCUTIO:** No, 'tis not so deep as \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Nor so wide as a \_\_\_\_\_ ,

But 'tis enough, 'twill serve.

Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a \_\_\_\_\_ .

... a plague on both your houses! **(1)**

... they have made worm's meat of me **(2)**

**Interpretation:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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**K. Friar Lawrence** devises a plan wherein Juliet will fake death using a potion he gives her. After she awakes in the tomb Romeo and she will leave together and live in exile together until they are allowed to return. What does Mr. Capulet mean about his daughter when he finds her dead:

**CAPULET:** Death lies upon her like an untimely frost

Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.

**Interpretation:**

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There are several events that occur that cause Romeo to go to the tomb believing that Juliet is really dead. Summarize them next page?

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**ROMEO:** Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,  
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.

**Interpretation:**

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**ROMEO:** Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?  
O, what more favour can I do to thee  
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain  
To sunder his that was thine enemy?

**Interpretation:**

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**L.** With the death of so many on the hands of the families Montague and Capulet the Prince is enraged but compassionate at the loss of two young teens.

**PRINCE:** Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague,  
See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,  
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.  
... All are punished!

**Interpretation:** (especially the last line “*All are punish-ed*” )

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**M.** In this play **Romeo and Juliet** written 400+ years ago by **Shakespeare** there are lessons for young teens today. Thinking about your life at this time and in the near future list some of them. (One mark for each goodly and different answer thou dost yield forth at this juncture in thine own testament to this topical and worthy play by the Bard, Will Shakespeare).

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