Romeo and Juliet: a revision guide

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.
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 bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act and Scene</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act 1</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Morn</td>
<td>Romeo lovesick for Rosaline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 1(i)</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>A street fight between the Montague and Capulet families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 1</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>The Capulets get ready for their masked ball. The Montagues gatecrash the ball - Romeo is disguised by a mask. Romeo sees beautiful Juliet - it is love at first sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 2</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet meet and learn they belong to the opposing families of Montague and Capulet. Despite the conflicting loyalties to their families, they swear their love for each other and decide to marry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 2</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Morn</td>
<td>Plans are made for the wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 2</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Early PM</td>
<td>Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet are married by Friar Laurence. The Nurse will help Romeo to climb into Juliet's bedchamber as her husband later that night...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3 (i)</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Late PM</td>
<td>Benvolio (Montague) and Mercutio meet Tybalt (Capulet). Mercutio is killed by Tybalt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3 (i)</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Early Eve</td>
<td>Romeo revenges the death of Mercutio and kills Tybalt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Prince of Verona banishes Romeo from Verona. Unaware of the wedding, Capulet arranges for Juliet to marry Paris on Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Having spent the night together, the lovers, Romeo and Juliet, part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 4</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Morn</td>
<td>Juliet refuses her father's wishes to marry Paris and decides she will commit suicide rather than betray Romeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 4</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Friar Laurence advises Juliet to pretend to take poison and fake her death, allowing her to escape to Romeo. Knowing she will escape Juliet &quot;agrees&quot; to marry Paris. Her delighted father brings the wedding forward to Wednesday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Act 4  
**Tue Night**  
Juliet takes the fake potion

Act 4  
**Wed Morn**  
The Nurse discovers the "dead" Juliet. The Capulet family learn that their daughter Juliet is dead. The wedding preparations are changed to those of a funeral.

Act 5  
**Wed**  
Romeo learns of Juliet's death – devastated, he plans to return to Verona to see the dead body of Juliet - he plans to commit suicide.

Act 5  
**Thurs Eve**  
Romeo looks at Juliet in her coffin. Paris sees him, they fight and Paris is killed. Romeo then takes the poison - just as Juliet awakes. Romeo dies, Friar Laurence enters too late and then Juliet stabs herself to death.

Act 5  
**Thurs Eve**  
The tragic love story ends as the Montague and Capulet families end their feud.

Notes:

Revision activities suggestions.

1. Make 17 ‘cards’ each with a description of the events – shuffle these and then reorder them from memory.
2. Add key quotations for each scene (perhaps onto the cards for the activity above).
3. Highlight the above timeline in different colours depending on whether you think honour or love is the prime motivation for the characters.
4. Contrast paired characters e.g. Tybalt and Benvolio; Friar Laurence and the Nurse; Paris and Mercutio – which seems to have the greatest impact on the plot?
5. Storyboard the play using the timeline above.
A Shakespearian audience’s views

**Honour:**
Men in Shakespeare’s time cared deeply about their honour, especially their horizontal or natural honour. This was the respect with which their equals treated them – to lose your honour was to lose all respect and reputation. It also could not be regained once lost – this lead to a lot of fights (duels) over insults to your honour. It only mattered among equals – this is why Lord Capulet isn’t bothered by Romeo being at his party, while Tybalt is. Lord Capulet is socially superior to Romeo, while Tybalt and Romeo are equals socially speaking. It is why Tybalt has to fight Mercutio once Mercutio insults him (“rat catcher”) otherwise he would lose face. This is also why Lord Capulet insists Juliet marry Paris – Capulet has promised this; if he failed and was “forsworn” he would lose honour.

To us this seems perhaps over the top – to challenge somebody to a duel over an insult – but Shakespeare’s audience would have understood that the characters had little choice but to act as they do in order to preserve their honour.

**Women’s honour** meanwhile was dependent on their chastity – remaining a virgin until their marriage. However if a women lost her honour so would her family.

**Time and the theatre:**
Shakespeare’s theatre was open to the sky and had no lighting: hence the characters have to constantly refer to the day of the week (“what day is it?”) and time of day (“it is the lark”) for the benefit of the audience.

**Potions and poisons:**
Elizabethan’s were superstitious people who believed in magic and witchcraft. The idea of anaesthetic as a medical procedure was unknown, so Friar Laurence’s potion would seem magical to them, evil perhaps (note how the Apothecary Romeo buys the poison takes a risk in selling it). Another reason why Friar Laurence would have come across as unnatural and untrustworthy to a Shakespearean audience.

**Family:**
Despite there being a Queen (Elizabeth 1) on the throne when Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet, men were the masters. Their wives and children were theirs to command, their daughters in particular their property to “give” to whomever they pleased. Capulet therefore seems decided liberal when he tells Paris that Juliet may have a “choice” in whom she married; he also seems perfectly normal when claimed that “she will be ruled” by him and agree to marry Paris.

Posh families also often employed a Wet Nurse to breastfeed their children – the Nurse had that role, which is why she feels like a mother to Juliet.
Example questions

Suggested activities

1. Highlight the **key words** in each question. Using this key words write **introductory** and **concluding sentences** that will demonstrate you have answered the question.

2. **Mind map** these questions, adding key events and quotations.

Character questions:

• What do we learn about the character of Juliet as the play progresses?

• How central is the character of Friar Laurence to the play’s conclusion?

• Whose role is more important: Paris or Tybalt?

• Which character could have best prevented the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*?

Theme questions:

• The contrast of youth and old age is important in this play. How far do you agree with this statement?

• Romeo and Juliet is really a play about honour. How far do you agree with this statement?

• Violence is the central cause of the events of Romeo and Juliet. How far do you agree with this statement?

• Is it true to say that *Romeo and Juliet* is critical of the idea of ‘family’?
### How ROMEO changes throughout the play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act 1</td>
<td>Romeo’s views on <strong>love</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 2</td>
<td>Romeo’s views on <strong>FATE</strong> (the idea that your life is decided for you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 5</td>
<td>Romeo’s views on his <strong>family</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROMEO's key relationships

- Mercutio
- Benvolio
- Friar Laurence
- Juliet
- Balthazar
- Rosaline
- His parents
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How JULIET changes throughout the play</th>
<th>Act 1</th>
<th>Act 2</th>
<th>Act 3</th>
<th>Act 4</th>
<th>Act 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juliet’s views on <strong>love</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet’s views on <strong>HONOUR</strong></td>
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</table>
JULIET’s key relationships

- Lady Capulet
- Paris
- Friar Laurence
- Tybalt
- The Nurse
- Romeo
- Lord Capulet
- Romeo
Does PARIS really **love** Juliet?

Is PARIS honourable?

Paris as a **contrast** to Romeo

A **modern** audience would think...

A **Shakespearian** audience would think...
Mind map Lady Capulet and Lord Montague’s relationships with these characters

Lady Capulet
- Capulet
- Tybalt
- Juliet
- The Nurse

Lord Montague
- Benvolio
- Romeo
- Prince
- Lord Capulet
How does Capulet talk about Juliet in:

Act 1 Scene 2 – to Paris

Capulet’s views on **honour**
(eespecially the feud)

Act 3 Scene 5 – to Juliet and Lady Capulet

Capulet’s attitude towards **family**...

How does this make us feel about a) Capulet and b) Juliet?

Capulet as a **contrast** to Tybalt...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Modern Audience</th>
<th>Shakespearian Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does BENVOLIO feel about his family?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are Benvolio’s views on violence?</td>
<td>A <em>modern</em> audience would think...</td>
<td>A <em>Shakespearian</em> audience would think...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benvolio as a contrast to Tybalt and Mercutio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tybalt’s views on <strong>HONOUR</strong></td>
<td>A <strong>modern</strong> audience would think...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tybalt’s views on <strong>FAMILY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tybalt on <strong>HATE</strong></td>
<td>A Shakespearian audience would think...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mercutio as a contrast to Romeo

Mercutio as a source of HUMOUR

Mercutio’s attitude towards honour.

What Mercutio causes to happen.

Act 1

Act 2

Act 3
Add notes and quotes to these pages to illustrate the character.

**What The NURSE helps happen.**

- Act 1
- Act 2
- Act 3
- Act 4

How does The Nurse **deceive** people?

The Nurse’s views on **LOVE**

The Nurse as a source of **HUMOUR**
Add notes and quotes to these pages to illustrate the character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What FRIAR Laurence helps happen.</th>
<th>Act 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does Friar Laurence <strong>deceive</strong> people?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Act 3</td>
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<td>Act 4</td>
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<td>Friar Laurence’s views on <strong>FATE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Act 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friar Laurence’s views on <strong>VIOLENCE</strong> (including self-harm)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Other **characters**. Think about their relevance to:

- The **feud** between the Capulets and Montagues
- Themes of **violence, honour** and **family**
- The way they assist (or not) Romeo and Juliet
- Themes of **loyalty** and **deception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Montague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balthazar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham, Gregory and Samson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friar John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris’ page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>