STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

The following questions should be used to guide you in your reading of the play and to insure that you recognize important parts of the play. As you read independently, try to answer the questions as best you can and plan to come to class seeking the answers you could not get on your own. During our class discussions, *be sure to record the answers.* It is your responsibility to ask what you do not understand.

\*These lines may be on a test. Be able to identify the speaker, describe the circumstances, and be able to interpret or paraphrase the quotation.

Words in **bold** print are vocabulary words that my also appear on a test.

# PROLOGUE

1. Who speaks the Prologue?
2. What is the purpose of the Prologue?
3. In what poetic form is this Prologue?

\*4. Highlight lines 5 and 6. Explain the importance of these two lines.

1. Why does Shakespeare tell us how the story is going to end?

6. What themes are established in the Prologue?

# ACT 1 SCENE 1

1. How does Shakespeare start the play so that he gains the attention of the “groundlings?”

\*2. Highlight lines 58-59. Our first introduction to Benvolio comes when he says these words. What do they reveal about his character?

\*3. Highlight lines 64-65. Our first impression of Tybalt occurs in these lines. What do we learn about his character?

\*4. Highlight lines 90-91. What is the tone of the Prince’s speech? In these lines he makes a new decree. What is it, and why is it important?

5. When we first see Romeo he shows all the signs of a **Petrarchan Lover**—**someone who is in love with the idea of being in love**. How does Romeo act (lines 125-136)?

6. When describing his feelings to Benvolio, Romeo uses **Oxymorons—pairs of contradictory words** in lines 170-177 and 184-188. Why does he speak in contradictions and paradoxes?

1. We then learn that Romeo is suffering from **Unrequited Love—He loves someone who does not love him back.** What suggestion does Benvolio make to Romeo to help him get over is unrequited love for Rosaline (lines 221-223)?

# ACT 1 SCENE 2

1. In this scene Lord Capulet talks to Paris about marrying his daughter Juliet. What two reasons does he give for not wanting Juliet to marry at this time (lines 8-14)?

\*2. Highlight line 16-19. On what condition will Lord Capulet agree to Juliet’s marriage with Paris?

3. What does this reveal about Lord Capulet’s love for his daughter?

4. From the servant who cannot read we learn that Rosaline, with whom Romeo believes he is in love, will be at the Capulet party. Why does this excite Benvolio? What is his plan (lines 84-89)?

\*5. Highlight lines 86-89. Explain Benvolio’s analogy:

6. Why does Romeo agree to go to the party (lines 102-103)?

7. What coincidence takes place in this scene? Explain what theme is being developed.

# ACT 1 SCENE 3

In this scene Lady Capulet is informing Juliet and her nurse of Count Paris’ proposal of marriage.

1. What is the nurse’s relationship with Juliet?

2. How would you describe the nurse’s personality?

\*3. Highlight lines 62-63. What is the nurse’s one wish for Juliet and why?

4. When Lady Capulet asks Juliet how she feels about being married, what is Juliet’s answer (line 67), and what does it reveal about her character?

5. The nurse and Lady Capulet are both excited and pleased by Paris’ proposal but for different reasons.

The nurse says Paris is “a man of wax” and at the end of the scene encourages Juliet to “Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.” What does the nurse see in Paris, and what does it reveal about her attitude toward love and marriage?

6. Lady Capulet’s lines 82-95 compose a **conceit. A conceit is an extended, exaggerated comparison or metaphor between two unlike things**—in this case, between Paris and a book that needs to be bound. What does Lady Capulet see in Paris that would make him a good match for Juliet? What is Lady Capulet’s attitude toward love and marriage?

\*7. Highlight lines 98-100. Explain Juliet’s answer to her mother when asked if she can love Paris. What does it reveal about her knowledge of being in love? What is her attitude toward love and marriage?

# ACT 1 SCENE 4

\*1. Highlight lines 106-111. Why does Romeo feel uneasy about going to the party? What dream-like premonition has he had?

2. Comment on this speech in terms of the Elizabethan attitude toward the stars and astrology.

3. What decision does Romeo make in lines 112-113, and what is the thematic importance of this decision?

# ACT 1 SCENE 5

1. We learn from Romeo’s **soliloquy** **(a speech delivered while the speaker is alone, calculated to inform the audience of what is passing in the character’s mind)** that he is struck by love at first sight when he sees Juliet at the party. Paraphrase Rome’s speech (lines 43-53). To what does he compare Juliet?

2. How does this speech about his love for Juliet compare to his speeches about being in love with Rosaline?

3. Tybalt recognizes Romeo’s voice and tries to start a fight. What two reasons does Lord Capulet give for stopping him (lines 65-69)?

\*4. Highlight lines 90-91. What threat does Tybalt make as he agrees to withdraw?

5. In lines 92-105 Romeo and Juliet speak to each other. Their lines form a sonnet. Paraphrase the lines of the sonnet.

**6. Dramatic Irony is when the audience knows something the characters do not.** What is ironic about Juliet’s line 134?

# ACT 2 SCENE 2

1. Juliet is on the balcony outside her bedroom but cannot hear the words that Romeo says to himself as he looks at her from the hiding place below. Answer the following questions about lines 2-25:

1. Romeo repeats the light and dark images he introduced when he saw Juliet for the first time. Why does Romeo compare Juliet to the sun?
2. Why does he want the sun to kill the envious moon?
3. Why is the moon envious?
4. Why does he compare Juliet’s eyes to the stars?
5. Why is this comparison to stars another example of foreshadowing?

\*2. Highlight lines 33-36. Juliet is still unaware that Romeo is nearby. Paraphrase these lines.

\*3. Highlight lines 43-44. Paraphrase lines 38-49. What is Juliet’s attitude toward the feud that has separated the two families?

4. After Juliet asks some pertinent questions (lines 58-84), she realizes that Romeo has overheard her intimate thoughts about him. How does her attitude change in lines 85-105? What is she worried about?

5. Why does Juliet object to Romeo’s swearing on the moon (lines 109-111)?

6. Juliet speaks of her fears in lines 116-119. Explain.

7. Paraphrase lines 142-148.

# ACT 2 SCENE 3

1. Friar Laurence is introduced in a lengthy soliloquy in which he philosophies about nature and about mankind. Paraphrase his speech (lines 7-30).

2. What does Romeo tell Friar Laurence, and what does he want from the Friar (lines 43-64)?

3. What is Friar Laurence’s reaction to hearing of Romeo’s new love (lines 65-80)?

\*4. Highlight lines 89-92. What reason does Friar Laurence give for agreeing to marry Romeo and Juliet?

# ACT 2 SCENE 4

1. This scene shows us more of the nurse’s character as she trades quips and puns with Mercutio. What **malapropisms (an inappropriateness of speech resulting from the use of one word for another which resembles it)** does the nurse use (line 115)?

2. What message does Romeo urge the nurse to give to Juliet (lines 163-166)?

## ACT 2 SCENE 5

1. Juliet is very impatient to hear news from Romeo (lines 1-17). What images does she use in her soliloquy to express this?
2. The nurse knows Juliet is impatient, but she keeps putting her off. Why does the nurse do this?
3. Why does the Nurse agree to help Juliet marry Romeo?

# ACT 3 SCENE 1

1. Why do you think Tybalt approaches Mercutio and Benvolio and wants a “word” with one of them (line 36)?

2. Mercutio tries to provoke Tybalt to fight (lines 37-38). Why doesn’t Tybalt want to fight him (line 53)?

3. After Tybalt insults Romeo, Romeo responds with lines 59-62. Explain his lines. What is the “reason” Romeo has for ignoring the insult?

\*4. Highlight lines 65-69. Explain the meaning of the lines and the dramatic irony of the situation.

5. Why does Romeo’s answer to Tybalt’s insults upset Mercutio? What does he think Romeo is doing (line 70)?

6. Romeo tries to stop Mercutio and Tybalt from fighting by reasoning with them (lines 82-85). Paraphrase what he says.

7. Even when he is dying, Mercutio continues to joke and to make puns. Explain the pun he makes in lines 92-99.

\*8. Highlight lines 102-103. Mercutio repeats the following line (106) three times and then adds the next line. Explain what he means:

“A plague O’ both your houses!

They have made worm’s meat of me.”

9. What does Romeo mean when he says lines 119-120?

10. After Mercutio dies, why does Romeo decide to kill Tybalt instead of accepting Mercutio’s death as an unfortunate accident?

\*11. Highlight line 132. What does Romeo mean?

\*12. Highlight lines 176-177. What reasoning does Lady Capulet use in begging the Prince for vengeance for Tybalt’s death?

\*13. Highlight lines 180-183. What is Lord Montagues’ reasoning in his attempt to persuade the Prince not to kill Romeo for killing Tybalt?

1. What is the Prince’s decree, and what are the reasons he gives for making it (lines 182-185)?

# ACT 3 SCENE 2

1. In lines 37-68 the nurse confuses Juliet as she tells Juliet of the fight. What misconception does Juliet make?

\*2. Highlight line 73. When Juliet receives news of Tybalt’s death, what is her first reaction?

\*3. Highlight Juliet’s lines 90-92. When the nurse agrees with Juliet, Juliet has a different reaction to Romeo’s killing of Tybalt. Explain.

4. How does the scene end?

# ACT 3 SCENE 3

\*1. Highlight line 12. What is Romeo’s reaction when he learns that he has been banished?

2. From the beginning of the play, Romeo acts impulsively. In what way is he still impulsive in this scene (lines 102-108)?

3. Friar Laurence tells Romeo to count his blessings. What are they (line 135-140)?

4. Explain Friar Laurence’s plan (lines 146-154).

# ACT 3 SCENE 5

Questions begin with Lady Capulet’s entrance, line 68.

1. Lady Capulet misunderstands Juliet’s sadness, and Juliet does not want her to know what has happened between Romeo and Juliet. What does Juliet say about Tybalt and Romeo to keep the truth from her mother (lines 67-102)?

2. What is Juliet’s response when she is told the news that she is to marry Paris (lines 116-123)? How has she changed since Act 1?

3. What is her mother’s reaction to Juliet’s response (line 124 and lines 139-140)?

\*4. Highlight lines 190-194. What is Lord Capulet’s response to Juliet’s refusal to marry Paris?

5. What does the Nurse advise Juliet to do (lines 212-225)? What is her reasoning?

1. After the Nurse leaves and Juliet is alone, what does Juliet decide to do (lines 240-243)?

## ACT IV SCENE 1

1. Why is Paris visiting Friar Laurence?
2. Juliet tells Friar Laurence what she will do if the wedding to Paris cannot be avoided. Paraphrase lines 50-67.

\*3. Highlight lines 68-70. Paraphrase lines 68-76. The Friar says he has thought of a way out, but what would it require?

1. What is Juliet’s answer to the Friar in her effort to convince him that she will do anything to avoid the marriage with Paris (lines 76-88)?
2. Summarize Friar Laurence’s plan as described in lines 89-120.

ACT 5 SCENE 1

1. What premonition does Romeo have at the beginning of this scene (lines 1-11)?

2. What news does Balthasar bring? How does this disrupt the Friar’s plan?

\*3. Highlight line 24. Paraphrase. Why is this a brazen thing to say?

4. What does Romeo decide to do after he hears Balthasar’s story (lines 34-57)?

# ACT 5 SCENE 2

1. What story does Friar John tell Friar Laurence as explanation as to why he could not deliver the letter to Romeo?

# ACT 5 SCENE 3

\*4. Highlight lines 91-96. What does Romeo notice about Juliet? Explain the dramatic irony.

\*5. Highlight line 167. What does Juliet realize about the situation?

\*6. Highlight lines 169-170. Explain the lines.