


# ROMEO & JULIET - ACT SUMMARIES

<p><b>ACT ONE</b></p>	
<p><b>Scene 1</b> It is Sunday, and the streets of Verona are busy. Two Capulet servants, Sampson and Gregory, are teasing each other quite rudely and as early as the seventh line mention how much they hate a rival family, the Montagues. Abraham and Balthasar of the Montagues enter, and a fight breaks out. Benvolio tries to stop it, but Tybalt refuses to help, and the fight turns into a riot that is eventually broken up by the town guards. The Prince threatens death to anyone who disturbs the peace again. Romeo enters after the scene and tells his friend Benvolio that he wants nothing to do with violence. He also admits to being lovesick because the woman he loves (Rosaline) doesn't want to know him.</p>	
<p><b>Scene 2</b> Paris visits Lord Capulet, asking to marry his daughter, Juliet. We learn she is not quite 14 years old, and Capulet tells Paris to wait two more years. Nevertheless, Capulet invites Paris to a masked ball, or party, at their house. Benvolio and Romeo find out about the party, and Benvolio encourages Romeo to go so that he can forget about Rosaline.</p>	
<p><b>Scene 3</b> Lady Capulet tells Juliet that Paris wants to marry her. Juliet's Nurse is very excited, but Juliet hasn't thought about marriage yet.</p>	
<p><b>Scene 4</b> It's now Sunday evening, and several partygoers, among them Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio, are outside Capulet's house. Mercutio's light-hearted and clever banter contrasts with Romeo's dark mood, though it's obvious Mercutio has his own dark side too.</p>	
<p><b>Scene 5</b> Preparations are being made for Capulet's party, and the guests arrive, followed by lots of dancing and music. Romeo sees Juliet for the first time, from a distance, and is overwhelmed by her beauty. Despite his mask, Romeo (Montague) is spotted by Tybalt (Capulet), who wants to kill Romeo for sneaking in uninvited – but Capulet forcefully stops him. Tybalt is angered by this and vows revenge against Romeo. Romeo approaches Juliet. They talk and then kiss. Nurse interrupts and tells Romeo that Juliet is a Capulet, much to his dismay. Later, Juliet finds out that Romeo is a Montague, and she reacts in much the same way.</p>	



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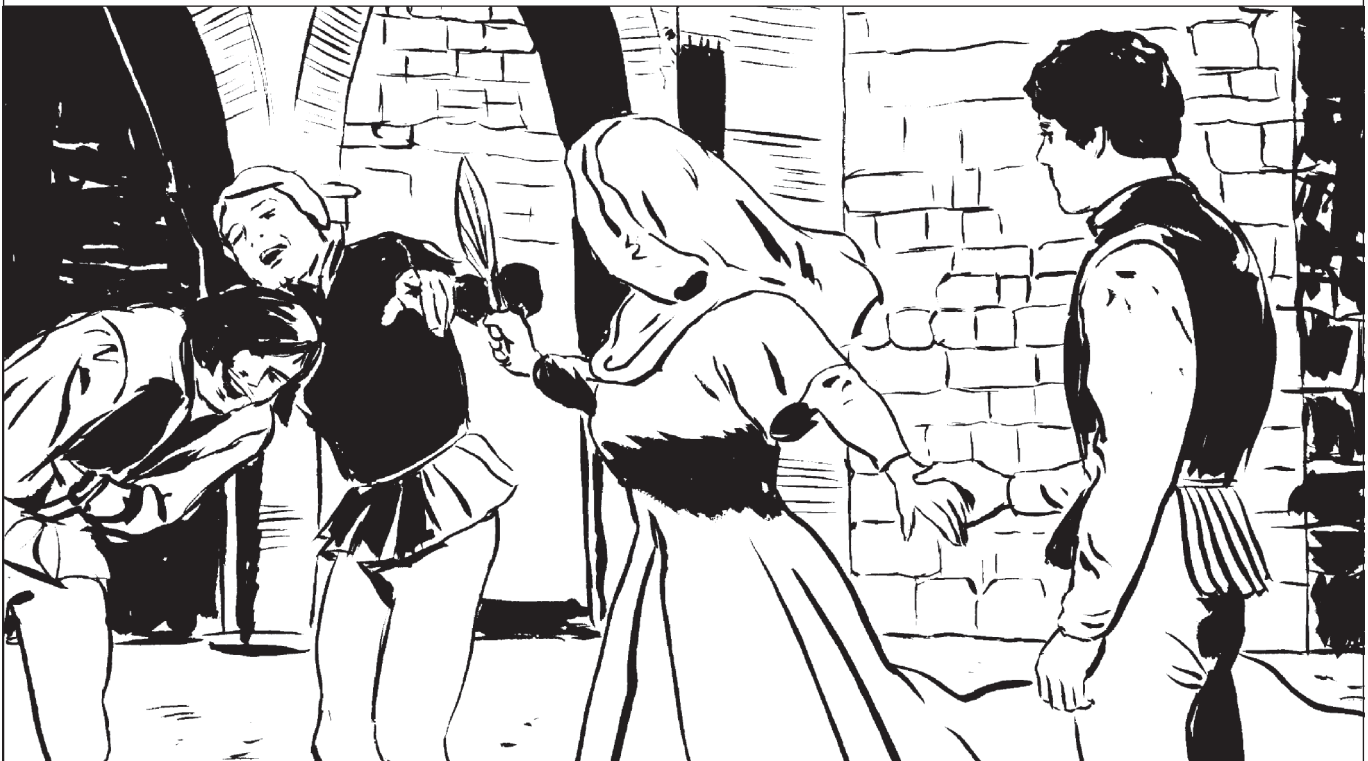
## ACT TWO

**Scene 1** Romeo manages to hide from his friends outside Capulet's orchard and refuses to join them, despite Mercutio's teasing.

**Scene 2** This is perhaps the most famous scene in the history of English drama, known as "The Balcony Scene". Romeo is in the orchard and sees Juliet high on her balcony. Not knowing Romeo is there, Juliet speaks about him lovingly but laments the fact that he's a Montague. Romeo lets her know that he is there. Juliet is shocked, but the two of them engage in loving conversation. Again interrupted by the Nurse, they hastily arrange to marry.

**Scene 3** It is now early on Monday morning, and Romeo goes to see his friend, Friar Laurence. When Laurence last saw Romeo he was lovesick about Rosaline, and Laurence is pleased to see the change in him – until he realizes that Romeo wants to marry some new girl. Friar Laurence agrees to marry Romeo to Juliet in the hope that the union will bring peace to the warring families.

**Scene 4** This is a very happy scene and the only one in the play in which we see Romeo enjoying time with his friends. Mercutio teases Benvolio and Romeo. The Nurse arrives, and Mercutio teases her mercilessly, provoking her anger. Romeo tells the Nurse to inform Juliet that she should go to Friar Laurence's cell that afternoon to be married.



**Scene 5** Juliet anxiously awaits the Nurse's return. When she does come back, she takes a long time to reveal the message, much to the annoyance of Juliet.

**Scene 6** Romeo waits for Juliet with Friar Laurence. She arrives, and the couple kiss. Romeo and Juliet are married – though, interestingly, the ceremony is not performed on stage.

# ROMEO & JULIET - ACT SUMMARIES



## ACT THREE

### Scene 1

This is the play's pivotal scene. The audience (and Romeo, of course!) will be on an emotional high after the wedding, but it all comes crashing down in this scene. It is only one hour after the marriage. Benvolio and Mercutio talk in Verona's streets. Benvolio is trying to persuade Mercutio to go indoors as it is very hot and he fears a brawl if they come across the Capulets. Typically, Mercutio rejects this idea and teases Benvolio. Tybalt enters; he and Mercutio have a heated discussion. Romeo enters. Tybalt hands out insults to Romeo, who does not take the bait. Instead, Mercutio fights Tybalt, and is killed; Tybalt strikes the fatal blow as Romeo moves between them. Grief-stricken, feeling guilty and seeking revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt. He runs away, and the Prince, in Romeo's absence, banishes him from Verona.

### Scene 2

Juliet has no idea what has gone on and sits at home looking forward to her wedding night with Romeo. The Nurse enters, crying, shouting Romeo's name and that someone has died. Juliet assumes it is Romeo but soon discovers it is Tybalt – and that Romeo killed him. At first she criticizes Romeo; then, she defends him to the Nurse. The Nurse agrees to find Romeo, telling him to come and bid farewell to Juliet.

### Scene 3

We return to Friar Laurence's cell, where Romeo is understandably distraught by events. Laurence tries to make him see sense, but Romeo won't hear it. The Nurse enters and tells Romeo that Juliet is constantly crying. Romeo takes a knife and offers to stab himself to remove his name. Friar Laurence stops him, and becomes angry. Laurence tells Romeo to visit Juliet as previously arranged but warns him to make sure he leaves Verona before dawn and go to nearby Mantua.

### Scene 4

It is late on Monday evening, and Paris has visited Capulet to repeat his request to marry Juliet. Capulet changes his mind, as he thinks it will cheer her up following the death of her cousin, and sets Thursday as the wedding day.

### Scene 5

It is now very early on Tuesday morning, in Juliet's bedroom. Romeo and Juliet have spent the night together, and neither wants to part, although they realize Romeo must go or risk death if he is captured. Romeo leaves. Lady Capulet enters and tells Juliet that she will be married to Paris on Thursday. Juliet refuses. Lord Capulet becomes very angry and threatens her. Juliet turns to the Nurse, but her advice is to marry Paris. Juliet, realizing she has nowhere else to turn, plans to visit Friar Laurence for help.

# ROMEO & JULIET - ACT SUMMARIES

## ACT FOUR

- Scene 1** Paris is with Friar Laurence, trying to arrange his marriage to Juliet, when she enters. Paris leaves, and Juliet threatens to kill herself if Laurence cannot help her. He comes up with a plan: she should go home and tell her father that she is sorry and will marry Paris. Laurence provides Juliet with a potion that will make her unconscious, mimicking the signs of death for 42 hours. She will then be taken to the Capulet tomb and laid to rest. In the meantime, the Friar will send a message to Romeo, telling him to return secretly from Mantua and take Juliet away once she wakes up.
- Scene 2** It is now Tuesday afternoon and the Capulet household is preparing for the wedding. Juliet enters and apologizes to her father. Capulet decides to move the wedding forward by a day to Wednesday (the very next day).
- Scene 3** Juliet is in her bedroom with the Nurse and her mother but manages to get them to leave, as this is necessary for her plan to work. Juliet is very worried about the potential consequences of drinking the potion; but, finally, she does it.
- Scene 4** Wednesday morning in the Capulet house, and wedding preparations are in full swing.
- Scene 5** The Nurse goes to Juliet's bedroom to wake her up but realizes she is "dead." The scene is one of great emotion (and also dramatic irony, seeing as the audience knows that she is still alive) as the Nurse, Lord and Lady Capulet and Paris all grieve over the shocking event. Friar Laurence enters and tries to reassure everyone that she will be peaceful and happy now. Capulet says all the preparations for a wedding will now change to a funeral.



# ROMEO & JULIET - ACT SUMMARIES

## ACT FIVE



**Scene 1** The setting switches to Romeo in exile in Mantua. His servant Balthasar has gone on horseback to see him and inform him that Juliet has died, her body placed in Capulet's family tomb. Romeo asks Balthasar if he is carrying any message from the Friar, but he has none. Romeo plans to return to Verona and see Juliet. He plans to kill himself and lay with her in the vault. He stops off on the way and buys some very strong poison with which to kill himself.

**Scene 2** We discover that Friar Laurence had previously sent Friar John to deliver a letter to Romeo in Mantua. However, Friar John returns, explaining he was unable to do so. He wasn't even allowed to leave Verona by the city's health officers, as he was suspected of carrying an illness. Immediately realizing the potentially disastrous consequences of this, Laurence asks Friar John to get him a crow bar. Juliet will awake shortly, and the Friar intends to break into the tomb to be with her. He plans to keep her at his cell until he can inform Romeo about what has happened.

**Scene 3** Paris has gone to Juliet's tomb to pay his respects. Romeo also approaches the tomb. Not knowing anything about the relationship between Romeo and Juliet, Paris assumes that Romeo has come to do something vile against the Capulets, seeing as he is a Montague. Paris challenges Romeo, who tries to warn him not to do so. Paris rejects this advice, the pair fight, and Paris is killed. Romeo, not realizing that Juliet will shortly awake, is surprised at how her cheeks and lips have kept their color. Overwhelmed by grief, he drinks the poison, gives Juliet a final kiss and dies. Friar Laurence enters the tomb, and Juliet wakes. Some noise from outside signifies that they are about to be disturbed, most likely by the Watch. Fearing capture, Laurence runs away. Juliet stays. Realizing Romeo has killed himself with poison, she tries to do the same, but there isn't any left. She kisses Romeo, then stabs herself with his dagger. The Watch and the Prince enter, as do Lord and Lady Capulet and Lord Montague. We find out that Lady Montague died earlier that night, heartbroken at Romeo's exile. Friar Laurence and Balthasar are captured by the Watch. Laurence later tells the whole story to the Prince, who believes him, especially as he is supported by a letter in Romeo's own hand, given to the Prince by Balthasar. A saddened and enraged Prince condemns the hatred between the two families. Capulet and Montague shake hands; the pair say that they will build golden statues of Romeo and Juliet to remind the people of Verona the power of true love and the need to live peacefully.



# QUESTIONS – ACT ONE

<p><b>COSY CAPULETS</b></p>	
<p>1. Which of the servants bites his thumb? (Scene 1)</p>	
<p>2. How old is Juliet? (Scene 2)</p>	
<p>3. Whom does Lady Capulet want Juliet to marry? (Scene 3)</p>	
<p>4. Who is Queen Mab? (Scene 4)</p>	
<p>5. How many times do Romeo and Juliet kiss? (Scene 5)</p>	
<p><b>MIND-BENDING MONTAGUES</b></p>	
<p>1. How does Shakespeare immediately introduce Tybalt as a menacing character? Look closely at the language. (Scene 1)</p>	
<p>2. How does Shakespeare create an immediate mood of sadness around Romeo? Again, look closely at the language. (Scene 1)</p>	
<p>3. How does Paris try to convince Capulet that Juliet isn't too young to be married? Were you surprised by this? (Scene 2)</p>	
	<p>4. Explain why the Nurse and Juliet have a particularly close relationship. (Scene 3)</p>
	<p>5. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to have Romeo and Juliet use religious vocabulary when they first meet? (Scene 5)</p>

# QUESTIONS – ACT TWO

## COSY CAPULETS

1. The word “balcony” is mentioned nowhere in this scene. Why do you think it has become known as “The Balcony Scene”? (Scene 2)
2. With whom does Friar Laurence think Romeo has been spending time? (Scene 3)
3. Romeo tells the Nurse the marriage arrangements. Where should Juliet go, and when? (Scene 4)
4. The Nurse left Juliet at 9 o’clock. What time does she return with the message? (Scene 5)
5. What excuse is Juliet going to invent in order to get out of her house? (Scene 5)

## MIND-BENDING MONTAGUES

1. Why is Romeo’s description of Juliet as “the sun” a particularly good metaphor? (Scene 2)
2. Why does Juliet not want Romeo to swear by the moon? (Scene 2)
3. Why does Friar Laurence agree to marry Romeo and Juliet? What do you think of his idea? (Scene 3)



4. How is Tybalt’s character developed in Scene 4...even though he isn’t in it?
5. Explain how the Nurse, on her return from seeing Romeo, annoys Juliet. (Scene 5)

# QUESTIONS – ACT THREE

## COSY CAPULETS

1. What does Mercutio tease Benvolio about? (Scene 1)
2. Why does Mercutio fight with Tybalt? (Scene 1)
3. At first, who does Juliet think has been killed when she meets the Nurse? (Scene 2)
4. What does Capulet change his mind about in Scene 4?
5. Where is Romeo going, after he leaves Juliet? (Scene 5)

## MIND-BENDING MONTAGUES

1. Does Benvolio tell the truth in his account of the fighting? Explain your answer. (Scene 1)
2. Explain why Romeo thinks banishment is a punishment worse than death. (Scene 3)
3. Why should Romeo be happy, according to Friar Laurence? (Scene 3)
4. In Scene 4, Capulet tells Paris he only wants a small wedding ceremony. Why?
5. Explain Romeo and Juliet's reference to larks and nightingales. (Scene 5)





# QUESTIONS – ACT FOUR

<b>COSY CAPULETS</b>	
1. What does Paris call Juliet, which she objects to? (Scene 1)	
2. If the potion works as Friar Laurence hopes, for how long will Juliet be unconscious? (Scene 1)	
3. Why does Juliet want to get the Nurse and her mother out of her room? (Scene 3)	
4. When Juliet is found dead in her room on the morning of her wedding day, whom does Capulet say that she has married? (Scene 5)	
5. How does Friar Laurence try to reassure the Capulet family? (Scene 5)	
<b>MIND-BENDING MONTAGUES</b>	
1. How does Juliet’s conversation with Paris reveal a new dimension to her character? (Scene 1)	
2. Work through Friar Laurence’s plan, step-by-step. Do you think it is a good plan? Explain your answer. (Scene 1)	
3. Juliet explains her fears in Scene 3. What are they?	
4. List some simple language techniques that Shakespeare uses to emphasize the shock and grief the characters feel at Juliet’s “death.” (Scene 4)	
5. What is your reaction to Friar Laurence’s speech, which begins “Peace ho, for shame!” (Hint – think of “dramatic irony”). (Scene 5)	

# QUESTIONS – ACT FOUR

## COSY CAPULETS

1. Why has Balthasar traveled to Mantua? (Scene 1)
2. How does Romeo persuade the Apothecary to sell him some poison? (Scene 1)
3. What critical piece of news does Friar Laurence hear from Friar John? (Scene 2)
4. When Romeo looks at the “dead” Juliet, what surprises him? (Scene 3)
5. The Prince says that he himself has lost two kinsmen. To whom is he referring? (Scene 3)

## MIND-BENDING MONTAGUES

1. What conclusion do you think Romeo has reached when he says “Is it e’en so? then I defy you, stars!” (Scene 1)
2. Why is it important to the plot that Romeo uses a very strong poison, one which “if you had the strength/Of twenty men, it would dispatch you straight”? (Scene 1)
3. Do you have sympathy for Paris? Explain your answer. (Scene 3)



4. One of the biggest examples of dramatic irony in the whole of Shakespeare’s works is when Romeo says, “Death, that hath suck’d the honey of thy breath,/Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:/Thou art not conquer’d.” Explain the dramatic irony. How did you feel as a reader/audience member at this point? (Scene 3)
5. Do you agree with Prince Escalus’ conclusion that “All are punish’d”? Explain your views. (Scene 3)

# SEQUENCING I

## THE PROLOGUE

### TASK:

The lines from the Prologue have all been mixed up! Can you put them in the right order? (Hint – there is a rhyme scheme...it's a b a b – except for the last two lines, which rhyme with each other!).

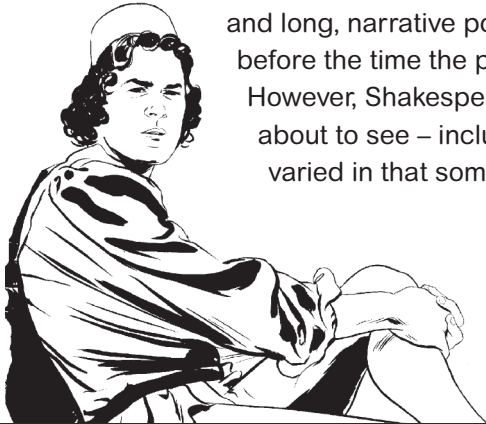


- 1 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
- 2 Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
- 3 The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
- 4 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
- 5 Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
- 6 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
- 7 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,

# SEQUENCING I

## UPDATE THE PROLOGUE

A “prologue” is something that comes at the beginning of a play (and sometimes stories and long, narrative poems), often giving information about events that have happened before the time the play itself begins. This is partly true in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*. However, Shakespeare goes much further, telling the audience key parts of what they are about to see – including the fact that the two lovers die! The language in the Prologue is varied in that some is very straightforward, whereas other parts are more complex.



### TASK:

Your task is to move the language forward 400 years or so and write a modern Prologue which gives all the information Shakespeare wanted the audience to have. And no – it doesn't have to have a rhyming scheme!


Shakespeare's 16c. version	Your 21c. version
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-cross'd lovers take their life;	
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.	
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd 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.	

# SEQUENCING II

## THE PLAY – THIS ONE’S TOUGHER THAN TYBALT!

### TASK:

The events in the play have been jumbled up! Cut them out and rearrange them into the order they appear in the play.



1. Romeo is banished from Verona by Prince Escalus.

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2. Paris visits the Capulets’ tomb.

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3. Romeo and Juliet decide to get married.

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4. Lady Capulet tells Juliet that Paris wants to marry her.

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5. Juliet drinks a potion that will give her death-like symptoms.

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6. Friar Laurence explains everything to Prince Escalus.

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7. Juliet is told she has to marry Paris.

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8. Tybalt kills Mercutio.

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9. Friar Laurence enters the Capulets’ tomb.

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10. Romeo and Juliet kiss for the first time.

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11. Romeo leaves Verona to go to Mantua.

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12. Romeo tells Benvolio he is lovesick.

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13. Romeo buys some very strong poison from an Apothecary.

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14. Lord Montague says that his wife, Romeo’s mother, has died of grief because of her son’s exile.

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15. Capulet and Montague shake hands and agree to build statues of their children.

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16. Capulets and Montagues openly fight in a public place, though Romeo isn’t present.

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17. The wedding night of Romeo and Juliet.

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18. Romeo sneaks into the Capulet orchard to see Juliet.

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19. Romeo kills Paris.

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20. Juliet kills herself with Romeo’s dagger.

# SEQUENCING II



21. Romeo and Juliet discover they are from rival families.
22. Juliet wakes up from her unconscious state.
23. Paris and Juliet have an awkward conversation.
24. Mercutio and Benvolio discuss Tybalt and his challenge to Romeo.
25. Balthasar visits Romeo in Mantua.
26. Friar Laurence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet.
27. Capulet accepts Paris's offer to marry Juliet.
28. Friar Laurence leaves the Capulets' tomb.
29. The Nurse gets a message from Romeo, telling Juliet when the marriage will be.
30. Prince Escalus is angry with Capulet and Montague and says, "All are punish'd."
31. Juliet seeks the help of both her mother and the Nurse, but she is rejected.
32. Friar Laurence reveals a plan to help Juliet.
33. Romeo and Juliet meet at a party held at the Capulet house.
34. Hiding in Friar Laurence's cell, Romeo is stopped from stabbing himself.
35. Romeo and Juliet are married.
36. Romeo drinks the poison, kisses Juliet and dies.
37. Romeo kills Tybalt.
38. Friar John tells Friar Laurence that he failed to deliver his letter to Romeo.
39. Juliet is discovered "dead" in her chamber and taken to the Capulets' tomb.
40. Paris asks Capulet if he can marry Juliet, but he is refused.

# TIMELINE

*Romeo and Juliet* sets a fast pace right from the public brawl in Act 1 Scene 1... and things just get faster and faster!

Shakespeare cranks up the speed throughout the play, until several characters are under so much pressure that they reach a breaking point.

Let's look at the character of Romeo. It's hard to believe but... Romeo is lovesick, falls in love with someone else, is married, has his wedding night,

sees his best friend killed, murders his cousin (by marriage), is exiled, kills someone else, and then kills himself – all within the space of **FIVE DAYS!** Shakespeare makes even the fastest moving soap operas of today look positively tame.

The events come so rapidly that it is often very difficult to keep track of the passage of time in the play, even though Shakespeare makes several references to help us.

Here's a chronology:



## Sunday

**9A.M.**

The public brawl in Verona.

**Midday**

The invitations to Capulet's party are issued.

**Afternoon**

Juliet is told that Paris wants to marry her.

**Evening**

Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio and others make their way to the party.

**Night**

Romeo and Juliet meet at the party.

**Late night**

Romeo manages to slip away from his friends.

**Very late night/early Monday morning**  
"The Balcony Scene" in Juliet's orchard.

## Monday

**Early Monday morning**

Romeo visits Friar Laurence, asking if the friar would marry him to Juliet.

**9A.M.**

Juliet sends the Nurse to give Romeo a message.

**12P.M.**

Nurse returns to Juliet with Romeo's message about the marriage arrangements.

**Afternoon**

Romeo and Juliet are married (less than a day after they met!).

**An hour later**

Tybalt kills Mercutio; Romeo kills Tybalt and is exiled.

**Two hours after the killings**

Juliet sends the Nurse to find Romeo.

**Late evening**

Capulet agrees to the marriage of Paris and Juliet, planned for Thursday.

**Night**

Romeo and Juliet spend their wedding night together.



# TIMELINE

## Tuesday

**Very early morning**

Romeo leaves Juliet to travel to Mantua.

**Morning**

Juliet is told she has to marry Paris.

**Later morning**

Juliet visits Friar Laurence, sees Paris there, and receives the potion.

**Afternoon**

Juliet apologizes to her father; he moves the wedding forward a day, to Wednesday.

**Night**

Juliet takes the potion.



## Wednesday

**Early morning**

Juliet is found "dead."

**Morning**

Balthasar tells Romeo that Juliet is dead.

**Afternoon/Evening**

Friar Laurence finds out that Romeo has not received his letter.

**Night/Late night**

At the Capulet tomb, Romeo kills Paris, and then kills himself. Friar Laurence goes to the tomb and is there when Juliet wakes, but he leaves when he hears people approaching. She won't leave with him. Instead, she kills herself.



## Thursday

**Very early morning**

Bodies are discovered (the Captain of the Watch says Juliet "hath lain this two days buried" so it must be Thursday), and the families are united.





# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

## TASK 1:

Look closely at the pictures on each card in the following pages. In the box, write down what you think is happening in each scene. You need to have read the play first!

Comic Card	<b>WHAT IS HAPPENING?</b> Describe in your own words. Try to explain what is going on in each panel and what the characters are saying. Can you remember what happens next?
CARD 1	
CARD 2	
CARD 3	
CARD 4	

# COMIC CARD 1

*Romeo & Juliet* Act 1 Scene 1



# COMIC CARD 2

*Romeo & Juliet* Act 2 Scene 2



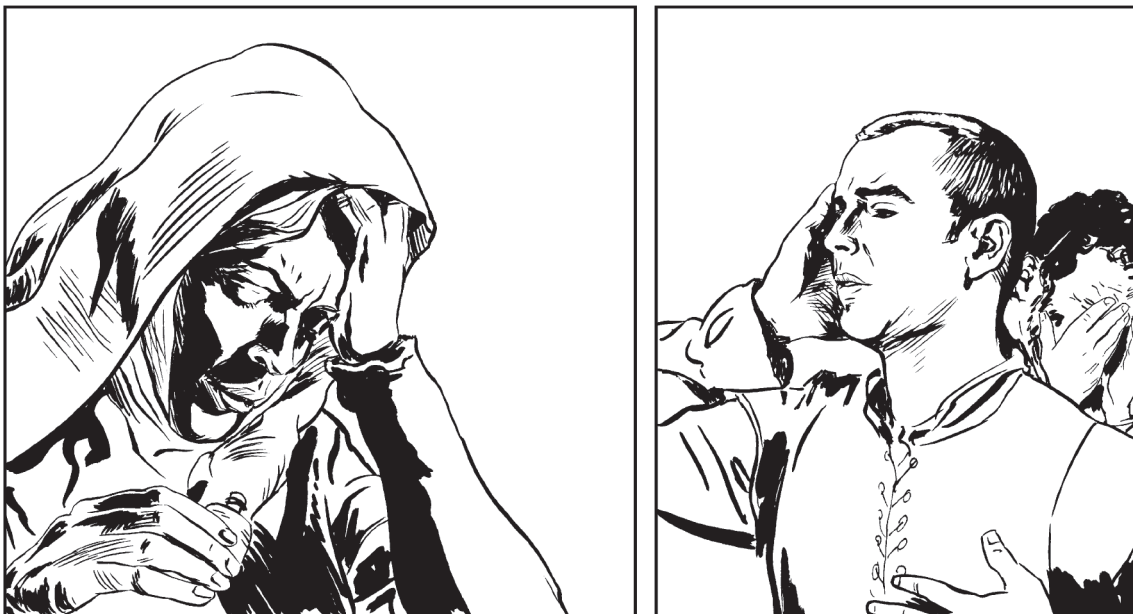
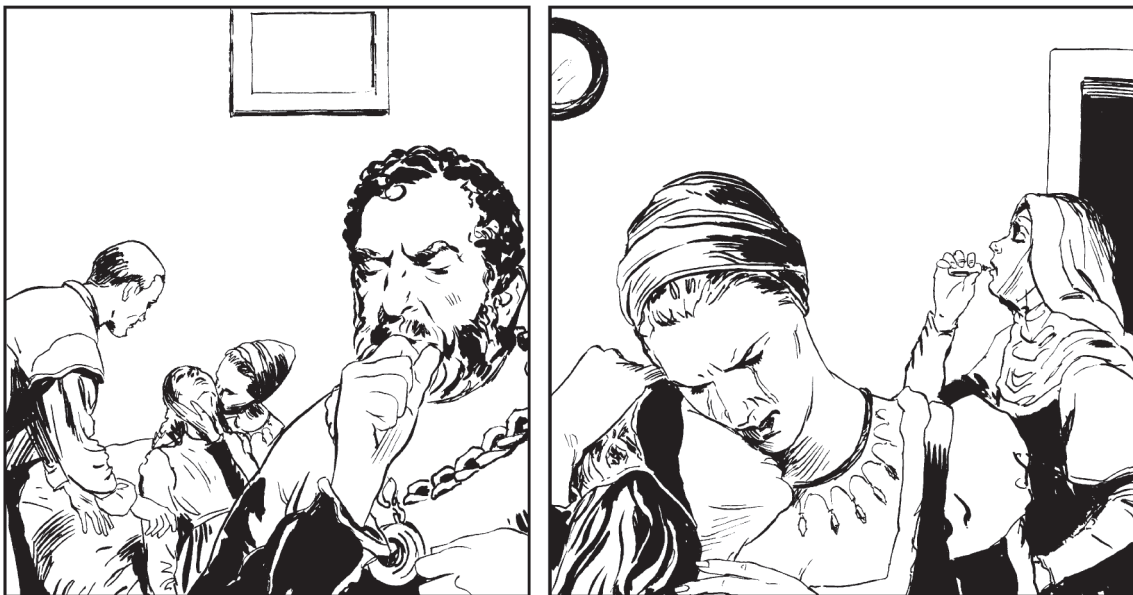
# COMIC CARD 3

*Romeo & Juliet* Act 3 Scene 1



# COMIC CARD 4

*Romeo & Juliet* Act 4 Scene 5



## “FATE” OR JUST “BAD LUCK”?

Put very simply, “fate” is a belief that things are destined to happen, that people’s decisions and actions cannot ultimately change events.

“Bad luck” leads to unfortunate events, but often, with only a slight change in circumstances, these can be avoided.

Even more simply:

If it’s fated, it’s going to happen anyway, eventually.

Bad luck can change, and therefore so can final outcomes.

Some people believe that Romeo and Juliet were “fated” to meet, fall in love and have a tragic ending – there was nothing they could have done to change this. Another expression for fate in these circumstances is that “it was their destiny.”

It is a theme that runs through many works, right from Ancient Greek literature to the present day. Take the Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* for example. Although many seemingly impossible obstacles are placed in the way of the relationship between Jamal and Latika, they eventually get together because “it was written” – meaning it was their destiny, or fate. In that example, the ending is very uplifting; but this is not the case with *Romeo and Juliet!*

There is evidence in the play that Shakespeare wanted his audience to believe that fate was ruling their lives, thereby creating even more sympathy for the characters:

- Romeo and Juliet are described in the Prologue as “star-cross’d lovers” meaning that fate was against them.
- When entering the party, Romeo says, “my mind misgives/Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,/Shall bitterly begin his fearful date/With this night’s revels” (Act 1 Scene 4).



- After Romeo has killed Tybalt, he says, “O, I am fortune’s fool!” (Act 3 Scene 1) meaning that he feels he is the plaything of fate/fortune.
- When Balthasar tells him that Juliet is dead, Romeo decides to fight against fate, which he feels is trying to prevent him from being with Juliet. He says, “then I defy you, stars!” meaning that he will take matters into his own hands by killing himself so that he can be with Juliet, even if it is in death.
- Just before Romeo drinks the poison, he says that he is about to “shake the yoke of inauspicious stars,” which means that he will finally break free from the restrictions put upon him by fate.

## “FATE” OR JUST “BAD LUCK”?

Those who don't believe in fate simply believe that Romeo and Juliet paid a heavy price for a series of very unlucky events – which makes it even more tragic when you think about it, as it opens up the possibility that Romeo and Juliet could have lived happily ever after. This heightened tragedy can be avoided from consideration if we believe in fate alone.

Which view do you take?

Were Romeo and Juliet victims of fate, thereby always destined for a tragic ending?

Or were they simply victims of bad luck, which could have been avoided?



Consider how the events of the play (and therefore the lives of Romeo and Juliet) would change if...

1. Romeo had not killed Tybalt.
2. Juliet had not been ordered to marry Paris.
3. Balthasar had not seen Juliet “buried.”
4. Friar Laurence’s letter had reached Romeo.
5. Juliet had woken up five minutes earlier than she did.