



The story of Romeo and Juliet is one of William Shakespeare's most popular plays. It centers on two families who have become enemies. When Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, fall in love, their relationship could unite the families—or make the long-standing conflict between the families even worse. The young couple must decide what they respect and care about most, a decision that could have terrible consequences.

As Act 2, Scene 2 begins, Juliet is on her balcony, talking to herself about Romeo. Meanwhile, Romeo walks by and sees Juliet standing there. This selection gives you two versions of a scene from the play. The pages on the left present Shakespeare's original text, written in 16th century English. The pages on the right restate the text in modern English.

SHAKESPEARE'S VERSION

Act 2, Scene 2

Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo.

ROMEO. He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

[Enter Juliet above.]

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun. **1**

- 5 Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid since she is **envious**.
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
10 And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

1 Form Mental Images

What imagery helps you visualize both the setting and Juliet? Jot down notes in your chart, and draw a sketch of what you see.

Key Vocabulary

envious *adj.*, feeling or showing resentful longing for someone's wealth, traits, or luck; jealous

Cultural Background

In Shakespeare's time, family members and friends used the pronouns **thou** and **thee** to refer to each other rather than the pronoun **you**.



SHAKESPEARE'S VERSION

It is my lady. O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

- 15 I am too bold. 'Tis not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
- 20 The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.
- 25 O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek! **3**

JULIET. Ay me!

ROMEO. She speaks.

- O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art
- 30 As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds
- 35 And sails upon the bosom of the air. **4**

3 Form Mental Images
Identify Shakespeare's use of details and descriptions that appeal to your senses. How do they help you visualize Juliet?

4 Structure: Blank Verse
Does it matter whether you read Romeo's speech in complete sentences or line by line? Explain.

Cultural Background

Shakespearean Pronunciation In blank verse, each line has ten syllables. To make the rhythm regular, Shakespearean actors often pronounce an *-ed* ending as its own syllable. Other words are shortened in order to remove syllables, such as "o'er" instead of "over."



SHAKESPEARE'S VERSION

JULIET. O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet. **5**

40 **ROMEO.** Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET. 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
45 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.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear **perfection** which he owes
50 Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

ROMEO. I take thee at thy word. **6**
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized.
55 Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET. What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night,
So stumblest on my counsel? **7**

ROMEO. By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am.
60 My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself

5 Structure: **Blank Verse**

How does the modern version help you understand what Juliet asks Romeo? How does the blank verse affect the way Juliet conveys what she wants Romeo to do?

6 Structure: **Blank Verse**

Reread lines 52–53. Compare them with lines 26–28. Why do you think Shakespeare sometimes splits the iambic pentameter between two characters?

7 Form Mental Images

How does Juliet's question suggest her facial expression and body language? Describe how you visualize the scene in lines 56–57.

Key Vocabulary

perfection *n.*, condition or quality of being without faults, excellence



Because it is an enemy to thee.
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

JULIET. My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.
65 Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?

ROMEO. Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.

JULIET. How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
70 If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO. With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do, that dares love attempt.
Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me. **8**

75 **JULIET.** If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO. Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords. Look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

JULIET. I would not for the world they saw thee here. **9**

8 Form Mental Images

How do the descriptive words in this dialogue help you understand Romeo's feelings for Juliet?

9 Language

Hyperbole is an overstatement used for emphasis. What is the hyperbole here? What is the purpose of this exaggeration?

SHAKESPEARE'S VERSION



80 **ROMEO.** I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,
And but thou love me, let them find me here.
My life were better ended by their hate
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love. 11 ❖



11 Form Mental Images

How do you visualize Romeo as he speaks these lines?