



# *Romeo and Juliet*

## *a Play and Film Study Guide*

This study guide was written for students with pre-intermediate to intermediate level English. It takes students scene by scene through a simplified version of William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. Each scene is accompanied by comprehension and extension exercises.

The playscript is printed at the back of the Student's Book. Students can just read the play to themselves, but we recommend that you give students parts and have them act out the play. Remember to change the parts around after every scene, or every few scenes, so that all students get a chance to participate.

We also look briefly at the 1996 film of *Romeo and Juliet*. This film uses original Shakespearean language, but sets the story in a modern city. We don't have a lot of comprehension exercises accompanying the film, as there isn't much point in getting intermediate students to understand Shakespearean language. However, if you are interested in reading the original, unsimplified play, the full text is available at <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/script-text-romeo-and-juliet.html>, along with many other resources for higher level study of the play.

If you don't have a copy of the film, or if you don't think it would be useful for your students, you can just do the activities related to the playscript.

## *Before You Start...*

1. The focus of the questions is to elicit the students' background knowledge, ideas and predictions about Romeo and Juliet, the two central characters of the play.

Students can work individually and then the teacher elicits answers and writes them on the board.

OR

Students work in groups of 3 or 4, and discuss the questions. Each group explains their ideas to the rest of the class.

Point out the following:

- *Romeo and Juliet are the two main characters*
- *They are lovers (as students can see on the book and film cover)*
- *Their relationship will become strong and they will marry*
- *The film will have more action, and have a more modern setting than the play.*

2. Students read the introduction to the play, and answer the questions.

**Answers:**

- a. *DS*
- b. *T*
- c. *F – they want to get married*
- d. *DS*

## *Characters in the Play*

Go through this page with the students. The pictures are of different productions of Romeo and Juliet. William Shakespeare wrote the play in 1597 and set it in Verona, Italy. It has also been made into films, plays, opera, dance and rock music productions, books, paintings and many other media. Different theatre companies have set Romeo and Juliet in different historical periods using people from various cultures and ethnic groups.

The play students will read is still set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Verona, but uses simple, modern, pre-intermediate level English. The 1996 film is set in a modern city, also called Verona, but uses Shakespearean English.

Pre-teach the titles *Lord and Lady* (rich, powerful people; less powerful than kings/queens and princes/princesses, but more powerful than ordinary people) and *Father* (a Catholic religious official).

Give out the roles to the students. For the first scenes, choose the strongest readers for the parts of Romeo, Juliet, Tybalt, Mercutio and Benvolio. Everyone without a named part takes the role of the servants, etc. Remember students can change parts after each scene or group of scenes.

Students look at the playscript on page 10 of their books. Explain that the words in *italics in brackets* are instructions for the scene. They should not read these parts out, but perform the actions.

## *Read Act One, Scene One*

3. Students order the events

**Answers:**

*b, d, e, c, a*

## *Read Act One, Scenes Two and Three*

4. In pairs or small groups, students take about 5–10 minutes to prepare their summaries. If you have time, have each pair (in a small class) or a few pairs (in a large class) read out their summary and write the main ideas on the board.

5. Students identify the women and what they are talking about.

**Answers:**

*The women are (left to right) Juliet, Nurse and Lady Capulet. They are talking about a husband for Juliet.*

6. Students answer the questions.

**Answers:**

*a. The messenger can't read the list of names, so he asks Romeo to read it for him.*

*b. Rosaline will be there.*

*c. Because he is young, rich and good-looking, and friends with Prince Escalus.*

*d. She doesn't say exactly, but probably not, because she doesn't know him.*

7. In groups or as a class, students predict what will happen at the ball. Write their ideas on the board.

## *Read Act One, Scene Four*

8. Look back at students' predictions and discuss. Which ones were correct?

9. This exercise looks at the original language Shakespeare used when he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*. Some classes might find this too difficult, so skip it if it is not appropriate for your students.

In groups of four or five, students read the passages, also looking back at the playscripts. Groups decide who each person was talking to when they said these words, and rewrite the passage in modern English.

**Possible answers:**

- a. *Tybalt is talking to Lord Capulet:* *Uncle, this is a Montague, our enemy. He has come here to make trouble.*
- b. *Lord Capulet is talking to Tybalt:* *People in Verona say he is a good person. I don't want you to harm him in my house.*
- c. *Nurse is talking to Romeo:* *Her mother is the house owner. She's a good and clever person.*
- d. *Juliet is talking to Nurse:* *Go and ask his name. If he's married, I will die without getting married.*

10. In pairs, students write summaries of Act one. Check that they cover these points:
- The Capulet and Montague families are enemies
  - Prince Escalus has warned them not to fight again or else
  - Romeo was in love with Rosaline
  - Romeo and his friends secretly went to to the Capulet ball
  - Romeo and Juliet met, and fell in love
  - Paris wants to marry Juliet
  - Lady Capulet wants Juliet to marry Paris
  - Tybalt saw Romeo at the ball, and wants to fight him

## *Read Act Two, Scenes One and Two*

11. Students pretend to be either Romeo or Juliet, and tell the story of the party to one of their friends. Give students five minutes to prepare what they are going to say. If necessary, elicit a few sentences from the students and write them on the board. Make sure they are using the first person for this task, e.g.

*'I met a wonderful man at the party last night, and I want to marry him.'*

Students tell their stories to each other in pairs. Get a few students to tell their stories to the class.

12. In groups or as a class, students predict how the second act will finish. Write their ideas on the board.

## *Read Act Two, Scenes Three and Four*

13. Look back at students' predictions and discuss. Which ones were correct?

14. Students put the events in order.

**Answers:** e, b, h, g, f, c, d, a

15. Students have a choice of two writing assignments that they can start in class and finish for homework. Discuss these assignments with the class. **Pre-teach marriage vows** - the words which people say to each other when they get married. Here are some examples:

" \_\_\_\_\_, do you take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your wedded [husband/wife] to live together in marriage. Do you promise to love, comfort, honor and keep [him/her], for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. And forsaking all others, be faithful only to [him/her] so long as you both shall live?"  
(traditional Christian vows)

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, offer you myself in marriage and in accordance with the instructions of the Holy Koran and the Holy Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. I pledge, in honesty and with sincerity, to be for you an obedient and faithful wife."  
(traditional Muslim vows)

Many couples choose to write their own wedding vows, because they feel it is more meaningful and personal if they write the vows themselves.

Alternatively, students can choose to write a love letter; either from Romeo to Juliet, or from Juliet to Romeo.

## *Read Act Three, Scenes One and Two*

16. Students identify what is happening in the picture, and what will happen next.

**Answer:** *Tybalt has challenged Romeo to a fight, and Mercutio is encouraging Romeo to fight Tybalt. Next, Romeo will refuse to fight, so Mercutio will fight Tybalt. Tybalt will kill Mercutio, and then Romeo will kill Tybalt.*

17. Students answer the questions.

**Possible answers:**

- a. *Because Romeo went to the Capulet party.*
- b. *Because he wants the Capulets and Montagues to have peace between them, because he has married Juliet.*
- c. *Because Tybalt killed Mercutio.*
- d. *He is banished; he must leave Verona and never return.*

18. Brainstorm points for and against executing Romeo. Some examples:

**For:** *Romeo killed a man - a life for a life; An example should be made of Romeo to discourage fighting between the Capulets and Montagues*

**Against:** *Tybalt killed a man first - they are even; Romeo was too upset about his friend's death to know what he was doing; No-one should ever be killed, the law does not have the right to take someone's life.*

Now students decide which argument they support, and write a letter to Prince Escalus outlining their opinions.

Alternatively, have a debate on this topic, instead of writing a letter.

19. Students look at the picture from the next part of the film. They identify who is in the picture, and predict what they are talking about. Write students' predictions on the board.

## *Read Act Three, Scenes Three, Four and Five*

20. Look back at students' predictions about the picture. Were they right?

**Answer:** *The people are Lady Capulet, Paris and Lord Capulet. Paris wants to go and talk to Juliet, but lady Capulet says she is unhappy because her cousin Tybalt has been killed, and that Paris should wait until the wedding.*

21. Students decide whether the statements are true or false, and write correct statements to replace the false ones.

**Answers:**

- a. *False. He tells him to go to Mantua.*    b. *True.*  
c. *False. They want her to marry Paris.*    d. *True.*

22. In the play, Romeo was able to spend one last night with Juliet. Nobody caught them. Imagine a different scene where Lord and Lady Capulet had walked into the room to talk about the wedding plans for the marriage with Paris. What would have happened? In groups, students write a short scene to be acted out to the class.

If possible, get each group to perform their alternative Act 3, Scene 5 to the class.

23. Students predict what Juliet will do in Act Four. Write their predictions on the board.



## *Read Act Four, Scenes One and Two*

24. Look back at students' predictions. Were they right?

**Answers:** *Juliet visits Father Lawrence. He gives her some medicine to make her sleep for two days. They make a plan for her and Romeo to be together.*

25. Students answer these questions.

**Answers:**

a. *To wait before marrying Juliet.*

b. *To drink the medicine so that people will think she is dead. When she wakes up she can run away with Romeo.*

26. In pairs, students think of a list of things Lord and Lady Capulet will have to do before the wedding. They can use any style of wedding, from their own culture or a different one if they prefer. If you like, elicit some topics they might want to think about when planning the wedding:

*Clothes, food, place to hold the wedding, party after the wedding, etc.*

Each pair decides on the ten most important things to do.

If you like, have each pair work with another pair and decide on a priority list for the whole group. This activity will work best if students use only English.

## *Read Act Four, Scenes Three and Four*

27. Students decide whether the statements are true or false, and write correct statements to replace the false ones.

**Answers:**

a. *True.*

b. *True.*

c. *False. He went there to meet Rosaline.*

d. *True.*

e. *True.*

f. *True.*

g. *False. He must wait in Mantua.*

h. *False. She is his cousin.*

i. *False. She didn't want to marry Paris.*

j. *True.*

k. *False. They first met at the Capulet's party.*

l. *True.*

m. *True.*

n. *False. She refuses to marry Paris, because she loves Romeo.*

o. *False. She pretends to kill herself.*

28. Students predict the answers to the questions. Write their predictions on the board.

## *Read Act Five, Scenes One and Two*

29. Look back at students' predicted answers. Were they right?

30. Retell the story as a class. The first student says one or two sentences about how the story started. The next student continues the story. Keep going around the room until you reach the end of the story.

In a large class, you might want to get students to do this in groups of five or more.

31. In pairs or groups of three, get students to make an argument either for or against selling the poison to Romeo. Students should consider the following points:

- To sell poison is illegal
- The shopkeeper could face punishment/imprisonment
- The shopkeeper was poor and needed money
- Romeo wanted to kill himself, even if the shopkeeper hadn't sold the poison

After the discussion or for homework, students write one or two paragraphs explaining their point of view.

One thing you might consider, if your students are interested, is putting on a performance of the play. Here are some things you'll need to think about and discuss:

- Who will be the audience? What is their level of English?
- Where will you set it? In 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe, or in your own communities? Or another place and time?
- Where will you perform the play? In your classroom, or another place?
- Costumes
- Props - things you need as part of the play such as swords, letters and bottles of poison. You need to go through the play and list the props you need
- Casting - who should play which role
- Rehearsals - how many do you want to have before the performance? Inside class time or outside class time?

## Watch the film

32. Students identify the differences between the play and the film.

Answers:

Play	Film
People fight with swords	<i>People fight with guns</i>
<i>The Prince keeps order</i>	Chief of police keeps order
16 <sup>th</sup> Century	<i>Modern times</i>
<i>Modern, simple English</i>	Shakesperean language
Guests are invited to the party by a servant	<i>Party announced on TV news</i>

If you like, brainstorm a list of other differences with the class, and write them on the board.

33. The play ended with the Capulets and Montagues agreeing to stop fighting and make peace. The film ended with the Capulets and Montagues finding out that their children had died as a result of the families' fighting.

34. In this exercise students compare arranged marriages and love marriages. Although love marriages are more common nowadays in Southeast Asia and Western cultures, there are many cultures and people who prefer arranged marriages. In pairs or groups, students look at the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

Make the point that an arranged marriage is not the same as a *forced marriage*, where people have no choice whether to marry someone. Most arranged marriages in the world are between people who agree to them. Internet dating services and matchmaking services can be a type of arranged marriage.

Pairs or groups think of one advantage or disadvantage for each type of marriage. Some possible answers are listed here.

Possible answers:

	Advantages	disadvantages
<b>Arranged marriage</b>	<i>People are chosen because of their good qualities, by people who have more experience in marriage.</i>	<i>Maybe the people won't like each other when they get to spend a lot of time together.</i>
<b>Love marriage</b>	<i>People already know and like each other.</i>	<i>It can be difficult to find a partner who you will love forever.</i>

35. These discussion questions focus on the similarities and differences between the world of Romeo and Juliet and the students' own society and culture. Students discuss the questions in groups of four or five, and report back to the class.

If possible, have groups write up their conclusions on large sheets of paper to stick to the wall while they present the results of their discussion.

# *Film Synopsis*

## ***Start – 18.45***

Two powerful families in Verona - the Montagues and the Capulets - have been fighting with each other for a long time. Benvolio Montague and his friends have a gunfight with Tybalt Capulet and his friends at a petrol station. Captain Prince tells the Capulets and Montagues to stop fighting. Romeo tells Benvolio how he loves Rosaline. Dave Paris, a rich bachelor, tells Lord Capulet that he wants to marry Juliet. Romeo and Benvolio see on the television that the Capulets are having a party, and that Rosaline will be there. Lady Capulet and Nurse tell Juliet that Paris wants to marry her, but she is not enthusiastic, and she doesn't know him.

## ***18.45 – 34.40***

Although Montagues are banned from the party, Romeo and his friends get in through Mercutio's invitation, wearing masks. Romeo and Mercutio take some drugs and they all go to the party. They are wearing masks. Romeo and Juliet see each other and fall in love. Lady Capulet introduces Juliet to Paris. Tybalt recognizes Romeo and wants to fight him, but Lord Capulet doesn't allow this. Romeo and Juliet kiss. Romeo finds out Juliet is a Capulet. Juliet finds out Romeo is a Montague. Romeo and his friends leave the party.

## ***34.40 – 49.42***

Romeo sneaks back into the Capulet house. Romeo and Juliet agree to get married. The next morning Romeo visits Father Lawrence, who makes medicines from plants. He asks Father Lawrence to marry them the next day. Father Lawrence questions Romeo about his previous love for Rosaline, but Romeo persuades him he really loves Juliet. Father Lawrence agrees to marry them.

## ***49.42 – 57.30***

Romeo talks to his friends about how they should not fight the Montagues. Juliet's Nurse arrives, and tells Romeo that Juliet wants to marry him. Then Nurse goes home, and tells Juliet that Romeo wants to marry her. Romeo and Juliet get married secretly in Father Lawrence's church.

### ***57.30 – 1.12.22***

Tybalt challenges Benvolio and Mercutio to a fight. They are about to start fighting when Romeo arrives. Romeo refuses to fight, and tries to persuade Tybalt that they should be friends and have peace. Tybalt continues to beat Romeo. Mercutio fights Tybalt, and is killed. Tybalt drives off in his car. Romeo chases Tybalt through the streets and kills him. Captain Prince decides that as Romeo has killed Tybalt because Tybalt killed Mercutio, he will not be executed. Instead he is banished from Verona.

### ***1.12.22 – 1.26.42***

Father Lawrence and Nurse tell Romeo to spend one night with Juliet, and then go to Mantua and wait for news. Paris arrives to visit Juliet. Lady Capulet tells him that Juliet is too upset by Tybalt's death to see him now. Romeo sneaks into Juliet's room, and they spend the night together. Lord Capulet tells Paris he can marry Juliet in three days. The next morning Romeo flees to Mantua. Lady and Lord Capulet tell Juliet that they have arranged for her to marry Paris. Juliet refuses, saying she would rather die. Lord Capulet beats her.

### ***1.26.42 – 1.36.55***

Juliet goes to visit Father Lawrence, and meets Paris there. After he leaves, she threatens to kill herself. Father Lawrence suggests a plan – Juliet should drink some medicine that makes her sleep deeply, so her family thinks she is dead. She will then be put in the family tomb, where Romeo will be waiting. Juliet goes home, and tells her mother she is prepared for the wedding. When her mother leaves, she drinks the medicine. Father Lawrence sends a message to Romeo, but he doesn't receive it. Juliet's family discover her body, and take her to church. Romeo's friend Balthazar arrives at the church and thinks Juliet is dead. He drives to Mantua and tells Romeo. Romeo decides to return to Verona and die beside Juliet.

### ***1.36.55 - end***

Romeo enters Verona. Captain Prince sends police to find and arrest him. Romeo buys some poison. Romeo drives to the Capulet tomb, fights off the police, and locks himself in the tomb. He sees Juliet, and assumes she is dead. He drinks the poison. Juliet wakes up as he is dying. They kiss. He dies. Juliet shoots herself. As the ambulances are taking away the bodies, Captain Prince tells the Capulet and Montague families that they are both punished.