

Name: _____ Class: _____

Excerpts from Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare
c. 1593

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He wrote 38 plays, including Romeo and Juliet, which recounts the tragic romance of two young lovers divided by their families' ongoing feud. The following excerpts are taken from the play's prologue and its famous balcony scene. As you read, take notes on how the figurative language used throughout the passage contributes to the themes.

Prologue

CHORUS:

[1] Two households, both alike in dignity,

In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

From ancient grudge break to new
mutiny,¹

Where civil blood makes civil hands
unclean.

[5] From forth the fatal loins of these two foes

A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;

Whose misadventured piteous overthrows



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1. In this context, "mutiny" means violence or turmoil. The more modern use of "mutiny" refers to a rebellion against authority.

Do with their death bury their parents' strife.

The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,

[10] 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.²

Excerpt from Act II, Scene II

JULIET:

[15] O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore³ 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.

ROMEO:

[Aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?⁴

JULIET:

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2. Whatever hasn't been mentioned (in the prologue) will be explained on stage.
 3. "Wherefore" means "why."
 4. Romeo says this line as an aside, or spoken dialogue that is heard by the audience but not by the other characters in the play. Romeo says this line as an aside because Juliet is not aware that he is listening.

[20] '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
Belonging to a man. O! be some other name:

[25] What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff⁵ thy name;

[30] And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

ROMEO:

I take thee at thy word.

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;

Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET:

[35] What man art thou, that, thus be-screen'd in night,⁶

5. **Doff** (*verb*) to remove or rid of

So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO:

By a name

I know not how to tell thee who I am:

My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,

[40] Because it is an enemy to thee:

Had I it written, I would tear the word.

JULIET:

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words

Of that tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound:

Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?

ROMEO:

[45] 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,

If any of my kinsmen⁷ find thee here.

6. hidden or shrouded in darkness

7. family member; relative

ROMEO:

[50] 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.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best describes a theme of the play excerpts?
 - A. Love makes people more willing to change and face obstacles.
 - B. Children should be obedient and not go against their parents' wishes.
 - C. Grudges are easy to overcome, to forgive, and to forget.
 - D. People's fates are set in stone and cannot be changed.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes / A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life" (Lines 5-6)
 - B. "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" (Lines 9-11)
 - C. "What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man." (Lines 22-24)
 - D. "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd; / Henceforth I never will be Romeo." (Lines 33-34)

3. What purpose does the prologue serve in the text?
 - A. It updates the audience on the current state of the feud.
 - B. It informs the audience of past and future events in the play.
 - C. It discusses the reasons behind why the two families hate each other.
 - D. It outlines the themes of the play by describing them.

4. How does Juliet's monologue in lines 15-31 affect Romeo?
 - A. He is shocked by her insistence that he give up his name.
 - B. He regrets being a Montague but resigns himself to being apart from Juliet.
 - C. He is willing to give up his family name in order to be with her.
 - D. He falls more in love with her and convinces her to marry him.

5. Explain the figurative language Juliet uses in lines 25-26 and how it relates to a theme of the excerpts.
