

Quiz: *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I – Answer Key

1. What's the purpose of the Prologue?

The Prologue is delivered by one actor. It's in the form of a sonnet--three quatrains and a couplet. The Prologue serves several purposes. It introduces the play and provides some general information, such as the location of the play ("fair Verona") and the length of the play ("two hours"). It also provides the dramatist's view of the tragedy that is about to be performed, citing two causes of the disaster--fate ("star-crossed lovers") and the feud between the families ("parents rage"). The tone of the Prologue is serious and formal, as befits tragedy.

2. Which Montague tried to stop the fight in Scene 1, and which Capulet challenges him to a fight?

Benvolio, a Montague, tries to stop the fight, but he is attacked by Tybalt, a Capulet, who mocks him for claiming to keep the peace while his sword is drawn.

3. What does Romeo tell Benvolio is the cause of his melancholy (sadness)?

Romeo is in love with a beautiful but cold woman, Rosaline, who does not share his feelings. He dismisses Benvolio's advice to simply transfer his love to another woman.

4. What request does Paris make of Lord Capulet?

Paris has asked to marry Juliet. Lord Capulet, Juliet's father, thinks his daughter is still too young to marry, but gives Paris permission to court Juliet. If Paris can win Juliet's heart, Capulet will agree to the match. He invites Paris to attend the feast that night at his home.

5. Why does Benvolio think Romeo should attend the Capulet's feast?

Benvolio tells Romeo that the feast will give him the chance to compare his beloved Rosaline with other beauties. Romeo insists that other women will only make him think more of Rosaline.

6. At the end of the act, what does Juliet discover about Romeo?

She discovers that he is a Montague, the enemies of her family, the Capulets. She realizes the huge obstacle that has been placed in their path--their parents' hatred.

Who said it and what is he/she talking about?

7. If ever you disturb our streets again, Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.

After the street brawl that opens the play is quelled, the Prince of Verona warns both Montagues and Capulets that death will be the penalty of future disruptions of the civil peace. Further, he summons the leaders of both houses to meet with him that afternoon. Prince Escalus represents the civil authority in the play.

8. ...For my mind misgives Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars, Shall bitterly begin his fearful date With this night's revels.

Romeo's ominous foreboding about the night to come is every English teacher's prime example of foreshadowing, and rightly so. Romeo has a premonition of the coming tragedy--some "consequence" shall begin with tonight's revels. The future "fearful date" is "hanging in the stars," that is, it is fated to happen. We are reminded of the doomed "star-crossed lovers" mentioned in the Prologue.

9. O she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear--

Romeo says this when he first sees Juliet at the party. His first description of Juliet is an image of brightness and fire. Notice how these images are used throughout the play to emphasize the intensity of the young lovers' passion, as well as its potential destructiveness. Romeo also describes Juliet as a "rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." This image of a brilliant jewel shining against the black skin of an African is one of many white-and-black contrasting images in the play. Shakespeare uses this imagery to emphasize the basic contradictions that lead to the tragedy--two people who are enemies, and therefore supposed to hate each other, somehow manage to fall in love.

10. My only love sprung from my only hate.

Juliet says this when she discovers that the boy she talked to at the party is a Montague. In this quote, she expresses the basic contradiction of the play and the cause of the tragedy first mentioned in the Prologue. The young lovers will be doomed by the hatred of their parents.