

# ROMEO AND JULIET

## ACT 4

### READING COMPREHENSION

#### YEAR 5 AND 6

Do you remember Lord Capulet's party? And the girl who danced so joyfully there, whose smile lit up the room? Where did that Juliet go? The one we see now in Friar Laurence's cell is very different. Tears stream down her cheeks as she pleads with the priest to help her to escape her marriage to Paris. "Be not so long to speak; I long to die, if what thou speak'st speak not of remedy. "

Remedy? What remedy, what cure, could there be for this situation, thought the Friar? It wasn't like the illnesses he cured with his herbs – this was desperate! But wait, there was something in that thought. Perhaps it was EXACTLY his herbs that were the solution. "Hold, daughter: I do spy a kind of hope."

Juliet was prepared to do anything rather than marry Paris – why, she'd rather jump from the top of a tower than be wed to him.

Well, said the Friar, if Juliet was prepared to take her own life, then he had the answer: a special potion of his own making that could bring about a sleep so deep it looked like death. "Go home," he said, "be merry, give consent to marry Paris." He held up his hand to silence the protest that he knew would come. There was more, she must listen. He took out a small glass bottle and spoke again, urgently. "Tomorrow night look that thou lie alone, and this distilling liquor drink thou off."

Once she had done that, the potion would quickly take effect, making it appear to all that Juliet was dead. Once her family believed her to be dead, they would take her straight away to the Capulet family tomb. Meanwhile, he would send letters to Romeo in Mantua, telling him of the plan. Romeo and he would then hurry to the tomb to be there when Juliet awoke, ready for the now happily reunited couple to escape back to Mantua.

It was a desperate plan, but Juliet grabbed the bottle of potion eagerly. "Give me, give me! O, tell not me of fear!" she cried.

Juliet, it turned out, was an excellent actor. Hidden away in her pocket she had the potion, hidden away in her heart she had this desperate plan. But who would have thought it as she walked back into her father's house? No, her heart seemed light; the tears that had lately been coursing down her cheeks were all dried. She smiled again and – Lord and Lady Capulet could hardly believe it – had returned to ask forgiveness and to declare that yes, she would marry Paris.

So overjoyed at this news was her father that he declared that there should be no more waiting – not even till Thursday. No, the wedding would take place tomorrow!

Juliet forced her smile to be even brighter at this news but inside, her fear grew of what was to come. That evening, with her mother and the Nurse departed for the night, she sat alone on her bed, the small bottle in her hand. Suddenly she was seized with doubt. “What if this mixture do not work at all? Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?” She shuddered at the thought, and slowly uncorked the bottle. “Romeo, I drink to thee!” And with that, she drained every last drop of the potion.

Leaving her daughter to sleep, Lady Capulet had rushed down to the servants’ quarters. So much to do! There would be no rest tonight, everything must be got ready for the wedding feast in the morning: food prepared, tables laid, musicians summoned. Lord Capulet was already there, dispensing orders with a broad smile. It would be a good marriage. Something to celebrate after all these unfortunate deaths. Before they knew it, it was time to wake the bride and prepare her for the ceremony. It was still early, and no-one was surprised that Juliet had not yet stirred.

The Nurse tiptoed into her room. “Mistress! what, mistress! Juliet! Sweet-heart! Bride!”

How soundly she was sleeping. The Nurse felt almost cruel at rousing her from such a deep sleep, but there was a wedding to get ready for! “Madam, madam, madam!” She was practically shouting, and still Juliet did not stir. A dreadful suspicion gripped the Nurse. She shook Juliet’s shoulder, and the flesh was cold to the touch. The Nurse ran to the door and shrieked, “Alas, alas! Help, help! my lady's dead!”

Lady Capulet came running and gasped at the sight of her daughter. “O me, O me! My child, my only life. Help, help! Call help!”

The screams brought Lord Capulet and Paris running to Juliet’s chamber. All the colour drained from their faces as they took in the unbearable sight of Juliet lying, seemingly dead, upon her bed. Friar Laurence was not far behind. He was careful to make sure his face wore a suitably shocked and grief-stricken expression but, in reality, he was reassured: all was going to plan. Now, he had to make sure that the next part of the plan went smoothly.

“Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary on this fair corpse; and, as the custom is, in all her best array bear her to church.” As he watched them go he thought: the potion’s power would last for 42 hours. If Juliet had taken it last night, there was a day and a half to send word to Romeo in Mantua, and for Romeo to return. Time was tight. The clock had started ticking.

**1. Where is Juliet at the beginning of this act?**

- Her bedroom  Lord Capulet's party   
Friar Laurence's cell  Paris' house

**2. A. Juliet is sad at the beginning of this act**

- TRUE  FALSE

**B. Justify your answer with evidence from the text**

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**3. "Be not so long to speak; I long to die, if what thou speak'st speak not of remedy. "**

**What is Juliet saying here?**

- I am tired and want you to stop talking   
I want Paris to die   
I want to die unless you can help me   
I have hurt myself and need some medicine

**4. What did Friar Laurence say he would do to help Juliet?**

- Make a special potion  Talk to her dad   
Talk to Paris  Make a deal with the Prince

**5. "Go home," he said, "be merry, give consent to marry Paris." He held up his hand to silence the protest that he knew would come.**

**Why did Friar Laurence know that Juliet would argue when he said she needed to go home and agree to marry Paris?**

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**6. What would Friar Laurence's special potion do? Use a direct quote from the text to support your answer**

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**7. Join the beginning and end of each sentence together**

Juliet was \_\_\_\_\_ this desperate plan.

Hidden away in her pocket she had \_\_\_\_\_ an excellent actor.

Hidden away in her heart she had \_\_\_\_\_ the potion.

**8. What did Lord Capulet do because he was so pleased that Juliet had changed her mind and agreed to marry Paris?**

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**9. 'And with that, she drained every last drop of the potion'.**

**A. Underline the word that tells us just how desperate Juliet was for the potion to work**

**B. Explain your answer**

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**10. Write one reason why Lord Capulet was so happy that Juliet had agreed to marry Paris.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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**11. A. Who was the first to go in and try to wake Juliet?**

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**B. What did she shriek when she couldn't wake her?  
(Use direct quote from the text)**

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**12.. *"Friar Laurence was not far behind. He was careful to make sure his face wore a suitably shocked and grief-stricken expression"***

**Why was Friar Laurence careful to make sure he looked sad and shocked?**

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**13. What did Friar Laurence tell Lord and Lady Capulet they needed to do?**

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**14. How long did Friar Laurence have to get Romeo back to Verona?**

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**15. Do you think Friar Laurence was confident he would be able to get Romeo back in time? Justify your answer with reference to the text**

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