

ROMEO AND JULIET

READING COMPREHENSION

ACT 3

YEAR 3 AND 4

The temperature was rising in the town square that day. Trouble seemed to hang in the air along with the heat – and Benvolio sensed it. “I pray thee, good Mercutio, let’s retire; the day is hot, the Capulets abroad, and if we meet, we shall not ‘scape a brawl.” And if that should happen, Prince Escalus would not hesitate to put his threat of execution into action.

Mercutio laughed at his cautious friend. What had he, the great Mercutio, to fear from the Capulets? Why should he move? He was having far too good a time to leave... let them steer clear if they wanted.

Benvolio gasped. “By my head, here come the Capulets!” Mercutio yawned. “By my heel, I care not.”

There stood Tybalt, his heart full of hate, his face full of the anger he had been carrying ever since Lord Capulet’s party. Like Juliet, he hadn’t been able to stop thinking about Romeo. Tybalt had come for revenge and nothing else would do. And if Romeo wasn’t there, well then, Romeo’s great friend Mercutio was the next best thing. Mercutio was only too happy to oblige. That Tybalt was one of the two most skilful swordsmen in Verona didn’t worry Mercutio. He was the other.

1. Tick TRUE of FALSE for each statement

A. It was a cold day

TRUE FALSE

B. Benvolio felt like there was going to be trouble

TRUE FALSE

C. Benvolio begged Mercutio to leave and go home

TRUE FALSE

2. 'Mercutio laughed at his cautious friend'.

Tick the statement that best explains why Mercutio laughed at Benvolio when he suggested they leave.

- He thought Benvolio was joking He was having too much fun
He wanted to start trouble He wanted to buy some lunch

3. Complete the sentence, using the exact words from the text

'There stood Tybalt, his heart full of _____, his face full of the _____'.

4. Who had Tybalt been thinking about since Lord Capulet's party?

Juliet Romeo Paris Mercutio

5. Why did Tybalt consider Mercutio to be the 'next best thing' if he couldn't fight Romeo? Tick one box

- Tybalt thought Mercutio was an idiot
Mercutio was Romeo's best friend
Tybalt and Mercutio used to be friends

6. Who were considered to be the two most skillful swordsmen in Verona?

1. _____

2. _____

Mindful of the Prince's death sentence, Benvolio desperately tried to divert them. "Withdraw unto some private place!" he urged them, "here all eyes gaze on us."

Mercutio laughed. "Let them gaze, I will not budge for no man's pleasure I."

Tybalt's eyes lit up. A greater prize had just arrived; here came his man, his much hated enemy. Oh, how he had longed for this moment! How he'd thought about what he would do! The fingers of his sword hand twitched happily. "Romeo, thou art a villain." Tybalt practically spat the words out.

A villain? He called him a villain? All those looking on thought a fight must surely follow this insult. No proper man would allow such words to be said to him! So, no one listening was prepared for what Romeo said next. "Tybalt, I do protest I never injured thee. But love thee better than thou canst devise."

Love? That word? How could it be? But you do love your family – and now that Romeo and Juliet were married, Tybalt was family. He just didn't know it. And neither did anyone else.

7. Why did Benvolio want them to go to a private place? Tick one box

He was worried someone might get killed.

He was worried about the Prince's threat of a death sentence.

He was worried he would get hurt.

He was worried they would hurt someone else.

8. 'A greater prize had just arrived' . Who was this?

9. Why does Romeo tell Tybalt that he loves him?

Romeo is trying to trick Tybalt Romeo is trying to distract Tybalt

Tybalt is now family Romeo doesn't tell Tybalt this

How could he, thought Mercutio? How could his dear friend let this pass? Well, if Romeo wasn't going to avenge this insult he would! "Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?"

Tybalt's eyes flashed with fury and, in a blur of steel, both swords were out, the sunlight flashing off the blades. Metal clashed with metal, the sound ringing out across the square, bringing some running to see and others running to tell. It was happening again, despite all the Prince's warnings.

Romeo, desperate to stop this, stepped between them, pleading with his friend, "Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up!"

Oh, to be able to turn back the clock even by one fateful second! For in this tick of time, his mind and sword distracted by his dear friend, Mercutio let down his guard. It was all Tybalt needed to slip the point of his sword deep into Mercutio's chest. With that deadly blow struck, he fled.

Mercutio sank to his knees, his hand over the wound. Wonderingly, he held the hand out in front of him gazing in amazement at the blood on his fingers. Staring up at Romeo he spoke his last. "I am hurt. A plague o' both your houses."

Tick tock tick tock tick...and silence. Mercutio's heart stopped beating. Benvolio looked into the fading eyes of his friend. More than friend: family, and known to him and Romeo since they were all babies crying in their mothers' arms....

"O Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio is dead." Benvolio seemed to choke on the words.

Before he knew what he was doing, Romeo's sword was in his hand. Tybalt was returning, running at him, his sword out and ready to deal more death. Let him come, thought Romeo, all kindness banished from his heart. Vengeance lent him skill and speed. Seconds later he stood gazing as Tybalt breathed his last. But Benvolio knew what was coming: there was no time for Romeo to pause.

"Stand not amazed. The Prince will doom thee death if thou art taken. Hence, be gone, away!"

Moments later, the Prince himself arrived, and as he gazed at the bloody slaughter and heard from Benvolio what had happened, his face darkened. There was one crumb of comfort; a lenience of sorts from the Prince. Romeo was not to be executed. Instead, he was sentenced to immediate and permanent exile from Verona. And if the boy should be

so foolish as ever to be found in the city again? Then, that hour would be his last.

10. How could he, thought Mercutio? How could his dear friend let this pass? Well, if Romeo wasn't going to avenge this insult he would! "Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?"

What does Mercutio mean by "will you walk?"

Will you come and fight

Will you come for a walk

11. Whose fault do you think it was that Mercutio died? Give two reasons for your answer

12. Who killed Tybalt?

Benvolio

Romeo

Mercutio

Prince Escalus

13. 'But Benvolio knew what was coming: there was no time for Romeo to pause'.

Why was there 'no time for Romeo to pause'? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer.

14. What was the 'one crumb of comfort' from what the Prince said would be Romeo's punishment?

15. Put these in order

- Romeo arrived and tried to keep the peace
- Tybalt arrived and challenged Mercutio to a fight
- Romeo killed Tybalt
- Tybalt killed Mercutio
- The Prince banished Romeo from Verona