

ROMEO AND JULIET

READING COMPREHENSION

ACT 3

YEAR 5 AND 6

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 skillful swordsmen in Verona didn’t worry Mercutio. He was the other.

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.

“O calm, dishonourable, vile submission.”

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.

Ignorance is bliss they say – and Juliet was both: blissful in her love for Romeo, blissful being newly wed and ignorant of what had just happened. Impatiently she waited in her room for news of her husband. And news came from her Nurse. Not the news she had ever hoped for. Not news she would ever wish to hear. Could it be true?

"O God!" gasped Juliet, "Did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?" She was frozen in horror, stunned by this and the banishment of her husband. But he was still her

husband. She must see him, she told the Nurse. The Nurse was quick to reply, “Hie you to your chamber. I’ll find Romeo and bid him come to take his last farewell. “

Romeo had sprinted frantically through the streets of Verona to Friar Laurence’s cell, where the priest had told him of the Prince’s verdict.

The news of his banishment fell like the blow of an axe on Romeo. “Ha! Banishment! Be merciful, say ‘death’”

Yet, said the Friar, not all was lost. Banishment was NOT death - and when the Nurse arrived to tell of how Juliet still loved her Romeo, the priest began to see a way to make things right. Romeo must leave next morning for Mantua. Whilst he was gone, the Friar would find a way to publicize their marriage, beg for pardon from the Prince, and lay the path for Romeo’s return. So, in Romeo and Juliet’s sad farewells, suddenly, Friar Laurence had given them hope!

So much has happened in so short a time, it is easy to forget two small facts. So now, let us remind ourselves: firstly, no one, except the Nurse and Friar Laurence, knew that Romeo and Juliet were married. And, secondly, Juliet already had a suitor for her hand, before Romeo ever came into her life. The County Paris – rich, handsome, well connected, came to Lord Capulet and begged again for the hand of his daughter. And whether it was because of the deaths that had just happened, and he wanted some good news to celebrate, or whether it was because Paris was so rich and handsome and well connected, or just because he... well, changed his mind, this time, Juliet’s father said yes.

Juliet could scream, could cry, could argue against this all she wants – and she did - but, said Lord Capulet, yes, she will marry you on Thursday. Which Thursday? This Thursday. And today is Monday.

Part 1: Page 1

1. What did Benvolio sense?

That Romeo was on his way

That there was going to be trouble

That Mercutio was cross

That Romeo and Juliet were married

2. *'Mercutio laughed at his cautious friend'.*

Using evidence from the text, explain why Mercutio laughed at Benvolio.

3. *'There stood Tybalt, his heart full of hate, his face full of the anger'.*

Write an antonym for

Hate _____ **Anger** _____

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

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

1. _____

2. _____

6. *'Tybalt's eyes lit up'.*

Using evidence from the text, explain why Tybalt's eyes lit up.

7. 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

Part 2: Page 2

8. 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

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

10. Who killed Tybalt?

Benvolio

Romeo

Mercutio

Prince Escalus

11. '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.

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

PART 3: Page 3

13. 'Romeo had sprinted frantically through the streets of Verona to Friar Laurence's cell, where the priest had told him of the Prince's verdict'.

- A. Underline the two words that show Romeo was in a hurry to get to Friar Laurence's cell.**
- B. Using your knowledge of the play so far, why do you think Romeo went to see Friar Laurence**

14. Write down the names of the two people that knew that Romeo and Juliet were married?

_____ and _____

15. Who is Juliet due to marry in three days time?

16. Put these events in order that they happen(1-6)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Romeo arrived and tried to keep the peace | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tybalt arrived and challenged Mercutio to a fight | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Romeo killed Tybalt | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tybalt killed Mercutio | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friar Laurence agreed to help Romeo and Juliet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Prince banished Romeo from Verona | <input type="checkbox"/> |