



The Chorus reminds the audience that Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline has ended. Romeo now loves Juliet, who returns his love. But dangers beset the young lovers. Act 2 begins with Mercutio teasing the hidden Romeo.

1 The Chorus speaks a sonnet (in groups of four to eight)

The words of the Chorus summarise much of the play so far and hint at the next scene. Sit in a circle. Read the Chorus's speech, each person speaking a line in turn. Then work on some or all of the following:

- Act out the story told in the fourteen lines. One person reads a line or two, then pauses. In that pause, other members of the group mime what is described. Two reminders: 'old desire' (line 144) is love for Rosaline, and the last two lines imply that the pleasures of Romeo and Juliet's meetings make their dangers and hardships bearable.
- Some critics have viewed the Chorus's lines more as a conclusion to Act 1 than an opening to Act 2 (as here). What do you think?
- These fourteen lines are often cut in performance. Imagine you are preparing to put on the play. Half of you want to include the Chorus's lines, half don't. Debate whether they should be left in or cut.
- All companies acting Shakespeare 'double' the parts (actors play more than one role). So the Chorus is spoken by someone with another role (or roles) in the play. Look at the list of characters on page 1 and decide who seems most likely to 'double' the Chorus.

Stagecraft

a How to show the 'orchard wall'

In line 5, Benvolio refers to Romeo having 'leapt this orchard wall'. It is unlikely that a wall would have been used (or even represented) in the Globe Theatre.

- Look at the illustration on page 220. If you were directing the play at that time, how would you represent the orchard wall on that stage? Write down or draw your ideas.

b Romeo listens in

After line 2, the stage direction instructs Romeo to withdraw, remaining out of sight but eavesdropping on the conversation between Benvolio and Mercutio.

- Annotate a photocopy of lines 3–42 with your thoughts about how Romeo might react to each of the personal comments that his friends make about him. Which ones do you think he would find amusing and which ones annoying or offensive?

young affection new love
(for Juliet)

fair (line 146) Rosaline

matched compared

fair (line 147) beautiful

again in return

foe supposed Juliet

complain address his love

means opportunities

Temp'ring extremities
easing dangers

dull earth body

centre heart

humours moods

[Enter] CHORUS.

Now old desire doth in his death-bed lie,
And young affection gapes to be his heir;
That fair for which love groaned for and would die,
With tender Juliet matched is now not fair.
Now Romeo is beloved, and loves again,
Alike bewitchèd by the charm of looks;
But to his foe supposed he must complain,
And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks.
Being held a foe, he may not have access
To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,
And she as much in love, her means much less
To meet her new-belovèd any where:
But passion lends them power, time means, to meet,
Temp'ring extremities with extreme sweet.

[Exit]

Act 2 Scene 1 Outside Capulet's mansion

Enter ROMEO alone.

ROMEO Can I go forward when my heart is here?
Turn back, dull earth, and find thy centre out.

[Romeo withdraws]

Enter BENVOLIO with MERCUTIO

BENVOLIO Romeo! my cousin Romeo! Romeo!
MERCUTIO He is wise,
And on my life hath stol'n him home to bed.
BENVOLIO He ran this way and leapt this orchard wall.
Call, good Mercutio.
MERCUTIO Nay, I'll conjure too.
Romeo! humours! madman! passion! lover!
Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh,

Mercutio, pretending to be a magician, uses much sexual innuendo as he mocks Romeo's love for Rosaline. Unable to get any response from Romeo, he goes off to sleep.

Language in the play

Mercutio's wordplay – very sexual puns

Mercutio, outrageous and imaginative as usual, teases Romeo, seizing every opportunity to make sexual puns:

demesnes	parklands for pleasure (or sexual parts)
spirit	ghost (or semen)
circle	magic circle (or vagina)
stand	ghost rising (or sexual erection)
down	ghost disappearing (or end of sexual intercourse)
honest	proper (and virginal)
mark	target (or sexual intercourse)
medlar	apple-like fruit (or female sexual organ)
open-arse	slang for medlar (or female sexual organ)
pop'rin pear	pear from Poperinghe in Flanders (shaped like a penis)

- On page 30, you began a Character file to collect evidence of Mercutio's clever use of language. Now add examples from the script opposite, especially his use of puns.

Themes

The conflicts of love (in pairs)

The play continues to explore the complexities of love.

- Talk together about why you think Shakespeare makes Mercutio speak as he does in the script opposite. For example, one reason may be that his sexual joking opposes and highlights the true love that Romeo and Juliet share (notice that Mercutio assumes Romeo is still in love with Rosaline). What other reasons can you come up with?
- Look back to Act 1 Scene 3, in which the Nurse speaks about love and relationships. On a piece of paper draw two columns, one for the Nurse and one for Mercutio. Fill these in with examples of the 'love' language each character uses. Are there similarities in their viewpoints and the ways they express them?
- Benvolio describes Romeo's new-found love: 'Blind is his love, and best befits the dark.' What do you think he means by this and why do you think he says it?

gossip old friend

Venus goddess of love

purblind almost blind

Abraham beggar, or old man, or famous archer

trim accurately

King Cophetua king who loved a poor girl (in an old ballad)

The ape is dead Romeo, my friend, is pretending to be dead

raise conjure up

invocation spell

consorted with companion to

humorous moody

truckle-bed camp bed

Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied;
Cry but 'Ay me!', pronounce but 'love' and 'dove', 10
Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word,
One nickname for her purblind son and heir,
Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so trim
When King Cophetua loved the beggar-maid.
He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not, 15
The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.
I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,
And the demesnes that there adjacent lie, 20
That in thy likeness thou appear to us.
And if he hear thee, thou wilt anger him.
MERCUTIO This cannot anger him; 'twould anger him
To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle,
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand 25
Till she had laid it and conjured it down:
That were some spite. My invocation
Is fair and honest: in his mistress' name
I conjure only but to raise up him.
BENVOLIO Come, he hath hid himself among these trees 30
To be consorted with the humorous night:
Blind is his love, and best befits the dark.
MERCUTIO If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
Now will he sit under a medlar tree,
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit 35
As maids call medlars, when they laugh alone.
O Romeo, that she were, O that she were
An open-arse, thou a pop'rin pear!
Romeo, good night, I'll to my truckle-bed,
This field-bed is too cold for me to sleep. 40
Come, shall we go?
BENVOLIO Go then, for 'tis in vain
To seek him here that means not to be found.

Exit [with Mercutio]

Romeo, hidden from Juliet, sees her at an upstairs window. He compares her beauty to that of the sun, brighter than the stars, as glorious as an angel.

Write about it

'He jests at scars that never felt a wound'

Romeo is now becoming more isolated from his two friends Mercutio and Benvolio. His first line is a dismissive comment on Mercutio's joking about love. Just as someone who has never been wounded can make light of a soldier's battle scars, so someone who has never been in love finds it easy to joke about the sufferings of a person deeply in love.

- In modern English prose, write a short interior monologue for Romeo (what he's thinking rather than saying) at this moment in the play. How does he feel about the dramatic changes in his life?

1 Romeo's view of Juliet (in pairs)

To help you understand how Romeo feels about Juliet, try this 'echoing' activity. Sit facing each other. One person reads lines 1–32 aloud. The other listens (or follows in the script) and quietly echoes certain words or phrases:

- to do with light (such as 'sun') or brightness or eyesight
- that refer to something overhead.

As you echo each 'upward' word, point your finger upward. Change roles and repeat. Afterwards, talk together about what those 'light-giving' words and 'upward' words tell you about Romeo's view of Juliet.

2 Thinking about Juliet?

Lines 1–32 are virtually a **soliloquy** (see p. 218). Juliet speaks at line 25, but she does not know that Romeo is there.

- Go through Romeo's speech again and divide it into sense units (see p. 24). Alongside each sense unit, indicate whether you think Romeo is speaking directly to Juliet or whether he is addressing his thoughts to the audience.
- Does your version show that Romeo is thinking more about what it feels like to be in love or about Juliet herself? Write a paragraph explaining your verdict.

Be not her maid don't be the maid of Diana, goddess of virginity (the moon was seen as Diana)

vestal livery virginal uniform

sick and green 'green sickness' was thought to be an illness suffered by virgins

fools those who don't marry (and therefore remain virgins)

discourses speaks

spheres orbits (the Ptolemaic system of astronomy held that the planets circled Earth; their orbits [paths] were believed to be crystal spheres enclosing Earth)

wingèd messenger angel

white-upturned showing the whites as they look up

Act 2 Scene 2

Capulet's orchard

ROMEO *advances.*

ROMEO He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

[JULIET *appears aloft as at a window.*]

It is my lady, O it is my love:
O that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?
Her eye discourses, I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me!

ROMEO

[*Aside*] She speaks.
O speak again, bright angel, for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes

Juliet declares her love for Romeo in spite of his belonging to the hated Montagues. He is his own perfect self, whatever he is called. When Romeo reveals himself, she fears for his safety.

Stagecraft

The 'balcony' scene

Scene 2 is always known as the 'balcony' scene, even though the word is never used by Shakespeare and does not appear in the stage directions. Many productions take their inspiration from Romeo's opening lines, which suggest he is looking upwards.

- Look at the two images below. One shows a traditional representation (left), the other a symbolic one (right). Write down what you think are the merits of each. Focus on how they would work for the opening exchanges in Scene 2 (the first 70 lines or so).
- Study the images on pages vii, viii, 204 and 215, and then try to create your own set design for this scene.



wherefore why

though even if

owes owns

doff cast off

Henceforth from this time on

bescreened hidden

counsel private thoughts

the place death by being here
you risk your life

o'erperch fly over

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 2

- JULIET
- Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds,
And sails upon the bosom of the air.
O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore 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
- JULIET
- [Aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?
'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!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy 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 baptised;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
- JULIET
- What man art thou that thus bescreened in night
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,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.
- JULIET
- My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?
- ROMEO
- JULIET
- Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.
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 kinsmen find thee here.
- ROMEO
- With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out,

1 What's in a name? (in small groups)

When Juliet declares 'That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet', she points out that what really matters is the object itself, not the name we use to label it. Whatever it were called, its essential quality would remain unchanged.

- Identify all the 'names' you can find between lines 33 and 61. What dramatic effects does Shakespeare achieve by using so many names in this episode?

 Juliet warns Romeo that her family will kill him if they find him. Admitting embarrassment at being overheard telling of her love, she asks if he loves her.

1 Imagery: life as a hazardous voyage

In lines 82–4, Romeo uses the image of himself as a merchant adventurer who would brave any dangerous sea journey to gain the reward of Juliet herself at the end of it ('pilot' is a sailor).

- Life as a perilous sea is a tragic theme that runs throughout the play. As you continue reading, look out for other examples of this image.
- Why do you think this image would have such a powerful impact on an audience watching the play in Shakespeare's day? Can you think of an equivalent image for the twenty-first century?
- What do you think of Romeo's comparison of Juliet to 'merchandise'? Is it complimentary or condescending? Write a paragraph giving your response to this image.

Language in the play

Juliet's language – simple and true? (in small groups)

Juliet's 'Fain would I dwell on form' (line 88) suggests she would gladly stick to speaking and behaving with ceremony and politeness. But her 'farewell compliment' (line 89) shows her rejecting pompous, artificial ways of behaving and speaking. To find out if she succeeds in her wish to speak simply and truly, without affectation, try the following activities.

- Read lines 90–106. The first group member begins, but reads only to a punctuation mark (the first is a question mark). The second group member then reads to the next punctuation mark, and stops. The third does the same, and so on round the group. Read the lines several times in this way.
- After the readings, talk together about Juliet's language. Write down examples of where she speaks directly and simply, without formality. Then find some individual words and lines from earlier scenes that you think are 'typical' of the way the men in the play speak. For example, you might focus on aspects of their aggressive or coarse language. Look at speeches by the brawling servants, Benvolio, Tybalt, Lords Montague and Capulet, Mercutio and Romeo.
- Display your collected language extracts visually in ways that highlight any key differences you have noticed between the two sexes.

proof protected

but thou if you do not

proroguèd postponed

wanting of lacking

bepaint colour

Fain gladly

dwell on form do things properly

compliment empty politeness

perjuries lies

Jove Jupiter; god of oaths (who did not take lovers' vows seriously)

So thou wilt if that will make you

fond foolish

light wanton, loose

coying to be strange

cunning to be distant or offhand

ere I was ware before I was aware you were listening

impute attribute

light love false feeling

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 2

	And what love can do, that dares love attempt: Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.	70
JULIET	If they do see thee, they will murder thee.	
ROMEO	Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye Than twenty of their swords. Look thou but sweet, And I am proof against their enmity.	
JULIET	I would not for the world they saw thee here.	
ROMEO	I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes, And but thou love me, let them find me here; My life were better ended by their hate, Than death proroguèd, wanting of thy love.	75
JULIET	By whose direction found'st thou out this place?	
ROMEO	By Love, that first did prompt me to enquire: He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes. I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea, I should adventure for such merchandise.	80
JULIET	Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face, Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight. Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny What I have spoke, but farewell compliment. Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay'; And I will take thy word; yet if thou swear'st, Thou mayst prove false: at lovers' perjuries They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo, If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully; Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won, I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay, So thou wilt woo, but else not for the world. In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond, And therefore thou mayst think my behaviour light: But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true Than those that have more coying to be strange. I should have been more strange, I must confess, But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware, My true-love passion; therefore pardon me, And not impute this yielding to light love, Which the dark night hath so discovered.	85 90 95 100 105

Romeo and Juliet exchange vows of love, but both are fearful. Juliet fears the suddenness of their love. Romeo fears because what is happening seems dream-like and unreal.

▼ How effectively does this image convey the relationship between the two lovers as you think it is presented in this scene? Give your reasons. Then have a go at writing thought bubbles in modern English for Romeo and Juliet that match this moment.

circled orb orbit around Earth
likewise variable
 similarly changing (like the moon's waxing and waning)

idolatry worship

contract exchange of lovers' vows

beauteous beautiful

Language in the play

Juliet describes love (in sixes)

There are at least five significant images connected with love in the script opposite:

- Lines 109–11 make reference to the moon as a symbol of inconstancy in love.
- Juliet (line 114) uses the word 'idolatry' to suggest that she worships Romeo like a god.
- In lines 118–20, Juliet likens the love she shares with Romeo to 'lightning'.
- Lines 121–2 compare their young love to a bud that has yet to flower.
- Juliet's lines 133–5 suggest that her love is as 'infinite' and 'boundless' as the sea.

Take each image in turn and depict it as a tableau for others to look at. Afterwards, talk together in your group about how Juliet's use of imagery adds to your understanding of what she feels about being in love.

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 2

ROMEO	Lady, by yonder blessèd moon I vow, That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops –	
JULIET	O swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon, That monthly changes in her circled orb, Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.	110
ROMEO	What shall I swear by?	
JULIET	Do not swear at all; Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self, Which is the god of my idolatry, And I'll believe thee.	
ROMEO	If my heart's dear love –	115
JULIET	Well, do not swear. Although I joy in thee, I have no joy of this contract tonight, It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be Ere one can say 'It lightens'. Sweet, good night: This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet. Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest Come to thy heart as that within my breast.	120
ROMEO	O wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?	125
JULIET	What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?	
ROMEO	Th'exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.	
JULIET	I gave thee mine before thou didst request it; And yet I would it were to give again. Wouldst thou withdraw it? for what purpose, love?	130
ROMEO	But to be frank and give it thee again, And yet I wish but for the thing I have: My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep; the more I give to thee The more I have, for both are infinite.	135
	[Nurse calls within.]	
	I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu! – Anon, good Nurse! – Sweet Montague, be true. Stay but a little, I will come again.	[Exit above]
ROMEO	O blessèd, blessèd night! I am afeard, Being in night, all this is but a dream, Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.	140

But only
frank truthful, generous
bounty generosity, willingness to give

Anon I'll be with you in a moment

substantial real

Juliet, promising marriage, says she will send a messenger tomorrow to ask the time and place of the wedding. At the Nurse's call, Juliet goes inside the house. Returning, she calls Romeo back.

1 Responding to the Nurse's calls (in threes)

The Nurse does not appear in this scene but, between the stage direction after line 135 and line 157, the audience hears her voice 'within' summoning Juliet three times. Juliet is torn between her desire to continue talking to Romeo and the need to respond to the Nurse's calls. Romeo is reluctant to leave, even though he knows there is a danger that he'll be discovered.

- Take parts as Juliet, the Nurse and Romeo, and read the exchange aloud in a way that creates as much dramatic impact as you can. Other groups should comment on your interpretation and the kind of atmosphere you have created.

Characters

Juliet's journey

By line 144 of this scene, Juliet is clearly thinking about becoming Romeo's wife. Yet in Act 1, Shakespeare emphasises several times that she is still very young and naive. Juliet first appears in Act 1 Scene 3, meets Romeo in Act 1 Scene 5 and here in Act 2 Scene 2, she pledges to marry him. These three scenes chart her voyage from the 'innocent' daughter of the strong-minded Capulets to independence and the adult responsibilities of a marriage against her parents' wishes.

- Look back through Juliet's lines in the play so far and then think about the point she has reached in the script opposite. Much has happened to change the way she might think about herself and her relationship with her parents and the Nurse. Most significantly, she has fallen deeply in love with Romeo.
- Step into role as Juliet, and in a piece of creative writing reflect on the dramatic and momentous ways your life has altered. Challenge yourself by looking into the future. What problems and difficulties might await? What are your greatest fears and anxieties? Choose the format that you think works best. A series of diary entries, for example, would allow you to chart some of the stages of Juliet's emotional journey. But you could equally choose to express your thoughts in a blog or as a monologue.

bent intention

one that I'll procure
someone I'll choose

cease thy strife stop your effort
(of loving me)

want miss, lack

tassel-gentle male peregrine
falcon (the bird of princes)
i.e. Romeo

Bondage is hoarse
prisoners must whisper (Juliet has
little freedom in her father's house)

Echo a cave-dwelling nymph,
in love with Narcissus, she repeated
the last word anyone spoke to her;
Echo wasted away until only her
voice remained

niësse young, unfledged hawk

a'clock time

	[Enter Juliet above.]	
JULIET	Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed. If that thy bent of love be honourable, Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow, By one that I'll procure to come to thee, Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite, And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay, And follow thee my lord throughout the world.	145
NURSE	[Within] Madam!	
JULIET	I come, anon. – But if thou meanest not well, I do beseech thee –	150
NURSE	[Within] Madam!	
JULIET	By and by I come – To cease thy strife, and leave me to my grief. Tomorrow will I send. So thrive my soul –	
ROMEO	A thousand times good night!	
JULIET	[Exit above]	
ROMEO	A thousand times the worse, to want thy light. Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books, But love from love, toward school with heavy looks. [Retiring slowly.]	155
	Enter Juliet again [above].	
JULIET	Hist, Romeo, hist! O for a falc'ner's voice, To lure this tassel-gentle back again: Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud, Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies, And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine With repetition of my Romeo's name.	160
ROMEO	It is my soul that calls upon my name. How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, Like softest music to attending ears!	165
JULIET	Romeo!	
ROMEO	My niësse?	
JULIET	What a'clock tomorrow Shall I send to thee?	
ROMEO	By the hour of nine.	
JULIET	I will not fail, 'tis twenty year till then. I have forgot why I did call thee back.	170



Romeo and Juliet reluctantly part. She compares him to a captive bird that can never escape from its owner. Romeo promises to seek Friar Lawrence's help.

Write about it

Plan a movie pitch (by yourself)

The 'balcony' scene is one of the most famous in the play. A lot happens here and by the end of the scene, Romeo is rushing off to begin planning his marriage to Juliet.

Imagine that you are making a film pitch to a group of media moguls. These people have the money to finance a new movie version of the play – if you can convince them of the merits of your concept. Part of your pitch will be based on your original ideas for this key scene.

- Write an account of how think the 'balcony' scene could be filmed to maximise dramatic effect. You will need to persuade your audience that your ideas are fresh, striking and well-matched to the medium of film. Describe how you would set the scene and how you think different sections of it could be played. Add further ideas about how lighting, costume and music could contribute to the overall effect.
- Pick your ideal cast (you can choose any actors you think would suit the roles of Romeo and Juliet), then identify several lines you think are particularly important and write instructions on how they should be delivered. Remember that your production can be big-budget! You could include this pitch in the Director's Journal that you began on page 22.

wanton's bird spoilt child's pet bird (held captive by string tied to its legs)

gyves fetters on the legs of prisoners

kill thee ... cherishing
kill you with kindness

ghostly sire Friar Lawrence (Romeo's 'spiritual father')

close cell private room

crave seek

dear hap good fortune

ROMEO	Let me stand here till thou remember it.	
JULIET	I shall forget, to have thee still stand there, Rememb'ring how I love thy company.	
ROMEO	And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget, Forgetting any other home but this.	175
JULIET	'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone: And yet no farther than a wanton's bird, That lets it hop a little from his hand, Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves, And with a silken thread plucks it back again, So loving-jealous of his liberty.	180
ROMEO	I would I were thy bird.	
JULIET	Sweet, so would I, Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing. Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, That I shall say good night till it be morrow.	[Exit above] 185
ROMEO	Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast! Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest! Hence will I to my ghostly sire's close cell, His help to crave, and my dear hap to tell.	Exit



At daybreak, Friar Lawrence is gathering flowers and herbs. He reflects that, like people, they contain both healing medicine and poison – both good and evil.

Characters

Focus on Friar Lawrence

This is the first appearance of Friar Lawrence in the play. Romeo comes to the Friar to tell him of his good fortune in falling in love with Juliet – and to ask him for help.

- Read quickly through the Friar's lines in the script opposite, then think about how closely the image below matches your own impression of the Friar.
- Why do you think that the first time we see the Friar he is gathering herbs at daybreak? Try to come up with at least two symbolic reasons for this.
- Romeo decides to talk to the Friar, rather than his own father, about his relationship with Juliet. Suggest reasons why this might be.



1 A world at odds with itself (by yourself)

Friar Lawrence will play a vital (but unfortunate) part in what happens to Romeo and Juliet.

- Read lines 1–30 to yourself, but quietly emphasise each antithesis. They are: 'morn smiles' / 'frowning night', 'day' / 'night's', 'baleful weeds' / 'precious juicèd flowers', 'mother' / 'tomb', 'grave' / 'womb', 'vile' / 'good', 'fair use' / 'abuse', 'Virtue' / 'vice', 'Poison' / 'medicine', 'cheers each part' / 'stays all senses', 'grace' / 'rude will'.
- Why do you think Friar Lawrence voices so many antitheses (mainly focused on good things versus bad things) when he first appears in the play? Write down a few ideas of your own, then compare your notes with your neighbour. Add your notes on this to the 'Antithesis' section of your Language file.

Act 2 Scene 3

Outside Friar Lawrence's cell

Enter FRIAR LAWRENCE alone, with a basket.

FRIAR LAWRENCE The grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,
Check'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light;
And fleckled darkness like a drunkard reels
From forth day's path and Titan's fiery wheels:
Now ere the sun advance his burning eye,
The day to cheer, and night's dank dew to dry,
I must upfill this osier cage of ours
With baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers.
The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;
What is her burying grave, that is her womb;
And from her womb children of divers kind
We sucking on her natural bosom find:
Many for many virtues excellent,
None but for some, and yet all different.
O mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities:
For nought so vile, that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give;
Nor ought so good but, strained from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometime by action dignified.

Enter ROMEO.

Within the infant rind of this weak flower
Poison hath residence, and medicine power:
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part,
Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.
Two such opposèd kings encamp them still
In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;
And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.

fleckled dappled

Titan Helios, the sun god, who drove his blazing chariot (the sun) across the sky

osier cage willow basket

baleful evil or poisonous

divers many, various

None but for some all plants have at least some good properties

mickle great

ought aught, anything

strained diverted

Revolts ... abuse turns from its true nature if it is mistreated

vice ... dignified an evil deed may produce a good outcome

infant young, undeveloped

part scent

stays kills

with together with

encamp them still always live

grace and rude will divine virtue and human passions

canker diseased worm

Friar Lawrence fears that Romeo has spent the night with Rosaline. But Romeo, telling of his and Juliet's mutual love, asks the Friar to marry them.

1 Should the actors emphasise the rhymes?

Read the last word in each line aloud from line 31 ('Benedicite!', pronounced 'beneedissitee') to the end of the scene. What do you discover? Find out if the whole scene is written in this way. Then step into role as director and write a note for your actors advising them, with reasons, whether or not to strongly emphasise the rhymes.

Themes

Youth versus age (in pairs)

One of the themes of the play is youth versus age (see pp. 210–11), most obviously in how the two young lovers are trapped in the web of hate of the older generation. In lines 35–8, Friar Lawrence's image identifies another contrast between young and old: elderly men with worries on their minds will never sleep as soundly as innocent, inexperienced young men.

- Look at exactly how the Friar expresses this contrast, then work out a physical way of illustrating what the lines say about the difference between old men and young men.
- As you read the rest of this scene, look out for the ways in which Shakespeare highlights the differences in attitude between Romeo and Friar Lawrence.

2 Romeo – facing up to the truth? (in pairs)

Friar Lawrence does not find Romeo's explanation in lines 48–54 at all clear. He tells the young man that ambiguous, unclear confessions will only be given similarly unsatisfactory absolution ('riddling shrift'). As a Franciscan priest, Friar Lawrence could give absolution to those who confessed (told him confidentially about) their sins. To clarify Romeo's explanation, try the following activity.

- One person reads lines 48–54. But only read up to a punctuation mark, then pause. In each pause, the other person makes clear Romeo's veiled ('riddling') meaning. The explanations given in the glossary to the right will help you (and remember that 'foe' in line 54 is ambiguous: it could mean Juliet – or possibly the Capulets).

Benedicite! bless you!

distempered confused, troubled
bid ... bed get up

unbruised inexperienced
unstuffed empty
couch rest
uproused awake early
distemp'rature troubled mind

ghostly spiritual (priestly)

holy physic religious medicine
(the marriage ceremony)

intercession entreaty or request

steads benefits

foe Juliet or the Capulets

homely direct, plain

drift meaning

riddling obscure

shrift pardon, forgiveness

rich Capulet see Act 1 Scene 5,
line 116

pass go along

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 3

ROMEO Good morrow, father.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Benedicite!

What early tongue so sweet saluteth me?
Young son, it argues a distempered head
So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed:
Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye,
And where care lodges, sleep will never lie;
But where unbruised youth with unstuffed brain
Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth reign.
Therefore thy earliness doth me assure

35

'Thou art uproused with some distemp'rature;

40

Or if not so, then here I hit it right,

Our Romeo hath not been in bed tonight.

ROMEO That last is true, the sweeter rest was mine.

FRIAR LAWRENCE God pardon sin! wast thou with Rosaline?

ROMEO With Rosaline, my ghostly father? no;

45

I have forgot that name, and that name's woe.

FRIAR LAWRENCE That's my good son, but where hast thou been then?

ROMEO I'll tell thee ere thou ask it me again:

I have been feasting with mine enemy,

Where on a sudden one hath wounded me

50

That's by me wounded; both our remedies

Within thy help and holy physic lies.

I bear no hatred, blessed man; for lo,

My intercession likewise steads my foe.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift,

55

Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.

ROMEO Then plainly know, my heart's dear love is set

On the fair daughter of rich Capulet;

As mine on hers, so hers is set on mine,

And all combined, save what thou must combine

60

By holy marriage. When and where and how

We met, we wooed, and made exchange of vow,

I'll tell thee as we pass, but this I pray,

That thou consent to marry us today.

After chiding Romeo for his fickleness in love, Friar Lawrence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet because he believes their marriage will end the feuding of the Montagues and Capulets.

Themes

Fast versus slow (in pairs)

The final two lines (93–4) suggest a lot about the characters of Romeo and Friar Lawrence. Romeo is impetuous, full of urgency: he wants to rush into marriage with Juliet. Friar Lawrence, like the advice he gives, is cautious and thoughtful. He is all too aware that acting with speed and rashness can result in accidents.

- Taking parts, read from line 31 to the end of the scene in the style these last two lines suggest (Romeo – hasty; Friar Lawrence – wise and slow).
- Afterwards, decide if you think those speaking styles are appropriate to the characters. Keep the idea of hasty/slow in your mind as you read on.

1 Question Friar Lawrence (in large groups)

Friar Lawrence criticises Romeo for his fickleness and inconstancy in love: the 'dear' love he had for Rosaline has quickly been transferred to Juliet. Yet the Friar agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet, seeing it as an opportunity to mend the feud between the Montague and Capulet households.

- One student plays the Friar in the hot-seat. The others question him to test out the wisdom of his decision and explore any possible risks.

Write about it

Romeo fills in the details

In his haste, Romeo only offers Friar Lawrence a brief explanation of his love for Juliet. He leaves out many details of their first meeting at the Capulet ball and his subsequent visit to her garden (the 'balcony' scene).

- Imagine that Romeo sits down with the Friar and updates him with all the missing information. What questions might the Friar ask? How would Romeo describe the events that have occurred so far and his feelings about the situation?
- Write their dialogue as a script that captures the close relationship between the two men. Shakespeare did not include stage directions in this scene, but you could put them in your version.

Holy Saint Francis Friar Lawrence is a Franciscan and swears by the founder of his Order

Young men's ... eyes young men fall in love just with what they see

brine salt water (tears)

sallow pale

season flavour; preserve

that of it ... taste that is now bland and lacking flavour

wast thyself sincere, full of integrity

sentence saying, proverb

chid'st chided, rebuked

oft often

doting infatuation

bad'st ordered

grace favour

O ... spell Rosaline knew your love for her was like love that had been learnt, not truly understood

waverer changeable one

In one respect for a particular reason

rancour hatred

stand on insist on

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 3

FRIAR LAWRENCE Holy Saint Francis, what a change is here!

65

Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,
So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.

Jesu Maria, what a deal of brine

Hath washed thy sallow cheeks for Rosaline!

70

How much salt water thrown away in waste,

To season love, that of it doth not taste!

The sun not yet thy sighs from heaven clears,

Thy old groans yet ringing in mine ancient ears;

75

Lo here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit

Of an old tear that is not washed off yet.

If e'er thou wast thyself, and these woes thine,

Thou and these woes were all for Rosaline.

And art thou changed? Pronounce this sentence then:

Women may fall, when there's no strength in men.

80

ROMEO Thou chid'st me oft for loving Rosaline.

FRIAR LAWRENCE For doting, not for loving, pupil mine.

ROMEO And bad'st me bury love.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Not in a grave,

To lay one in, another out to have.

ROMEO I pray thee chide me not. Her I love now

85

Doth grace for grace and love for love allow;

The other did not so.

FRIAR LAWRENCE O she knew well

Thy love did read by rote, that could not spell.

But come, young waverer, come go with me,

90

In one respect I'll thy assistant be:

For this alliance may so happy prove

To turn your households' rancour to pure love.

ROMEO O let us hence, I stand on sudden haste.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast.

Exeunt

Mercutio jokes with Benvolio about Tybalt's challenge to Romeo and about Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline. He mocks Tybalt's precise style of sword-fencing and the current fashions of speaking.

1 Friendship under pressure? (in pairs)

Act 2 Scene 4 opens with Mercutio questioning Benvolio about what Romeo has been up to the previous night. He still thinks that Romeo is in love with Rosaline. Shakespeare uses this scene to emphasise once again how Romeo has withdrawn from his friends.

- Take parts and read aloud lines 1–5. Notice that Mercutio and Benvolio speak to each other in prose rather than the heightened language and style of poetry. Try different methods of reading these lines to explore the best way of conveying the growing frustration these characters feel at Romeo's continued absence. In your Director's Journal, write down your ideas for staging Mercutio's and Benvolio's entrances to enhance the impact of the opening exchange.

Write about it

Tybalt's challenge (by yourself)

Tybalt has sent a letter challenging Romeo to a duel. Look back at Act 1 and remind yourself of the type of language that Tybalt uses, the type of character he is and the source of his grievances.

- Write the letter that Tybalt sends to Romeo. Use appropriate modern English, but try to match the style and expression to your impressions of Tybalt so far.

Characters

Mercutio's mockery (in small groups)

As usual, Mercutio is quick to use language as a weapon. In lines 13–31 he targets:

- Romeo (lines 13–16) and how his being in love renders him **hopeless** as a man and thus unable to take up Tybalt's challenge
- Tybalt (lines 18–23) and his pretentious way of fencing ('passado' = lunge; 'punto reverso' = backhanded thrust; 'hay' = hit)
- the affected ways of speaking that young men adopt (lines 25–31).

Use the glossary to help you understand the details of Mercutio's verbal onslaught, then talk together about what these three speeches reveal about Mercutio's view of the world. Write your ideas in the Character file you are compiling on Mercutio.

should can
tonight last night

answer it accept the challenge

the very pin ... butt-shaft
Romeo's heart has been pierced by Cupid's arrow

Prince of Cats Tybalt was a popular name for a cat

prick-song printed music (Mercutio makes an elaborate comparison between music and sword-fencing – both played precisely by the rules)

rests ... rests acknowledges all pauses

the third ... bosom on the third beat he strikes

butcher ... button brutal stabber of his opponent's button

very ... house best fencing school

immortal deadly

pox of plague upon

antic grotesque

affecting phantasies
posturing young men

new tuners of accent people who pronounce words affectedly

grandsire old man

flies parasites

O ... bones O their painful bones (from sitting on hard benches)

Act 2 Scene 4

A street in Verona

Enter BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO.

- MERCUTIO Where the dev'l should this Romeo be?
Came he not home tonight?
- BENVOLIO Not to his father's, I spoke with his man.
- MERCUTIO Why, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline,
Torments him so, that he will sure run mad. 5
- BENVOLIO Tybalt, the kinsman to old Capulet,
Hath sent a letter to his father's house.
- MERCUTIO A challenge, on my life.
- BENVOLIO Romeo will answer it.
- MERCUTIO Any man that can write may answer a letter. 10
- BENVOLIO Nay, he will answer the letter's master, how he dares, being dared.
- MERCUTIO Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabbed with a white
wench's black eye, run through the ear with a love-song, the very
pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft; and is 15
he a man to encounter Tybalt?
- BENVOLIO Why, what is Tybalt?
- MERCUTIO More than Prince of Cats. O, he's the courageous captain
of compliments: he fights as you sing prick-song, keeps time,
distance, and proportion; he rests his minim rests, one, two, and 20
the third in your bosom; the very butcher of a silk button, a duellist,
a duellist; a gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second
cause. Ah, the immortal 'passado', the 'punto reverso', the 'hay'!
- BENVOLIO The what?
- MERCUTIO The pox of such antic, lisping, affecting phantasies, these
new tuners of accent! 'By Jesu, a very good blade! a very tall man!
a very good whore!' Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire,
that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these
fashion-mongers, these pardon-me's, who stand so much on the
new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? O their 30
bones, their bones!

Mercutio (thinking Romeo loves Rosaline) teases Romeo about his love, saying that many beautiful women in history cannot compare with Rosaline. The two men joke together, trying to outdo each other's puns.

1 Tragic ladies – fateful forecasts (in small groups)

Mercutio teases Romeo, accusing him of writing love poetry ('numbers') to Rosaline like that of the fourteenth-century Italian poet Petrarch to his love, Laura. But the women he names ominously predict the tragic fate that will befall Romeo and Juliet:

- **Dido** was queen of Carthage. When her lover Aeneas deserted her, she killed herself.
- **Cleopatra** (pictured below) was queen of Egypt, loved by both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. She and Mark Antony committed suicide.
- **Helen**, the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, was stolen by the Trojan, Paris. Her abduction led to the siege and destruction of Troy.
- **Hero** was loved by Leander, who swam the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) to meet her every night. He drowned and she committed suicide.
- **Thisbe** loved Pyramus, but their families were bitter enemies. Thinking her killed by a lion, he killed himself. She then committed suicide.

Each person in the group takes one or more of these tragic love stories and finds out more about it, before creating a poster to illustrate the tale. View all the posters and then discuss what they add to your understanding of *Romeo and Juliet*.



2 Romeo: one of the young men? (in pairs)

In this scene, many productions show Romeo consciously re-engaging with the world of his young male friends. He is about to marry Juliet but he still takes part in racy, 'laddish' banter with Mercutio – and he certainly seems a match for his friend as they trade insults.

- Read through lines 32–82 and then talk about how you would present this exchange in a production of your own. What effects would you hope to create?

roe fish eggs or half of Romeo (notice Mercutio's sexual punning – again)

fishified made into a dried fish

numbers poetry

to when compared with

dowdy loose woman

hildings flibbertigibbets, wild women

French slop baggy trousers

You ... night you tricked us last night

slip fake coin or escape

conceive understand

case circumstance or genitals

bow in the hams make a bow/ bend the legs

cur'sy curtsy

hit it take the point or sexual intercourse

pink perfection or a flower or decoration on a shoe

pump shoe (or penis)

Sure wit! how clever!

solely singular threadbare

Swits and spurs urge on your wits, as if you were horse-riding, with whips and spurs

wild-goose chase pointless pursuit

goose bird or prostitute or nitwit

I will ... ear I shall show you affection

cheverel leather that stretches

ell forty-five inches

Enter ROMEO.

BENVOLIO Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

MERCUTIO Without his roe, like a dried herring: O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was a kitchen wench (marry, she had a better love to berhyme her), Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose. Signior Romeo, 'bon jour!' there's a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night. 35

ROMEO Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you? 40

MERCUTIO The slip, sir, the slip, can you not conceive?

ROMEO Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great, and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.

MERCUTIO That's as much as to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams. 45

ROMEO Meaning to cur'sy.

MERCUTIO Thou hast most kindly hit it.

ROMEO A most courteous exposition.

MERCUTIO Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

ROMEO Pink for flower. 50

MERCUTIO Right.

ROMEO Why then is my pump well flowered.

MERCUTIO Sure wit! Follow me this jest now, till thou hast worn out thy pump, that when the single sole of it is worn, the jest may remain, after the wearing, solely singular. 55

ROMEO O single-soled jest, solely singular for the singleness!

MERCUTIO Come between us, good Benvolio, my wits faints.

ROMEO Swits and spurs, swits and spurs, or I'll cry a match.

MERCUTIO Nay, if our wits run the wild-goose chase, I am done; for thou hast more of the wild goose in one of thy wits than, I am sure, I have in my whole five. Was I with you there for the goose? 60

ROMEO Thou wast never with me for any thing when thou wast not there for the goose.

MERCUTIO I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.

ROMEO Nay, good goose, bite not. 65

MERCUTIO Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting, it is a most sharp sauce.

ROMEO And is it not then well served in to a sweet goose?

MERCUTIO O here's a wit of cheverel, that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad!

Mercutio's joking becomes more and more sexual. When the Nurse appears, seeking Romeo, Mercutio directs his sexual teasing at her. Romeo identifies himself.

Language in the play

Should Mercutio add actions to words?

Mercutio relishes his sexual puns. After his fairly conventional use of 'art' five times in lines 73–4 (meaning 'are' or 'skill'), his imagination takes over. Here are just some of his puns: 'bauble' = stick carried by a fool, or penis; 'hole' = hole or vagina; 'tale' = story or penis; 'against the hair' = against my wishes or against pubic hair. In Elizabethan times, even the word 'occupy' (line 80) had a sexual double meaning.

- How actively do you think Mercutio should bring out the sexual meanings in a stage performance? Write a paragraph explaining whether you feel that adding actions to the 'sexual' words would increase an audience's enjoyment and understanding, or whether you think such actions are unnecessary. Give reasons for your preference.

► What kind of relationship between Mercutio (left) and Romeo (right) is portrayed in this image? From your reading of this scene, do you think this is the correct portrayal?

broad indecent ('a broad goose' probably means 'dirty-minded')

natural idiot

lolling sticking out his tongue

gear stuff (joking), or clothes (the Nurse), or sexual organs

shirt man

smock woman

good den good evening (Elizabethans used this greeting any time in the afternoon)

for the bawdy ... noon the hand of the dial is on twelve o'clock (where dial also means vagina and prick means penis)

troth faith

quoth'a he said

took understood

confidence private talk

indite Benvolio mocks the Nurse; he means 'invite'

bawd someone who profits from prostitution; a brothel-keeper

So ho! tallyho!

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 4

ROMEO I stretch it out for that word 'broad', which, added to the goose, proves thee far and wide a broad goose. 70

MERCUTIO Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature, for this drivelling love is like a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole. 75

BENVOLIO Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO 'Thou desirest me to stop in my tale against the hair.

BENVOLIO 'Thou wouldst else have made thy tale large.

MERCUTIO O thou art deceived; I would have made it short, for I was come to the whole depth of my tale, and meant indeed to occupy the argument no longer. 80

ROMEO Here's goodly gear!

Enter NURSE and her man [PETER].

A sail, a sail!

MERCUTIO Two, two: a shirt and a smock.

NURSE Peter!

PETER Anon. 85

NURSE My fan, Peter.

MERCUTIO Good Peter, to hide her face, for her fan's the fairer face.

NURSE God ye good morrow, gentlemen.

MERCUTIO God ye good den, fair gentlewoman. 90

NURSE Is it good den?

MERCUTIO 'Tis no less, I tell ye, for the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon.

NURSE Out upon you, what a man are you?

ROMEO One, gentlewoman, that God hath made, himself to mar. 95

NURSE By my troth, it is well said: 'for himself to mar', quoth'a? Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where I may find the young Romeo?

ROMEO I can tell you, but young Romeo will be older when you have found him than he was when you sought him: I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse. 100

NURSE You say well.

MERCUTIO Yea, is the worst well? Very well took, i'faith, wisely, wisely.

NURSE If you be he, sir, I desire some confidence with you. 105

BENVOLIO She will indite him to some supper.

MERCUTIO A bawd, a bawd, a bawd! So ho!

 Mercutio sings a song full of indecent meaning. He leaves, continuing to mock the Nurse. She protests against his sauciness to her, then cautions Romeo not to deceive Juliet.

Language in the play

Mercutio's song – obscene (but obscure) humour

In his song, lines 111–16, Mercutio is playing his usual language game, seizing every opportunity for sexual punning. His 'So ho!' (line 107) sets him off on a hunting **metaphor**: chasing the hare. In his song, 'stale', 'hare' and 'hoar' can mean or sound like 'whore': a prostitute. Superficially, the song means that any old dish is good to eat when you're hungry, but if it goes mouldy, it's not worth paying for ('too much for a score'). Modern audiences and readers are often puzzled by the song, because both its surface meaning and its indecent meaning are obscure.

- If you were directing the play, would you cut the song from the performance? Why, or why not? Be prepared to justify your answer to your classmates. (For more information about metaphors in the play, see p. 214.)

Write about it

How does the Nurse respond?

The Nurse makes a comment about Mercutio directly after he leaves (lines 121–2). She calls the young man 'saucy' and acknowledges that his language is full of 'ropery' (dirty jokes). But what is she thinking privately about Mercutio? Note that she must have *understood* the jokes in order to point out publicly that they are rude!

- Write a few sentences outlining the Nurse's unspoken thoughts in the moments after she delivers line 122.

1 But is it fair? (in pairs)

In the patriarchal, male-dominated world of the play, the young men seem to think it's acceptable to treat the Nurse (who is probably much older than they are) without much respect. But the Nurse shows real concern for Juliet's well-being, warning Romeo that he should not seduce Juliet ('lead her in a fool's paradise', lines 136–7).

- Do you think that the Nurse deserves the mockery she receives? One person should argue 'yes' and the other 'no'.
- Would you have a different view about her treatment in today's society?

lenten pie a pie without meat (to be eaten during Lent, when Christians abstained from meat)

hoar mouldy

spent used up

score bill for food

hoars goes mouldy

merchant chap

ropery indecent jokes

stand to listen to (but Romeo might also be making a sexual pun)

And 'a if he

take him down humiliate him (perhaps with a play on 'satisfy him sexually')

Jacks loutish men

flirt-gills flirts

skains-mates cut-throats, rascals

use me ... pleasure treat me as he wishes

weapon sword or penis (Peter makes a sexual pun)

lead ... paradise seduce Juliet

weak dealing immoral behaviour

ROMEO What hast thou found?

MERCUTIO No hare, sir, unless a hare, sir, in a lenten pie, that is something stale and hoar ere it be spent. 110

[*He walks by them and sings.*]

An old hare hoar,

And an old hare hoar,

Is very good meat in Lent;

But a hare that is hoar

Is too much for a score, 115

When it hoars ere it be spent.

Romeo, will you come to your father's? We'll to dinner thither.

ROMEO I will follow you.

MERCUTIO Farewell, ancient lady, farewell, lady, [*Singing.*] 'lady, lady'. 120

[*Exeunt [Mercutio and Benvolio]*]

NURSE I pray you, sir, what saucy merchant was this that was so full of his ropery?

ROMEO A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month.

NURSE And 'a speak any thing against me, I'll take him down, and 'a were lustier than he is, and twenty such Jacks; and if I cannot, I'll find those that shall. Scurvy knave, I am none of his flirt-gills, I am none of his skains-mates. [*She turns to Peter, her man.*] And thou must stand by too and suffer every knave to use me at his pleasure! 125

PETER I saw no man use you at his pleasure; if I had, my weapon should quickly have been out. I warrant you, I dare draw as soon as another man, if I see occasion in a good quarrel, and the law on my side. 130

NURSE Now afore God, I am so vexed that every part about me quivers. Scurvy knave! Pray you, sir, a word: and as I told you, my young lady bid me enquire you out; what she bid me say, I will keep to myself. But first let me tell ye, if ye should lead her in a fool's paradise, as they say, it were a very gross kind of behaviour, as they say; for the gentlewoman is young; and therefore, if you should deal double with her, truly it were an ill thing to be offered to any gentlewoman, and very weak dealing. 135

ROMEO Nurse, commend me to thy lady and mistress. I protest unto thee – 140

NURSE Good heart, and i'faith I will tell her as much. Lord, Lord, she will be a joyful woman.

Romeo arranges to marry Juliet that afternoon at Friar Lawrence's cell. He will send a rope ladder to the Nurse so that he may climb to Juliet's room in Capulet's house.

1 Decisions about the Nurse (in pairs)

- a Does the Nurse take the money?** In lines 151–3, Romeo offers money to the Nurse. The episode can be made very funny on stage, and can add to the audience's understanding of the Nurse's character. Work out a staging of the three lines that you feel will amuse the audience.
- b 'As pale as any clout in the versal world'** In lines 168–72, the Nurse says that Juliet would as happily set eyes on a 'toad' as Paris, and that when she tells Juliet that Paris is a handsomer ('properer') man than Romeo, Juliet looks as white as a sheet ('clout' = washed-out rag, 'versal' = universal). But is she just making up a story that she thinks Romeo wishes to hear? From your experience of the Nurse so far, suggest whether or not you think she is telling the truth.

Language in the play

Verse and prose (in pairs)

Most of this scene is in prose, but a few short sections are in verse.

- Identify the verse sections, then read the information about verse and prose in the 'Language' section on page 216. Suggest why Shakespeare switched between prose and verse in this scene. Write down your answer and pass it to a partner for discussion.

Write about it

A mixture of moods?

In most productions, this scene is full of comic atmosphere. It is rich in racy language, which is often accompanied by strikingly funny 'stage business' (actions and gestures that complement the words).

- a** Look back through the scene and identify all the different opportunities to showcase the comic features. Then see if you can highlight any elements of the scene that might be used to suggest a different mood. Is this scene entirely about making the audience laugh, or could parts of it be played in other ways?
- b** Write your findings in a critical essay in which you explore the variety of moods and dramatic effects that could be achieved in this scene. Remember to use embedded quotations to support your points.

mark me listen to me

shrift confession (see p. 66)

shrived given absolution (pardon) for the sins she has confessed

tackled stair rope ladder

top-gallant summit (topmost mast of a ship)

be my convoy carry me

quit reward

Is your man secret? can your man keep a secret?

prating chattering

would fain lay knife aboard would claim Juliet as his (guests in Elizabethan times brought their own knives to claim a place at table)

as lieve as willingly

properer more attractive

dog-name 'R' was called the dog's letter because it sounded like a dog growling

sententious does the Nurse mean 'sentences'?

apace get a move on

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 4

- ROMEO What wilt thou tell her, Nurse? thou dost not mark me. 145
- NURSE I will tell her, sir, that you do protest, which, as I take it, is a gentleman-like offer.
- ROMEO Bid her devise
Some means to come to shrift this afternoon,
And there she shall at Friar Lawrence' cell 150
Be shrived and married. Here is for thy pains.
- NURSE No truly, sir, not a penny.
- ROMEO Go to, I say you shall.
- NURSE This afternoon, sir? Well, she shall be there.
- ROMEO And stay, good Nurse, behind the abbey wall: 155
Within this hour my man shall be with thee,
And bring thee cords made like a tackled stair,
Which to the high top-gallant of my joy
Must be my convoy in the secret night.
Farewell, be trusty, and I'll quit thy pains. 160
Farewell, commend me to thy mistress.
- NURSE Now God in heaven bless thee! Hark you, sir.
- ROMEO What say'st thou, my dear Nurse?
- NURSE Is your man secret? Did you ne'er hear say,
'Two may keep counsel, putting one away'? 165
'Warrant thee, my man's as true as steel.
- ROMEO Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady – Lord, Lord! when 'twas a little prating thing – O, there is a nobleman in town, one Paris, that would fain lay knife aboard; but she, good soul, had as lieve see a toad, a very toad, as see him. I anger her sometimes, 170
and tell her that Paris is the properer man, but I'll warrant you, when I say so, she looks as pale as any clout in the versal world.
Doth not rosemary and Romeo begin both with a letter?
- ROMEO Ay, Nurse, what of that? Both with an R.
- NURSE Ah, mocker, that's the dog-name. R is for the – no, I know it begins with some other letter – and she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it. 175
- ROMEO Commend me to thy lady.
- NURSE Ay, a thousand times.

[Exit Romeo]

Peter!

PETER Anon.

NURSE [Handing him her fan.] Before and apace. 180

Exit [after Peter]

Juliet is impatient for the Nurse's return. She compares the speed of love and young people with the slowness of the old. The Nurse finally arrives, grumbling of her aches and pains.

1 Get on with it! (in pairs)

Juliet is eagerly awaiting the Nurse's return with a message from Romeo. She cannot wait to hear the news.

- Take turns to read Juliet's lines 1–19 to each other, speaking them with Juliet's impatience in mind. After your readings, work together to write a set of notes for the actor playing Juliet, advising her how to deliver different sections of the soliloquy. Include these in your Director's Journal.
- Look at lines 1–19 again. From each line, say out loud just one word connected with movement (for example, line 1 – 'send', line 2 – 'return'). How many of these 'movement' words can you find? Talk together about how they create a sense of urgency.

Themes

Fast versus slow

Juliet sent the Nurse at nine o'clock, but she met Romeo at twelve (see Scene 4, lines 92–3). No one knows what the Nurse was doing during that time, but it has served to increase Juliet's eagerness for news. In this scene, Shakespeare builds up a sense of urgency in Juliet's soliloquy. He then has the Nurse use all kinds of delaying tricks that frustrate Juliet and increase her impatience.

- Come up with two delaying tactics of your own to add to the dramatic effectiveness of this scene. Select your strongest idea to share with the class.

Write about it

The missing three hours (by yourself)

The Nurse has 'gone missing' for the three hours (see above). What has she been up to in this time?

- Use your knowledge of the Nurse so far – and your imagination – to write a short story that sheds light on the mystery. Use this opportunity to 'flesh out' the Nurse's character and lifestyle. You might follow Shakespeare's lead in highlighting some of the comic aspects of her personality and behaviour. Or perhaps you'd like to explore a more serious side to this character – after all, the Nurse is clearly very fond of Juliet and takes her responsibilities towards her young charge seriously.

Perchance perhaps
lame unable to move quickly
heralds messengers
low'ring threatening
nimble-pinioned doves
 swift-winged doves pulling the
 chariot of Venus, goddess of love

bandy strike to and fro
 (like a tennis ball)
feign pretend, appear

jaunce exhausting, bumpy journey

stay a while wait a minute

Act 2 Scene 5

Capulet's mansion

Enter JULIET.

JULIET The clock struck nine when I did send the Nurse;
 In half an hour she promised to return.
 Perchance she cannot meet him: that's not so.
 O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,
 Which ten times faster glides than the sun's beams,
 Driving back shadows over low'ring hills;
 Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
 And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
 Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
 Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve
 Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
 Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
 She would be as swift in motion as a ball;
 My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
 And his to me.
 But old folks, many feign as they were dead,
 Unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead.

Enter NURSE [with PETER].

NURSE O God, she comes! O honey Nurse, what news?
 Hast thou met with him? Send thy man away.
 Peter, stay at the gate.

[Exit Peter]

JULIET Now, good sweet Nurse – O Lord, why look'st thou sad?
 Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily;
 If good, thou shamest the music of sweet news
 By playing it to me with so sour a face.
 NURSE I am a-weary, give me leave a while.
 Fie, how my bones ache! What a jaunce have I!
 JULIET I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news.
 Nay, come, I pray thee speak, good, good Nurse, speak.
 NURSE Jesu, what haste! can you not stay a while?
 Do you not see that I am out of breath?

Juliet is increasingly frustrated by the Nurse's irrelevant replies. At last, Juliet hears the longed-for news: Romeo is waiting to marry her at Friar Lawrence's cell.

Stagecraft

Stage the scene (in pairs)

- Read through the whole scene, one person as Juliet, the other as the Nurse. Just enjoy how the Nurse keeps Juliet waiting until she finally tells the news of Romeo.
- After reading it, work out how to stage the scene. Where in the Capulet mansion do you think this exchange should take place? Write notes for the actors, suggesting how they should reflect the changing moods of Juliet and the Nurse. Best of all – act it out!

▼ Juliet and the Nurse. In most productions there is a good deal of action. For instance, the Nurse struggles repeatedly to get comfortable; Juliet massages her back, neck and shoulders. At lines 56–7, Juliet sometimes explodes in exasperation, much to the audience's amusement. Which line do you think is being spoken at this moment? What do you make of the relationship between these two women as suggested by this picture?



in about

stay the circumstance
wait for the details

simple silly

be ... on are not worth
speaking about

warrant guarantee

Beshrew curse, shame on

Marry come up, I trow
expressions of impatience ('by the
Virgin Mary, hang on, I trust')

poultice comforting treatment

coil fuss

leave permission

hie hasten

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 5

- JULIET How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
The excuse that thou dost make in this delay
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.
Is thy news good or bad? Answer to that.
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad? 35
- NURSE Well, you have made a simple choice, you know not how to
choose a man: Romeo? no, not he; though his face be better than
any man's, yet his leg excels all men's, and for a hand and a foot 40
and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past
compare. He is not the flower of courtesy, but I'll warrant him, as
gentle as a lamb. Go thy ways, wench, serve God. What, have you
dined at home?
- JULIET No, no! But all this did I know before. 45
What says he of our marriage, what of that?
- NURSE Lord, how my head aches! what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.
My back a't'other side – ah, my back, my back!
Beshrew your heart for sending me about 50
To catch my death with jauncing up and down!
I'faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.
- JULIET Sweet, sweet, sweet Nurse, tell me, what says my love?
- NURSE Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
And a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, 55
And I warrant a virtuous – Where is your mother?
- JULIET Where is my mother? why, she is within,
Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest:
'Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
'Where is your mother?'
- NURSE O God's lady dear, 60
Are you so hot? Marry come up, I trow;
Is this the poultice for my aching bones?
Henceforward do your messages yourself.
Here's such a coil! Come, what says Romeo?
Have you got leave to go to shrift today? 65
I have.
- NURSE Then hie you hence to Friar Lawrence' cell,
There stays a husband to make you a wife.

The Nurse, with a sexual joke, sends Juliet off to her marriage with Romeo. In Scene 6, Friar Lawrence and Romeo await Juliet. Romeo longs for marriage, but his words have an ominous ring.

1 How embarrassing! (in pairs)

'Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks'. The Nurse's vivid image is a way of saying 'You're blushing!' In Act 2 Scene 2, lines 85–6, there is another example of Juliet blushing. She appears to be quickly embarrassed, so how does she respond to the sexual jokes in the Nurse's lines 72–5?

- What movements and expressions might Juliet use as she hears the Nurse talk of 'bird's nest' and 'bear the burden'?

Stagecraft

Appropriate exits and entrances (in fours)

- Take parts (the Nurse, Juliet, Friar Lawrence, Romeo).
Work out how Juliet and the Nurse would deliver the final four lines of Scene 5, and how they would leave the stage.
The way they leave should match their language and feelings.
- Explore how you might stage the opening eight lines of Act 2 Scene 6. What similarities or contrasts would you seek to highlight as one scene moves into the next?
- Learn your few lines and run the action! Ask other groups to watch your performance and comment on what they observe. Can they pick out all the key dramatic features that you were looking to draw their attention to?

Language in the play

'Love-devouring Death' and other personification (in small groups)

'Love-devouring Death' is a personification – turning death into a person and giving it human feelings and actions (see p. 44). Friar Lawrence also personifies 'the heavens' (Scene 6, line 1) when he imagines the heavens smiling. In the next line, he imagines 'after-hours' (the future) sorrowfully telling off himself and Romeo.

- In each case, after discussion in your group, suggest two reasons why Shakespeare might have chosen to give the Friar these particular images at this point in the play.
- Compare your reasons with those of other groups and write your findings in the 'Personification' section of your Language file.

wanton uncontrolled, passionate

bird's nest Juliet's bedroom (or the Nurse's sexual joke about Juliet's pubic hair)

drudge servant, slave (what does this suggest about the way the Nurse views her role?)

the burden the weight of Romeo's body

That after-hours ... not so that we are not rebuked or punished with sadness later

countervail outweigh

close our hands marry us

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 6

Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks,
They'll be in scarlet straight at any news.
Hie you to church, I must another way,
To fetch a ladder, by the which your love
Must climb a bird's nest soon when it is dark.
I am the drudge, and toil in your delight;
But you shall bear the burden soon at night.
Go, I'll to dinner, hie you to the cell.
Hie to high fortune! Honest Nurse, farewell.

70

75

JULIET

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 6

Friar Lawrence's cell

Enter FRIAR LAWRENCE and ROMEO.

FRIAR LAWRENCE So smile the heavens upon this holy act,
That after-hours with sorrow chide us not.
ROMEO Amen, amen! but come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short minute gives me in her sight.
Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
Then love-devouring Death do what he dare,
It is enough I may but call her mine.

5

The Friar advises moderation in love, not violent excess. In reply to Romeo's elaborate language asking her to give an ornate description of their happiness, Juliet speaks of her true love. They leave to be married.

Language in the play

Imagery – the Friar warns and praises

Friar Lawrence's first speech opposite is rich in imagery. He begins with an image of joyous love as fire and gunpowder, which destroy ('consume') at the very moment ('triumph') of meeting ('kiss'). His next image is of how over-sweet honey can become revolting and can destroy the appetite. His image of Juliet is of how someone in love seems to float on air.

- Match these images with the lines opposite. Then write a paragraph on each image, explaining what it shows about the Friar's attitude towards Romeo and Juliet's love.

1 Can true love be measured? (in pairs)

Romeo, in elaborate language, invites Juliet to tell of their love like a rich description ('blazon') of a coat of arms. But Juliet argues ('Conceit, more rich in matter than in words', line 30) that true love does not need words. It is so rich, it cannot be measured, nor can it ever be fully described. Some argue that here Shakespeare shows Romeo and Juliet speaking to each other as if they are mature and experienced lovers, not youthful and impulsive ones.

- What do you think? Talk together about how much you feel their relationship has developed since their meeting at the end of Act 1.

Stagecraft

A pause in the action? (in threes)

Nearly all modern productions of *Romeo and Juliet* insert an interval. In most cases, that break is placed here at the end of Act 2.

- Why do you think directors see this as a good moment to pause the action?
- If you were directing the play and had decided to place the interval here, how would you close Act 2? Create a tableau of the final moment of the scene that would stay firmly in the audience's mind as the curtain comes down.
- As you read on into Act 3, consider other possible choices for the interval break and how they might leave the audience with different impressions.

powder gunpowder

confounds destroys

tardy late

Will ... flint will not wear out the hard stone floor (because she walks so lightly)

bestride the gossamers walk on threads of a spider's web

wanton playful

vanity love's pleasure

ghostly confessor spiritual adviser

As much to him I must pay him back with a kiss

measure amount

blazon describe or portray

rich music's tongue the harmony of your words

Conceit imagination

Brag ... ornament boasts about inner truth, not outward show

worth wealth

sum up count

Till Holy Church ... one until you are joined in marriage by proper religious ceremony

ROMEO AND JULIET ACT 2 SCENE 6

FRIAR LAWRENCE These violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,
And in the taste confounds the appetite.
Therefore love moderately, long love doth so;
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow. 10 15

Enter JULIET.

Here comes the lady. O, so light a foot
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint;
A lover may bestride the gossamers
That idles in the wanton summer air,
And yet not fall, so light is vanity. 20
JULIET Good even to my ghostly confessor.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Romeo shall thank thee, daughter, for us both.
[Romeo kisses Juliet.]

JULIET As much to him, else is his thanks too much.
[Juliet returns his kiss.]

ROMEO Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy
Be heaped like mine, and that thy skill be more
To blazon it, then sweeten with thy breath
This neighbour air, and let rich music's tongue
Unfold the imagined happiness that both
Receive in either by this dear encounter. 25
JULIET Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,
Brag of his substance, not of ornament;
They are but beggars that can count their worth,
But my true love is grown to such excess
I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth. 30

FRIAR LAWRENCE Come, come with me, and we will make short work,
For by your leaves, you shall not stay alone
Till Holy Church incorporate two in one. 35

[Exeunt]

Looking back at Act 2

Activities for groups or individuals

1 Headlines from Act 2

Imagine you are a newspaper sub-editor. Is your paper a tabloid or a broadsheet? Your job is to write brief, memorable headlines for each of the six scenes in Act 2. Make your headlines as accurate as possible. Try to use some of Shakespeare's own words.

2 What is your image of the Nurse?

Throughout this edition there are several photographs showing different portrayals of the Nurse.

- Look at the images of the Nurse on pages 24, 82, 106 and 207. Which comes closest to your imagining of what the Nurse is like? Write a paragraph giving reasons why you have chosen that picture – and why some others do not match your impression.

3 Cast the play

You are a director about to film the play. Who would you sign up to play some of the characters you've met so far? Choose anyone you like: movie or television actors, singers or other public figures. Say why you think each person is suitable. Remember, Juliet is only thirteen!

4 Research malapropisms

The Nurse uses many **malapropisms**. 'Confidence' (Act 2, Scene 4, line 105) is her mistake for 'conference'. Benvolio, replying, uses 'indite' (line 106) for 'invite' (presumably mockingly). Malapropisms are named after Mrs **Malaprop**, who mixed up her words, in Sheridan's play *The Rivals*.

- Find out more about Mrs Malaprop. Shakespeare would have known malapropisms as 'cacozelia'. Why do you think he gives malapropisms to the Nurse?

5 Verse and prose

Glance through Scenes 1–6. Five are written in verse, one in prose. Why do you think Shakespeare changed his style from verse to prose in that particular scene?

6 Hints about tragedy?

Although there are many potentially comic moments in Act 2, Shakespeare also underlines the ever-present threat of death. For example, Romeo knows that he will die if he is discovered in Juliet's garden. Friar Lawrence gathers flowers that can kill as well as heal. Tybalt's letter to Romeo challenges him to a deadly duel.

- See what other references to death you can discover in Act 2, and display your findings visually.

7 Gathering momentum

Things happen quickly in Act 2. Shakespeare gives us precise information about exactly when each scene and episode takes place. Flick back through the act and then produce a detailed timeline showing how Act 2 unfolds.

8 Show the marriage ceremony

Shakespeare does not show the wedding of Romeo and Juliet.

- In pairs, talk about whether the dramatic effect of the play would be increased by adding a wedding scene. To help your thinking, rehearse and perform a scene showing Romeo and Juliet getting married, to see how well it works.

9 Truly, madly, deeply?

By the time Act 3 opens, Romeo and Juliet are married.

- Look back through Act 2 and gather examples of how Shakespeare presents their blossoming relationship. Explore what they say and do, and think about their views of and relationships with other characters.
- What do you think this act has to say about the nature of 'young love'? Using quotations to back up your points, write an essay in answer to the question.

Compare these two images of the closing moment of Act 2. Which do you think more effectively captures the mood that the text creates? Explain your thinking.

