



# GLOBE EDUCATION SHORTER SHAKESPEARE

## ROMEO AND JULIET

- Get straight to the heart of the play
- Understand the whole story
- Read Shakespeare's language with confidence

# Introduction

## Shakespeare the writer

Shakespeare would probably be amazed that you are studying one of his plays in school over 400 years after his death. He did not write his plays to be read, he wrote them to be performed. When he wrote, he expected a company of skilful actors to interpret and perform his play for an audience to listen to and watch. *Romeo and Juliet* was printed in his lifetime, but eighteen of his plays were only printed after his death in a collection of his plays known as the *First Folio*.

## Prose and verse

Most of the time, Shakespeare wrote *blank verse* – verse where the ends of the lines do not rhyme. So what makes it verse? It has a rhythm. Normally there are ten syllables in every line. Shakespeare wrote the lines to be spoken with the stress on every second syllable. Try saying, “*baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom*”.

Moving on to a line from *Romeo and Juliet*, try saying it with the same rhythm and stress:

‘*What drawn – and talk – of peace – I hate – the word*’.

Shakespeare can break the rules of blank verse, but he does not often do so in *Romeo and Juliet*. He does use prose instead of verse. Less socially important characters often speak in prose, as do comic characters. So the Nurse and Peter speak in prose (for example, in Act 1 Scene 2). Romeo and Juliet speak to each other mainly in verse (for example, Act 1 Scene 5) while Romeo talks to Peter and the Nurse in prose (Act 2 Scene 4).

**Shared lines:** Sometimes Shakespeare had two characters

share the ten syllables that make a line (as Capulet and Lady Capulet do on the right). He did this when he wanted the actors to keep the rhythm going. This was often to show the characters are particularly close, or when one is impatient.

Capulet	Thank me no thankings, nor, proud me no prouds, But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next, To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church, Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither. Out you green-sickness carrion, out you baggage, You tallow-face!	105
Lady Capulet	Fie, fie, what, are you mad?	110

**Counting lines:** You can see the number 110 at the end of the last line on the right. It is normal to print the line number every five lines in a Shakespeare play. This helps people find an exact place when talking or writing about the play. If you count, however, you will see that line 110 is six lines from the line 105 – the two lines that make the shared line only count as one.

## How to use this book

**Act and Scene:** Printed plays are divided into Acts and Scenes. On the stage there is no real gap – a new scene happens when the story moves on, either to a new time or place. When Shakespeare's company performed indoors by candlelight they needed to trim the candles about every half an hour, so they picked points in the story where a short gap between scenes made sense. These became the divisions between Acts.

### Act 2 Scene 1

*Enter Romeo alone.*

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

*Enter Benvolio with Mercutio. Romeo hides.*

**Benvolio** Romeo! My cousin Romeo! Romeo!

**Mercutio** On my life hath stol'n him home to bed.

**Elision:** Elision is the correct term in English Literature for leaving a bit out. Shakespeare does it a lot. Often he can not quite fit what he wants to say into his ten-syllable line, so he cheats – running two words together. In the highlighted example, do not say *stolen*, pronouncing the *-en* at the end, but say *stol'n*, running the */* and *n* together. The inverted comma shows you there is something missing.

**Stage Directions:** Shakespeare wrote stage directions – mainly when characters enter or exit, but sometimes telling actors what to do. In this book we develop Shakespeare's stage directions a bit, to tell you what you would see if you were watching the play.

Some stage directions are in square brackets, we print them as part of an actor's lines. These help you understand who the actor is talking to – which would be obvious on stage. *Aside* is a significant one – this is when the character shares their thoughts with the audience.

**Romeo** *[To a Servingman.]*  
What lady is that which doth enrich the hand  
Of yonder knight?  
*[Aside.]* O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! 5  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

- 7** **Ethiope:** a black African (from Ethiopia)  
**8** **Beauty too rich ... too dear:** too beautiful to live an ordinary life on

**The glossary:** Some words and phrases have changed their meaning or fallen out of use since Shakespeare's time. The glossary helps you with them. It gives you the line numbers in the play (in red); then the word, or the start and end of a long phrase (with three dots to mark the elision where some words have been left out), in **bold**; then the explanation in modern English. It is as close to the original line as we can make it.



**The questions:** There are questions in the photograph captions, and in red boxes. Here are two tips for answering them:

- There usually is not a simple 'right' answer. We hope you will develop your own ideas. The best way to answer any question is to be able to back up your answer with a reference to the play text.
- Unless we tell you otherwise, you can answer the question using the play text on the opposite page.



## The Prologue

*Enter Chorus.*

**Chorus** Two households, both alike in dignity,  
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage  
(Which but their children's end, nought could remove),  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage.  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

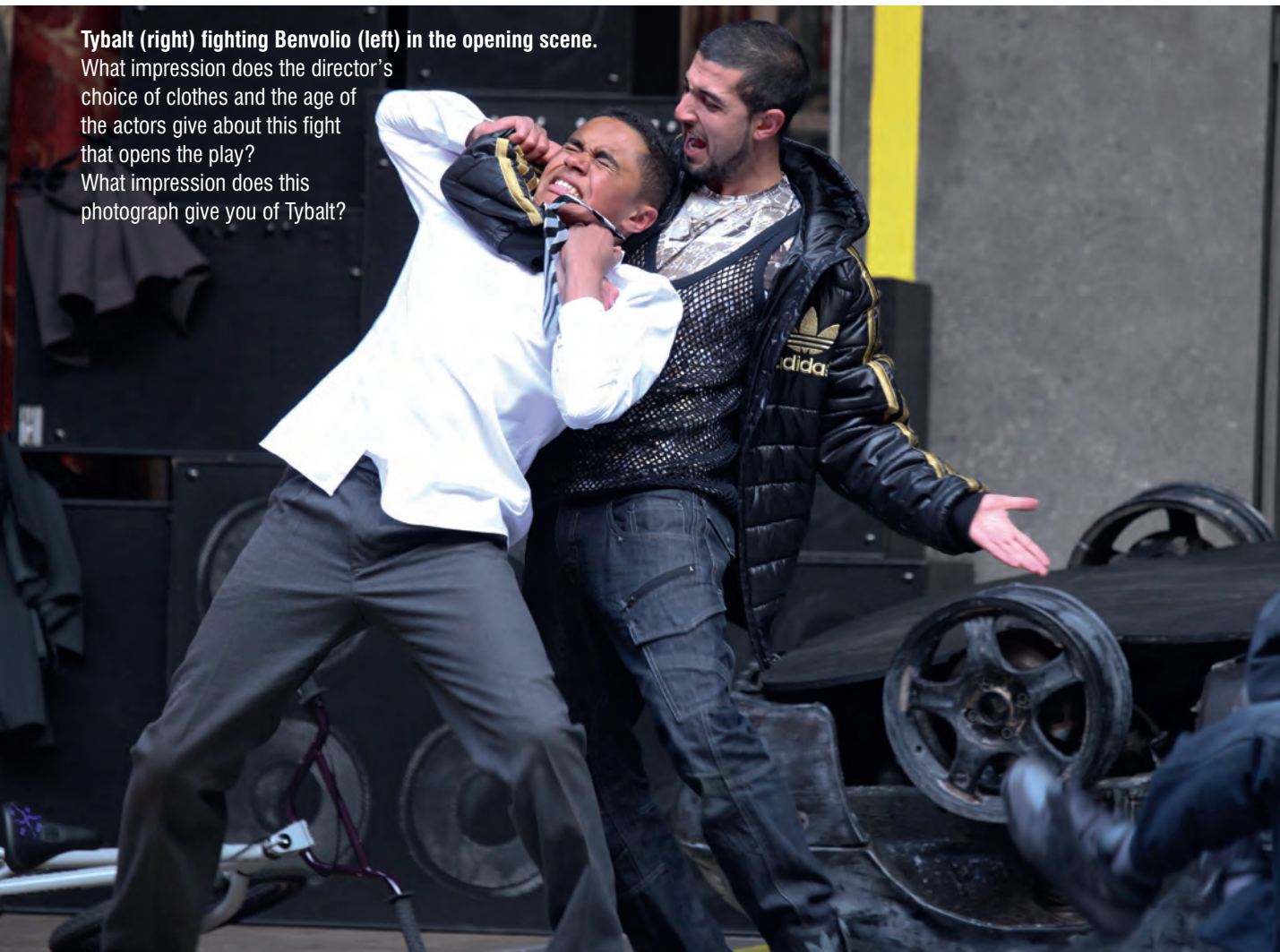
*Exit.*

- 1 **dignity:** social status
- 3 **ancient grudge:** old quarrels
- 3 **break to new mutiny:** begin new quarrels
- 4 **Where civil blood ... hands unclean:** fighting and spilling blood even though they are not soldiers at war
- 5 **From forth the fatal loins ... two foes:** from these two warring households
- 6 **star-crossed:** doomed by fate
- 10 **misadventured piteous overthrows:** tragic, steps to ruin
- 12 **traffic of our stage:** subject of our play
- 14 **What here shall miss ... to mend:** We'll work hard to tell you the full story

**Tybalt (right) fighting Benvolio (left) in the opening scene.**

What impression does the director's choice of clothes and the age of the actors give about this fight that opens the play?

What impression does this photograph give you of Tybalt?



## Act 1 Scene 1

*Enter Sampson and Gregory, of the house of Capulet, armed with swords and bucklers.*

**Sampson** A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

**Gregory** To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand.  
Therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.

**Sampson** A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I will take  
the wall of any man or maid of Montague's. Draw thy  
tool, here comes two of the house of the Montagues. 5

*Enter Abraham and Balthasar, serving men of the Montagues.*

**Sampson** My naked weapon is out. Quarrel, I will back thee.

**Abraham** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**Sampson** I do bite my thumb, sir.

**Abraham** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? 10

**Sampson** *[Aside to Gregory.]* Is the law of our side, if I say 'ay'?

**Gregory** *[Aside to Sampson.]* No.

**Sampson** No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir. But I bite my  
thumb, sir.

**Gregory** Do you quarrel, sir? 15

**Abraham** Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

**Sampson** If you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

**Abraham** No better?

**Sampson** Well, sir –

**Gregory** Say "better". 20

**Sampson** Yes, better, sir.

**Abraham** You lie.

**Sampson** Draw if you be men. *[They fight.]*

*Enter Benvolio.*

**Benvolio** *[Drawing his sword.]* Part, fools!

Put up your swords, you know not what you do. 25

*Enter Tybalt.*

**Tybalt** What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?  
Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

**Benvolio** I do but keep the peace.

**Tybalt** What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word,  
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee. 30  
Have at thee, coward! *[They fight].*

*Enter several Montagues and Capulets who join in the fight, also an officer and three or four citizens with clubs or partisans.*

**2 stir:** run away

**2 stand:** stay and fight

**4 move:** make me angry enough to

**4-5 take the wall:** walk by the wall (the best part of the street) furthest from the centre of the street where the gutter was

**6 tool:** sword

**7 My naked weapon is out:** my sword is out of my scabbard

**7 Quarrel:** start a fight

**7 back thee:** back you up

**7 bite your thumb:** [an insulting gesture at the time]

**17 I am for you:** I'll fight you

**25 Put up:** put away

**26 heartless hinds:** cowardly servants (double meaning of female deer without a male for protection)

**28 I do but keep the peace:** I'm just trying to stop this fighting



1 When Shakespeare wrote this play, family honour was very important. It often led to fights, and sometimes deaths. How does the opening scene show the audience the role that family honour played in Verona?



**Capulet (left) and Montague (right) fighting. In this production they entered from opposite sides of the Yard, and started fighting before they got onto the stage.** Compare this photograph with the one on the previous page. Which is more surprising? What does this tell you about the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets?

**Officer** Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!  
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!  
*Enter Capulet in his gown, and Lady Capulet.*

**Capulet** What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!  
*Enter Montague and Lady Montague.*

**Montague** Thou villain Capulet. — Hold me not, let me go. 35

**Lady Montague** Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.  
*Enter Prince Escalus, with his Attendants.*

**Prince** Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,  
Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel, —  
Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,  
And hear the sentence of your movèd Prince. 40  
Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,  
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,  
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets.  
If ever you disturb our streets again,  
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace. 45  
For this time on pain of death, all men depart.  
*Exit all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio.*

**Montague** Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?  
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

**Benvolio** I drew to part them. In the instant came  
The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,  
Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,  
He swung about his head and cut the winds,  
Who nothing hurt withal, hissed him in scorn.

**Lady Montague** O, where is Romeo, saw you him to-day?  
Right glad I am he was not at this fray. 55

**Benvolio** Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun  
Peered forth the golden window of the east,  
A troubled mind drove me to walk abroad,  
So early walking did I see your son.  
Towards him I made, but he was ware of me  
And stole into the covert of the wood. 60

**Montague** Many a morning hath he there been seen,  
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,  
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.

**Benvolio** My noble uncle, do you know the cause? 65

**Montague** I neither know it, nor can learn of him.  
*Enter Romeo.*

**Benvolio** See, where he comes. So please you step aside,  
I'll know his grievance, or be much denied.

**32 bills, and partisans:** types of spear

**34 long sword:** old-fashioned heavy sword

**38 Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel:** who have shown contempt for my orders and God by fighting and wounding fellow citizens

**39 mistempered:** used with a double meaning of 'badly made' (for swords) and 'angry' for the people using them

**40 sentence:** punishment

**40 movèd:** angry

**41 civil brawls:** outbreaks of fighting between citizens

**41 bred of an airy word:** over some trivial remark

**45 Your lives ... the peace:** you'll be executed

**47 set this ... new abroad:** started this old quarrel up again

**48 by:** nearby

**53 Who nothing hurt withal:** which, unharmed

**55 Right glad ... this fray:** I'm very glad he wasn't part of this fight

**60 made:** went

**60 he was ware of me:** he noticed me


**61 covert:** shelter

**63 augmenting:** adding to

**67 So please you:** please

**68 his grievance ... denied:** what's upsetting him, I won't take no for an answer





### Romeo (left) and Benvolio (right)

When might Benvolio have put his blazer back on?

These questions are about all of Act 1 Scene 1.

- 2 What impressions of Romeo's feelings are given by the language he uses in this scene?
- 3 What impression do the audience have of Romeo when he appears?

### Views of romantic love in Shakespeare's time

In this scene, Romeo and Benvolio talk about love. Romeo feels that love has changed him completely: 'This is not Romeo, he's some other where.' In Shakespeare's time, romantic love was often viewed with suspicion: love was expected to grow after marriage – not sweep a couple off their feet beforehand. Marriages were often arranged by families, not by the couple to be married.

Loving someone too much was seen as an illness, a form of short-term madness. Unrequited love was often called 'lovesickness', and treated as a disease that could also send people mad. Doctors were sometimes consulted. They prescribed a variety of 'cures', from herbal medicines, to changed diets, to talking to a priest.



**Montague** Come madam, let's away.  
*Exit Montague and Lady Montague.*

**Benvolio** Good morrow, cousin.

**Romeo** Is the day so young? 70

**Benvolio** But new struck nine.

**Romeo** Ay me, sad hours seem long.  
 Was that my father that went hence so fast?

**Benvolio** It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

**Romeo** Not having that, which having, makes them short.

**Benvolio** In love? 75

**Romeo** Out —

**Benvolio** Of love?

**Romeo** Out of her favour, where I am in love.

**Benvolio** Alas that love, so gentle in his view,  
 Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof! 80

**Romeo** Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,  
 Should without eyes see pathways to his will. —  
 Where shall we dine? — O me! What fray was here?  
 Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.  
 Here's much to do with hate, but more with love. 85  
 Why, then, O brawling love, O loving hate,  
 O any thing, of nothing first created.  
 This love feel I, that feel no love in this.  
 Dost thou not laugh?

**Benvolio** No, coz, I rather weep.

**Romeo** Good heart, at what?

**Benvolio** At thy good heart's oppression. 90

**Romeo** Why such is love's transgression.  
 Farewell, my coz.

**Benvolio** Soft! I will go along.  
 And if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

**Romeo** Tut, I have lost myself, I am not here,  
 This is not Romeo, he's some other where. 95

**Benvolio** Tell me in sadness, who is that you love?

**Romeo** What, shall I groan and tell thee?

**Benvolio** Groan? Why, no. But sadly tell me who.

**Romeo** In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

**Benvolio** I aimed so near when I supposed you loved. 100

**Romeo** A right good mark-man, and she's fair I love.

**Benvolio** A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.

**Romeo** Well, in that hit you miss, she'll not be hit

**70 morrow:** morning

**70 cousin:** used to close relatives and friends

**72 hence:** away from here

**78 Out of her favour:** no longer loved

**79 so gentle in his view:** so attractive as an idea

**80 be so .... in proof:** treat us so badly when we experience it

**81 whose view ... still:** refers Cupid, the god of love, who was said to be blind or blindfolded

**82 see pathways to his will:** can still make what he wants happen

**87 of nothing first created:** made from nothing at the start

**88 This love... in this:** I love, but am not loved in return

**89 coz:** cousin

**89 rather weep:** weep instead

**90 oppression:** heaviness, misery

**91 love's transgression:** the way love steps outside its proper limits

**92 Soft!:** wait!

**96 in sadness:** in all seriousness

**100 I aimed ... you loved:** I'd worked that out when I guessed you were in love

**101 A right good mark-man:** an excellent guess

**102 A right fair mark:** an easy target

## How to do well in assessment

Most importantly, you should aim to enjoy the Shakespeare play that you are reading, and start to think about why Shakespeare makes the characters act as they do and what the main themes of the story are. You should also begin to consider the language that Shakespeare uses. This is also a great start for studying Shakespeare at GCSE.

There are a series of skills that will help you in any assessment of your understanding of a Shakespeare play. They are:

- Read, understand and respond to the play clearly. Comment on the characters' behaviour and motivations, using evidence from the text.

In other words, you need to show that you know the play and can answer the question that you have been given.

- Analyse the language, form and structure that Shakespeare uses. Show your understanding of Shakespeare's techniques by explaining their effects. Use subject terminology.

Here, you show that you understand how the play has been written by commenting on the words and techniques that Shakespeare uses. Also, you should demonstrate that you understand and can use appropriate technical language.

- Show understanding of the relationship between the play and the context in which it was written.

You must show that you understand the connections between the text and the time that it was written. This could be historical events, like the Gunpowder Plot, but also people's social and cultural beliefs of the time – such as a belief in witches – and how these affect the way that the characters think and behave.

- Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

This means that your work should be clear, organised and well-written. You are not expected to have perfect spelling, but you should spell key words and character names correctly and use correct grammar.

## Advice for answering questions

Remember the skills explained above. You will usually not have to show every single skill in every answer that you write. For example, extract questions usually require you to cover the first two skills – commenting on characters' behaviour and looking at how the play has been written. Remember that there is not one perfect answer to any question. Consider how you feel about the characters' actions. It is perfectly acceptable to use phrases such as, 'I think,' 'I feel that' and 'In my opinion' when answering. The most thoughtful responses often show originality, but remember to support your points with sensible argument and evidence from *Romeo and Juliet*.