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YORK NOTES

# ***Rapid*** **Revision**

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**Romeo and**  
**Juliet**

**AQA GCSE English Literature**



# York Notes Rapid Revision

# **Romeo and Juliet**

**AQA GCSE English Literature**

Written by Jo Heathcote

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# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Prologue and Act I Scene 1

## Three key things about the Prologue and Act I Scene 1

1. The **Prologue** introduces **two rival families**: the **Capulets** and the **Montagues**.
2. It **foreshadows** the themes and events of the play.
3. We witness the **feud** between the two families, and are introduced to a **main character, Romeo**.

## What happens in the Prologue?

- We are told of the lengthy disagreement between two old Verona families, the Capulets and the Montagues.
- We learn just how violent their quarrel has become.
- We are told that Montague and Capulet's own two children will fall in love and the quarrel will be ended only through their deaths.



## What happens in Scene 1?

- The servants of both households taunt each other in the street.
- We are introduced to Tybalt, a hot-blooded Capulet, and Benvolio, a peacekeeping Montague.
- A violent fight takes place on the street, stopped by the arrival of the Prince and the heads of both families.
- The Prince decrees there will be serious consequences if the violence continues.
- Lady Montague enquires where her son Romeo is as he was not involved in the fight.
- Benvolio finds Romeo, who seems sensitive and sad.
- Romeo confides in Benvolio that he is desperately in love with a Capulet called Rosaline, who does not return his love.
- Benvolio listens thoughtfully and gives Romeo sensible advice.

## Five key quotations

1. Dramatic technique of foreshadowing: **'From forth the fatal loins of these two foes/A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life'** (Prologue.5–6)
2. Benvolio's good sense: **'Put up your swords, you know not what you do'** (I.1.59)
3. The **theme** of violence: **'What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word,/As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee'** (Tybalt) (I.1.64–5)
4. **Plot** development: **'If ever you disturb our streets again,/Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace'** (The Prince) (I.1.90–1)
5. The language of opposites and **oxymoron**: **'O brawling love, O loving hate'** (Romeo) (I.1.170)

### Note it!

Note how, despite the violence between the two families, Romeo is presented as sensitive and loving and Benvolio as sensible. Together, they provide a contrast to the hot-headed young men we see in the opening of the play and to Montague and Capulet themselves.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about character? AO1

You can explore some of Shakespeare's key messages by thinking about what certain characters represent.

Tybalt is shown to be hot-headed: he is quick to begin a fight, with his words 'Have at thee, coward.' He challenges Benvolio and is shown to be vicious.

Shakespeare provides a contrast in Benvolio who tries to stop the fight and encourages Tybalt to 'Put up thy sword/Or manage it to part these men with me.' In this way Shakespeare uses character to show us that two opposite forces are working against each other in the play right from the start.

Describes Shakespeare's technique

Quotation used to contrast the two characters

Broader analysis of this use of character

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about the character Benvolio. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Shakespeare presents the character of Benvolio as sensible to contrast. ....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act I Scenes 2-5

## Three key things about Act I Scenes 2-5

1. Juliet's father discusses her **future marriage** with Paris but at this point wants Juliet to **approve the match**. He holds a **feast** so they can meet.
2. The Montagues find out about the feast from a servant and **vow to attend** for some fun, though **Romeo is unhappy** at the idea.
3. **Juliet meets Romeo** at the feast for the first time and they are **immediately attracted** to each other. Only later do they discover they are from the **rival families**.

## What happens in Scenes 2 and 3?

- Paris comes to Capulet to seek Juliet's hand in marriage. He feels his daughter is too young but will consent if she agrees.
- Capulet invites Paris to a feast he is holding and sends out a servant with invitations.
- Benvolio and Romeo meet the servant. He invites them to the feast not knowing they are Montagues.
- Juliet's mother talks to her about marriage and is keen she approves of Paris.
- We see how Juliet has a trusting relationship with her Nurse.

## What happens in Scene 4?

- Benvolio and Romeo are joined by the other Montagues who are on their way to the Capulet feast with masks and torches. Romeo is still lovesick and has a bad feeling about them going.
- We meet lively Mercutio, Romeo's good friend. He paints a picture of love as a troubling fantasy planted in young minds by a fairy called Queen Mab.



## What happens in Scene 5?

- The feast is busy and lively. Romeo sees Juliet for the first time.
- Tybalt notices Romeo and is immediately enraged that he is there.
- Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love, discovering at the very end of the night they are from the feuding families.

## Five key quotations

1. The **theme** of marriage: 'Let two more summers wither in their pride,/ Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride' (Capulet) (I.2.10-11)
2. The character of Lady Capulet: 'Tell me, daughter Juliet,/How stands your dispositions to be married?' (I.3.65-6)
3. The theme of fate: 'Some consequence yet hanging in the stars/ Shall bitterly begin his fateful date/With this night's revels' (Romeo) (I.4.107-9)
4. Romeo's character: 'Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!/ For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night' (I.5.51-2)
5. An example of **foreshadowing**: 'If he be married,/My grave is like to be my wedding bed' (Juliet) (I.5.133-4)

### Note it!

Though the main focus of these scenes is love and marriage, Shakespeare draws attention to other actions and feelings. The party may be fun, but note how conflict and problems are foreshadowed through further evidence of Tybalt's fiery character. Note also Romeo and Juliet's anxiety about a possible future together given their backgrounds.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about a theme? **AO1**

You can use Act I to write about love and marriage, as many different viewpoints are explored here.

When Paris requests Juliet's hand in marriage, Lord Capulet seems reluctant for Juliet to marry young as she is his only child. He tells Paris to 'Let two more summers wither in their pride,/Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.' This suggests that Capulet is protective of his daughter who is 'the hopeful lady of my earth'. However, later in the play his attitude changes and he forces Juliet into the marriage when he thinks his authority as a father is being challenged.

Makes a point about one view of marriage

Quotations used to illustrate the point

Displays a wider knowledge of this theme across the play.

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about how Lady Capulet views the proposal of marriage. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Lady Capulet seems keen for Juliet to look positively at Paris and consider.....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act II Scenes 1 and 2

## Three key things about Act II Scenes 1 and 2

1. **Romeo** is in **love** but with **Juliet** now and **not** Rosaline.
2. He puts himself in **danger** by climbing into the **Capulet orchard** after the feast is over.
3. The two young lovers meet again, exchange a **vow of love** and decide to **marry without their parents' permission**.

## What happens in Scene 1?

- Benvolio and Mercutio are out searching for Romeo after the feast.
- We learn that Benvolio is concerned for his friend, whilst Mercutio mocks his lovesick nature. They do not realise he is with Juliet.

## What happens in Scene 2?

- Romeo climbs the wall into the Capulet orchard and sees Juliet at her window.
- He overhears her talking about her feelings for him and calls to her.
- Juliet is embarrassed at being overheard, but concerned her family will find him there and his life will be in danger.
- Romeo declares his feelings of love for Juliet.
- Juliet in turn declares her love.



- Juliet asks Romeo to arrange for them to be married if his feelings towards her are true.



## Five key quotations

1. The use of **imagery**: 'It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.' (Romeo) (II.2.3)
2. The meaning of the family feud: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;/ Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.' (Juliet) (II.2.38–9)
3. The **theme** of love: 'With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,/For stony limits cannot hold love out' (Romeo) (II.2.66–7)
4. The use of **foreshadowing**: 'It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden' (Juliet) (II.2.118)
5. The theme of marriage: 'If that thy bent of love honourable,/Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow' (Juliet) (II.2.143–4)

### Note it!

Note how aware Juliet is of the danger they are both in. She worries that if Romeo is found in the orchard, the Capulets may kill him. Although she seems more wary and thoughtful than the impetuous Romeo, it is Juliet who asks him to arrange their marriage for the very next day.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about language? AO2

You can use Scene 2 to write about imagery connected with light and the heavens.

Romeo describes Juliet using **metaphors** of light, saying 'It is the east, and Juliet is the sun', and describing her as a 'bright angel' and a 'winged messenger'. The effect is that Romeo sees Juliet as heavenly and beautiful. She seems to represent all that is good, innocent and bright to him, but the metaphor as he gazes up at her also suggests he sees her as a type of goddess.

Language technique used by Shakespeare

Selected textual details as examples

Thoughtful comment on the effect of the metaphor

Develops the idea

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about imagery. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Romeo also describes his love for Juliet as giving him wings .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act II Scenes 3-6

## Three key things about Act II Scenes 3-6

1. The **Nurse and Friar Lawrence** become involved in Romeo and Juliet's **secret love plot**.
2. **Romeo** reassures the **Nurse** of his **genuine love and commitment** whilst **Juliet waits anxiously** for news.
3. The **lovers meet** at **Friar Lawrence's cell** to be **married**.

## What happens in Scene 3?

- We meet Friar Lawrence and see Romeo ask him to perform the wedding ceremony.
- The Friar is concerned at how quickly Romeo has decided to marry Juliet but feels the marriage may help to end the two families' feud.

## What happens in Scene 4?

- Benvolio learns that Tybalt has sent a challenge to Romeo's house.
- Romeo arrives but is intercepted by the Nurse who is waiting to take news to Juliet.
- Romeo asks the Nurse to make sure Juliet can come that afternoon to Friar Lawrence's cell to be married.

## What happens in Scenes 5 and 6?

- Juliet waits impatiently for the Nurse to return with news.
- The Nurse returns and tells Juliet Romeo has kept his promise.
- Romeo and the Friar await Juliet's arrival at the cell.
- When Juliet arrives, the lovers greet each other with a kiss.
- The Friar leads the young couple away to be married.



## Five key quotations

1. Romeo reveals his plan: **'my heart's dear love is set/On the fair daughter of rich Capulet'** (II.3.57–8)
2. Friar Lawrence's hope: **'For this alliance may so happy prove/To turn your households' rancour to pure love'** (II.3.90–2)
3. The Nurse's comic warning: **'if ye should lead her in a fool's paradise, as they say, it were a very gross kind of behaviour'** (II.4.151–2)
4. Romeo keeps his promise: **'And there she shall at Friar Lawrence' cell/Be shriv'd and married'** (II.4.163–6)
5. The **theme** of fate: **'These violent delights have violent ends'** (Friar Lawrence) (II.6.9)

### Note it!

Although the couple are about to marry, which we might associate with love and happiness, note there are many references to death, sorrow and violence, suggesting the **tragedy** to come.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about character? AO1

You can write about the Nurse's character and actions to consider whether Romeo and Juliet were right to seek her help.

The Nurse reveals that she has been employed to take care of Juliet since she was a baby. **She seems genuinely concerned that Juliet does not make a mistake in marrying Romeo** and reminds him that, **'if ye should lead her in a fool's paradise, as they say, it were a very gross kind of behaviour'**. However, she goes ahead and helps Juliet to marry Romeo secretly knowing that Capulet is arranging a marriage with Paris. **In this way, she could be said to be irresponsible in her care of Juliet.**

Clear point showing character's role

Key quotation for theme

Considers another interpretation

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about the Friar and his actions at this point. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

The Friar also seems genuinely concerned about Romeo.....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act III Scenes 1 and 2

## Three key things about Act III Scenes 1 and 2

1. There is a **swift change** of atmosphere as a **violent fight** erupts between the Capulets and Montagues.
2. Both Mercutio and Tybalt **lose their lives** in the fight.
3. By contrast, **Juliet waits** for Romeo on their **wedding night**.

## What happens in Scene 1?

- It is a hot afternoon and Benvolio is anxious to keep the Montagues out of trouble.
- Tybalt arrives. He is looking for Romeo to whom he has issued a challenge, as he was insulted by Romeo's attendance at the feast.
- Romeo tries to keep the peace. Tybalt and the Montagues are unaware he has just married Juliet – a Capulet.
- Mercutio cannot understand why Romeo does not rise to the challenge so he fights Tybalt himself.
- Mercutio is stabbed as Romeo tries to break them apart. Mercutio dies from his wound.
- Enraged, Romeo chases after Tybalt to avenge his friend. Tybalt is injured and dies. Romeo flees the scene.
- The Prince arrives and banishes Romeo from Verona for his actions.



## What happens in Scene 2?

- Juliet is waiting for night to fall so that Romeo can visit her in secret.
- The Nurse returns and is very upset, bringing the news of Tybalt's death.
- She reveals that Romeo has been banished from Verona for killing Tybalt.
- Juliet is distraught at the news, both of Tybalt's death and that her husband is to be banished.
- The Nurse promises to find Romeo and bring him to her.



## Five key quotations

1. Romeo as peacemaker: **'I do protest I never injured thee,/But love thee better than thou canst devise'** (III.1.65–6)
2. The theme of violent conflict: **'A plague a'both your houses!'** (Mercutio) (III.1.102)
3. The **theme** of fate: **'O, I am fortune's fool'** (III.1.132)
4. The outcome of the fight: **'Tybalt is gone and Romeo banished,/Romeo that kill'd him, he is banished.'** (Nurse) (III.2.69–70)
5. The theme of family honour: **'Will you speak well of him that kill'd your cousin? /'Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?'** (Juliet) (III.2.96–7)

### Note it!

Note how Shakespeare uses **contrast**, for example by **juxtaposing** the marriage of Romeo and Juliet in Act II with the violent fight scene in Act III. Consider how these contrasts echo the conflicting emotions we see in the play.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about plot? AO1

You can explore how events turn against Romeo from this point and threaten the future of the newly married couple.

Romeo is drawn into the fight against his will. **He pleads with Tybalt not to fight but does not make it plain he has married Juliet**, instead telling him, **'I never injured thee,/But love thee better than thou canst devise'**. In this way, **the secret marriage to Juliet cannot help to stop the feud and the indirectness of Romeo's words only confuses and angers both Tybalt and Mercutio**.

A clear point about the plot

Quotation used to support the point

Analyses the impact of the action

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about the impact of the fight. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

We see the impact of the fight when Mercutio .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act III Scenes 3-5

## Three key things about Act III Scenes 3-5

1. The **Friar** organises a **rescue plan** for the two lovers, worried that **Romeo** may choose to **take his own life**.
2. **Capulet** makes a **sudden decision** that his daughter should **marry Paris**.
3. **Romeo and Juliet** say **farewell** after spending just **one night** together.

## What happens in Scene 3?

- Romeo turns to the Friar who gives him the news of his banishment.
- Romeo sees the punishment as worse than death and threatens to take his own life.
- The Nurse interrupts them with news of Juliet's distress.
- They arrange for Romeo to spend the wedding night with Juliet.
- The Friar reassures Romeo that all will be well but tells him he must go to Mantua the next morning and await news.

## What happens in Scene 4?

- Lord and Lady Capulet discuss Juliet's grief – believing it to be for Tybalt.
- Capulet decides to arrange her marriage to Paris as soon as possible.
- Lady Capulet is to inform Juliet that the wedding will be in three days' time.

## What happens in Scene 5?

- Romeo and Juliet wake in the early morning but realise they must part.
- The Nurse warns the lovers that Lady Capulet is on her way to see Juliet.
- The lovers part hastily.
- Lady Capulet tells Juliet she will wed Paris.
- Juliet is devastated and refuses to cooperate.
- Capulet arrives and is angry with Juliet.
- Juliet seeks comfort from the Nurse who advises her to forget Romeo and marry Paris.
- Juliet arranges to see the Friar under the pretence of going to confession.



## Five key quotations

1. Romeo's reaction to his punishment: **'There is no world without Verona walls'** (III.3.17-18)
2. A father's authority in arranging a marriage: **'I think she will be rul'd/In all respects by me;'** (Capulet) (III.4.13-14)
3. The **theme** of fate: **'I have an ill-divining soul!/Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low,/As one dead in the bottom of a tomb'** (Juliet) (III.5.54-6)
4. Capulet's anger: **'disobedient wretch!/I tell thee what: get thee to church a'Thursday,/Or never after look me in the face'** (III.5.160-2)
5. Lady Capulet accepts Capulet's decision: **'Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word./Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee.'** (III.5.202-3)

### Note it!

Note how the Nurse changes her advice to Juliet. After being her trusted helper, once she witnesses Capulet's angry display of power, she immediately advises Juliet to forget Romeo.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about context? AO3

You can use ideas about Capulet's decision to comment on the social context of the play.

Though Capulet said Juliet should agree before marrying Paris in Act I, the violent events make him reconsider his plans for Juliet. Perhaps he fears Paris will no longer wish to be associated with the family and so uses his authority over Juliet to enforce the marriage. He asserts that she **'will be rul'd/In all respects by me'**, showing how he can take this decision as Juliet's father. Lady Capulet accepts this and follows her husband's orders, revealing how male authority was absolute over women at the time.

Makes a clear statement establishing the plot

Offers an interpretation of Capulet's actions

Quotation used to support the point

Analyses how the context can link to meaning

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about how the response of Juliet's mother reflects the social context of the time. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Juliet's mother reacts by .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act IV

## Three key things about Act IV

1. The Friar proposes an **elaborate plan**: Juliet will **fake her own death** to avoid marriage to Paris and be **reunited** with Romeo.
2. Juliet **deceives her parents** and the Nurse by **seemingly agreeing** to the wedding.
3. Juliet is found, **apparently dead**, on the wedding morning.

## What happens in Scene 1?

- Paris asks the Friar's advice about his marriage to Juliet.
- Juliet arrives and evades Paris's questions about her feelings for him.
- Paris leaves, and Juliet shows the Friar how desperate she is by threatening to take her own life.
- The Friar tells Juliet of a potion to fake her own death.
- He suggests a plan whereby he and Romeo would be at the Capulet tomb when she wakes. The lovers could escape to Mantua.

## What happens in Scenes 2 and 3?

- The Capulets are organising the wedding.
- Capulet is delighted when Juliet returns from the Friar, agreeing to the marriage.
- The marriage is brought forward to Wednesday.
- On the eve of her wedding Juliet asks the Nurse and her mother to leave her. She speaks of her fears about the Friar's plan and of waking in the tomb alone.
- She drinks the potion and falls unconscious.



## What happens in Scenes 4 and 5?

- It is early morning on the wedding day and the Capulets are still preparing.
- The Nurse discovers Juliet's 'dead' body.
- Lord and Lady Capulet are overcome with grief.
- Paris and the Friar arrive and the wedding day becomes a funeral.



## Five key quotations

1. Juliet's strength of feeling: **'O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,/ From off the battlements of any tower'** (IV.1.77–8)
2. The Friar's plan: **'Take thou this vial, being then in bed,/And this distilling liquor drink thou off'** (IV.1.93–4)
3. Juliet pretends to be obedient: **'Pardon, I beseech you!/Henceforward I am ever rul'd by you'** (IV.2.21–2)
4. Dramatic tension in Juliet's questioning: **'What if this mixture do not work at all?/Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?'** (IV.3.21–2)
5. The **theme** of fate: **'The heavens do low'r upon you for some ill;/Move them no more by crossing their high will'** (IV.5.94–5)

### Note it!

Note that in Act IV the Friar continues to keep Romeo and Juliet's secret even when the situation has become serious. Remember that he has married the couple in secret and 'acted' when Juliet's 'dead' body is found. Perhaps he fears punishment for his role in the **plot**.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about language? AO2

You can use ideas from Juliet's **soliloquy** to comment on her thoughts and feelings.

Juliet is shown to be fearful and anxious about the Friar's plan. We see this in her soliloquy when she questions, 'What if this mixture do not work at all? Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?' From her speech we can see how isolated Juliet is – she no longer has anyone to confide in and must act alone. There is a sense of panic in her questions yet she bravely goes through with the plan.

Topic sentence about Juliet's feelings

Quotation used to support the point

Interprets the feelings in relation to the plot

Develops idea of how language conveys emotions

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about a different feeling Juliet experiences elsewhere in Act IV. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Juliet is also presented as quite capable of deception when .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Act V

## Three key things about Act V

1. **Romeo** learns of **Juliet's death** before the **Friar's letter** arrives.
2. **Friar Lawrence's** plan begins to **fall apart**.
3. **Romeo** and **Juliet** take their own lives in a final **cruel twist of fate**.

## What happens in Scene 1?

- Balthasar has hurried to Mantua to give Romeo the news of Juliet's death.
- Romeo immediately sets off for Verona.
- He stops only to collect a deadly poison from a poor apothecary, planning to use this to take his own life if he finds Juliet is dead.

## What happens in Scene 2?

- Friar John returns Friar Lawrence's letter having been unable to deliver it to Romeo.
- Friar Lawrence is driven to panic and rethinks his plan.

## What happens in Scene 3?

- Paris visits Juliet's body at the tomb where he is met by Romeo.
- Paris and Romeo fight and Paris is killed.
- Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo swallows the poison.
- Friar Lawrence arrives and meets Balthasar, learning Romeo is in the tomb.
- Juliet begins to wake and, seeing Romeo dead, refuses to leave with the Friar, who flees in fear.
- Juliet uses Romeo's dagger to take her own life.
- The Friar is captured by watchmen and, with Balthasar, tells the Prince of the secret marriage.
- The Montagues and the Capulets are reconciled in their shared grief.



## Five key quotations

1. The **theme** of fate: 'I defy you, stars!' (Romeo) (V.1.24)
2. The themes of love and death: 'Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you/The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss' (Romeo) (V.3.112–14)
3. Use of **oxymoron**: 'O happy dagger,/This is thy sheath; there rust and let me die' (Juliet) (V.3.169–70)
4. The Friar's story: 'Romeo, there dead, was husband to that Juliet,/And she, there dead, that Romeo's faithful wife.' (V.3.231–2)
5. The **structure** comes full circle: 'Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague?/See what a scourge is laid upon your hate' (the Prince) (V.3.291–3)

### Note it!

Note how Paris is presented as honourable throughout the play. His courtship follows the conventions of Veronese society and he is genuinely affected by Juliet's death, laying flowers in her tomb. Consider whether Capulet's choice for Juliet could have been a wise one in retrospect.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about a theme? AO1

You can write about how the final Act explores whether fate has played a part in the tragedy.

Throughout the play there are many references to fate, chance or the work of the stars being responsible for what happens to Romeo and Juliet. At the end of the play even the Prince feels 'That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love!' However, it could be argued that from the turning point of Mercutio's death to the Friar's letter being undelivered, we see how the human chain of events and miscommunication may have caused the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Topic sentence makes overall point

Quotation used to support the point

Develops a different interpretation

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about the use of chance, fate or the stars. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Romeo reacts strongly when he hears that Juliet .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE

## Form and structure

### Three key things about form and structure

1. *Romeo and Juliet* is a play made up of **five Acts**.
2. The play borrows some elements of a **classical tragedy** by centring on **high-status families, themes of loss and death** and **fast-paced action**.
3. The **time span** of the play is crucial to the action, covering only a **few days** from the **feast** on the **Sunday** to the **death** of the lovers on **Thursday** evening.

### Why is the play structured into five Acts?

The structure of Shakespeare's play in five Acts is based on classical structures for drama, most closely associated with the Ancient Greeks and Romans. It is made up of:

1. **Exposition** (an initial incident): the fight in Act I
2. **Rising action** (a growth in tension): the meeting of the two lovers and their secret wedding
3. **Climax** (the high point of the action): the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt
4. **Falling action** (where the plot unravels): Juliet's desperate situation in taking the potion
5. **Denouement** (the resolution): the deaths of the two lovers and the reconciliation of their families



### What is blank verse?

- **Blank verse** is a type of poetry that does not rhyme, but which has a clear pattern of ten syllables in each line.
- This creates a rhythm in Shakespeare's **dialogue**.

### Why does Shakespeare use so much contrast and opposition in the play?

- Shakespeare **juxtaposes** moments of high drama and hectic action with quieter, more reflective scenes. For example, Capulet's noisy and hectic feast in Act I Scene 5 is followed by the love scene in Capulet's orchard in Act II Scene 1.
- This structure heightens the tension and makes a dramatic contrast. It emphasises how the sequence of events leads the two young lovers to their tragic ending.

## Five key quotations

1. Setting the scene: **'The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love ... Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage'** (Prologue. 9–12)
2. Reflecting on the past: **'Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?'** (Montague) (I.1.98)
3. Fast pace of the relationship: **'It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,/Too like the lightning.'** (Juliet) (II.2.118–20)
4. Impact of the speedily arranged marriage: **'Monday, ha, ha! Well, Wednesday is too soon,/A'Thursday let it be—a'Thursday, tell her'** (Capulet) (III.4.19–20)
5. The Friar's timely warning: **'Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast'** (II.3.94)

### Note it!

Shakespeare uses subtle twists in the **plot** to maintain tension. Think about how he constructs a way to ensure the Montagues are at the feast; how he ensures it is Romeo who kills Tybalt; the way the Friar is unable to reach Romeo with the message before Balthasar arrives.

## Exam focus

### How can I write about pace and time? AO2

Despite a number of tender moments, the action of the play moves fast. You can use this to comment on the structure of the drama.

Shakespeare uses characters such as Friar Lawrence to indicate the swift pace with which the lovers meet, fall in love and marry. He advises, 'Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast.' His warnings reflect the rapid manner in which Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline has transformed into love for Juliet. Shakespeare seems to show us that youth can make us act hastily and perhaps without thought.

Comment on a structural feature

Supporting quotation for the point

Inference about how pace is used

Develops point to show dramatic purpose

## Now you try!

Finish this paragraph to show a character behaving hastily. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

However, Shakespeare also shows us that it is not just the young who .....

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE Quick revision

1. Look at the calendar below. Work back through the play and collect as many quotations as you can that refer to time. Identify who makes the reference. Some examples have been given.
2. When you have found as many as you can:
  - a) decide in which Act the passing of time is most important
  - b) identify which character or characters are most anxious about the passing of time.

<b>Sunday</b>	<i>Romeo: 'Is the day so young?'</i>
<b>Monday</b>	<i>Friar Lawrence: 'The grey ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night'</i>
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	<i>The Prince: 'A glooming peace this morning with it brings'</i>

## Quick quiz

Answer these quick questions about the play's plot and structure.

1. Who tries to stop the fighting in Act I Scene 1?
2. Who is Romeo infatuated with at the start of the play?
3. Who visits Capulet to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage?
4. How do the Montagues find out about the Capulet feast?
5. Who asks Juliet, 'How stands your dispositions to be married?'?

6. Which member of the Capulet household recognises Romeo's voice at the feast?
7. When Romeo sees Juliet at her window, what does he compare her to?
8. What does Juliet promise to do the next morning?
9. Where should Juliet go to for the secret wedding?
10. Who has been waiting since 'The clock struck nine'?
11. Why does Benvolio suggest to Mercutio they should go indoors in Act III Scene 1?
12. Who calls Tybalt a 'rat-catcher'?
13. What curse does Mercutio make as he dies from his wounds?
14. What item of jewellery does Juliet send with the Nurse when she goes to find Romeo?
15. What day does Capulet initially plan the wedding for?
16. Which city is Romeo to travel to when he leaves Juliet?
17. Who does Juliet meet at Friar Lawrence's cell when she goes for advice?
18. Name two things Juliet is frightened of as she is about to take the potion.
19. Who fails to deliver Friar Lawrence's letter?
20. Who does Romeo fight outside the Capulet vault?

## Power paragraphs

**Write a paragraph** in response to **each of these questions**. For each, try to **use one quotation** you have learned from this section.

1. Why is Mercutio's death important to the plot?
2. In what ways is Friar Lawrence helpful or unhelpful to the young lovers?

## Exam practice

Re-read Juliet's speech at the beginning of Act III Scene 2.

What does this speech show about Juliet and her actions, thoughts and feelings? Write **two paragraphs** explaining your ideas. You could comment on:

- Juliet's impatience for the night and why she is waiting for Romeo
- how she compares Romeo to the heavens.