

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Prereading Activity
for
Romeo and Juliet
Plot Summaries
Act III

Directions: To help you better understand and follow Shakespeare's play, read the summary of specific scenes immediately before you begin to read the original. If you get lost during the scene, refer to the summary again.

Act III,
scene i

Sunday afternoon, immediately following the wedding, Benvolio, Mercutio, and several of the Montague's servants are in the public square. Benvolio urges Mercutio to get out of the sun, for the Capulets are out, and Benvolio fears another fight. But Mercutio puts Benvolio down for wanting to run from a fight.

Tybalt and other Capulets appear. Tybalt and Mercutio both want to pick a fight with each other and begin to taunt each other. Benvolio urges them either to fight out of sight or settle the dispute by talking. It doesn't work, and Mercutio and Tybalt draw their swords as Romeo appears.

Romeo tries to stop the fight, stepping between them. Thrusting beneath Romeo's arm, Tybalt stabs Mercutio fatally and then runs away. Although Mercutio makes a great act of dying, his friends think he's "just acting." When Romeo and the others realize that Mercutio is dying, it is too late. They take him into a neighboring house, where he soon dies.

Meanwhile Romeo believes that he has lost his courage because of his love for Juliet and has caused his friend's death. When Tybalt appears, Romeo, enraged, draws his sword and kills him. Soon the Prince and his men begin approaching, so Romeo flees.

Benvolio explains to the Prince, the Capulets, and the Montagues what has happened. Lady Capulet demands Romeo's life for slaying Tybalt. The Prince decides that Romeo should be banished rather than put to death.

Act III,
scene ii

Juliet waits for Romeo anxiously in her garden. The Nurse enters with the rope ladder crying "he's dead." At first Juliet thinks the Nurse means Romeo, but she discovers that Romeo has killed Tybalt and is to be banished. Juliet decides that Romeo's banishment is worse than news of the death of all her family. She sends the Nurse to find Romeo and have him come to say goodbye.

Romeo and Juliet: Act III Plot Summaries (continued)

*Act III,
scene iii*

Romeo, having sought sanctuary in Friar Laurence's cell, lies crying in the corner. Friar Laurence tells him that his sentence is banishment rather than death. Romeo, like Juliet, sees banishment as a more severe punishment because it will separate him from his wife. Romeo hides when the Nurse enters, but comes out of the corner when he learns that she has brought a message and a ring, as a token from Juliet. The friar scolds Romeo for his tears and tells him to go to Mantua, a neighboring city, and wait for an appropriate time to return when they can tell their families of the marriage and ask forgiveness of the Prince.

*Act III,
scene iv*

After midnight early Monday morning, Capulet agrees to the marriage of Juliet to Paris on Thursday.

*Act III,
scene v*

At dawn on Monday, Romeo slips out of Juliet's chamber and prepares to ride to Mantua. The Nurse enters, announcing that Lady Capulet is coming. The lovers part. Lady Capulet tells her daughter that she is to wed Paris on Thursday. Juliet refuses. When Lord Capulet enters and finds Juliet in tears, he thinks that she grieves for Tybalt. When Juliet refuses to marry Paris, Capulet threatens to drag her to the church or disown her, throwing her into the street to support herself.

After Juliet's parents storm out, the Nurse urges Juliet to go ahead and marry Paris. The Nurse points out that no one knows differently, and Romeo can't return to challenge the marriage. Juliet sends the Nurse to her parents, telling them that she has gone to Friar Laurence for confession and absolution. Instead, Juliet admits that she is going to the friar for advice.