

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Prereading Activity**  
for  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
*Plot Summaries*  
*Act IV*

**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 IV,*  
*scene i*

In Friar Laurence's cell on Monday, Paris comes to discuss with Friar Laurence the arrangements of the Thursday wedding. Juliet interrupts and pretends to have come to make confession. Because the confession needs to be heard in private, Paris plans to leave but first asks Juliet to "confess" that she loves him. Juliet phrases her responses to Paris cleverly so she remains true to Romeo while Paris presumes Juliet's love is directed towards him.

Friar Laurence tells Juliet that he knows of her grief—the death of her cousin, the desperation about Romeo, and the plans for her to marry Paris. Juliet wants a plan from the priest to prevent the marriage or she says she will kill herself. The friar recognizes that Juliet is indeed desperate enough to kill herself although he warns her that doing so would bring everlasting damnation to her soul. He develops a plan.

He gives her a potion made from the plants and herbs that he gathers. The friar tells Juliet to take it when she retires the night before the wedding. The potion will put her into a 42-hour sleep, but will make her family think that she is dead. The friar believes Juliet will take the potion Wednesday night and awaken Friday evening. The plan will give him two days to get the letter to Romeo. Once Juliet's family has buried her in the family tomb, Friar Laurence will come for her on Friday evening and help her escape to Mantua, where she can be with Romeo.

*Act IV,*  
*scene ii*

Meanwhile, all of the Capulet household is making preparations for the wedding feast. Capulet is pleased that Juliet has gone to confession. When she returns, she asks her father to forgive her and he does, thinking that she has agreed to marry Paris. Because of Lord Capulet's joy, he immediately decides to move the wedding ahead one day to Wednesday. Juliet asks the Nurse to help her select a dress to wear the next day.

*Act IV,  
scene iii*

Tuesday night, Juliet and the Nurse are in the process of selecting a dress for the wedding that Lord Capulet has moved to Wednesday. Lady Capulet enters and asks if they need any help. When Juliet says no, her mother and the Nurse leave. Juliet relates her fears in the long soliloquy. She says farewell to her family and is tempted to call them back. She wonders if the potion will work or whether it will poison her, for Friar Laurence might want her out of the way so he won't get into trouble for their marriage. She decides that the friar can be trusted after all. But then she speculates upon what will happen to her if she isn't rescued from the tomb. Will she die in there, be attacked by the ghosts, or simply go mad and kill herself anyway? She takes the potion and falls onto her bed.

*Act IV,  
scene iv*

During the night, the whole household continues making preparations for the wedding. At dawn on Wednesday, Capulet sends the Nurse to awaken Juliet for her wedding day.

*Act IV,  
scene v*

When the Nurse enters, she accuses Juliet of being lazy and wanting to stay in bed. When she shakes Juliet, she thinks that the girl is dead and alerts the entire household. Lady Capulet, Lord Capulet, and Paris all mourn for Juliet. Finally Friar Laurence enters and consoles the family, reminding them to rejoice, for Juliet's soul is in heaven. What was to be a day of celebration becomes a day of mourning.

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*Act V,*  
*scene i*

In Mantua, Romeo reveals that he has had a strange dream. In the dream, Juliet has found him dead, kissed him, and he revives, becoming an emperor. Balthasar comes with the news that Juliet is dead, for Balthasar saw the burial. He tries to comfort Romeo with the idea that Juliet's soul is at peace and in heaven.

Romeo doesn't want to believe Juliet is dead. He asks for horses, so he can return to Verona to investigate for himself. He asks if Friar Laurence has sent a letter, but the servant has none.

Romeo swears to be with Juliet that night, and he remembers a druggist who is shady enough to sell him poison. Romeo buys a small bottle of poison from the druggist. Although the selling of poison is against the laws of the town, the druggist sells it because he needs the money. Romeo heads for Verona, where he plans to drink the poison beside Juliet's body.

*Act V,*  
*scene ii*

Meanwhile, Friar John, whom Friar Laurence had sent to Mantua with a letter revealing the plan to Romeo, returns to Friar Laurence's cell. Friar John relates that he sought the help of another monk when he got to Mantua. But the other monk had been exposed to pestilence and, with Friar John, was isolated by the authorities. Having failed, Friar John returns to Verona with the letter. Friar Laurence realizes that Romeo will not be at the tomb when Juliet awakens, so he hurries to be there when she does and plans to hide Juliet in his cell until Romeo does come.

*Act V,*  
*scene iii*

Thursday night, Paris and a page come to visit Juliet's grave. Paris tells the page to stand lookout and whistle if anyone approaches.

Romeo and Balthasar arrive. Romeo gives the servant a letter for Friar Laurence and then commands the servant not to interfere, regardless of what he may see or hear. Balthasar doesn't leave. Instead, he hides to see what Romeo will do.

*Romeo and Juliet: Act V Plot Summaries (continued)*

Paris sees Romeo breaking into the tomb. Paris believes that Romeo has come to take revenge against the Capulets for being exiled. When Paris confronts Romeo, Romeo asks to be left alone. They fight and Romeo kills Paris. Romeo grants Paris's dying request to be placed beside Juliet.

When Romeo enters the tomb and sees Juliet's body, he recalls their love, takes the poison, and dies.

Friar Laurence, armed with tools to break into the tomb, arrives too late. He finds the bodies of Romeo and Paris. Hearing Juliet awaken, he goes to her and tries to get her out of the tomb. He tells her of the two deaths and offers to send her to a convent. Hearing the Prince's men on watch approaching, he exits.

Juliet realizes that Romeo has taken poison, but that his death was recent, for his lips are warm. Wanting to join him in death, Juliet tries to poison herself, first from the empty vial and then by kissing Romeo. It doesn't work, so she takes Romeo's dagger, stabs herself, and dies.

The watch comes and realizes that someone may still be around. Some of the guards go to get the Prince while others enter with Balthasar and another group with Friar Laurence.

When the Prince enters, he demands an explanation. Having heard the noise, Lord and Lady Capulet and later Lord Montague enter. All realize that Juliet has killed herself. Montague reveals that his wife has died from grief over Romeo's exile.

Friar Laurence then explains the secret marriage, the banishment, and his plan to have Juliet only seem dead so she could be reunited with Romeo. He also explains why the plan didn't work. Both Balthasar's testimony and Romeo's letter demonstrate the truth of the friar's story. As the sun is about to dawn, the Prince points out the consequences of the feud to both Capulet and Montague and that no further punishment is necessary. The two men put aside the feud and promise to raise a statue to Romeo and Juliet to remind the town of the children's fate.