

# ROMEO & JULIET | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S  
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Under orders from the Prince of Verona, the Montagues (Romeo's family) have agreed to a truce with their arch-enemies, the Capulets (Juliet's family).

Act III begins on a super-hot summer day. Romeo's friends Mercutio and Benvolio are walking around when they run into a bunch of Capulets led by Tybalt, Juliet's cousin.

Two other things you should know:

- 1) Everyone in this scene is still a teenager, and
- 2) Romeo and Juliet have literally just gotten married... in secret. No one else knows yet.

Enter TYBALT, PETRUCHIO, and others.

**Benvolio**  
By my head, here comes the Capulets.

**Mercutio**  
By my heel, I care not.

**Tybalt**  
Follow me close, for I will speak to them. Gentlemen, good-e'en°, a word with one of you.

**good-e'en**  
good evening

**Mercutio**  
And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something, make it a word and a blow.

**Tybalt**  
You shall find me apt° enough to that, sir, an° you will give me occasion°.

**apt**  
eager  
**an**  
if  
**occasion**  
cause, provocation

**Mercutio**  
Could you not take some occasion without giving?

**Tybalt**  
Mercutio, thou consortest° with Romeo.

**consortest**  
hang out

**Mercutio**  
'Consort'°? What, dost thou make us minstrels? An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick°, here's that shall make you dance. Zounds, 'consort'!

**consort**  
it also means "perform music with" Ha, ha!  
**fiddlestick**  
violin bow--but he's clearly talking about his sword

**Benvolio**  
We talk here in the public haunt of men. Either withdraw unto some private place, Or reason coldly° of your grievances, Or else depart. Here all eyes gaze on us.

**coldly**  
calmly (as opposed to "hotly," which would involve fighting)

**Mercutio**  
Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze. I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I.

Enter ROMEO.

**Tybalt**  
Well, peace be with you, sir, here comes my man. Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford No better term than this: thou art a villain°.

**villain**  
a low-down, wicked person (This was a serious insult-- definitely "fighting words")

**Romeo**  
Tybalt, the reason I have to love thee Doth much excuse the appertaining° rage To such a greeting. Villain am I none, Therefore farewell: I see thou knowest me not.

**appertaining**  
usual, appropriate (Tybalt's rage at seeing Romeo is "appertaining" because the families hate each other)

**Tybalt**  
Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries That thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw.

**Romeo**  
I do protest I never injured thee, But love thee better than thou canst devise° Till thou shalt know the reason of my love. And so, good Capulet, whose name I tender° As dearly as mine own, be satisfied.

**devise**  
understand  
**tender**  
value

**Mercutio**  
O calm, dishonorable, vile submission! 'Alla stoccado° carries it away! Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

*Draws.*

**Alla stoccado**  
a fancy Italian fencing term for jabbing at someone with your sword

**Tybalt**  
What wouldst thou have with me?

**Mercutio**  
Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives.

**rapier**  
a long thin sharp-pointed sword designed chiefly for thrusting, often used in fencing

**Tybalt**  
I am for you.

*Draws.*

**Romeo**  
Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

**passado**  
another fancy Italian fencing term for jabbing at someone with your sword (They had a lot of words for this--and a lot of swords!)

**Mercutio**  
Come, sir, your 'passado°'!

*They fight.*

## Notice the way each character speaks.

Start with Mercutio:

- Are his phrases long or short?
- Do they "want" to be said quickly or slowly?

Now focus on the sounds that begin each of Mercutio's words (like in the insult packet!).

How would you describe those sounds?

Soft? Hard? Round? Sharp?

Do they work better when your mouth is more closed or more open?

**DO THEY WANT TO BE SPIT OUT? GROWLED? POPPED?**

Do they stay the same throughout the scene or do they change?



Do the same thing for the other characters. What do you learn about each of them from the way they speak?



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You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write

**ACT IT OUT**

Talk about it

Draw

THINK ABOUT IT

... up to you!

We often talk in SIP about *objectives* (what the character wants) and *tactics* (how the character tries to get it)...

- What is each character's objective in this scene?
  - Does any one get what they want?
  - Does anyone totally fail?
- What are each character's tactics?
  - Why do the successful tactics work?
  - Why do the unsuccessful tactics not work?

You may have noticed that the first part of the scene is in prose (normal speech), but the second part, after Benvolio says "We talk here in the public haunt of men," switches to verse (with a more or less steady rhythm from line to line). Does the switch from prose to verse change the scene's rhythm? How?

How would you stage this scene?

Would it be a wide-open stage, or would the actors be in close quarters?

What time period would it be, if you want to be specific about that?

Where would you set it, if you want to have a specific place?

What would the *action* look like?

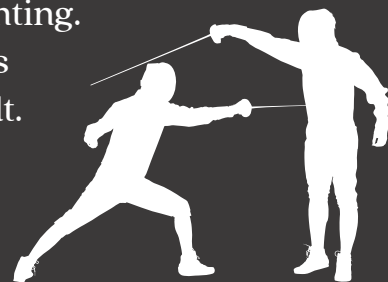
Try rewriting the dialogue in your own words, but keeping the meaning of each line basically the same. (You don't need to use fancy Italian fencing words—just think about the intent of each line and think of how you or someone you know might put it.)

What if this were a musical? Or a rap battle? Or a dance-off? Or... the lead-in to a really intense game of chess?

Tybalt and Mercutio end up fighting. Then, (*\*spoiler alert!\**) Tybalt kills Mercutio and Romeo kills Tybalt.

It's a *mess*.

This play is an absolute *mess*.



- Do you think they went into the scene expecting an actual fight?
- If not, then how did they wind up at that point?
- Could anything have stopped them?
- What would you have done in that situation if you were Mercutio or Tybalt?
- What if you were Benvolio? Or Romeo?

**WHAT WOULD THE SCENE LOOK LIKE AS A COMIC BOOK?**

Stan Lee, eat your heart out!



Do these characters remind you of anyone you know?