

ROMEO AND JULIET | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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

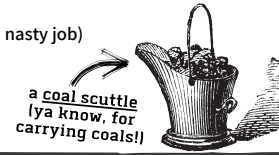
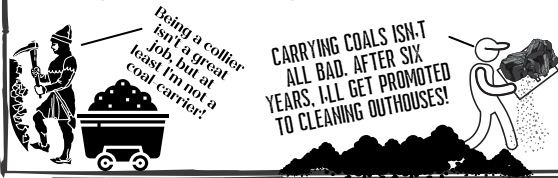


SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona, where we lay our scene... in this case, the *first* scene!

Long story short, the Capulets and the Montagues don't like each other very much; they're always getting into fights over nothing. That's it. Have fun!



The Shakespeare

Enter SAMSON and GREGORY, with swords and bucklers, of the house of Capulet.

SAMSON
Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.

GREGORY
No, for then we should be colliers.

SAMSON
I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.

GREGORY
Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of the collar.

SAMSON
I strike quickly being moved.

GREGORY
But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMSON
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.

SAMSON
A dog of that house shall move me to stand.

GREGORY
The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

SAMSON
'Tis all one.

GREGORY
Draw thy tool, here comes of the house of Montagues (They draw.)

OH, THOSE WORDS SOUND SORT OF THE SAME THESE GUYS MUST BE SO SMART AND FUNNY AND POPULAR!



Enter two other Servingmen, one of them ABRAHAM, of the house of Montague.

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

GREGORY
How, turn thy back and run?

SAMSON
Fear me not.

GREGORY
No, marry, I fear thee!

SAMSON
Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin.

GREGORY
I will frown as I pass by and let them take it as they list.

SAMSON
Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

ABRAHAM
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMSON
I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAHAM
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMSON (aside to Gregory)
Is the law of our side if I say 'Ay'?

GREGORY (aside to Samson)
No.



SAMSON
No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY
Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAHAM
Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMSON
But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAHAM
No better.

SAMSON
Well, sir.

Enter BENVOLIO.

GREGORY (aside to Samson)
Say 'better'. Here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

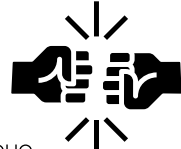
SAMSON
Yes, better, sir.

ABRAHAM
You lie.

SAMSON
Draw if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing blow.

They fight.

BENVOLIO (draws)
Part, fools!
Put up your swords, you know not what you do.



The Translation

SAMSON and GREGORY, servants of the Capulet family, enter carrying swords and small shields.

SAMSON
Gregory, I swear, we can't let them humiliate us. We won't take their garbage.

GREGORY (teasing Samson)
No, because then we'd be garbagemen.

SAMSON
What I mean is, if they make us angry we'll pull out our swords.

GREGORY
Maybe you should focus on pulling yourself out of trouble.

SAMSON
I hit hard when I'm angry.

GREGORY
But it's hard to make you angry.

GREGORY
Angry enough to run away. You won't stand and fight.

SAMSON
A dog from that house will make me angry enough to take a stand.

GREGORY
The fight is between our masters, and we men who work for them.

SAMSON
It's all the same.

GREGORY
Pull out your weapon now. These guys are from the house of Montague.

ABRAHAM and another servant of the Montagues enter.

SAMSON
I have my naked sword out. Fight, I'll back you up.

GREGORY
How will you back me up—by turning your back and running away?

SAMSON
Don't worry about me.

GREGORY
No, really, I *am* worried about you!

SAMSON
Let's not break the law by starting a fight. Let them start something.

GREGORY
I'll frown at them as they pass by, and they can react however they want.

SAMSON
You mean however they dare. I'll bite my thumb at them. That's an insult, and if they let me get away with it they'll be dishonored.

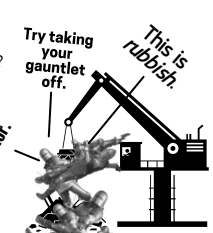
ABRAHAM
Hey, are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMSON
I'm biting my thumb.

ABRAHAM
Are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMSON (aside to Gregory)
Is the law on our side if I say yes?

GREGORY (aside to Samson)
No.



SAMSON
No, sir, I'm not biting my thumb at you, but I am biting my thumb.

GREGORY
Are you trying to start a fight?

ABRAHAM
Start a fight? No, sir.

SAMSON
If you want to fight, I'm your man. My employer is as good as yours.

ABRAHAM
But he's not better than mine.

SAMSON
Well then.

BENVOLIO enters.

GREGORY (aside to Samson)
Say "better." Here comes one of my employer's relatives.

SAMSON
Yes, "better," sir.

ABRAHAM
You lie.

SAMSON
Pull out your swords, if you're men. Gregory, remember how to slash.

They fight.

BENVOLIO (pulling out his sword)
Break it up, you fools. Put your swords away. You don't know what you're doing.



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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!



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

The Shakespeare... continued!

Enter TYBALT.

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?
(Draws.) Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,
Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT

What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word
As I hate hell, all Montagues and thee.
Have at thee, coward. (They fight.)

Enter three or four Citizens with clubs or partisans.

CITIZENS

Clubs, bills and partisans! Strike, beat them down,
Down with the Capulets, down with the Montagues!

Enter old CAPULET in his gown, and his WIFE.

CAPULET

What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

CAPULET'S WIFE

A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword?

Enter old MONTAGUE and his WIFE.

CAPULET

My sword, I say. Old Montague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

MONTAGUE

Thou villain Capulet!— Hold me not, let me go.

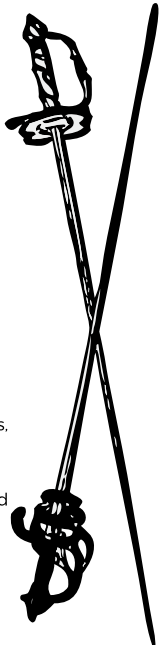
MONTAGUE'S WIFE

Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

Enter PRINCE Escalus with his train.

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel—
Will they not hear? What ho, you men, you beasts,
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
With purple fountains issuing from your veins;
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
Three civil brawls bred of an airy word,
By thee, Old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave-beseeming ornaments,
To wield old partisans in hands as old,
Cankered with peace, to part your cankered hate.
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time all the rest depart away.
You, Capulet, shall go along with me.
And, Montague, come you this afternoon,
To know our farther pleasure in this case,
To old Freetown, our common judgement-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.



The Translation... continued!

TYBALT enters.

TYBALT

What? You've pulled out your sword to fight with these
worthless servants? Turn around, Benvolio, and look at
the man who's going to kill you.

BENVOLIO

I'm only trying to keep the peace. Either put away your
sword or use it to help me stop this fight.

TYBALT

What? You take out your sword and then talk about
peace? I hate the word peace like I hate hell, all
Montagues, and you. Let's go at it, coward!

BENVOLIO and TYBALT fight. Three or four CITIZENS of
the watch enter with clubs and spears.

CITIZENS

Use your clubs and spears! Hit them! Beat them down!
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

CAPULET enters in his gown, together with his wife,
LADY CAPULET.

CAPULET

What's this noise? Give me my long sword! Come on!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, you need a crutch—why are you asking for a
sword?

MONTAGUE enters with his sword drawn, together with
his wife, LADY MONTAGUE.

CAPULET

I want my sword. Old Montague is here, and he's waving
his sword around just to make me mad.

MONTAGUE

Capulet, you villain! (his wife holds him back) Don't stop
me. Let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

You're not taking one step toward an enemy.

PRINCE Escalus enters with his escort.

PRINCE

You rebels! Enemies of the peace! Men who turn their
weapons against their own neighbors—They won't listen
to me!—You there! You men, you beasts, who satisfy your
anger with fountains of each others' blood! I'll have you
tortured if you don't put down your swords and listen to
your angry prince. Three times now riots have broken out
in this city, all because of a casual word from you, old
Capulet and Montague. Three times the peace has been
disturbed in our streets, and Verona's old citizens have
had to take off their dress clothes and pick up rusty old
spears to part you. If you ever cause a disturbance on our
streets again, you'll pay for it with your lives. Everyone
else, go away for now. You, Capulet, come with me.
Montague, this afternoon come to old Free-town, the
court where I deliver judgments, and I'll tell you what else
I want from you. As for the rest of you, I'll say this once
more: go away or be put to death.



Here's a bit of the First Folio (1623).
In Shakespeare's time, there weren't
really spelling rules.* But spelling also
wasn't random: You could spell the
same word differently, based on *how*
you wanted someone to say it!

So: What's the difference for you
between saying "dog" and "dogge"?

* Shakespeare actually spelled his own name a
few different ways, and none of them was the
way we write it now!

THE CITIZENS

...clearly don't actually speak their
"line" in unison, as if they were
reciting the pledge of allegiance.
- How would you have the citizens
divide these words up?
- Are these lines just a suggestion,
or do you think Shakespeare wants
people to say them as written?

“ Your lives shall pay the ”
forfeit of the peace

Spoiler alert!

The Prince's threat doesn't
actually work. By the end of this
play, four young people will be
dead as a result of his inability to
control the feud between these
families, and the families' inability
to stop feuding.

The Prince's **objective**
is to stop the violence...
but his **tactic** doesn't work.

- Why do you think it doesn't work?
- If you were the Prince's advisor, how would you tell him to handle the situation in this scene?
- "If you fight, you die" doesn't seem to be an effective approach in this play. Can you think of a strategy that might actually stop the violence?

"REMEMBER THY SWASHING BLOW!"

What is Gregory's "swashing blow"?

A fancy fencing attack?

A tricky wrestling move?

A distracting insult?

Something else??



Benvolio and Tybalt are main
characters in the play. The other
fighters are not.

How would you
make Benvolio and Tybalt
stand out to the audience?

Or would you
have them
blend in?



This scene happens in
public... but where,
exactly?

Brainstorm some
possible locations (don't
limit yourself to the
stage!). How does the
setting change the way
the scene works?

