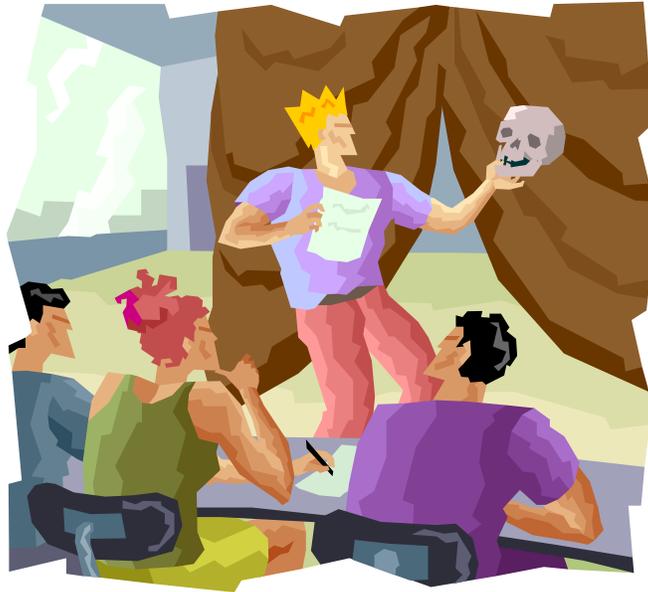


# SHAKESPEARE SOLVED

## **THE TRAGEDY OF ROMEO AND JULIET**



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**THE PLAY'S THE THING**

I love Shakespeare. I'll bet you love Shakespeare, too. After all, we're English teachers. We love the richness of Shakespeare's language, the force of his characters, and the romance of the Elizabethan stage. Many of us became English teachers just so we could spend all day introducing eager young readers to the joys of Shakespeare.

So why don't kids "get" Shakespeare? We're good teachers. We do all the right things, like act out the important scenes, help students translate the writing into modern English, maybe show clips from movie versions of the plays. Yet for many students, nothing really works the way we'd like.

Well, the problem is solved. At their essence, Shakespeare's plays are all about what problems he has set up for the main characters, and how the other characters help to solve those problems. Even students who couldn't care less about sonnets and soliloquies enjoy approaching a play as a game, a game where they get to BE Shakespeare.

Rather than laboring to get students to analyze characters, the Shakespeare Solved approach gives students the point of view of the playwright. What must this character do next to push the plot forward? Who makes the next move on the game board? With Shakespeare Solved, all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

Try our approach, and *your* problems can be solved like Shakespeare's.

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**ACT I: PROLOGUE**

Complete the paraphrase of the prologue to Act I.

Two \_\_\_\_\_, both \_\_\_\_\_,  
 In fair Verona, where \_\_\_\_\_,  
 From old \_\_\_\_\_ switch to new \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Where \_\_\_\_\_ blood makes \_\_\_\_\_ hands unclean.  
 From \_\_\_\_\_ of these two \_\_\_\_\_  
 A pair of \_\_\_\_\_ lovers take their life;  
 Whose \_\_\_\_\_ pitiful \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do with their death \_\_\_\_\_ their parents' \_\_\_\_\_.  
 The \_\_\_\_\_ of their doomed love,  
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
 Which, \_\_\_\_\_ for their children's \_\_\_\_\_, nothing could remove,  
 Is now the two hours' \_\_\_\_\_ of our stage;  
 The which if you \_\_\_\_\_ carefully,  
 What here shall miss, our acting will \_\_\_\_\_.

Can you imagine going to a movie that opens with some guys coming on screen and telling the audience everything that's going to happen? Why would anyone stay to watch? Well, that's pretty much what Shakespeare does in the Prologue to Act I of *Romeo and Juliet*. Sure, there's lots of great language, and it's cool that it's a sonnet, but why tell everybody what's going to happen?

Today, of course, most people know the story pretty well. But so did audiences in Shakespeare's time, because the story isn't new. Remember Pyramus and Thisbe? Shakespeare isn't really giving anything away in the Prologue. What he does do, however, is set up a problem. How do playwrights solve problems? They use characters.

Characters in a dramatic work are totally at the mercy of the writer—they can only do and say what the writer allows them to. The main characters in *Romeo and Juliet* are obviously, well, Romeo and Juliet. Everyone else exists to help Shakespeare solve the problem he has created between these two. It's almost like he paints himself into corners just to see how creatively he can work out of them. Let's look at the first problem and some characters that help to solve it.

**THREE CIVIL BRAWLS**

Complete the paraphrase of Prince Escalus's speech in Act I, Scene I, lines 83-105.

Rebellious subjects, \_\_\_\_\_ to peace,  
 Whose swords are stained with your \_\_\_\_\_ blood,--  
 Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you \_\_\_\_\_,  
 That \_\_\_\_\_ the fire of your \_\_\_\_\_  
 With \_\_\_\_\_ pouring from your veins,  
 I'll punish you with \_\_\_\_\_ unless you  
 Throw your \_\_\_\_\_ down,  
 And hear my \_\_\_\_\_ sentence.  
 Three civil brawls, started because of \_\_\_\_\_,  
 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,  
 Have \_\_\_\_\_ disturb'd the quiet of our streets,  
 And made Verona's \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cast aside their \_\_\_\_\_,  
 To take up \_\_\_\_\_ as in olden days,  
 \_\_\_\_\_ with peace, to break up your \_\_\_\_\_:  
 If ever you disturb our streets again,  
 You'll pay the price of it with \_\_\_\_\_.  
 For this time, \_\_\_\_\_ go away:  
 You Capulet; shall \_\_\_\_\_ with me:  
 And, Montague, \_\_\_\_\_ this afternoon,  
 To find out \_\_\_\_\_ in this case,  
 To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.  
 Once more, on pain of death, \_\_\_\_\_ leave.

Here Shakespeare lays out the first problem in the play. Before Romeo and Juliet can fall in love, they must meet. What is standing in the way of their meeting at this point in the play?

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How do you predict Shakespeare will solve this problem?

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**THE PLOT THICKENS**

What do we learn in Act I, Scene, I, lines 168-232?

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Does this help to solve Shakespeare's problem of bringing Romeo and Juliet together? Explain.

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Paraphrase Capulet's speech in lines 13-19.

And too soon \_\_\_\_\_ are those who so \_\_\_\_\_ early  
All my \_\_\_\_\_ but she are \_\_\_\_\_.  
She is my last \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_:  
But \_\_\_\_\_ her, gentle Paris, get her heart,  
My \_\_\_\_\_ to the marriage is \_\_\_\_\_;  
If she \_\_\_\_\_, so far as she has \_\_\_\_\_  
Then I will \_\_\_\_\_ and give you my \_\_\_\_\_.

Does this help to solve Shakespeare's problem of bringing Romeo and Juliet together? How?

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What do we learn in Act I, Scene III. Lines 75-105?

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Now list three problems Shakespeare has created to keep Romeo and Juliet apart.

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**A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS**

By the end of the first Act, Shakespeare has indeed brought Romeo and Juliet together, despite the many obstacles established earlier. Complete the chart below to show what role other characters played in solving the problem.

<b>Character</b>	<b>What s/he does</b>	<b>Quotes (w/line numbers)</b>
Rosaline	Draws Romeo to the Capulet's feast where he meets Juliet	
Capulet servingman		
		"This night I hold an old accustomed feast... 1:2, lines 20-23
	Convinces Romeo to crash the Capulet party	
Lady Capulet		