Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

# Romeo and Juliet

written by

## William Shakespeare

All text is copyright of the author and / or the illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

## CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

ESCALUS, *Prince of Verona.*
PARIS, *a young nobleman, kinsman to the Prince.*

MOUNTAGUE, *head of the Veronese family at feud with the Capulets.*
MOUNTAGUE'S WIFE.
ROMEO, *son of the Mountagues.*
BENVOLIO, *nephew to Mountague and friend to Romeo.*
MERCUTIO, *kinsman to the Prince and friend to Romeo.*

CAPULET, *head of the Veronese family at feud with the Mountagues.*
CAPULET'S WIFE.
JULIET, *daughter of the Capulets.*
TYBALT, *nephew to Capulet's wife.*
PETRUCHIO, *friend of Tybalt.*
COUSIN CAPULET, *an old gentleman.*
NURSE *to Juliet.*

FRIAR LAWRENCE, *Franciscan confessor to Romeo and Juliet.*
FRIAR JOHN, *another Franciscan friar.*

APOTHECARY.
PAGE *to Paris.*
ABRAM, *servant to Mountague.*
BALTHASAR, *servant to Romeo.*
PETER, *a Capulet servant attending the nurse.*
SAMPSON, GREGORY, ANTHONY, POTPAN — *Servants of Capulet.*
SIMON CATLING, HUGH REBECK, JAMES SOUNDPOST — *Musicians.*
WATCHMEN.
CITIZENS OF VERONA.
MASQUERS.
PAGES.
SERVANTS.
TORCH-BEARERS.

CHORUS.

*The Prologue.*

*Enter* CHORUS.

CHORUS Two households, both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes,
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life:
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which, if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.[1]
[*Exit.*

## ACT I, SCENE I.

*Verona. A public place.*

*Enter* SAMPSON *and* GREGORY *of the house of* CAPULET, *with swords and bucklers.*

SAMPSON Gregory, on my word we'll not carry coals.
GREGORY No, for then we should be colliers.
SAMPSON I mean, if we be in choler, we'll draw.
GREGORY Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.
SAMPSON I strike quickly, being moved.
GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.
SAMPSON A dog of the house of Mountague moves me.
GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand: therefore if thou art moved thou runn'st away.
SAMPSON A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take the wall of any man or maid of Mountague's.

GREGORY That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.[2]

SAMPSON 'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker vessels,[3] are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Mountague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.[4]

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

SAMPSON 'Tis all one; I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men, I will be cruel[5] with the maids: I will cut off their heads.

GREGORY The heads of the maids?

SAMPSON Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMPSON Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

GREGORY 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor John.[6] Draw thy tool: here comes two of the house of Mountagues.

*Enter* ABRAM *and another* SERVANT.

SAMPSON My naked weapon is out: quarrel; I will back thee.

GREGORY How? Turn thy back and run?

SAMPSON Fear me not.

GREGORY No, marry: I fear thee!

SAMPSON 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.

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

ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON [*aside to Gregory:*] Is the law of our side if I say ay?

GREGORY No.

SAMPSON [*to Abram:*] No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

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

ABRAM No better.
SAMPSON Well, sir.

*Enter* BENVOLIO *on one side,* TYBALT *on the other.*

GREGORY [*aside to Sampson, on seeing Tybalt:*] Say 'better': here comes one of my master's kinsmen.
SAMPSON [*to Abram:*] Yes, better, sir.
ABRAM You lie.
SAMPSON Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy washing blow. [*They fight.*
BENVOLIO [*drawing:*] Part, fools!
Put up your swords; you know not what you do.[7]
TYBALT What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?[8]
Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death.
BENVOLIO I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword,[9]
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 Mountagues, and thee:
Have at thee, coward.

*They fight. Enter three or four* CITIZENS *with clubs or partisans, and an* OFFICER.

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

*Enter old* CAPULET *in his gown, and his* WIFE.

CAPULET What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!
C.'S WIFE A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword?

*Enter old* MOUNTAGUE *and his* WIFE.

CAPULET My sword, I say! Old Mountague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.
MOUNT. Thou villain Capulet! – Hold me not, let me go.
M.'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-stainèd 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 movèd Prince.
Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet and Mountague,
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, Mountague, come you this afternoon,
To know our farther pleasure in this case,
To old Freetown,[10] our common judgment-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

[*Exeunt all but Mountague, his wife, and Benvolio.*

MOUNT. Who set this ancient quarrel new abroach?
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

BENVOLIO Here were the servants of your adversary
And yours, close fighting ere I did approach:
I drew to part them; in the instant came
The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,
Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,
He swung about his head, and cut the winds,
Who, nothing hurt withal, hissed him in scorn.
While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,
Came more and more, and fought on part and part,
Till the Prince came, who parted either part.[11]

M.'S WIFE O where is Romeo? Saw you him today?
Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

BENVOLIO Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun
Peered forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad,
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore[12]
That westward rooteth from this city's side,
So early walking did I see your son:
Towards him I made, but he was ware of me,

And stole into the covert of the wood.
I, measuring his affections by my own,
Which then most sought where most might not be found,
Being one too many by my weary self,
Pursued my humour, not pursuing his,[13]
And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me.

MOUNT. Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night.
Black and portentous must this humour prove,
Unless good counsel may the cause remove.

BENVOLIO My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

MOUNT. I neither know it, nor can learn of him.

BENVOLIO Have you impórtuned him by any means?

MOUNT. Both by myself and many other friends:
But he, his own affections' counsellor,
Is to himself – I will not say how true –
But to himself so secret and so close,
So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious worm
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun.
Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow,
We would as willingly give cure as know.

*Enter* ROMEO.

BENVOLIO See where he comes. So please you, step aside:
I'll know his grievance or be much denied.

MOUNT. I would thou wert so happy by thy stay
To hear true shrift. Come, madam, let's away.

[*Exeunt Mountague and his wife.*

BENVOLIO Good morrow, cousin.
ROMEO Is the day so young?
BENVOLIO But new struck nine.
ROMEO Ay me, sad hours seem long.
Was that my father that went hence so fast?
BENVOLIO It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?
ROMEO Not having that which, having, makes them short.
BENVOLIO In love?
ROMEO Out –
BENVOLIO Of love?
ROMEO Out of her favour where I am in love.
BENVOLIO Alas that Love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!
ROMEO Alas that Love, whose view is muffled still,
Should without eyes see pathways to his will![14]
Where shall we dine? – O me! What fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all:
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:
Why, then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything of nothing first create![15]
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
Dost thou not laugh?
BENVOLIO No, coz, I rather weep.
ROMEO Good heart, at what?
BENVOLIO At thy good heart's oppression.
ROMEO Why, such is love's transgression.
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
Which thou wilt propagate, to have it pressed
With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.
Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears.
What is it else? A madness most discreet,
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.

Farewell, my coz.
BENVOLIO Soft, I will go along;
And if you leave me so, you do me wrong.
ROMEO Tut, I have lost myself, I am not here,
This is not Romeo, he's some other where.
BENVOLIO Tell me in sadness, who is that you love?
ROMEO What, shall I groan and tell thee?
BENVOLIO Groan? Why no:
But sadly tell me, who?
ROMEO Bid a sick man in sadness make his will –
A word ill urged to one that is so ill.
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.
BENVOLIO I aimed so near when I supposed you loved.
ROMEO A right good markman; and she's fair I love.
BENVOLIO A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.
ROMEO Well, in that hit you miss. She'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow: she hath Dian's wit,
And, in strong proof of chastity well armed,
From Love's weak childish bow she lives unharmed.
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
O, she is rich in beauty, only poor
That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store.
BENVOLIO Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?
ROMEO She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste:
For beauty, starved with her severity,
Cuts beauty off from all posterity.
She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair,
To merit bliss by making me despair:[16]
She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow
Do I live dead, that live to tell it now.
BENVOLIO Be ruled by me: forget to think of her.
ROMEO O, teach me how I should forget to think.
BENVOLIO By giving liberty unto thine eyes:
Examine other beauties.
ROMEO 'Tis the way
To call hers (exquisite) in question more.
These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,

Being black, put us in mind they hide the fair.
He that is strucken blind cannot forget
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost.
Show me a mistress that is passing fair:
What doth her beauty serve but as a note
Where I may read who passed that passing fair?[17]
Farewell, thou canst not teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.[18]

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE 2.

*The same; later in the day.*

*Enter* CAPULET, *County* PARIS, *and Capulet's* SERVINGMAN.

CAPULET But Mountague is bound as well as I,
In penalty alike; and 'tis not hard, I think,
For men so old as we to keep the peace.

PARIS Of honourable reckoning are you both,
And pity 'tis you lived at odds so long.
But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?

CAPULET But saying o'er what I have said before:
My child is yet a stranger in the world;
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years:
Let two more summers wither in their pride
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

PARIS Younger than she are happy mothers made.

CAPULET And too soon marred are those so early made.
Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she;
She is the hopeful lady of my earth.
But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart;
My will to her consent is but a part;
And, she agreed, within her scope of choice
Lies my consent and fair-according voice.
This night I hold an old-accustomed feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest,
Such as I love; and you among the store,
One more most welcome, makes my number more.