Name: \_\_\_\_**ANSWER KEY**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Romeo and Juliet- Act 1 Guided Notes

**Prologue, spoken by the Chorus**

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| 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 foesA pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;Whose misadventured piteous overthrowsDoth with their death bury their parents’ strife.The fearful passage of their death-marked loveAnd the continuance of their parents’ rage,Which, but their children’s end, naught could remove,Is now the two hours’ traffic of our stage;The which, if you will with patient ears attend,What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. | Context: Two wealthy familiesSetting: Verona, ItalyOld grudges lead to new, bloody conflictsThe children of these two families will fall in love and take their own lives, which ends the feud.All of this will be explained during the next two hours of this play |

**Act 1, Scene 1 Summary**

* A fight breaks out between the Montagues and Capulets
* Prince Escalus, ruler of Verona, sternly warns the Montagues and Capulets not to fight again
* A melancholy Romeo is questioned by his cousin, Benvolio, who learns that Romeo is upset and forlorn due to unrequited love

**The First Conflict**

* Sampson and Gregory, servants of the Capulets, discuss how they hate their enemies, the Montagues
* When Abram and another servingman from the house of Montague walk by, Sampson provokes them by biting his thumb (an insult!)
* Abram: “Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?” (1.1.45).
* Sampson regrets this and replies: “No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir” (1.1.51-52).

**The Brawl**

* Sampson challenges Abram: “Draw if you be men.—Gregory, remember thy washing blow” (1.1.63-64).
* Benvolio, a Montague, tries to break up the fight: “Part, fools! Put up your swords. You know not what you do” (1.1.65-66).
* Tybalt, a Capulet, enters and directly challenges Benvolio: “What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death” (1.1.67-68).

**Foil Characters**

* A **foil** is a **character** who contrasts with another **character** (usually the protagonist) in order to highlight particular qualities of the other **character**
* We see how Benvolio is a foil of Tybalt in this exchange:
* 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!” (1.1.69-73).
* Lord Capulet and Lord Montague also arrive on the scene

**Prince Escalus’s Threat**

* Prince Escalus arrives to break up the street brawl; he delivers a **monologue**, or extensive speech by one actor, that offers context for the fight and expresses his anger
* “Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, profaners of this neighbor-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” (1.1.83-87).
* He states that the Capulets and Montagues use violence and bloodshed to quell their inner anger
* “Three civil brawls bred of an airy word by thee, old Capulet, and Montague, have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets” (1.1.91-93).
* This brawl is the third public disturbance lately
* “If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace” (1.1.98-99).
* What is the punishment for those who are caught fighting again?

**Where was Romeo?**

* When Lady Montague asks where Romeo is, Benvolio reports that Romeo has been avoiding him
* Lord Montague adds that “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” (1.1.134-136).
* How do Montague’s words characterize his son?
* Romeo also “shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out, and makes himself an artificial night” (1.1.142-143).
* This is the first reference to **night**, and important symbol
* Pay attention to the juxtaposition of dark and light

**Romeo’s Explanation**

* Romeo tells Benvolio he is gloomy because he is “our of her favor where I am in love” (1.1.173).
* He does not understand why this girl (later identified as Rosaline) does not love him back
* To explain his conflicted emotions, Romeo uses **oxymorons**, a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction
* Romeo: “Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate, O anything of nothing first create! O heavy lightness, serious vanity, misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!” (1.1.181-184).
* Romeo is quite depressed: “Tut, I have lost myself, I am not here. This is not Romeo. He’s some other where” (1.1.204-205).
* Benvolio offers some advice: “Be ruled by me. Forget to think of her” (1.1.233).

**Act 1, Scene 2 Summary**

* Count Paris, a proper and wealthy suitor, expresses interest in marrying Capulet’s only daughter, Juliet
* Capulet invites him to a masquerade party later that night
* Capulet gives his servant a guest list and asks him to deliver invitations
* The servant cannot read, and asks Romeo and Benvolio to read the list for him
* They find out that Rosaline is invited to the Capulet party and they plan to crash it

**Count Paris’s Charm**

* Count Paris: “But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?” (1.2.6)
* Capulet: “By 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” (1.2.7-11).
* How old is Juliet?
* Capulet wants to delay her marriage two more years to let her mature
* Paris: “Younger than she are happy mothers made.”
* Capulet: “And too soon marred are those so early made…She’s the hopeful lady of my earth, but woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart; My will to her consent is but a part” (1.2.11-17).
* Again, Capulet wants to delay Juliet’s wedding, but approves of Paris and says he can marry Juliet if he wins her heart

**Capulet’s Invitations**

* Capulet invites Paris to his “old accustomed feast” later that evening, where he might woo Juliet (1.2.20).
* Capulet then instructs a servingman: “Go, sirrah, trudge about through fair Verona, find those persons out whose names are written there, and to them say my house and welcome on their pleasure stay” (1.2.35-38).
* Servingman: “I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here write. I must to the learned”(1.2.43-45).
* The servingman reveals he cannot read and will need some help

**“I Pray, Sir, Can You Read?”**

* The servingman asks Benvolio and Romeo, not knowing they are Montagues, if they can read the invitation list
* Romeo reads the list and finds out that his friend Mercutio and his love, Rosaline, are invited to the party
* Servingman: “My master is the great rich Capulet, and, if you be not of the house of Montague, I pray come and crush a cup of wine” (1.2.85-88).
* The servingman accidentally invites them
* Benvolio persuades Romeo to go to the party, where he will help Romeo get over Rosaline

**Act 1, Scene 3 Summary**

* Lady Capulet informs her daughter Juliet that Paris intends to win her heart and propose
* Juliet says she is not interested in marrying, but she will consider Paris if her parents wish her to

**Impending Marriage**

* The Nurse reminisces about raising a young Juliet, and laughs about memories involving her now deceased husband and Juliet as a toddler
* The Nurse says Juliet was “the prettiest babe that e’er I nursed. An I might live to see thee married once, I have my wish” (1.3.65-67).
* Lady Capulet: “Marry, that “marry” is the very theme I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet, how stands your disposition to be married?”
* Juliet: “It is an honor that I dream not of” (1.3.68-71).
* How does Juliet feel about the idea of marriage?

**Different Perspectives**

* Lady Capulet: “By my count I was your mother much upon these years that you are now a maid. Thus, then, in brief: The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.”
* Lady Capulet said she was a mother at Juliet’s age
* Nurse: “A man, young lady—lady, such a man as all the world—why, he’s a man of wax” (1.3.77-82).
* Even the Nurse agrees: Paris is a perfect man and match!
* Lady Capulet: “What say you? Can you love the gentleman? This night you shall behold him at our feast. Read o’er the volume of young Paris’ face, and find delight writ there with beauty’s pen” (1.3.85-88).
* Juliet: “I’ll look to like, if looking liking move. But no more deep will I endart mine eye than your consent gives strength to make it fly” (1.3.102-105).
* Juliet will give Paris a chance, but is not serious about making a decision
* Nurse: “Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days” (1.3.113).

**Act 1, Scene 4 Summary**

* Romeo and Benvolio are going to the Capulet’s party
* They meet up with their friend, Mercutio, an eccentric guy
* It is a masque (masquerade party) and everyone wears disguises
* Romeo admits he had an ominous dream, but Mercutio mocks him

**Romeo Needs Encouragement**

* Mercutio: “Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.”
* Romeo: “Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes with nimble souls. I have a soul of lead so stakes me to the ground I cannot move” (1.4.13-15).
* Notice the juxtaposition; this emphasizes Romeo’s downtrodden state of mind
* Mercutio: “If love be rough with you, be rough with love!” (1.4.27).

**Queen Mab**

* Romeo reveals that he had a dream and although “we mean well in going to this masque, but ‘tis no wit to go” (1.4.49-50).
* Mercutio: “O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you. She is the fairies’ midwife, and she comes in shape no bigger than an agate stone on the forefinger of an alderman, drawn with a team of little atomi over men’s noses as they lie asleep” (1.4.58-63).
* Queen Mab causes dreamers to think of particular things, depending where she rides her chariot
* Mercutio: “I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain, begot of nothing but vain fantasy” (1.4.103-105).
* Mercutio claims that Romeo’s dream means nothing
* Romeo: “I fear too early, for my mind misgive some consequence yet hanging in the stars shall bitterly begin his fearful date with this night’s revels, and expire the terms of a despised life closed in my breast by some vile forfeit of untimely death” (1.4.113-118).
* This is **foreshadowing**, and reinforces what we know from the prologue

**Act 1, Scene 5 Summary**

* Capulet welcomes the disguised Romeo and his friends to his party
* Romeo sees Juliet and is immediately captivated by her beauty
* Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin, recognizes Romeo’s voice and is furious with his intrusion
* Capulet instructs him to leave Romeo alone
* Romeo then meets Juliet and they fall in love, only to learn that they are of rival houses

**The Party Begins**

* As the servingmen frantically hurry to prepare for the feast, guests begin to arrive
* Romeo, seeing Juliet for the first time: “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hands upon the cheek of night as a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear” (1.5.51-53).
* Notice the reference to light, which contrasts Romeo’s previous state of “darkness”
* Romeo: “Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, for I ne’er saw true beauty till this night” (1.5.59-60).

**Tybalt Spies Romeo**

* Tybalt: “This, by his voice, should be a Montague.—Fetch me my rapier, boy” (1.5.61-62).
* Tybalt is prepared to duel in a swordfight!
* Tybalt reports to Capulet that “a villain that is hither come in spite to scorn at our solemnity this night” (1.5.70-71).
* Capulet: “Content thee, gentle coz. Let him alone. He bears him like a portly gentleman, and, to say the truth, Verona brags of him to be a virtuous and well-governed youth” (1.5.74-77).
* Capulet tells Tybalt to leave Romeo alone
* Although Romeo is a Montague, he has a stately reputation
* When Tybalt refuses to listen, Capulet retaliates: “Am I the master here or you? Go to…You’ll make a mutiny among my guests” (1.5.88-90).
* Capulet orders Tybalt not to fight, or he will ruin the party

**Love at First Sight**

* Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time in lines 104-117, which take the form and rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet
* Romeo, to Juliet: “If I profane with my unworthiest hand this holy shrine, the gentle sin is this: My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.”
* **Metaphor**: Romeo’s lips are two blushing (nervous) pilgrims (experiencing for the first time), which desire to kiss Juliet
* Juliet: “Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, which mannerly devotion shows in this; for saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch, and palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss” (1.5.104-111).
* Juliet does not want to kiss yet, but rather hold hands, which is a form of appropriate intimacy

**The Tragic Reveal**

* After Romeo and Juliet kiss, Juliet is pulled away by the Nurse, who says “Madam, your mother craves a word with you” (1.5.123).
* Romeo asks who her mother is, and the Nurse states that her mother is the lady of the house
* Romeo: “Is she a Capulet? O dear account! My life is my foe’s debt” (1.5.131-132).
* Juliet sends the Nurse to find out what Romeo’s name is, while stating, “If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding bed.”
* This **simile** also serves as **foreshadowing**!
* When the Nurse confirms that Romeo is “the only son of your great enemy” (1.5.151), Juliet exclaims, “My only love sprung from my only hate! Too early seen unknown, and known too late!” (1.5.153-154).