

CliffsNotes.com® Conversation Starters for **ROMEO & JULIET**

Love manifests itself in a multitude of ways in *Romeo and Juliet*. How does Romeo's love for Rosaline compare to Romeo's love for Juliet? Within the Capulet household, how does love operate between Lord and Lady Capulet, Juliet, the Nurse, and Tybalt?

We first meet Paris in Act I, Scene 2, in which he asks Capulet for Juliet's hand in marriage. Why is Capulet initially reluctant to say yes to Paris? When in the play does Capulet mind? Why does he eventually change his mind?

Obviously both Paris and Romeo want to marry Juliet. What are the differences between these two suitors? How does Shakespeare compare them and their love for Juliet to each other? Which one is more immature and rash in his actions and his love for Juliet? How so?

Consider Lord Capulet's personality. How do his moods change and why? How do these mood swings affect Juliet, and how do they affect the course of the play?

How does Romeo's reaction to the news of his banishment differ from Juliet's reaction? Do they react the same way? What's the significance of how each reacts to his banishment?

What role does Escalus, the Prince, play as the play's figure of authority? What sort of man do you think he is? How far is he to blame for what happens?

In Act I, Scene 2, we first meet Juliet, Lady Capulet, who is Juliet's mother, and the Nurse. In this scene, Shakespeare introduces the theme of youth versus old age. How so? How is Juliet different than her mother and the Nurse? What is each character's view toward sex? In the scene, who is the most innocent? The most bawdy?

How would you characterize the relationship between Juliet and her Nurse? Why is the Nurse's social position crucial to understanding her relationship with Juliet? What role does the Nurse serve in regards to Romeo and Juliet's relationship?

Some people think that Shakespeare had to kill Mercutio because Mercutio was becoming such an important and compelling character that he detracted from Romeo and Juliet. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Light in its various forms recurs throughout the play. What are some instances of light in the play? How does light mirror the action? How does Shakespeare use light to describe the characters and the changes they undergo?

CliffsNotes.com® Conversation Starters for **ROMEO & JULIET**

In Act II, Scene 3, as the Friar picks his herbs, he tells us that nature's tomb is also her womb and that what dies gives birth to new life. How do the Friar's words anticipate upcoming events? Does the Friar proactively cause events that follow, or does he react to situations that are beyond his control?

Juliet is a very young girl; however, she shoulders a great deal of responsibility and manages a series of very difficult situations. How does Juliet's maturity level compare to Romeo's? Overall who do you think is the more responsible person, Romeo or Juliet?

In Act II, Scene 6, in which Romeo and Juliet are secretly married by the Friar, images of happiness and marriage are repeatedly paired with images of violence and death. What are some of these images? What might Shakespeare mean by pairing such images?

In Act III, Scene 5, Lady Capulet, unaware that Juliet grieves for Romeo's banishment rather than the death of Tybalt, tries to comfort her daughter with her plans to avenge Tybalt's death by poisoning Romeo. What do you think of Lady Capulet in this scene? How would you characterize her love for her daughter, Juliet? For her wanting to essentially continue the family feud with the Montagues by poisoning Romeo?

Some readers think that Act IV, Scene 1, is one of the defining moments in the play's overall structure. How so? What happens in the scene that so impacts the rest of the play? How would you characterize Juliet in this scene?

In Act V, Scene 2, the Friar discovers that the messenger he sent to tell Romeo that Juliet is alive has been quarantined because of an outbreak of the plague. This is an example of how Fate has altered the course of events in the play according to many readers. Do you agree with this assessment? Is it Fate working here? What other instances in the play are there of Fate changing the outcome of events?

In Act V, Scene 3, the final scene in the play, some people think the family tomb becomes a symbol of both birth and death. Do you agree? How is the tomb a symbol of birth — or rebirth?

How does Juliet change during the play? When does she change? Why do these changes occur?

Dreams often play an important part in Shakespeare's plays. At several points in the play, the characters have dreams. Sometimes they interpret them correctly, and other times they don't. First identify some of the dreams in the play, and then discuss these instances and how the characters' reactions to the dreams affect the action in the play. How do the characters interpret or misinterpret their dreams?

CliffsNotes.com® Conversation Starters for **ROMEO & JULIET**

The feud between the families seems to be an ever-present concern for the characters. How does the feud drive the action of the play?

Think about the final scene of the play. Some people consider the final scene in which both Romeo and Juliet die to be triumphant. Is it? Why or why not? In addition to the families being reconciled, how is the final scene triumphant?
