

Romeo and Juliet

Prologue and Act I

by William Shakespeare

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: account, dear, forfeit, loathed, pilgrims, purged, steals, strife, vexed, volume

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Play:

Section 1 · Prologue and Act I · Feuding households and Capulet's masked ball

Section 2 · Act II · Romeo in the Capulet orchard

Section 3 · Act III · A hot day in Verona's streets

Section 4 · Act IV · Preparations for a Thursday wedding

Section 5 · Act V · Romeo in exile, awaiting news

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

Romeo and Juliet

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The shopkeeper handed him an **account** at the end of the month.

- A. a coupon for a future discount
- B. a schedule of work still to come
- C. a bill; a record of what is owed

2. Fresh fruit was **dear** at the winter market.

- A. costly; of great value
- B. in short supply
- C. of poor quality

3. Missing the game meant a **forfeit** for the whole team.

- A. a delay; a rescheduled date
- B. a penalty; a price paid as punishment
- C. a rematch; a second chance

4. He **loathed** the smell of boiled cabbage.

- A. grew used to; stopped noticing
- B. hated; found disgusting
- C. noticed at once; recognized quickly

5. Every summer, **pilgrims** crowd the dusty road that leads up the mountain.

- A. workers heading to the fields
- B. traders bringing goods to sell
- C. travelers to a holy place

6. The long rain **purged** the dust from every rooftop.

- A. washed away; cleansed
- B. loosened; shook free
- C. scattered; blew around

7. Each night the cat **steals** into the barn through a gap in the boards.

- A. squeezes through with effort
- B. moves quietly and secretly
- C. wanders in without aim

8. Years of **strife** between the two villages left both worn out.

- A. cold distance; neglect
- B. stiff rivalry; competition
- C. bitter conflict; fighting

9. The delay **vexed** every passenger on the platform.

- A. troubled; annoyed
- B. exhausted; wore out
- C. confused; puzzled

10. She pulled a heavy **volume** from the top shelf.

- A. a book
- B. a rolled map
- C. a wooden box

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

carry coals — here, to put up with insults — carrying coals was lowly, dirty work'

will not stay the siege — won't withstand

kiss by th' book — like someone who learned kissing from a manual (here, teasing)

fairies' midwife — figuratively, one who brings dreams to birth

Ethiop — a dark-skinned Ethiopian; here, standing for the dark face of night

palmer — A pilgrim, especially one who carried a palm leaf in the Holy Land

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	A
3	B
4	B
5	C
6	A
7	B
8	C
9	A
10	A

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 "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."

As used in the passage, the word "strife" most nearly means...

- A. bitter fighting
- B. deep sorrow
- C. hidden shame

2 "If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace."

According to the passage, anyone who disturbs the streets again will...

- A. pay a heavy fine
- B. pay with his life
- C. be banished from the city

3 "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."

In the passage, the speaker's son is characterized as...

- A. secretive and withdrawn
- B. lazy and careless
- C. angry and violent

4 "Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.
What is it else? A madness most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet."

As used in the passage, the word "vexed" most nearly means...

- A. made stronger
- B. stirred up; troubled
- C. made pure

5 "Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen."

The speaker most likely includes the phrase "beauty's pen" in order to...

- A. show that Juliet loves reading
- B. suggest Paris writes love poems
- C. extend the face-as-book image

6 "O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear—
Beauty too rich for use, for Earth too dear."

Which choice best describes the speaker's attitude toward the lady he calls "too dear"?

- A. amused by her showiness
- B. resentful of her wealth
- C. awestruck by her worth

7 "If I profane with my unworthing 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."

Which choice best describes the speaker's attitude toward the person he addresses?

- A. ashamed, begging forgiveness
- B. reverent, as if she were holy
- C. solemn, mourning a loss

8 "Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged."

As it is used in the passage, the word "purged" most nearly suggests that the kiss...

- A. worked like a cleansing ritual
- B. was a shameful mistake
- C. needed to be kept secret

9 "Is she a Capulet?
O dear account! My life is my foe's debt."

It can reasonably be inferred from "O dear account!" that loving her will...

- A. end the family feud
- B. make him wealthy
- C. cost him greatly

10 "My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me
That I must love a loathed enemy."

The information in the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. express anguish at loving a hated foe
- B. praise a stranger's charms
- C. explain how the feud began

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	B	
3	A	
4	B	
5	C	
6	C	Elizabethan 'dear' runs from 'beloved' to 'costly'; here it is worth: she is too precious for this world.
7	B	
8	A	
9	C	'Account' is a ledger word: Romeo tallies the price of loving a Capulet — his life now stands in his enemy's debt.
10	A	

Teacher Context: Prologue and Act I

The Prologue frames the feud, and a street brawl between Montague and Capulet men draws in Tybalt and Benvolio before Prince Escalus threatens death for anyone who fights again. Paris asks Capulet for Juliet's hand; meanwhile the lovesick Romeo is talked into crashing the Capulet ball, where he and Juliet meet and fall in love before each discovers the other's name.