

The balcony scene

LEAD IN

1 Read these tips to help teenagers deal with their first romantic experiences. Then answer the questions below.

1. Which of these tips do you agree the most with?
2. Which of these tips do you think teenagers find it most difficult to follow? Why?

RESPECT EACH OTHER'S INDIVIDUALITY: accept and celebrate each other's uniqueness and allow each other to express your most authentic selves.

SOCIALISE TOGETHER AND APART: spend time with the person you love, but do not neglect your connections outside the relationship.

DO NOT AVOID YOUR PERSONAL INTERESTS: maintain your individual interests, hobbies, and activities.

DO NOT IDEALISE THE OTHER: avoid idealising your lover and always look at him/her as a real person, with his/her qualities and faults.



↑ Another scene from *Romeo + Juliet* directed by Baz Luhrman (1996), 20th Century Fox.



Romeo and Juliet's 'balcony scene' takes place in Act II, Scene 2 and shows the 'secret' night meeting between them in the Capulets' garden.

JULIET O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love¹,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

5 **ROMEO** [*Aside.*] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET 'Tis but thy name² that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
Nor arm nor face, nor any other part

10 Belonging to a man. O be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose³
By any other word would smell as sweet;

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
15 Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name⁴,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

ROMEO I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptised;
20 Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET What man art thou that thus bescreened in night⁵
So stumblest on my counsel⁶?

ROMEO By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am.

25 My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word. [...]

JULIET How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,

30 And the place death⁷, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

< Juliet talks to herself
and is unaware of Romeo's
presence.

< Romeo appears and accepts
Juliet's request to get rid of
his name.

< Romeo compares Juliet
to a saint.

- 1 **be but sworn my love:**
giura di essere il mio amore
- 2 **but thy name:** solo il tuo nome
- 3 **That which we call a rose:**
Quella che chiamiamo rosa
- 4 **doff thy name:** rinuncia al tuo nome
- 5 **bescreened in night:**
protezione dal buio della notte
- 6 **stumblest on my counsel:**
scopri i miei pensieri più segreti
- 7 **And the place death:** E questo è un luogo di morte

ROMEO With love's light wings did I o'erperch⁸ these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do, that dares love attempt:

35 Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.

JULIET If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords. Look thou but sweet⁹,
And I am proof against their enmity¹⁰.

40 **JULIET** I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO I have night's cloak¹¹ to hide me from their eyes;
And but thou love me¹², let them find me here;
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love¹³.

< Romeo uses a 'conceit' to declare how precious Juliet is for him.

- 8 o'erperch: volai oltre
9 Look thou but sweet: Guardami con dolcezza
10 And I am proof against their enmity: E sarò protetto dal loro odio
11 night's cloak: manto della notte
12 And but thou love me: Ma se non mi ami
13 Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love: Piuttosto che la morte venga ritardata in mancanza del tuo amore

VOCABULARY Lab

2 Match the Shakespearean words or phrases (1-5) with the modern equivalents (a-e). Write a letter in the boxes.

- | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. wherefore | ☐ | 4. peril | ☐ | a. You are | d. relatives |
| 2. hither | ☐ | 5. Thou art | ☐ | b. danger | e. why |
| 3. kinsmen | ☐ | | | c. here | |

COMPREHENSION

3 Complete the summary of the scene with the following words.

safety | name | balcony | enemy | sincere

Romeo is hiding in the garden beneath Juliet's 1 while Juliet is talking to herself. She is reflecting on the possibility of loving a Montague, the son of her family's 2 In her soliloquy, she states that even if Romeo had a different 3, he would be the same person and she would love him anyway. At this point Romeo reveals his presence. The two lovers have a dialogue in which they strengthen their love for each other and show their personalities: Juliet appears 4, matter-of-fact and spontaneous, while Romeo is impulsive and defiant. Juliet worries about Romeo's 5 and her questions are concrete, but Romeo's answers seem to follow the conventional conceits of the language of love of the time.

ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

4 Juliet's opening lines show her reflecting on the relationship between names and their meanings. How do her thoughts progress? Read the text and complete the following.

- Romeo's family name is an enemy to Juliet: this means they
- In order for them to be together, she thinks Romeo could (l. 2)
- Another solution could be that Juliet (l. 4)
- Juliet thinks the essence of Romeo (l. 7)
- She wonders what the name 'Romeo' refers to. It is not (ll. 8-10)
- Juliet realises that the same clash between 'name' and 'meaning' exists in nature: e.g. the name 'rose' refers to the flower. But if the flower had another name, (ll. 11-12)
- Juliet concludes her reasoning by saying that if Romeo refused his name, this loss would become a gain because (ll. 15-17)

5 Romeo uses many expressions that underline his idea of love. Find them and complete the text below.

Ll. 33: 'stony limits cannot hold love out' = Love can overcome all physical limits.

Ll. 38-39: = If you look at me sweetly I will be protected against them.

Ll. 43-44: = A life without love is worse than death.

6 Find examples of 'conceits'. Who uses them? You can also look in your booklet *Literary Skills*.

7 Dramatic irony occurs when the audience is aware of something the characters don't know. What is the effect of dramatic irony in this case? Choose the correct option.

- It increases the audience's anxiety about the characters' actions, which are leading them to an inevitable tragic ending.
- It lowers the audience's tension; they already know the ending.

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ROMEO AND JULIET
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