**Shakespeare’s World**

A. Elizabethan Age

1. Queen Elizabeth I

2. Great Virgin Queen/ruled 1558-1603

B. Age of Discovery

1. Pursuit of scientific knowledge and the exploration of human nature

2. Assumptions concerning feudalism openly challenged (optimism

concerning humanity)

C. Shakespeare’s works deal with civil harmony, either restoring or maintaining it

1. War of the Roses (Lancaster v. York)

D. The Reformation 1517-1648 (England breaks away from the Catholic Church)

1. England is a Protestant/Anglican country

2. Continuous religious strife (Catholic vs Protestant wars)

3. Queen Margaret/“Bloody Mary”=Catholic sister of Elizabeth (1553-1558)

E. The Renaissance

1. The cultural rebirth of Europe (14th-17th centuries)

2. Based on the rediscovery of the literature of Greece and Rome

3. Music of Shakespeare=Baroque

a. Strings, woodwinds and brass

b. Vivaldi, Bach, Handel, Corelli

**Marriage, Love, and Elizabethan comic relief**

• Music, poetry, literature and drama flourished under Elizabeth's reign, largely due to the

Queen's love of the arts.

• During this time, young women (like Juliet) were controlled specifically by their fathers.

They were expected to marry within their own class. This play is a reflection of the time

in which it was written.

• The women’s say so in whom they wanted to marry was only a mention. Juliet’s father

says “My will to her consent is but a part”.

• Many marriages were simply arranged and there was nothing that could be done about it.

• Love was not really known back then, or at least it did not matter. Marriages were

arranged in order to promote status and wealth within families, like the Capulets.

• Comic relief is defined in a tragedy as a short comic scene that releases some of the built up

tension of the play - giving the audience a momentary “relief” before the tension

mounts higher.

• Note in Scene three the comedy of the nurse.

- The nurse’s low-end humor (sexual punning)

- Being a servant she has no social etiquette

- “I would say thou hads’t suck’d wisdom from thy teat”

• In the best tragedies, comic relief also provides an ironic counterpoint to the tragic action.

**Tuesday — Act I, Scenes 1,3,5**

As the play begins, a long-standing feud between the Montague and Capulet families continues to disrupt the peace of Verona, a city in northern Italy. A brawl between the servants of the feuding households prompts the Prince to threaten both sides to keep the peace on pain of death.

Benvolio advises his lovesick friend [Romeo](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/character-analysis/romeo), (son of Montague), to abandon his unrequited love for Rosaline and seek another.

That night, Capulet holds a masked ball to encourage a courtship between his daughter, [Juliet](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/character-analysis/juliet), and Paris, a relative of the Prince. Concealing their identities behind masks, Romeo and Benvolio go to the ball, where Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight, but at the end of the evening discover their identities as members of the opposed families.

**Wednesday — Act II, Scene 2-3**

On his way home from the feast, Romeo climbs into Capulet's orchard to glimpse Juliet again. Juliet appears at her balcony, and the couple exchange vows of love, agreeing to marry the next day.

Romeo asks [Friar Laurence](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/character-analysis/friar-laurence) to perform the marriage ceremony. Though initially reluctant, he finally agrees, hoping to reconcile the families, and marries Romeo and Juliet that afternoon.

**Thursday —Act III, Scenes 1 and 5 also Acts 4- 5 scene 2 overview**

Meanwhile, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, sends Romeo a challenge to a duel. Romeo refuses to fight when Tybalt confronts him because they're now related. However, [Mercutio](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/character-analysis/mercutio), Romeo's quick-tempered friend, intervenes and accepts the challenge. Romeo tries to part the other two as they fight, but Mercutio is fatally wounded under Romeo's arm. To avenge Mercutio's death, Romeo kills Tybalt and then flees.

The Prince announces Romeo's banishment for Tybalt's murder. Romeo, in hiding at the Friar's cell, becomes hysterical at the news of his sentence and tries to kill himself, but the Friar promises to make Romeo's marriage to Juliet public and gain the Prince's pardon. Romeo and Juliet celebrate their wedding night before he leaves at dawn for Mantua.

That morning, Juliet discovers that her father has arranged for her to marry Paris on Thursday. The Capulets, unaware that Juliet is grieving for Romeo's exile rather than Tybalt's death, believe the wedding will distract her from mourning. Distressed at the prospect of a false marriage and isolated from her family, Juliet seeks advice from Friar Laurence, who offers her a sleeping potion to make her appear dead for 42 hours. During this time, the Friar will send a message to Romeo in Mantua so that Romeo can return to Verona in time for Juliet to awake.

Juliet returns home and agrees to marry Paris. In a moment of euphoria, Capulet brings the wedding forward from Thursday to Wednesday, thereby forcing Juliet to take the potion that night and reducing the time for the message to reach Romeo.

**Friday — Wednesday: 5-Act 5, Scene 3**

Early on Wednesday morning, Juliet's seemingly lifeless body is discovered and she is placed in the family tomb. Because an outbreak of the plague prevents the Friar's messenger from leaving Verona, Romeo now receives news of Juliet's death instead. Desperate, Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and returns to Verona.

Late that night, Romeo enters the Capulet tomb, but is confronted by Paris, whom he fights and kills.

Still unaware that Juliet is in fact alive, Romeo takes the poison and dies. The Friar, arriving too late, discovers the bodies as Juliet begins to stir. He begs her to leave with him, but Juliet refuses, and then stabs herself with Romeo's dagger.

As dawn breaks, the Watch arrives, closely followed by the Prince, who demands a full inquiry into what has happened. The two families then arrive, and the Friar comes forward to explain the tragic sequence of events. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet finally bring the feud to an end as Montague and Capulet join hands in peace.