

SHAKESPEARIENCE

SUMMARY HANDOUTS

Romeo and Juliet

Act II, sc. 1 - sc. 2

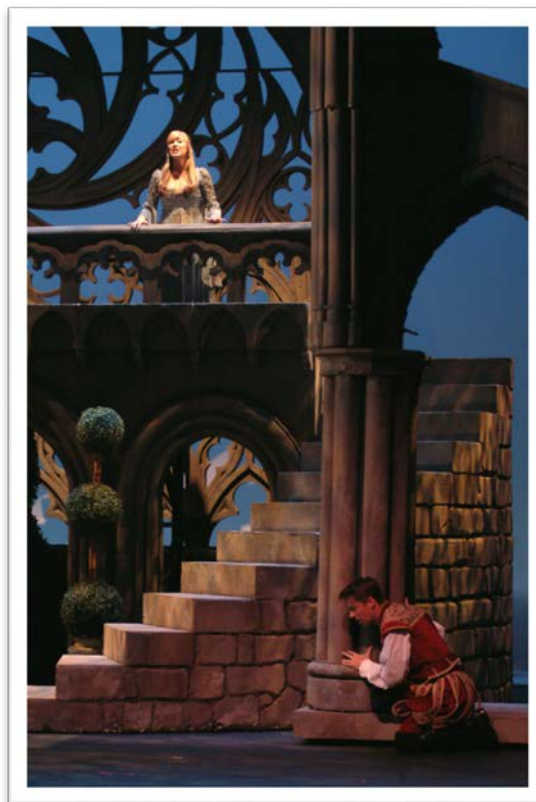
Set against the backdrop of rival families, the play revolves around the tragic intertwining of Romeo and Juliet - a pair of “star-cross’d lovers” from the houses of Montague and Capulet respectively. Having just met Juliet at a masked ball hosted by her father, the scene opens with Romeo avoiding his band of inebriated friends who are intent on teasing the young Montague. Once his comrades depart, Romeo manages to scale the orchard walls of Capulet’s estate in hopes of catching a glimpse of Juliet. While crouched near her balcony, Romeo hears Juliet profess her love for him to which he quickly responds. Her initial amazement at his presence gradually gives way to ardent joy as she gently instructs the impassioned Romeo how to correctly swear his fidelity for her. They part promising to secretly marry as soon as possible.

Romeo and Juliet

Act III, sc. 1

Mercutio and Benvolio, both friends of Romeo, are engaged in friendly banter when they encounter a band of Capulets led by Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin. Angered with Romeo for appearing at the Capulet’s ball the other night, Tybalt wishes to rectify the “injuries” done him. When the newly married Romeo appears on the scene, Tybalt attempts to engage him in a duel, but Romeo smoothly sidesteps all of Tybalt’s enticements to fight.

Mercutio, unaware of Romeo’s secret marriage to Juliet, is not so easily calmed and takes up Tybalt’s challenge. The ensuing duel costs Mercutio his life much to the horror of Romeo and his friends. Thus enraged, Romeo takes up Mercutio’s weapons and slays Tybalt. Benvolio, realizing that Romeo will be sentenced to death by the Prince, urges Romeo to flee which he promptly does.



The Taming of the Shrew

Act II, sc. 1

Bianca, the young daughter of a wealthy merchant in Italy, is widely sought after as a wife. However, her father refuses to marry her until her older sister, Katherina, has found a husband. Unfortunately, Katherina's wild and "intolerable" disposition makes her a difficult prospect for marriage. As such, three of Bianca's suitors band together to find Katherina a husband so that they might each try their luck at winning the hand of Bianca. They decide on Petruchio, a gentlemen from Verona, as the most likely candidate for "taming" Katherina.

The scene between Petruchio and Katherina begins with the two encountering each other for the first time. Their verbal sparring quickly becomes physical as the two test each other. Despite her best efforts to drive him away, Katherina is unable to dissuade Petruchio from his intent to win her, and the scene ends with Petruchio triumphantly declaring that he was "born to tame" Katherina and shall have her as "my wife."



Macbeth

Act I, sc. 7 and Act II sc. 2

A general in the Scottish army, Macbeth is returning from a victorious battle when he is confronted by three witches in the middle of an empty wasteland. Before vanishing, the witches predict that Macbeth will be crowned Thane of Cawdor and eventually, King of Scotland - however, they also predict that Macbeth can only be defeated a man “not born of woman”.

No sooner does Macbeth arrive at home than word reaches him that he has been bestowed the title of Thane of Cawdor by the King for his valiant efforts in battle. Spurred by this partial realization of the prophecy, Macbeth decides to murder the King and fulfill the rest of the prophecy.



As Act I, scene 7 opens, Macbeth finds his resolve to kill the King wavering - however, his wife admonishes him to “screw his courage to the sticking place” and proceed with the plan.

Act II, scene 2 begins with Lady Macbeth impatiently waiting for her husband’s return from the murder.

When he finally does, she finds him paralyzed with fear and unable to carry out the rest of the plot. Hence, she takes the bloody daggers from her husband and plants them on the sleeping grooms (guards) whom she had drugged earlier.

At the top of Act V, sc. VIII, Macbeth has indeed become king but the truth behind the murders has come to light. His rival, Macduff, has besieged the castle, looking for the murderer - however, Macbeth believes himself invincible until he discovers Macduff’s true origins and the rest of the prophecy is fulfilled.

Hamlet Act III, sc. 1

Having recently discovered that his father was murdered by his uncle to gain the throne, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is alone contemplating suicide when he is interrupted by Ophelia, daughter of Polonius and beloved by Hamlet. Sent by the King and her father to determine the reason behind Hamlet's

increasingly agitated state, Ophelia offers to return Hamlet's love letters to him.



However, the young prince, disgusted with his mother's remarriage to his uncle (and perhaps aware of Ophelia's collusion with the King), rejects Ophelia's advances. In the course of their conversation, Hamlet becomes noticeably hostile and urges her to "get thee to a nunn'ry". Upon his departure, Ophelia is left alone to lament Hamlet's apparent descent into insanity.

A Midsummer Night's Dream Act III, sc. 2

Set in Athens, much of this play revolves around the comic infatuation of four young lovers. At the start of Act I, both Lysander and Demetrius are in love with Hermia but not with her friend Helena. On the other hand, Hermia loves only Lysander while Helena is deeply in love with Demetrius. When the four lovers enter the woods of Athens, they catch the attention of fairy Puck who attempts to rectify the situation with magic. Intending to make Demetrius fall in love with Helena, he unfortunately enchants Lysander thus intensifying the problem.

Hence, Puck casts a spell on Demetrius as well which results in both men madly pursuing Helena while Hermia is left alone. The scene begins with Helena being courted by Lysander and Demetrius as Hermia accuses her of stealing Lysander. After much confusion and arguing, Puck finally sets things right by causing the four lovers to sleep and removing the spell from Lysander.

