

## *The Balcony Scene*

Go to this webpage and watch the scene from the Franco Zeffirelli movie:  
[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlkv2f\\_romeo-and-juliet-zeffirelli-the-balcony-scene\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlkv2f_romeo-and-juliet-zeffirelli-the-balcony-scene_shortfilms)

Now answer the questions:

### **A) The vocabulary**

This play was written in Old English.

Find the ancient terms for :

- you: *thou, thee*
- your: *thy*

### **B) The structure of the scene.**

1. This scene falls into two parts. Where is the turning point?

The turning point is when Juliet understands Romeo is here, in the orchard. Before that, she was speaking to herself. Now she can address him.

### **C) The setting.**

2. At what time of day does the scene take place? Why is this?

The scene takes place at night, after the party at the Capulets'.

3. Why did Shakespeare set Romeo and Juliet's meeting at night? What part of the stage is in darkness? What part is lit up?

Night is a protection for the lovers. Indeed, Romeo says : "*I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes*", meaning Juliet's kinsmen won't see him, therefore he has nothing to fear.

Yet, at the end of the scene, Romeo wonders if he's not dreaming ("*I am afeard being in night, all this is but a dream*"). Night may be treacherous and mislead them into believing their love is true.

Romeo is standing in the dark whereas Juliet is in the light. The part that is lit up is the balcony and Juliet's apartment. The light comes both from her bedroom and from the moon. This puts the scene under the influence of Juliet, as the moon is the symbol of femininity.

4. How did Shakespeare dramatise the fact that Romeo's love for Juliet was impossible?

Consider the position of the characters on stage.

First, there seems to be a barrier standing between them, symbolized by the balcony that Romeo will not step onto throughout this scene.

Moreover, Juliet is in a higher position than Romeo. She seems to belong to another world, and Romeo understands that from the beginning, as soon as he sees her. Indeed, he compares her eyes to "*stars*" ("*two of the fairest stars in all the heavens*").

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**> «Romeo and Juliet», by William Shakespeare**

Throughout this scene he will remain underneath her, in the position of someone worshipping a goddess.

He also calls her "*bright angel*"

Furthermore, she's the one who leads the scene, who asks him to speak or be silent. She dominates him and he obeys her, even at the end when she asks him to marry her. He seems to be enthralled, absolutely captivated.

Yet, Juliet also worships Romeo: "*swear by thy gracious self, which is the god of my idolatry, and I'll believe thee.*"... and he swears... obeying her wish, once more.

She's the one who stops this conversation too, by dismissing him.

To conclude, although they are very much alike, there seems to be a real difference between them. They believe they are each other's alter-ego, yet their ways are probably parallel and will never meet but once.

5. The scene takes place in the Capulets' orchard which is surrounded by high walls. What makes this setting particularly appropriate? What does Shakespeare suggest by speaking of an orchard rather than a garden?

Because of the high walls surrounding the garden, this place is set apart from the rest of the world.

The fact that it is an orchard reminds us of the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve used to live before they were expelled from the Paradise. It's a place where the fruits have not yet reached full growth (ripeness), just as these two lovers who are still children.

Thus it conveys a feeling of purity, innocence, the hope for a better future, by opposition to the outside world which is ruined by sin and hatred.

This is expressed by Juliet herself: "*This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, may prove a beauteous flower, when next we meet.*"

6. What in Shakespeare's play indicates that the world is "**wild, bright, and going mad**"?

Romeo's friends who are drunk.

The noise outside, opposed to the silence in the orchard.

**C) The characters.**

7. Show that Juliet and Romeo stand for two worlds that are apart.

The opposition between their worlds is symbolized by:

- their position on either side of the stone balcony
- the opposition between the colours of their clothes
- the opposition in their roles

8. Who are "they" l.40? What values do they represent?

"They" are their kinsmen, the members of their families, who are enemies.

9. What fundamental question does Juliet ask in the first part? What values does she challenge?

She raises the question of the name one has: does a name reveal the essence of a person? Is it the most important? Does your name (thus your origin) make you what you are? Or are you free to change your name, to refuse it ("*Deny thy father and refuse thy name!*").

She stresses the fact that there is someone beyond a name, and someone worth loving, even if the name has become a barrier ("*Thy name is no part of thee*")

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10. How do you react as a reader? Do you feel that she is right or too daring? Analyse what leads you to judge her as you do.

11. Do you find Romeo too rash or rather moving? Explain why?

**D)The plot.**

12. How many times are the words "love" and "death" used? Which of the two characters uses them. Show that they are central to the myth of Romeo and Juliet.

13. Romeo and Juliet's love upsets the world order. How is this idea expressed?