

CONTENTS

How to Use This Study Guide With the Text4	TESTS & ANSWER KEY
Notes & Instructions to Teacher (or Student) ...5	Test ~ Act 172
Taking With Us What Matters7	Test ~ Act 274
Four Stages to the Central One Idea.....9	Test ~ Act 376
How to Mark a Book.....11	Test ~ Act 478
Introduction12	Final Exam ~ Act 5.....80
Basic Features & Background.....14	Test ~ Act 1 ~ Answer Key.....83
ACT 1	Test ~ Act 2 ~ Answer Key.....85
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....18	Test ~ Act 3 ~ Answer Key.....87
Grammar Presentation.....19	Test ~ Act 4 ~ Answer Key.....89
Logic Dialectic.....26	Final Exam ~ Act 5 ~ Answer Key.....91
Rhetoric Expression.....28	
ACT 2	
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....30	
Grammar Presentation.....31	
Logic Dialectic.....37	
ACT 3	
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....38	
Grammar Presentation.....38	
Logic Dialectic.....46	
Rhetoric Expression.....48	
ACT 4	
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....50	
Grammar Presentation.....51	
Logic Dialectic.....56	
ACT 5	
Pre-Grammar Preparation.....57	
Grammar Presentation.....58	
Logic Dialectic.....63	
Rhetoric Expression.....64	
Memorization & Recitation66	
Rhetoric Essay Template.....67	
Master Words-to-Be-Defined List.....68	

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❁ ACT 1 ❁

Central Quote:

“Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate! / O anything, of nothing first create! / O heavy lightness! serious vanity! / Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!”

“Love is a smoke rais’d with the fume of sighs; / Being purg’d, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes; / Being vex’d, a sea nourish’d with loving tears. / What is it else? A madness most discreet”

— (1.1.174-177; 188-191)

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.

1. What does your family name mean? What is its nationality or history? Write what you know about your family name and its significance. Feel free to do some research or ask some member(s) of your family who can provide you with some important information.



Read the Prologue and Act 1, marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

As you read through Act 1, be sure to pause as often as necessary to read the helpful footnotes for difficult words and phrases. You may not need to read all of the footnotes because you will probably know some of the words already or have a sense of their meaning as you read. If you pause frequently in any section, it will be helpful to read the section again without pausing so that you get a proper sense of the rhythm and continuity of the language, as well as the gist of the complete speech or scene.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. List two details about the **setting** from the prologue.

Two noble families of Verona, Italy, are locked in an ancient, bitter feud.

2. What tragic event is announced, and what **dénouement** (resolution) does it bring about?

A pair of "star-crossed" lovers from the two feuding families fall in love, meet with unfortunate events, and take their lives. Their deaths bring about the end of their parents' rage.

3. Regarding Gregory and Sampson, who is more sarcastic with whom? Quote a line(s) that reveals this.

Gregory is more sarcastic. "To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand; therefore, if thou art moved, thou run'st away." (1.1.9-10)

4. Sampson and Gregory come from which house? Capulet

5. List four **characteristics** of Benvolio and four of Tybalt. Include one quotation from each character that casts some light on his personality.

Benvolio:

- quite reasonable
 - a peacemaker
 - seems wise
-

"Put up your swords; you know not what you do." (1.1.63)

Tybalt:

- impulsive - wants to bring death upon his enemy immediately
 - fiery; quick to extreme anger
 - bold, daring
-

"Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death." (1.1.65)

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Answers will vary. The Chorus is traditionally played by a male actor wearing a large cloak. He is a gentleman who provides the comforting voice of a narrator or guide to the play. He contributes a wise voice of reason throughout the play.
- This will be nearly impossible for students to get on their own. It will need to be mostly teacher-led, but should facilitate some good discussion. As Crystal Downing so convincingly suggests in her essay in the back, “A Rose by Any Other Name,” in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare may have been exploring “the power of clichés to control behavior.” This means that shallow, excessive language (like that present in the Petrarchan sonnet tradition of love poetry) functions as a plague for Romeo and other characters in the play, causing much of the dysfunction and tragedy. Clichéd and hyperbolic language separates many characters and actions from authenticity and truth. It separates appearance from reality. But not all the characters are afflicted thus. Juliet is different, a kind of heroine. Shakespeare elevates her to speak against such insubstantial language. For example, she says, “Conceit, more rich in matter than in words, / Blags of his substance, not of ornament” (2.6.30-31)—asserting that Romeo’s love must be substantial and active, and consist of more than mere words.
- Montague’s assertion foreshadows that Romeo’s mood (humour)—his excessive romantic passion—if unchecked by reason and balance, will prove tragic—“black and portentous.” These words also convey that good (i.e., reasonable and wise) counsel must come from the adults surrounding Romeo in order to remove this defect in him and prevent tragic ends.
- Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love. Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate! O anything, of nothing first create! O heavy lightness! serious vanity! Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms! Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health! Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is! This love feel I, that feel no love in this. (1.1.173-180)*

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas—and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea. Discussion of the Socratic Questions may include note-taking in the Literature Notebook, or they may be answered in written form in the Literature Notebook.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

- Describe the **Chorus**. What perspective or **voice** does he give to the play?
- Of his 38 plays, this is the only play in which Shakespeare opens with a **sonnet**. Stemming from the Petrarchan tradition, sonnets in Shakespeare’s day were the conventional form of love poetry that idealized the perfect woman. What might Shakespeare be saying about this kind of conventional (e.g., hyperbolic, clichéd) language?
- “Black and portentous must this humour prove, Unless good counsel may the cause remove.” (1.1.139-140)
Is there any **foreshadowing** present here? How might these words by Montague (about Romeo) serve as the **Central One Idea** of the play?
- Read 1.1.173-180, starting at “Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love.” Underline the **paradoxes** in Romeo’s words. Explain the use of **irony** and the overall **gist** of his speech.
- Read 1.1.206-212, starting at “Well, in that hit you miss: she’ll not be hit”
a) Explain the **extended metaphor** and **summarize** Romeo’s speech.
b) Conduct a **scansion** of the lines: what is the **meter** and **rhyme scheme**?
- Read 1.2.16-19, starting at “But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart”
a) Briefly **summarize** these lines.
b) Do you think Capulet’s advice is sound? Why or why not?
c) Do you think Capulet will be a **static character** who remains committed to this perspective over the course of the play, or will he be a **dynamic character** who undergoes significant change?
- Read 1.5.42-51, starting at “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!”
a) When Romeo sees Juliet, he makes a number of **comparisons (similes, metaphors, etc.)**. Identify three and list them here.
b) What do you think of Romeo’s infatuation here? “Did my heart love till now?” Do you believe he has found true love, or something else?

Footnote 56 in the text gives much of the answer to this question. But it is best for students to answer this on their own, or to discover the footnote on their own. The quarrel between the two families has much to do with hate, but ironically, even more to do with love—i.e., the love between Romeo and Juliet. Then the following list of paradoxes—“brawling love,” “loving hate,” etc.—implies the irony present in having a strong love for one’s own family that leads to the hatred of another family.

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION

- The play opens with the Chorus, who presents an overview of the play in the form of a sonnet. This prologue announces that two wealthy families in Verona, Italy, are engaged in an ancient and ongoing feud. A daughter and son from each family fall in love, are entangled in piteous disasters, commit suicide, and “doth with their death bury their parents’ strife.” In scene 1, on the streets of Verona, two servants of the Capulets fight with two servants of the Montagues, and the fray causes quite a scene. Prince Escalus arrives and castigates the patriarchs of each family for allowing repeated conflicts. After the fray, Montague and Lady Montague discuss Romeo’s strange and sad behavior with Benvolio. Shortly thereafter, Romeo tells Benvolio about his unrequited love for Rosaline.
 In scene 2, Capulet and Paris discuss Paris’s suit to marry Juliet. Capulet invites him to the family banquet in order to advance the prospect. A servant of Capulet sets out to deliver the invitations to the banquet, but since he is illiterate, he asks Benvolio and Romeo to help him read the list. To repay them for their kindness, he invites them to the party. Benvolio suggests that attending the banquet will cure Romeo of his lovesickness because he will see that Rosaline is just one of many beauties. In scene 3, at the Capulet house, Lady Capulet, Juliet, and Juliet’s Nurse discuss Paris’s proposal to marry Juliet. Lady Capulet and the Nurse make a case for Paris based on his handsomeness and status. In scene 4, outside the Capulet house, Benvolio, Mercutio, and Romeo prepare to attend the banquet. In scene 5, at the banquet inside the Capulet house, Romeo sees Juliet and immediately falls in love with her. Tybalt recognizes Romeo and becomes greatly offended at his presence. Capulet restrains him from fighting and chastises him. Tybalt leaves the party insisting on revenge. As the party breaks up, Romeo discovers Juliet’s identity from the Nurse, and Juliet does likewise. They are both distraught over the news.
- Answers will vary.

RHETORIC | Expression

The student expresses in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details. The ability to organize and express their thoughts in the Literature Notebook is an important skill in the presentation of their Central One Idea.

RHETORICAL EXPRESSION:

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

- In 1-2 paragraphs, **summarize** the events of Act 1.
- Write the **Central One Idea** of Act 1 in a complete sentence.
- List two or three points that **support** your determination of the Central One Idea of Act 1.
- Write a **lead** (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader’s attention—such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue, etc.*
- Write an **amplification/importance** (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

◆ Choose a quote from anywhere in Act 1 that you think best embodies the Central One Idea. With good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of Act 1.

1 WRITE THE CENTRAL ONE IDEA AS EXPRESSED BY THE TEACHER.

False, misdirected loves and groundless hatred lead to much tragedy.

ESSAY OPTION

Choose a topic below and respond with a 3-5 paragraph essay that includes an Introduction with a clear thesis; a Body with organized, logical, and specific support of the thesis; and a Conclusion that recapitulates the thesis and supporting points in a fresh way, and closes with an amplification—why the thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

The essay should feature appropriate tone, voice, and point of view; correct grammar, usage, and mechanics; a variety of sentence structures enhanced by subordination and parallelism; a balance of general and specific detail; and enhanced rhetorical effect through transition words, appropriate diction, strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and other rhetorical devices.

Note: Some of these prompts tend toward a shorter essay, and some toward a longer. Check with your teacher to see what length he or she suggests. Both short essays (1 page) and long essays (2-4 pages) are useful and helpful, depending on the intent and purpose.

- Read Romans 12:17-21. Compare the instruction given in this passage with the feud between the two families in *Romeo and Juliet*. Write an essay in which you compare the virtue of the former and the vice of the latter, offering a persuasive argument in favor of the instruction presented in Romans.
- Write a personal narrative essay about a time when you were mad at a sibling or a friend. What were the causes of the conflict? In what ways were you responsible for the altercation? How was it resolved? If it has not been resolved yet, how could you resolve the conflict?

- Support for the Teacher’s Central One Idea:
 - Romeo has a juvenile, irrational, self-indulgent “love” for Rosaline.
 - Capulet’s “love” for Juliet is in reality more of a love of money and position.
 - Paris’s “love” for Juliet seems sincere, but is unrequited by her, and is probably also rooted in maintaining social status and rank.
 - Romeo and Juliet’s “love at first sight” is impulsive and ill-advised. Romeo seems infatuated with Juliet in nearly the same way as he was with Rosaline.
 - The feuding families’ hatred is groundless and foolish—“bred of an airy word” (1.1.87).
- Answers will vary.
- Answers will vary.