

Answers

Romeo and Juliet

The points offered below are only indicative and highlight some key things that could be included in your response. You may cover other points as well. It's how your response is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer.

DO IT! ANSWERS

pp.9–37

p.9 Do it!



- In the extract, Juliet seems to be in control. She interrupts Romeo and is abrupt and commanding at times ('Do not...'). She is more cautious about their relationship, despite her love for him ('too rash, too unadvised...'). (AO1/AO2)
- Romeo seems confused, and is determined to address Juliet with routine romantic images and references, such as the moon. Juliet, however, calls Romeo 'the god of my idolatry'. Investigate the implications of this image (Worship? Obsession?). (AO2)
- Compare the formal, ceremonial conversation here with the pair's first meeting. That was like a game in which they explored their feelings via a religious analogy, as in prayer or as pilgrims. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Compare this scene too with how they express their love on the night of their wedding. Then they are genuinely romantic, but apprehensive too. Juliet is worried; Romeo more reassuring and optimistic. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.13 Do it!



- Juliet's angry reactions here show her to be hasty and impulsive. Notice how she lists the extreme actions she would rather take than marry Paris: 'leap.../off the battlements', 'walk in thievish ways', 'Chain me with roaring bears.' This impulsive response is in stark contrast to the calm and measured rhythms of Friar Lawrence's responses and instructions: 'Hold, then. Go home, be merry, give consent.' (AO1/AO2)
- In this refusal to marry Paris, Juliet can be seen as hot-headed when she accepts the Friar's plan and ignores the Nurse, whom she considers traitorous for suggesting that she forgets Romeo. In Shakespeare's presentation, her determination can be seen as a strength but perhaps also a weakness of her headstrong nature. Her hasty decision will lead to death, including her own. (AO1)
- A modern audience might be surprised by the speed of Juliet's falling in love and suggesting marriage to Romeo, especially as her first response is, 'It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden.' (AO3)
- Discuss the imagery of light and lightning used in the presentation of Romeo and Juliet's love. Consider how this reflects Juliet's hasty decision-making in the play. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore Juliet's measured response to her father's anger at her refusal to marry Paris in Act 3 Scene 5. Shakespeare presents her responding to his violent speech with measured and respectful language. Here, the audience might see her as determined rather than hasty. (AO2)

p.17 Do it!



- At this point, Shakespeare suddenly switches to prose. This indicates her garrulous nature and supports the impression of her speech as unfocused and clumsy. Shakespeare presents the Nurse as ridiculous – both pretentious and unsophisticated. (AO2)
- Compare the effect of Shakespeare's use of prose for other servants' scenes, such as the end of Act 4 Scene 5, when the servants and musicians converse after the wedding cancellation. (AO2)
- Explore how the Nurse tries to imply her superiority in the extract and how Shakespeare undermines these pretensions of grandeur as ridiculous. (AO1/AO2)
- Consider evidence for the Nurse's real status in the Capulet household: Lady Capulet and Juliet cannot do without her (and her advice) even though she irritates them. (AO1/AO3)
- Rank and status are not just between servant and master. Consider how Capulet imposes his will on Tybalt, and the Prince imposes his on Capulet and Montague. Verona is a hierarchical society with many layers of authority. (AO1/AO3)

p.21 Do it!



- Explore how violence is linked with passion throughout the play: passion for family (the 'civil unrest' is triggered by the 'Ancient grudge' between the two families and began through an 'airy word'); passion between Romeo and Juliet; strong feelings about family obedience and loyalty. (AO1/AO2)
- Examine how Shakespeare presents the Prince in this extract through his language: men are 'beasts'; weapons are 'mistemper'd'; hands are 'bloody'. (AO2)
- The play opens with violence and a brawl: 'My naked weapon is out. Quarrel'; 'Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?' From this point, love scenes are juxtaposed with scenes of violence and conflict. (AO2/AO3)
- Notice how Romeo and Juliet's love is described as 'These violent delights have violent ends', and that 'My only love sprung from my only hate.' (AO2)
- Shakespeare presents Verona as a place where violence is common. Dying at Tybalt's hand, Mercutio curses the families, 'a plague o' both your houses'; Capulet attacks Juliet with a barrage of violent language when she refuses to marry Paris, 'my fingers itch.' (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.25 Do it!



- Explore the cruel irony in Romeo's words. He is feeling an 'unaccustom'd' optimism, when we know that his normal fatalism is justified. This seems to emphasise and dramatise his bad luck. (AO2)
- Look at how Romeo's language conveys his light mood and confidence. After Balthasar's entrance, Romeo's exclamations and questions express both his excitement and his apprehension. (AO2)
- Consider how unlucky chance events seal Romeo's (and Juliet's fate), for example the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, the failure of the Friar's letter to arrive. (AO1/AO2)
- What is the biggest cause of Romeo's misfortunes: bad luck or bad judgement? Examine character weaknesses shown at key moments, such as killing Tybalt, buying the poison, killing Paris. Compare these incidents with the Friar's misgivings about Romeo in Act 2 Scene 3. (AO1/AO3)
- Luck or fate? Explore the role of fate as something inescapable. The play suggests that fate's purposes are deliberate: the prologue makes it clear that the lovers must die as a sacrifice to peace. Their 'children's end' finally removes the warring families' 'rage'. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.29 Do it!



- Explore how Capulet, as head of the family, wields influence over the younger members of the family. Consider his methods – calming persuasion; assertion of his power ('I say he shall'); resorting to rage and threats ('I'll make you quiet'). (AO1/AO2)
- Capulet loves his daughter, yet seeks to exert absolute power over her. When she refuses to marry Paris, his language is violent: his 'fingers itch'; she will 'starve' and 'die in the streets' if she doesn't respect his authority. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how Shakespeare presents the Montague family's love for Romeo through their concern for his well-being. Contrast this with their involvement in the feud. (AO1/AO2)
- Look at how the Friar is presented as a father figure for Romeo, and the Nurse is a mother figure for Juliet. Explore how each make mistakes in this relationship which leads to Romeo and Juliet's deaths (AO1/AO3)
- How does Shakespeare present family loyalty? What is Juliet's reaction to Tybalt's death? Romeo's reaction to Mercutio's death? Contrast the presentation of these family bonds with the conclusion of these mistaken loyalties: repentant and grief-stricken parents, realising that these blind loyalties are ultimately disastrous. (AO2/AO3)

p.33 Do it!



- In this speech, the Friar presents death as God's will and as a passage to a better life. Therefore 'nature' might be grief-stricken, but 'reason' suggests that such grief is pointless. The Friar's logic is relentless, and the speech's careful structure makes this logic both harsh and undeniable. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how the Friar's tone reassures the mourning parents, but also rebukes and even accuses them. 'Peace... for shame', 'Weep ye now when she is advanc'd'? (AO2)
- The Friar's presentation of death as a merciful gateway to a better place contrasts with other images of death that Shakespeare uses. Explore death personified as an 'abhorred monster' and 'amorous' (Act 5 Scene 3). Such images make death frightening and revolting. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Examine the frightening and physical images of death and tombs that Juliet imagines as she thinks about the consequences of the Friar's plan in Act 4 Scenes 1 and 3. (AO1/AO2)
- Ultimately, death – the deaths of Romeo and Juliet – *do* lead to a 'better place' – a peaceful Verona. Their deaths are presented by Shakespeare as a sacrifice to peace, a lesson that the two families must learn. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.37 Do it!



- In the extract, Juliet's vision of Romeo 'dead at the bottom of a tomb' foreshadows his death at the end of the play. Their dialogue following their first and only sexual encounter emphasises the finality of their parting, which like a death, leads Juliet to question, 'O thinkest thou, we shall ever meet again?'. Their 'sorrow drinks our blood' also linking their passion to decline and eventual death. Furthermore this sorrowful and tormented nature of love is further reinforced by Romeo's assertion that, 'All these woes shall serve/For sweet discourses'. Romeo's optimism is bittersweet here, as the audience knows from the Prologue that the lovers are destined for tragedy. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how Shakespeare presents Romeo and Juliet's love as 'death mark'd'. It is inevitable and inescapable. Link to the theme of fate: the lovers are 'Star-crossed' and will 'Take their life'. Shakespeare presents their destiny as already written in the 'stars'. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Consider how the intensity of Romeo and Juliet's love seems to drive them towards death rather than towards a celebration of a love-filled life. They are troubled with thoughts of suicide, and a willingness to experience it: in Act 3 Scene 3, Romeo brandishes a knife in Friar Lawrence's cell and threatens to kill himself after his banishment. Juliet wields a knife in order to take her own life in Friar Lawrence's presence. After Capulet decides that Juliet will marry Paris, Juliet says, 'If all else fail, myself have power to die' (Act 3 Scene 5). (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Explore how Shakespeare presents death as an 'abhorred monster' and 'amorous' (Act 5 Scene 3). This personification links death to a twisted and abhorrent form of love. (AO1/AO2)
- Family love within the Capulet and the Montague families leads to the perpetuation of the 'ancient grudge' between the two families. It is because of this feud and the family love/loyalty that we witness the deaths of Tybalt and Mercutio, as well as Romeo and Juliet. Ultimately, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet leads to the creation of a peaceful Verona where people can be free to love across family boundaries. (AO1/AO2)

ANSWERS TO EXAM STYLE QUESTIONS

pp.38–45

p.38 Question 1



- In the extract, Capulet is teasing and flirtatious with the ‘girls’. He implies that he is youthful. However, he has to admit that his ‘dancing days’ are in the past. Shakespeare’s presentation mocks Capulet but also allows us to smile with him. (AO1/AO2)
- Capulet’s confused switching between youthful enthusiasm and realisation of the limits of his age is reflected in the changes in meter in his speech. When he is confident and teasing, the iambic pentameters are regular. The rhythm breaks down when he remembers his age and status. (AO2)
- The conflict with ‘saucy boy’ Tybalt shows that age is to be respected and is no impediment to authority. (AO2)
- Even so, age is also mocked. When Capulet calls for his sword in the opening scene, his young wife suggests a ‘crutch’ would be more appropriate. When Juliet awaits the Nurse’s return from Romeo in Act 2 Scene 5, she accuses the Nurse of being ‘unwieldy, slow’ and lacking ‘warm youthful blood’. (AO1/AO2)
- So, Shakespeare does not fully support youth or age: he shows the impetuosity of youth that kills Romeo and Juliet; and he shows the ingrained negative attitudes of age that sustain the pointless ‘ancient grudge’ between the Montagues and Capulets. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.39 Question 2



- Mercutio is a complex character. Shakespeare presents him as a lively joker (who sometimes in productions can outshine Romeo). His function in the play is to mock hypocrisy and pretence through his jokes and wordplay. His jokes and wit act as a contrast to Romeo’s torment in love. However, he too is proud and headstrong. (AO1/AO3)
- In this extract, Shakespeare presents Mercutio as magician-like, seeking to ‘conjure’ Romeo as he jokes about Romeo’s love for Rosaline. He makes fun of Romeo’s ‘sigh’ and links Romeo’s behaviour with courtly love and infatuation. He uses sexual puns: ‘demesnes’ (pleasure grounds / sexual organs) to tease Romeo; links Romeo to the ‘purblind’ (blindfolded) Cupid whose arrows cause people to fall in love; asks Romeo to tell Venus (the goddess of love) where he is and, parodying fashionable love poetry, calls on “Rosaline’s bright eyes” to help him conjure Romeo. (AO1/AO2)
- Look at Act 2 Scene 4 to consider how Mercutio uses alliteration and sexual innuendo to mock Romeo’s infatuation with Rosaline: his heart has been pierced by ‘the blind bow-boy’s butt-shaft’. He is scornful of Tybalt’s fencing style and gives him the name ‘Prince of Cats’. He ridicules fashionable language: ‘The pox of such antic, lispings, affecting phantasies.’ (AO1/AO2)
- Mercutio’s language often focuses on puns with sexual content, such as ‘the bawdy hand of the dial is on the prick of noon’, the jester’s ‘bauble’. Notice how he often repeats words to stress the joke: ‘Very well took, wisely, wisely’; ‘A bawd, a bawd, a bawd!’ (AO2)
- Even as he is dying, in Act 3 Scene 1, Mercutio jokes, ‘Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.’ His final words, however, are a curse on the families, ‘a plague o’ both your houses.’ So, as his death triggers a more sombre atmosphere and a chain of tragic events, Shakespeare still uses him to comment scornfully on the others’ actions and attitudes. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.40 Question 3



- Juliet lists a number of oxymorons here – such as ‘beautiful tyrant’, ‘fiend angelical’ – as different ways of expressing the same thing: that you can’t trust appearances and evil can disguise itself as virtue. (AO2)
- It isn’t just that things can be the opposite of what they seem, but that this can be a product of deliberate deceit. This idea is given special significance by the reference to a ‘serpent heart’. Elizabethan audiences would have recognised this as an allusion to the devil (in the guise of a snake) in the Garden of Eden. The deception therefore is strengthened by its being appealing, tempting. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- This religious allusion might imply that Shakespeare is questioning the trustworthiness of the relationship between Romeo and Juliet, which was established, at their first meeting, with an extended metaphor of praying and holiness. It was also blessed, perhaps unwisely, by a priest who married them secretly. (AO2/AO3)
- However, we realise soon enough that Juliet is not really condemning Romeo as deceitful. When the Nurse concludes that men are ‘all dissemblers’, Juliet objects strongly: ‘Blister’d be thy tongue’. She remains loyal and loving to Romeo. She trusts him. (AO1)
- Even so, in broad terms, the oxymorons in the extract are part of Shakespeare’s general motif of contradiction and opposites: ‘Away from the light steals home my heavy son,’ says Montague; ‘O heavy lightness! serious vanity!’ Romeo complains, and ‘More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!’ (AO2)

p.41 Question 4



- Study the extract for how Juliet’s resourcefulness and quick thinking is shown through Shakespeare’s use of dramatic irony. The audience knows that she is already married to Romeo, yet Paris thinks she will be his wife. Look at Juliet’s double meanings: Paris refers her to as ‘my wife’, she responds ‘That may be, sir, when I may be a wife’; when Paris asks if she will confess her love for him to the friar, she says, ‘I will confess to you that I love him’ (Romeo); Paris tells her that her face is his, she confirms that her face is ‘not mine own,’ as it now belongs to Romeo. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how Juliet is presented at the start of the play. Marriage is ‘an honour that I dream not of’ – she is dutiful and willing to consider her parents’ wishes, but evasive in her response to her mother. ‘I’ll look to like’ resourcefully implies respect while making no commitment to comply. Consider how the plot unfolds so that, by the end of the play, Juliet has defied their wishes and taken charge of her own life (and death). (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- On meeting Romeo and falling in love, Juliet resourcefully takes control of the situation and proposes marriage: ‘If that thy bent of love be honourable, / Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow.’ As a young woman of her time, this would be unusual and perhaps even shocking – perhaps for a contemporary audience too. (AO1/AO3)
- Juliet is resourceful in the face of her father’s anger in Act 3 Scene 5. She seeks to appease him by treating him as a priest, ‘I beseech you on my knees’; she asks her mother’s support by calling on her ‘pity’. When the Nurse also betrays her trust, Shakespeare presents her as isolated and having to rely on her own instincts and imagination. (AO1/AO2)
- How is Juliet’s resourcefulness presented within Friar Lawrence’s plan at the end of the play? She is terrified yet seizes the opportunity to be with Romeo, ‘Tell not me of fear.’ (AO1/AO2)

p.42 Question 5



- What impressions do we get of Capulet in the extract? 'I will make a desperate tender' suggests that he will decide Juliet's future for her, but, on the other hand, he considers this a risk. He sounds like a man *trying* to be autocratic. At first, he only *thinks* she will be 'ruled' by him, and then declares he is sure she will. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how Capulet alternates between certainty and doubt throughout the speech and how this vacillation is conveyed in the syntax, which switches between fluent and fragmentary. He also keeps changing topic, again suggesting that he is unsure of himself. (AO2)
- When Juliet refuses to marry Paris in Act 3 Scene 5, Capulet becomes insistent and abusive ('Out, you green-sickness carrion!'). Compare this response to his forceful rebuttal of Tybalt's challenge in Act 1 Scene 5. (AO1/AO2)
- Again, compare Capulet in this extract with his attitude when Paris asks if he may marry Juliet in Act 1 Scene 2. He seems protective of Juliet and wants to allow her to choose her own husband. (AO2/AO3)
- Why does Capulet vary and change? Consider how the plot shows Capulet as being controlled by the 'ancient grudge' with the Montagues and by how events unfold. Shakespeare finally shows Capulet as repentant and grief-stricken, realising that having his (and his family's) own way was ultimately disastrous: he loses the daughter he is devoted to. (AO1/AO2/AO3)

p.43 Question 6



- In the extract, Romeo and Juliet's bad luck is presented as 'unhappy fortune': a series of events that conspire to keep the messenger from delivering the message to Romeo: the messenger may have been in contact with 'infectious pestilence' and so is quarantined; other messengers were 'fearful' of infection so refused to take over. Friar Lawrence immediately sees the 'danger' in this. Luck is against the lovers. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore how the audience is alerted to bad luck in the opening scenes of the play. In the Prologue, the lovers are described as 'star-cross'd' and 'death-mark'd'; in Act 1 Scene 4, as Romeo heads to the Capulet ball, he senses that something bad is 'hanging in the stars.' The Prologue tells us that bad luck will torment the lovers and Shakespeare reminds us of this throughout. (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- In Act 3 Scene 1, after killing Tybalt, Romeo presents himself as 'fortune's fool'. He knows that luck and fortune is not on his side. Similarly, Juliet describes herself as 'an ill-divining soul' when her premonition of Romeo's death foreshadows the events in Act 5 arising from their bad luck. (AO2)
- At the end of the play, when Romeo hears of Juliet's death, Shakespeare presents him as willing to 'defy' his bad luck by killing himself to be with Juliet forever. Romeo will 'shake the yoke of inauspicious stars', and take control of his own luck. Shakespeare uses dramatic irony, however, to show the audience that, once again, bad luck will plague the 'star-cross'd' lovers. (AO1/AO2)
- Consider beliefs relating to fate and destiny when the play was written. Did people feel that they were in control of their lives? Were they subject instead to the whims of God, fate or chance? (AO3)

p.44 Question 7



- Examine Romeo's extravagant – and startling – imagery in the extract, particularly his personification of death as Juliet's forced lover ('paramour') and his description of the physical reality of death ('worms' as 'chambermaids') (AO2)
- Typically, Romeo presents love as a burden (a 'yoke'), an agony from which death will release him. Until he dies, he sees himself as a prisoner of misfortune, ruled by 'inauspicious stars'. By dying, Romeo will be 'engrossed' by death, become part of it. This will allow him to go on loving Juliet. (AO1/AO2)
- Compare Romeo's last moments with our first meeting him in the opening scene, when he is presented as a gloomy lover who seems to revel in his pessimism and sense of failure in love. We might get the impression that he is playing the role of a 'star cross'd' lover. Both Benvolio and Mercutio tease – or even mock – him for this. (AO2/AO3)
- Romeo's somewhat ceremonial approach to love can be seen even in the very dark imagery in this extract. It is evident in his first meeting with Juliet, in which the extended metaphor of love as a prayer or sign of devotion is jointly developed by the lovers as though it is also a game. (AO1/AO2)

p.45 Question 8



- Shakespeare's warning in the play is that pride can lead to tragedy and misfortune. Family pride, potentially a positive aspect, becomes toxic when 'ancient' grudges poison it. Explore how this 'grudge' affects nobles and servants alike. (AO1)
- Explore the impressions we have of Mercutio, Tybalt and Romeo's pride and honour in the extract. Hot-headed Tybalt seeks to defend his family honour against Romeo and is happy to inflame the situation: 'Thou art a villain'. Romeo, now married to Juliet, seeks to calm the situation, saying that he 'love thee better than thou canst devise.' Mercutio's pride and honour is offended by what he sees as Romeo's capitulation: 'O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!' (AO1/AO2)
- Use the extract to discuss how pride and honour is linked with status. Tybalt refers to Romeo as 'my man', implying ownership; Mercutio responds impulsively that Romeo will not 'wear your livery'. How might this relate to both Elizabethan and contemporary society? (AO1/AO2/AO3)
- Shakespeare links pride with manliness, and presents dangers posed by that. The servants are drawn into defending this idea of honour in the opening scene when Samson 'bites his thumb' at the Capulets starting the brawl. Consider the Prince's words that the families are 'enemies to peace' and 'profaners of this neighbour-stained steel' – they are disrespectful of their fellow countrymen. It could be argued that it is only Benvolio who behaves honourably by attempting to stop the brawl. (AO1/AO2)
- Explore the ending of the play. It is only through the deaths of Romeo and Juliet that the Capulets and Montagues learn the true meaning of family honour. (AO1/AO2/AO3)