

Romeo and Juliet

Act 1 Guided Reading

Act 1: Scene 1:

Summary

Sampson and Gregory, servants of the house of Capulet, go out looking for trouble. . . . Sampson and Gregory almost pick a fight with Abraham and Balthasar, servants of the house of Montague. . . . Seeing a Capulet kinsman, Sampson and Gregory start to fight with Abraham and Balthasar. Benvolio tries to stop the fight, but Tybalt enters and attacks Benvolio. The citizens of Verona attack both the Capulets and Montagues. Capulet and Montague try to join the fight, but are restrained by their wives. . . . Prince Escalus stops the riot, threatens everyone with death, and takes Capulet with him, leaving Benvolio alone with Montague and Lady Montague.

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, 81
Profaners of this neighbor-stained steel¹—
Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you beasts
That quench the fire of your pernicious² rage
With purple fountains³ issuing from your veins. 85

On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistemper'd⁴ weapons to the ground,
And hear the sentence of your moved⁵ prince:
Three civil brawls, bred⁶ of an airy⁷ word,
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, 90
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets,
And made Verona's ancient⁸ citizens
Cast by their grave beseeming ornaments⁹,
To wield old partisans¹⁰, in hands as old,
Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate. 95

If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit¹¹ of the peace.
For this time, all the rest depart away.
You Capulet; shall go along with me:
And, Montague, come you this afternoon, 100
To know our further pleasure in this case,
To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

You rebels who hate peace and who turn your swords against your friends! Why won't you listen? Wow... you beasts who take your anger by spilling each other's blood.

¹ *neighbor-stained steel*: swords turned against neighbors

² *pernicious*: destructive

³ *purple fountains*: flowing blood

⁴ *mistemper'd*: angry

⁵ *moved*: angry

⁶ *bred*: have come from

⁷ *airy*: casual

⁸ *ancient*: old

⁹ *grave-beseeming ornaments*: old people bling

¹⁰ *wield old partisans*: take a side

¹¹ *forfeit*: something lost or given up

1. Re-read lines 86 & 87. Who is the prince talking to? Label that as the *subject* of the sentence. Now label the *action verb*. What is he asking them to do?
2. In line 95, Shakespeare is using the first cankered to mean "rusted". How can the old men's hands be "rusted with peace?" Look up the word canker. What are different meanings? What does he mean by the second "cankered?"
3. Use a highlighter to indicate the words you think the Prince would have emphasized (maybe even yelled). Imagine he is yelling at you!

