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INGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 4

# Three Great Plays of Shakespeare



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## What's the book about?

Discuss these questions.

- 1 What plays by Shakespeare do you know? Name some famous characters from these plays. What do you know about them?
- 2 Which of the three plays in this book are these pictures from?  
Write *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* or *King Lear*.



## What happens first?

1.2

Look at the words in *italics* at the top of page 1 and the pictures on pages 3–7. What problems do you think *Romeo and Juliet's* feelings for each other will cause? Make notes.

Notes

# Romeo and Juliet

*'Oh, Romeo, Romeo, why is your name Romeo?' she said.  
'Leave your family and change your name.'*

This is the story of Romeo and Juliet. Romeo was the son of Lord Montague, the head of the Montague family. Juliet was the daughter of Lord Capulet.

The Montagues and the Capulets were two important families in the city of Verona who had had a terrible **quarrel**. Even their servants hated each other, and they fought and **cursed** each other whenever they met.

One day, two servants from the house of Capulet saw two servants from the house of Montague and they began to fight. Benvolio, a friend of Romeo, saw the fight. He liked peace and quiet, so he hated to see people fighting.

'Stop!' he cried, but it was already too late. Tybalt, a young and angry Capulet, had arrived in the street.

'Help me to stop this fight,' Benvolio cried to him.

Tybalt pulled out his **sword**. 'I hate all Montagues and I hate you!' he cried, and he began to fight Benvolio.

The noise and the shouting brought officers of the law to the scene of the fight. Then Lord Capulet and his wife arrived, and Lord Montague and his wife. The heads of the two families pulled out their swords.

Suddenly Prince Escalus, the Prince of Verona, appeared.

'You men, you are like wild animals!' he said to them angrily. 'Your quarrels spoil the quiet of our streets. Listen to me! If you make trouble in the streets of Verona again, you will pay for it with your lives! Now, everyone must leave this place.'

Lord and Lady Montague and Benvolio left last.

'Where is Romeo?' asked Lady Montague. 'I am very glad that he did not take part in this fight.'

'Very early this morning,' Benvolio said, 'I could not sleep. I walked out into the woods on the west of the city, and I saw Romeo there, alone. I went towards him, but when he saw me, he hid among the trees. I decided not to follow him.'

**quarrel** /'kwɒrəl/ (n/v) an angry argument

**curse** /kɜːs/ (v/n) to use offensive language, or words that are intended to bring someone bad luck

**sword** /sɔːd/ (n) a long, sharp knife that was used in battle



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Romeo's father, Lord Montague, said, 'Many people have seen Romeo early in the morning, **weeping** alone. When the sun comes up, he goes into his room and he shuts out the daylight. I am afraid for him.'

'Do you know why he is unhappy?' Benvolio asked.

'He will not tell me,' Lord Montague replied.

'Look! Here he comes,' said Benvolio. 'Go home. I will try to find out why he is unhappy.'

He quickly learned the reason for Romeo's sadness.

'I become fond of Rosaline, but she does not pay attention to me,' Romeo said.

Benvolio tried to help his good friend. 'Forget her. Don't think about her,' he said.

'How can I forget her?' Romeo asked.

'Look around you. Look at other women.'

'When I look at other women, I see that Rosaline is the best of all!'

In another street in Verona, Count Paris was talking to Lord Capulet, Juliet's father. Paris was the prince's nephew.

'I would like to marry Juliet. What do you say?' Paris asked.

'She is my only child and she is too young,' said Capulet. 'Let two more summers pass before she marries. But you can speak to her and try to attract her attention. Every year at this time I give a great **feast**. It will take place tonight. All my friends will come to my house. You must come too – then you can talk to Juliet.'

Capulet called a servant and said, 'On this piece of paper there is a list of names. Find these people and ask them to come to dinner at my house tonight.' Then he walked away with Paris.

'This is going to be quite difficult for me because I cannot read,' the servant thought.

Benvolio and Romeo came along the street. They were still talking about Romeo's unhappiness.

'Please, sir, can you read?' Capulet's servant asked. He gave Romeo the list of names.

Romeo read out the list for him: 'Martino and his wife and daughters; Anselm and his sisters; Mercutio and his brother Valentine; Lucio and Helena; Rosaline ... Where are these people going to meet?'

'At my **master's** house tonight,' the servant said.

'Who is your master?' Romeo asked.

**weep** /wi:p/ (v) to cry

**feast** /fi:st/ (n/v) a large meal for a lot of people, to celebrate a special occasion

**master** /'ma:stə/ (n) the man who is the servants' employer





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## Three Great Plays of Shakespeare

British English

*Classic*

These are three of Shakespeare's greatest, and most tragic, plays. In each story, the main characters die – cruel Lord Macbeth, unhappy King Lear and the doomed lovers, Romeo and Juliet. They die because they, or others, are weak, greedy or very foolish. But, like real people, they have good qualities and moments of greatness too.

*Number of words (excluding activities): 15,147*

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