

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

ROMEO & JULIET, In Short
by Lee Karvonen

ESTABLISHING THE RHYTHM

To find the proper rhythm for this piece, first read-aloud and clap through the sections as you go. Each underlined word or word part falls directly on a beat. As you read, clap on each underlined word, keeping the rhythm steady. Be careful not to read too fast!

This is a rehearsal technique and readers will not clap throughout these sections during performance. After you have established the beat, it is time to start interpreting, experimenting, and having fun with the words by varying tempo, volume, inflection, and expression. Be careful not to allow the development of a "sing-song" delivery while rehearsing and performing this script.

STAGING

This script may be staged as either a Readers Theater Reading or as a Traditional Play:

If you are staging it as RT, hang signs around each characters neck telling the audience the name of that character. (NARRATOR, ROMEO, JULIET, FRIAR LAURENCE, CAPULET, etc.) Since most RT productions do not involve much stage movement, ask your Narrator (and some of the other characters who have smaller parts) to hold up large signs at the proper moments to inform the audience which stage movements are happening at the time. (ASIDE, TAKES JULIET'S HAND, DRINKS THE POISON, etc.).

NOTE: If you are staging the piece as Traditional Theater, simply block your actors as you normally would, and follow the stage directions below.

3

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

4

SCENE ONE

SAMPSON: TODAY I'M SPOILING FOR A FIGHT;
 LET'S FIND A MONTAGUE.
 MY BLADE IS ITCHY IN MY HAND;
 I'D LIKE TO RUN ONE THROUGH.

GREGORY: THEN SET YOURSELF; HERE COME A PAIR,
 SO WE CAN START A FIGHT.
 LET'S QUARREL FOR OUR MASTERS' SAKE;
 WE KNOW WE'RE IN THE RIGHT!

SAMPSON: HEY ABRAHAM, YOU WEAK OLD MAN,
 OUR MASTER IS THE BEST,
 SO NOW PUT UP OR SHUT UP;
 HEY, MAN, THIS IS THE TEST.

ABRAHAM: I SEEK NO QUARREL WITH YOU, SIR.
 SO, PLEASE, JUST LET ME PASS.

SAMPSON: WELL, SIR, I BITE MY THUMB AT YOU.
 YOU CANNOT LET **THAT** PASS!

ABRAHAM: I SERVE A MAN AS GOOD AS YOURS.

GREGORY: NO BETTER, DO YOU SAY?

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

5

ABRAHAM: YES, BETTER, KNAVE; NOW DRAW
AND LET YOUR INSULT DIE TODAY!

NARRATOR: AND SO THE FIGHT WAS ON;
IT WAS A QUESTION OF BELIEF,
AND THEN BENVOLIO BROKE IT UP
WITH BLADE DRAWN FOR RELIEF.

BENVOLIO: PUT UP YOUR SWORDS! BE MEN OF PEACE!
I BEG YOU ALL TO STOP!
THIS QUARREL HAS GONE FAR TOO FAR;
IT'S WAY OVER THE TOP!

TYBALT: BENVOLIO, YOU TALK OF PEACE
AND YET YOUR BLADE IS DRAWN,
I HATE THE WORD, AND MONTAGUES,
AND HELL - LET'S GET IT ON!

NARRATOR: THE PRINCE WAS CALLED TO BREAK IT UP
AND HE WAS IN A RAGE.
HE WAS, FOR CERTAIN, ALL FED UP
WITH QUARRELS AT THIS STAGE.

PRINCE: HEY CAPULET! HEY MONTAGUE!
YOU ENEMIES OF PEACE!
TODAY BECOMES THE FINAL STRAW!

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

6

YOUR QUARREL NOW MUST CEASE!
IF YOU PERSIST NOW, EITHER ONE,
YOUR LIVES WILL PAY THE PRICE!
NOT ANOTHER CIVIL BRAWL!
THERE'S NO MORE MISTER NICE!

SCENE TWO

LADY MONTAGUE: BENVOLIO, I ASK YOU PLAIN,
HAVE YOU SEEN ROMEO?
I WORRY THAT HE IS SO SAD
AND BLUE AND DOWN AND LOW.

BENVOLIO: HE WANDERS THROUGH THE STREETS AT DAWN
AND MOANS A MIGHTY SIGH,
HE SOUNDS AS IF IT'S FATAL
AND THAT SOON HE'S GOING TO DIE.
I'LL SEEK HIM OUT AND TRY TO LEARN
WHAT SADDENS HIM SO DEEP,

THEN MAYBE ALL THE REST OF US
CAN CATCH UP ON OUR SLEEP!
(to Romeo)
OH COUSIN, WHAT IS TROUBLING YOU?
WE'RE WORRIED AS CAN BE.

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

7

ROMEO: I LOVE MY TRUE LOVE MORE THAN LIFE!
MY TRUE LOVE WON'T LOVE ME!
OR SHE HAS SWORN TO BE A NUN!
ALAS, SHE WILL BE CHASTE!
THAT WE SHOULD NEVER KISS AND HUG
IS JUST NOT TO MY TASTE.

SCENE THREE

PARIS: LORD CAPULET, PLEASE TELL ME NOW.
WHAT SAY YOU TO MY PLEA?
WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR DAUGHTER,
JULIET, TO MARRY ME?

CAPULET: GOOD PARIS, PLEASE REMEMBER
THAT MY GIRL IS JUST THIRTEEN.
I KNOW, GIRLS YOUNGER THAN MY DAUGHTER
OFTEN ARE QUITE KEEN,
BUT ALL MY OTHER CHILDREN
ARE NO LONGER IN THIS WORLD.
ALLOW ME JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH MY LITTLE GIRL.

Romeo and Juliet, In Short
A "Shortened Shakespeare" Script

8

PARIS: LORD CAPULET, I ASK AGAIN,
HER BEAUTY TO POSSESS.
I LONG TO SEE YOUR LITTLE GIRL
POSED IN HER WEDDING DRESS.

CAPULET: I UNDERSTAND YOUR HASTE, MY SON,
AND SO I'LL TELL YOU THIS:
IF SHE'S A WILLING BRIDE TO YOU,
MY OBJECTIONS I'LL DISMISS.

SCENE FOUR

SERVANT: IF I COULD ONLY READ, YOU KNOW,
THEN I COULD READ THIS LIST,
THEN I'D BE SURE THAT NARY OF MY
MASTER'S GUESTS ARE MISSED
(to Romeo & Benvolio)
GOOD SIRS, I BEG OF YOU TO HELP
ME UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS
TO SEND THE ILLITERATE WITH A LIST,
IT SEEMS TO ME ABSURD.