

## The importance of Act 1 Scene 1

Discuss and answer the following questions to help you think about the importance of this scene to the rest of the play.

1. The action starts with a fight developing between members of the house of Capulet and Montague. How does Shakespeare show the growing tension between the two groups? (There are a number of ways this is done so do not be satisfied with only one idea)
2. What impression do you get of Benvolio (a Montague) from this fight? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What impression do you get of Tybalt (a Capulet) from the fight? Give reasons for your answer.
4. How does Shakespeare suggest that both Lord Capulet and Lord Montague want to get involved in the fight? Why might this be important later in the play?
5. What information does the audience find out from the Prince?
6. Why is it important that we hear Benvolio's version of events here? Think about how accurately he tells the Prince and the Montague what happened and then consider his role in later events in the play.
7. Write down what we (the audience) learn about Romeo from Benvolio's conversation with Lord Montague.
8. In what ways is the description of Romeo a contrast (different) to the fight scene and the characters we have met so far? Look particularly at the language used to describe Romeo and his behavior.
9. Count up how many times Benvolio and Romeo use the word 'love' or 'loving' within these speeches. What might this suggest to an audience?
10. Romeo uses lots of oxymoron (a phrase which brings together two contradictory words such as 'an honest thief'; paradox reduced to two words) in this scene when talking to Benvolio. Find as many as you can and write them down. Explain the effect of each one.
11. What does Romeo give as the reason for his sadness?
12. Considering how eloquently (well) Romeo speaks about his problem in this scene what might this suggest to an audience when he first sees Juliet in Act 1 Scene 5 and expresses his feelings there?