# Act 1 scene 1 romeo and juliet. essay

ASSIGN BUSTER

Enter Sampson and Gregory: Sampson and Gregory, servants of the house of Capulet, go out looking for trouble. Enter Abraham and Balthasar: Sampson and Gregory almost pick a fight with Abraham and Balthasar, servants of the house of Montague. Enter Benvolio: 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. Enter Prince Escalus with his Train: Prince Escalus stops the riot, threatens everyone with death, and takes Capulet with him. Exeunt all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio: Benvolio tells how the brawl started, then Lady Montague asks where Romeo is, and Benvolio answers that he was up before dawn, wandering in the woods.

The Montagues say that Romeo is afflicted with strange sorrows, and Benvolio offers to find out what’s wrong with him. Enter Romeo: Seeing Romeo coming, Montague and Lady Montague leave Benvolio alone to speak with their son. Benvolio soon discovers that Romeo’s problem is that he loves a woman who doesn’t return his love. Benvolio tries to get Romeo to say who it is he loves, but Romeo won’t. Benvolio also tries to get Romeo to solve his problem by looking for another woman, but Romeo seems determined to love and suffer. Enter Sampson and Gregory: The opening stage direction reads, “ Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, of the house of Capulet, armed with swords and bucklers (1.

1. 1, s. d. ). As viewers of the play, we don't know that Sampson and Gregory are of the house of Capulet, but their clothes tell us they are servants of some great man.

To make a big impression, rich men dressed their servants in uniforms, called " liveries. " Present-day street gangs wear " colors" for similar reasons. Sampson and Gregory's swords and bucklers (small round shields) are important, too. Gentlemen wore swords, but servants usually didn't, and bucklers were used only for individual combat. (For some interesting background on the Elizabethan use of the sword and buckler, see the review of Jill L. Levenson's "' Alla Stoccado carries it away': Codes of Violence in Romeo and Juliet.

") In short, we know at first glance that Sampson and Gregory are looking for trouble. It won't be long efore these two will find the trouble they are looking for, but in the meantime we will see that Shakespeare doesn't glamorize violence. Sampson is a boasting fool, and Gregory is more interested in wordplay than swordplay. Any feud in which these two are involved can only be silly and stupid. In the opening moments of the scene, Sampson talks tough, and Gregory makes jokes at his expense. It takes time to explain jokes, so you may find this section of the summary slow going.

Try to keep in mind that things actually move quickly. In less than three minutes of stage time Tybalt will be trying to kill Benvolio. Sampson says, " Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals" (1. 1. 1), and Gregory replies, " No, for then we should be colliers" (1.

1. 2). The modern equivalent of “ carry coals” is “ take guff,” but Gregory pretends not to understand, and says that if they carried coals, they would be coal miners. Sampson, apparently not bright enough to understand Gregory’s little joke, explains himself: “ I mean, an [if] we be in choler, we’ll draw” (1. 1.

3). To be “ in choler” is to be angry, and Sampson means that if they are angry they’ll draw their swords from their scabbards. Gregory answers with two puns: “ Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o’ the collar” (1. 1. 4).

He’s saying that Sampson will not draw his sword, but draw his neck out of the hangman’s collar (i. e. , noose). Gregory’s point is that Sampson, despite his tough talk, isn’t likely to do anything that will get him in trouble with the law. (Later in the scene we’ll see that Gregory is right about Sampson.

) Insisting that he’s a scary guy, Sampson says, “ I strike quickly, being moved [angered]” (1. 1. 5). Gregory responds by reversing Sampson’s words: “ But thou art not quickly moved [motivated] to strike” (1.

. 6). Sampson’s answer to this is “ A dog of the house of Montague moves me” (1. 1.

7). This is a little puzzling, because he’s speaking as though he has just seen a Montague, but the Montagues don’t appear until a little later. Maybe he’s drawing his sword and placing his buckler in front of him to show what he would do if a Montague did show up. Gregory then proceeds to prove that Sampson will run when he sees a Montague. Gregory’s proof consists of

definitions of words: “ To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand [as in “ to make a stand”]: therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn’st away” (1. .

7-8). Sampson declares that he will stand up against any Montague, and adds, “ I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague’s” (1. 1. 9-10). The side of the street next to the wall, the farthest away from the horse droppings and open sewers, was the favored place. Inferiors were supposed to yield the wall to superiors, and therefore to “ take the wall” of someone was to show disrespect to that person.

Gregory contradicts Sampson by using a proverb, “ the weakest goes to the wall,” which means that the weak must always yield to the strong. Therefore if Sampson takes the wall, says Gregory, “ That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest goes to the wall” (1. 1. 11-12).

Gregory’s joke only gives Sampson an opportunity to make even bigger boasts. He says, “ True; and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague’s men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall” (1. 1. 13-17). Sampson is going to be the man who will frighten all the Montague men and screw all the Montague women.

Sorry for the crude language, but Sampson is a crude character, and he gets worse. Gregory points out that the feud is between the Capulet and Montague men, not the women, but that makes no difference to Sampson. He declares that he will fight the men and then politely cut off the heads of the women. Or their maidenheads, “ take it in what sense thou wilt (1. 1. 25-26).

Gregory responds with another pun, a fairly feeble one: “ They must take it in sense that feel it” (1. 1. 27). Gregory has turned the phrase “ take it in what sense” into the phrase “ take it in sense,” which means “ to feel with the physical senses,” and he means that it’s the Montague maids who are going to “ take it in sense.

This joke pleases Sampson, because he’s sure he’s the stud who can give what the maids are going to “ take in sense. ” He says, “ Me they shall feel while I am able to stand: and ’tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh” (1. 1. 28-29). Earlier Sampson used the word “ stand” in the sense of “ stand and fight”; now he’s referring to the sturdiness of his male member. This brings another joke from Gregory: “‘ Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor-John” (1.

1. 30-31). “ Poor-John” was the cheapest kind of dried fish. Dried fish were commonly sold whole — head, tail, and all — and they were so thoroughly dried that they were as hard as wood. Thus a dried fish could be compared to a man’s erection, and Gregory’s joke is that Sampson’s “ pretty piece of flesh” isn’t so pretty. At this point, the enemy appears, but even that doesn’t stop the sex jokes.

Gregory says, “ Draw thy tool! here comes two of the house of the Montagues” (1. 1. 31-32), and Sampson answers, “ My naked weapon is out” (1. 1.

33-34). Enter Abraham and Balthasar: Seeing Abraham and Balthasar, Sampson says to Gregory, “ quarrel, I will back thee” (1. 1. 33-34). This could make the audience laugh because Sampson, who has been talking big, now

wants Gregory to go first. Gregory doesn’t have a lot of confidence in Sampson, and he’s not done making jokes.

He asks if Sampson is going to “ back” him by turning his back and running away. Sampson answers, “ Fear me not” (1. 1. 36), meaning “ have no fears about me”; Gregory replies, “ No, marry; I fear thee! ” (1. 1.

37), meaning “ no chance I would ever be afraid of you. ” Not only does Sampson want Gregory to go first, he’s so worried about getting in trouble with the law that he suggests they let Abraham and Balthasar start the fight. Gregory says he’ll frown as they walk by the other two, Sampson has a better idea: he’ll bite his thumb at Abraham and Balthasar. (Biting the thumb is a variation of “ giving the fig,” an obscene, insulting gesture.

To give a fig, you move your thumb in and out between your first two fingers. Do it, look at it, think about it, and you’ll see why it’s an insulting and obscene gesture. ) In order to properly bite one’s thumb at someone, you have to place your thumbnail just behind your top teeth, then make a cracking sound by flicking your thumb towards the other person. Apparently Sampson doesn’t do the whole thing, because Abraham asks, “ Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? ” (1.

1. 44). Sampson, looking pretty foolish with his thumb in his mouth, says “ I do bite my thumb, sir” (1. 1.

45), and Abraham asks again, “ Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? ” (1. 1. 46). Sampson, still worried about getting in trouble, asks Gregory if the law will be on their side if he says “ yes. ” Gregory tells him it won’t, so all

Sampson dares do is tell Abraham that he is not biting his thumb at him, but he is biting his thumb. This is lame, and Gregory's next attempt to get the Montagues to start the fight is pretty weak, too.

He asks Abraham if he is quarreling with them. Abraham says he is not, and Sampson says, " If you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you"(1. 1. 54-55). Abraham asks, " No better? " (1. 1.

56). Abraham sees that Sampson doesn't have the guts to say that Capulet is better than Montague. To avoid having to walk away with his thumb in his mouth, Sampson stalls, saying " Well, sir" (1. 1. 57). For a moment, it looks like nothing is going to happen after all, but then Gregory sees a kinsman of Capulet.

Enter Benvolio: Abraham has dared Sampson to say that Capulet is better than Montague, but it doesn't happen until Gregory spots a Capulet kinsman (perhaps Tybalt, who appears a moment later) and tells Sampson, " Say ' better,' here comes one of my master's kinsmen" (1. 1. 58). It seems that Sampson and Gregory believe that their master Capulet wants them to fight Montagues, so when they see that a Capulet kinsman is watching, they begin to fight. Very quickly, the fight develops into a riot.

Benvolio appears and tries to stop the fight. Crying " Put up your swords; you know not what you do" (1. 1. 5), Benvolio draws his sword to beat down the swords of the four men.

But Benvolio has scarcely gotten his sword out of its scabbard before Tybalt shows up and calls out, " What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?

/ Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death” (1. 1. 66-67). “ Heartless hinds” are cowardly servants, and Tybalt thinks that Benvolio should be ashamed to draw his sword among such lowly creatures. Benvolio asks Tybalt to help him keep the peace, but Tybalt answers, “ What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word, / As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee: / Have at thee, coward! ” (1. 1.

70-72). Have at thee” is what you say as you attack, and Tybalt attacks Benvolio. Instead of stopping the fight, Benvolio has to join it. As soon as Tybalt and Benvolio begin fighting, some citizens, who are sick of both the Capulets and Montagues, join in. They shout, “ Clubs, bills, and partisans! strike! beat them down! / Down with the Capulets! down with the Montagues! ” (1. 1.

73-74). “ Clubs, bills, and partisans” was a cry used by London apprentices to call everyone out for a riot. Now all kinds of weapons are swinging through the air: swords, clubs, bills (long spears with hooked blades), and partisans (fancy spears). If that weren’t enough, Capulet appears on one side of the stage and Montague on the other. Both old men want to go out and join the fight. Montague is flourishing his sword, and Capulet is calling for his.

These old men might be frightening if they weren’t so ridiculous. Montague can’t get to the fight because his wife is holding on to him and won’t let go. And when Capulet calls for his sword, his wife says sarcastically, “ A crutch, a crutch! why call you for a sword? ” (1. 1. 76). Enter Prince Escalus with his Train: In the middle of this mess comes Prince Escalus with his train.

A prince’s “ train” is his followers; in this case they act as riot police. As the Prince’s train is busy separating the various brawlers from one another, the Prince tries to make himself heard: “ Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, / Profaners of this neighbor-stained steel,– (1. 1. 81-82). “ Steel” — the swords being used by the combatants — should be dedicated to the defense of the city; instead, the steel is being profaned by citizens who are staining it with the blood of their neighbors. Despite the prince’s words, no one is listening and the swords are still flying, so he has to start over: What, ho! ou men, you beasts That quench the fire of your pernicious rage With purple fountains issuing from your veins, On pain of torture, from those bloody hands Throw your mistemper’d weapons to the ground, And hear the sentence [judgment] of your moved [angry] prince.

(1. 1. 83-88) The Prince is outraged at the beastliness of his citizens. “ Pernicious” means more than “ bad”; it means persistently, progressively bad. Their “ pernicious rage” is out of control, and they think they can get satisfaction only by drawing blood, “ fountains” of blood.

A fountain, where people gather to get their water, is a traditional symbol of the source of life, so a fountain of blood is an image of horror. To control his beastly citizens, the prince has to threaten them with torture. In our time, when prisons are equipped with televisions, the threat of torture may seem unreal, but Shakespeare lived in a time when the rack was used, offenders’ ears were nailed to the pillory, and traitors were hung and then disemboweled while still living. The prince’s threat is followed by an order to “ Throw your mistemper’d weapons to the ground. The weapons are “

mistempered" in the sense that they are angry, that is, used by angry men. They are also mistempered in another sense.

Swords are tempered (hardened) by being heated and then rapidly cooled in cold water; these swords are being tempered in their neighbors' blood. Finally the Prince Escalus gets everyone to listen, but he speaks mainly to the heads of the families: " Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word, / By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, / Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets . . .

" (1. 1. 89-91). (Who said the " airy word"? Probably Capulet, but maybe Montague, who is equally at fault. Have princes or parents ever really been interested in listening to the long, long story of who said what first? ) These brawls have stopped anyone from living in peace.

They have " made Verona's ancient citizens / Cast by their grave beseeming ornaments, / To wield old partisans, in hands as old, / Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate" (1. 1. 92-95). A " grave beseeming ornament" of an ancient citizen would be a staff of office. The Capulet-Montague feud has kept the ancient citizens from enjoying the respect they have earned. Instead, the ancient citizens have had to take up weapons of war (" partisans") which have grown rusty (" cankered") in peacetime, in order to separate (" part") the two sides and their malignant (" cankered") hate for each other.

The Prince warns Capulet and Montague that if there's another fight, they both will be executed. Then he disperses the crowd and orders Capulet to come with him to " old Free-town, our common judgment-place" (1. 1. 102).

(Shakespeare took the name “ Free-town” from his source, but in the source it’s the name of Capulet’s villa; in this play it’s a courthouse. Presumably, the Prince is going to keep talking with Capulet until he’s sure that Capulet knows he means business. Montague’s turn will come later, in the afternoon. Once more, the Prince orders everyone else away.

He is obeyed, and only Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio remain on stage. Exeunt all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio: After Prince Escalus has broken up the brawl and dispersed the crowd, Montague asks Benvolio how it all started. Benvolio tells him, and includes a disdainful description of Tybalt. He says that Tybalt came on to the scene with his sword out, “ Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears, / He swung about his head and cut the winds, / Who nothing hurt withal hiss’d him in scorn” (1. 1.

110-112). In other words, Tybalt swung his sword around so fast that it made a hissing sound, but the only thing he cut was the air, which wasn’t hurt and made the hissing sound to disrespect Tybalt. Lady Montague (whom in the earliest version of the play is designated only as “ wife”) shows a motherly concern for her son. She asks, “ O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day? Right glad I am he was not at this fray” (1. 1.

116-117). Benvolio replies that he was up an hour before dawn, walking west of the city and trying to calm his troubled mind, when he saw Romeo in a grove of sycamore. Benvolio walked towards his friend, but Romeo spotted him and went further into the woods, out of sight. Benvolio then explains why he didn’t follow Romeo any further: “ I, measuring his affections by my

own, / Which then most sought where most might not be found, / Being one too many by my weary self, / Pursued my humour not pursuing his" (1.

1. 126-129). Measuring his affections by my own" means that Benvolio thought that if he was up early with a troubled mind, Romeo probably was, too. Benvolio's state of mind was such that he " then most sought where most might not be found. " That is, he was looking for a place where no one was likely to find him.

He didn't want any company because even his own company was too much, " Being one too many by my weary self. " So Benvolio " pursued" (followed) his own " humor" (feelings) by not " pursuing" (asking about) Romeo's. In short, Benvolio is such a good friend of Romeo that he knew how Romeo felt and when to leave him alone. Montague, however, doesn't agree that Romeo should be left alone. He tells Benvolio that Romeo is often out in the sycamore grove: " Many a morning hath he there been seen, / With tears augmenting the fresh morning dew, / Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs" (1.

1. 131-133). Not only does Romeo wander about, weeping and sighing, he also locks himself in his room and closes the shutters, so that it's as dark as night. Montague is worried.

He says, " Black and portentous must this humor prove, / Unless good counsel may the cause remove" (1. 1. 141-142). In Shakespeare's time, the name of Romeo's condition was " melancholy. We would probably call it " depression," but we would agree with Montague that it's a " portentous . .

. humor,” a state of mind that will lead to something even worse. And we would also agree that Romeo needs “ counsel,” that is, advice and someone to talk to. Benvolio asks if Montague knows the reason for Romeo’s problem. Montague answers that he doesn’t, though he has often asked. Others have also tried to get Romeo to open up, but he hasn’t been willing to talk, so that he is like “ the bud bit with an envious worm, / Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air, / Or dedicate his beauty to the sun” (1.

1. 151-153). Montague is comparing his son to a flower bud being eaten away from the inside by a worm, so that he will be ruined before he has a chance to bloom. We don’t use such fancy language, but we have the same kind of worries; any dad would be worried to see his beautiful child eaten alive by depression. Enter Romeo: As his father is worriedly talking about him, Romeo appears. Benvolio asks Romeo’s parents to step aside so that he can find out what’s wrong with Romeo.

Benvolio promises that if he doesn’t discover what Romeo’s problem is, it won’t be for lack of trying; he says, “ I’ll know his grievance, or be much denied” (1. 1. 57). Romeo’s parents are glad that their son is going to get some peer counseling, and they leave. Though he hasn’t been saying anything to his parents, Romeo is open with his friend, and starts talking about his problem before he’s asked.

Benvolio says “ Good-morrow, cousin,” and Romeo replies, “ Is the day so young? ” (1. 1. 160), indicating that he’s in such bad shape that he’s surprised it’s still morning. Benvolio informs him that it’s not yet nine o’clock, and says, “ Ay me! sad hours seem long” (1. 1.

161). The “ Ay me” is a kind of sigh in words, and it appears that Romeo is inviting Benvolio to ask him why he is so sad. Benvolio does ask, and Romeo tells him that he is “ Out of her favor, where I am in love” (1. 1. 168). Then follows a long discussion of love, during which we find that Romeo is in love just exactly as the culture of the day said a young man was supposed to be in love.

In the popular love poetry of Shakespeare’s time, the focus is always on the sufferings of the male lover. The lady is beautiful, and her beauty strikes a man through the eyes, into the heart, making him fall in love. He suffers and tries to tell the lady of his suffering, so that she may pity him and return his love. But she cruelly rejects his advances, and so he suffers some more, both from the fire of love and the coldness of her heart.

Benvolio knows that it has been ever thus, and sympathizes, saying “ Alas, that love, so gentle in his view, / Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof! ” (1. 1. 169-170), which means that it’s too bad that love, which looks so good, should be so bad when it’s actually experienced. Romeo replies, “ Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still, / Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will! ” (1. 1. 171-172).

Here Romeo is thinking of love as cupid, who, though he is always blindfolded (“ whose view is muffled still”), still manages to make people fall in love. For a moment, it appears that Romeo is tired of talking about love. He asks Benvolio where they are going to have lunch, and then exclaims, “ O me! What fray was here? ” (1. 1. 173).

Apparently he has just now seen something — a little blood, a discarded club or pike — left over from the street brawl. But neither food nor fighting can really turn Romeo's thoughts away from love. Rather than let Benvolio say anything about the brawl, Romeo says, " Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all. Here's much to do with hate, but more with love" (1. 1.

174-175). In saying, " I have heard it all," Romeo does not mean that he has heard all about the fight that just took place. He means that he has heard all about fighting in general. And he doesn't care.

Where he says, " Here's much to do with" we would say something like " There's much to-do about," and Romeo means that no matter how much people talk about hate, love is more interesting. Romeo then launches into a series of paradoxes describing love, or at least the kind of love he is experiencing, which we would call a hopeless crush. It is both love and hate at the same time. It is " any thing, of nothing first create" (1. 1. 177), something that can take many forms, be anything, but created out of nothing.

It is a sad happiness and a serious foolishness. It is a " Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms" (1. 1. 179), a phrase which evokes the lover's experience of daydreaming about his beloved, but in such a jumbled way, that it's more frustrating than enjoyable. Romeo reels off some more paradoxes about love, then concludes with one about his feelings: " This love feel I, that feel no love in this" (1. 1.

182-183), which means that he feels love, but is not in love with being in love. He also suspects that he's a fool for being such a fool for love, and asks

Benvolio, “ Dost thou not laugh? ” (1. 1. 182-183). Benvolio, however, is understanding and says that he grieves for Romeo’s unhappy state. Benvolio’s grief for him only adds to Romeo’s burden; he’s not only unhappy, he’s responsible for Benvolio’s unhappiness.

Romeo says, “ This love [i. e. , brotherly love for Romeo] that thou hast shown / Doth add more grief to too much of mine own. ” (1.

1. 188-189). Nevertheless, Romeo adds more paradoxes to his list. He says that love is the smoke made of sighs, and when the smoke is cleared away, it’s a fire in a lover’s eyes. It’s a stormy sea of tears.

It’s a sane insanity. It’s a bitter poison and a sweet medicine. Wrapped up in his own feelings, Romeo says goodbye to Benvolio, but Benvolio asks to go along with him, and Romeo gives him a kind of an apology: “ Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here; / This is not Romeo, he’s some other where” (1. 1.

197-198). Then Benvolio, trying to bring Romeo back to himself, says, “ Tell me in sadness, who is that you love? ” (1. 1. 199). By “ in sadness” Benvolio means “ seriously, truthfully,” but Romeo accuses him of wanting to make him sad, of wanting to hear him groan as he names the lady. Benvolio says that’s not his intention, and again asks who the lady is.

Romeo replies that asking that question is like asking a sick man to make his will; Romeo is dying for love of this lady, and if he names her, he’ll die for sure. To avoid answering his friend’s question, Romeo flippantly declares that the one he loves is a woman. With gentle irony, Benvolio replies, “ I aim’d so near, when I supposed you loved” (1. 1.

205). Romeo makes a joke out of “ aim’d” by answering “ A right good mark-man [marksman]! Then he adds, “ And she’s fair [beautiful]I love” (1. 1. 06). Benvolio answers Romeo’s word-play with some of his own: “ A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit” (1.

1. 207). In archery, a “ fair mark” is one that’s easy to hit; Benvolio is suggesting that because the lady is beautiful, she may be easy to win. (It seems that some men have always made that kind of assumption, in Shakespeare’s time as well as ours. ) Besides that, Romeo is also good-looking (“ fair”), and that should help. However, Romeo refuses to be hopeful.

He declares that the lady cannot be hit “ With Cupid’s arrow; she hath Dian’s wit” (1. 1. 209). Dian” is Diana, the fierce goddess of chastity.

(When Actaeon happened to see Diana bathing, she punished that trespass against her chastity by turning him into a stag and hunting him to death with his own dogs. ) The lady is a veritable fortress of chastity, says Romeo: “ She will not stay [abide] the siege of loving terms, / Nor bide [abide] the encounter of assailing eyes, / Nor ope [open] her lap to saint-seducing gold” (1. 1. 212-214). (Has Romeo actually laid siege to her with words, or assailed her with his eyes, or tried to seduce her with gold? We are not told, but it seems unlikely.

The love poetry of Shakespeare’s time said that the lover could be struck by love merely by seeing the lady, without her having a clue, and what popular culture says can happen, usually does. ) Benvolio asks, “ Then she hath

sworn that she will still [always] live chaste? ” (1. 1. 217). Romeo answers that she has, and that in doing so she is destroying beauty.

(The idea, a favorite one in Shakespeare’s sonnets, is that beautiful people who refuse to have children kill beauty by not passing it on to future generations. ) She’s also destroying him: “ She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow / Do I live dead that live to tell it now” (1. . 224). Benvolio, however, doesn’t seem to think Romeo’s situation is hopeless. He advises him to put the lady out of mind.

Romeo asks how that can be done, and Benvolio answers, “ By giving liberty unto thine eyes; / Examine other beauties” (1. 1. 228). Romeo replies, “‘ Tis the way / To call hers (exquisite! ) in question more” (1.

1. 228-229). As Romeo uses it, “ To call . . . in question” means the opposite from what it means now.

He means that looking at other beauties would only make his lady’s beauty more vivid. Romeo then drives his point home with other examples. Sun-blocking masks are black, which only makes men think about the whiteness of the lady’s skin underneath the black mask. A man who is struck blind can’t forget that he once could see.

All of this leads him to his point, which is that Benvolio can never teach him how to forget the beauty of his lady-love. Romeo then bids Benvolio farewell, but Benvolio goes along with him, telling him that, yes, he can too teach him how to forget the lady. The close of the scene only interrupts this

conversation. A few minutes later, in the next scene, we will see these two discussing the same topic — Romeo’s love-sickness.