

**The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, Act IV, by William Shakespeare**  
**Literary Analysis: Dramatic Irony**

**Dramatic irony** is a contradiction between what a character thinks and says and what the audience or reader knows is true. For example, in Act III, Capulet plans Juliet's wedding to Paris. He does not know what you know: that Juliet is already married to Romeo. Dramatic irony involves the audience emotionally in the story.

Shakespeare knew his audience could become *too* involved in the intense emotion of *Romeo and Juliet*. Therefore, he made sure to include the following elements to lighten the play's mood:

- **Comic relief:** a technique used to interrupt a serious scene by introducing a humorous character or situation
- **Puns:** plays on words involving a word with multiple meanings or two words that sound alike but have different meanings. For example, the dying Mercutio makes a pun involving two meanings of the word *grave*: "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man."

**DIRECTIONS:** Use the lines provided to answer the following questions.

1. Explain the dramatic irony in this passage from Scene i, when Friar Lawrence asks Paris to leave.

FRIAR. My lord, we must entreat the time alone.

PARIS. God shield I should disturb devotion!

Juliet, on Thursday early will I rouse ye.

2. In Scene ii, Juliet tells her father she will go through with the wedding, and he begins to make preparations for the celebration. How do Capulet's words create dramatic irony?

CAPULET. My heart is wondrous light,

Since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed.

3. Juliet prepares for bed in Scene iii. Why is this exchange dramatically ironic?

LADY CAPULET. What, are you busy, ho? Need you my help?

JULIET. No, madam; we have culled such necessities

As are behoveful for our state tomorrow. . . .

LADY CAPULET. Good night.

Get thee to bed, and rest: for thou hast need.

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**Reading: Breaking Down Long Sentences to Summarize**

**Summarizing** is briefly stating the main points of a piece of writing. Stopping periodically to summarize what you have read helps you to check your comprehension before you read further. Before you summarize a long passage of Shakespearean dialogue, you should **break down sentences**.

If a sentence contains multiple subjects or verbs, separate it into smaller sentences with one subject and one verb.

If a sentence contains colons, semicolons, or dashes, treat those punctuation marks as periods in order to make smaller sentences.

**ACTIONS:** Read the following passages. Practice breaking down the sentences by reading in meaningful sections according to the punctuation. Rewrite the sentences in your own words, using smaller sentences.

**PARIS.** Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt's death,  
 And therefore have I little talked of love;  
 For Venus smiles not in a house of tears. (Act IV, Scene i)

**JULIET.** 'Twixt my extremes and me this bloody knife  
 Shall play the umpire, arbitrating that  
 Which the commission of thy years and art  
 Could to no issue of true honor bring. (Act IV, Scene i)

**FRIAR.** Hold, daughter. I do spy a kind of hope,  
 Which craves as desperate an execution  
 As that is desperate which we would prevent.

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**Vocabulary Builder**

**Word List**

dismal    enjoined    loathsome    pensive    vial    wayward

**A. DIRECTIONS:** In each of the following items, think about the meaning of the italicized word and then answer the question.

1. Would most of the people at a lively party be likely to be in a *pensive* mood? Why or why not?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. If a good friend's behavior was *wayward*, would you be pleased or concerned? Explain.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. "That place is *dismal*," he remarked. Would you want to go there? Why or why not?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you were *enjoined* to do something, would the action be ordered or recommended?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. If a swampland you were visiting had a *loathsome* smell, would you be tempted to return?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Would a sick person or a well person be more likely to carry a *vial*? Explain.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**B. WORD STUDY:** The prefix *en-* means "in" or "cause to be." Answer each of the following questions using one of these words containing *en-*: *endanger*, *enjoined*, *enlighten*, *enlarge*, *entice*.

1. What might you be *enjoined* to do in a library?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What might a person *enlarge*?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. How might you *entice* your dog to do a trick?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What might *enlighten* you about the subject of medicine?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. What might *endanger* swimmers?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Open-Book Test**

**Short Answer** Write your responses to the questions in this section on the lines provided.

1. What is the dramatic irony in the conversation between Juliet and Paris at Friar Lawrence's cell in Act IV, Scene i, lines 18–43, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*?

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2. In Act IV, Scene i, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence calls Juliet a "pensive daughter." Why does he perceive her as pensive? Base your answer on the meaning of *pensive*.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. When Juliet comes to Friar Lawrence's cell, what help does she hope the Friar will provide in Act IV, Scene i, lines 50–67, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*? What does she feel is her alternative if he cannot help her?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Read the following excerpt from Juliet's speech to Friar Lawrence found in Act IV, Scene i, lines 66–67, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*:

Be not so long to speak. I long to die

If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy.

Identify the puns that Juliet makes on the words *long* and *speak*.

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5. In Act IV, Scene ii, lines 45–46, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet tells her father that Friar Lawrence has instructed her to be obedient, and Capulet says:

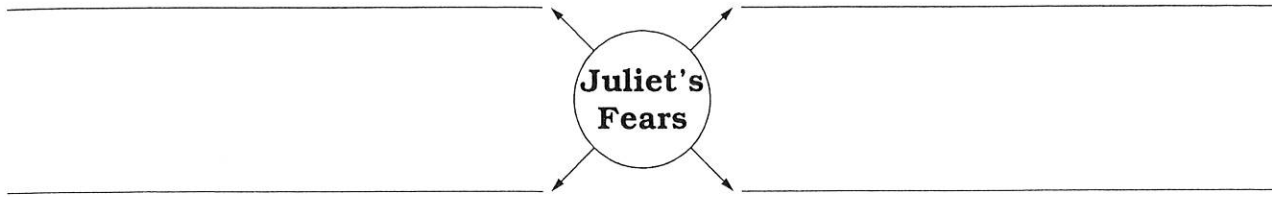
My heart is wondrous light,

Since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed.

Break down Capulet's statement into two shorter sentences, using your own words to restate his meaning.

\_\_\_\_\_

- ~ In Act IV, Scene iii, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet experiences fears as she prepares to drink the potion the Friar has given her. Fill in the cluster chart, listing the frightening things she imagines before she drinks.



7. What is dismal about the events Juliet imagines before she drinks the potion in Act IV, Scene iii, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*? Base your answer on the meaning of *dismal*.

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8. How do the preparations for the wedding in Act IV, Scene iv, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* contrast with Juliet's soliloquy in Act IV, Scene iii? Why might Shakespeare have included this scene?

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9. What is the dramatic irony in Act IV, Scene v, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* when everyone mourns Juliet's death?

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10. Friar Lawrence attempts to comfort the Capulets and Paris. He directs them to prepare properly for Juliet's burial in Act IV, Scene v, of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Use your own words to break down this sentence in lines 94–95:

The heavens do low'r upon you for some ill;  
Move them no more by crossing their high will.

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