

# BBC Bitesize Romeo and Juliet

## Episode 7 – Recap

HOLLIE: Hello, and welcome to our Bitesize English Literature podcast. This is the final episode on William Shakespeare's best-known tragedy, 'Romeo and Juliet'. My name's Hollie McNish, I'm with the brilliant writer, rapper, and beatboxer, Testament.

Hopefully you've listened to all the other episodes, the six episodes on the key themes of this tragic play. So now we're just gonna go through some of our top tips to help you remember which quotes we might be thinking of in the exam and how we might get them right into our heads and what we would do to revise. Testament.

TESTAMENT: Yo.

HOLLIE: If you could choose one quote to remember that could encompass as many themes as possible, could you give it? Well one quote from all of these, we've done so many episodes and we've talked about this play so much, we've talked about all the different themes. So is there anything that really stands out that you're like, yes, this would be good-.

TESTAMENT: Well, as a general overview, 'cause there's loads of stuff hidden at the very beginning and at the very end of the play, so read the prologue a million squillion times and loads of clues are hidden in there. "Star-cross'd lovers", talking about "ancient grudges", things like that.

HOLLIE: "Civil blood".

TESTAMENT: "Civil blood, make civil hands unclean". They got some great catchy quotes in the prologue which sum up the-, the whole play.

[clip from Romeo and Juliet]

NARRATOR: "In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, from ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes, a pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life."

TESTAMENT: And then at the very end, the prince is summing things up, and what a disaster it's been uh for these two families.

[clip from Romeo and Juliet]

PRINCE: "Capulet, Montague, see what a scourge is laid upon your hate, that heaven finds means to kill your joys with love for winking at your discords too, have lost a brace of kinsmen. All are punished."

HOLLIE: So, you would say if you're, like, really looking for quotes-.

TESTAMENT: So, he's got like "All is punished." And talking about these different things-, uh different ways that their families have been affected at the end. So, the top and the tail, it's reading them a lot. And then if you pepper that in with some juicy quotes, then you're all right.

HOLLIE: [laughing] Love the word juicy! Yeah, [Testament: Ripe.] I-, that's great-, the prologue is great. And to talk about the prologue, 'cause if you have a quote from the prologue, you can say, this

is at the very start of the play. So, you're talking about the language already. Any quote you've got from the prologue, say it's from the prologue - that is very important because it's before any of the action's started. So, this is from the very beginning the audience wants to know this.

TESTAMENT: It's very exciting coz-, 'cause the prologue is a very clever device from Shakespeare because he tells you the ending, he spoils you, and then it's like, how's it going to happen? How's-, how are the cards going to fall? How is this tragedy going to get worse and worse and worse before we-?

HOLLIE: Yeah, because you know it's gonna get worse.

TESTAMENT: 'cause it's inevitable and it's like, oh no. Or you've been framed or something.

HOLLIE: And that's dramatic irony isn't it. We've said that before, but, like, you know-, because of the prologue, you know what's going to happen the whole way through the play. If I was reading the prologue, if it was me, I would read it out loud.

There's so much sitting down when you're doing your GCSEs, there's so much sitting, staring at pages of text. But this is a play, like it's-, it's meant to be heard; it's meant to be read. So, you know, make a thing of it. Like, I used to stand up, walk around my room and read it out loud. You get so tired just staring at a page; I used to fall asleep quite a lot.

I used to record myself reading quotes and then listen to the quote over and over again, 'cause that means you can go out-, you can go outside, you can get some fresh air, or you can lie on your bed, you don't need to just sit.

TESTAMENT: And you know what, I've got um a really good quote from Friar Laurence, Act 2, Scene 3. And it ties in with loads of the different themes. So, the full quote is, "For this alliance may so happy prove, to turn your households' rancour to pure love."

So he's saying this marriage may prove happy, and in so doing turn, you know, the Capulets, the Montagues, these two households' rancour, they're anger, their friction, their trouble into pure love. So, I'll say it again.

"For this alliance may so happy prove, to turn your households' rancour to pure love." If you can't remember the full thing, just the last bit. Why does Friar Laurence want these two individuals to get married? "To turn your households' rancour to pure love."

HOLLIE: I think you're just soppy because you've kept talking about that, you love the pure love idea.

TESTAMENT: It's pure love because you've got the love theme, you've got the pressure of the two households in family, you've got um society against the individual. The fact that these two-, marriage of just two wee, little, small individuals can affect the hatred between the enmity, their anger, the hatred between these two big houses, these two big families. Uh-.

HOLLIE: Conflict, family.

TESTAMENT: Conflict-.

HOLLIE: It's really good as well, if you've got a quote, like, write it down, stick it on your wall.

[Testament: Yes.] And then if you find a quote that is against it, like a quote that contrasts it, it's a really good thing to do for your exam. Because if you find a quote that says one thing, and then you see a quote that says another thing, if you remember one of them, it's likely to trigger your memory of the other one.

So, if you've got things that say the opposite, then that's a great thing. So put them next to each other. Cover your walls. And, you know, have a look at the quotes. And if-, if you're finding a quote really hard to remember, I would scrap it.

Like, I've done that in my exams, I've looked at a quote and I've been told, I've read in the notes or I've been told, this is the best quote, this is the best quote, but if you cannot remember that quote accurately-, it's gotta be accurate in the exam, if you can't remember it accurately, use another one. This book is full of quotes, so I'd try to remember I think about five per book, three if I was struggling. Plus a few w-, like the word star, the repetition, the symbol of the word star, if you are somebody that can't remember quotes-.

TESTAMENT: You pull it back. So why remember the word star? Why are we remembering the word star?

HOLLIE: Remember the word star because the words-, like, there's like, "star-cross'd lovers", there's Romeo saying, "I defy you, stars", it's this idea of fate. If the-, which fate comes into everything whether the conflict is fated, whether their love is fated to fail, whether individual can ever have their own free will against society.

And the quote that just sticks out for me, of all the versions of this play that I've seen, is, "My only love sprung from my only hate!" And I've talked about it in another episode, [Testament: I love that.] but it's so simple. I find it easy to remember 'cause it's in the balcony scene, which is one of the most famous scenes and Juliet says it.

Basically, so soon after she realises, or she's been told, that Romeo is from the Montague family and she's like aw what?! [chuckles] "My only love sprung from my only hate!" She might say it like that.

In the versions I've heard she says, [softly spoken] "My only love sprung from my only hate!"

But if I was saying it and I was recording it, I would not put it in that voice 'cause that sort of theatrical voice often sends me to sleep. So, I'd say, [exasperated] "My only love sprung from my only hate!" That's so annoying. "My only love sprung from my only hate!" And then think about the language but record it and listen to it over and over again.

And think about how it makes you feel. Try and put yourself in the position of the characters that are saying these things or hearing these things. And actually the simplicity of this quote is part of the language. It's become so embedded in her that she calls it "my hate" like it's hers, it's part of her.

TESTAMENT: So it's her love and it's her hate.

HOLLIE: And then like it's my love, like Romeo is hers. She's so young and it's love, and she's-, you know, oh God. And the individual, her only love. So, for me, I could use this quote to answer, I think, any question I would get this quote in on 'Romeo and Juliet', and that could be used for anything. And it's not lazy to do that, it's just, for me, it's sensible because I know I find it hard to remember things.

TESTAMENT: Yeah, I mean, the main thing is we try, you know, whether you're like sticking the words on your fridge, or getting your mum to test you or your mate to test you.

HOLLIE: And of course, if you're writing down quotes and you get into the exam and you panic, don't not talk about that scene just 'cause you can't remember the quote. So I remember once I got into my exam, where I was like, what's the next bit? What's the next bit? I can't remember.

You know, clock's ticking, you're worried, you can still talk about it. If you can remember one word, put that word in, obviously try to do what you can to learn it, but don't think, I can't remember it, therefore you know, everything's ruined, I can't talk about this. Just try to remember a word, if you've got a word, quote it, it's a quote. And remember to talk about the author's intent.

[music]

HOLLIE: That is us... done.

TESTAMENT: Oh no.

HOLLIE: [chuckling] Oh-.

TESTAMENT: "Parting is such sweet sorrow"!

HOLLIE: Oh, that's so nice.

TESTAMENT: Well, that's, you know, that's Shakespeare. That's from 'Romeo and Juliet'. "Parting is such sweet sorrow". It's beautiful innit.

HOLLIE: I know, I know. It's so lovely, it's so beautiful. So, thank you so much, Testament, it's been a pleasure to chat about this play. I hope it's been interesting. Really good luck with your GCSE exams. I know it's not easy. You know, listen to this podcast, check out BBC Bitesize. Check out the other episodes on BBC Sounds; check out the other podcasts of other books on BBC Sounds. Listen to us again, go for a walk, lie down. Right now, to take us out, Testament, you've been talking a lot about this prologue. So, in whatever way makes you feel good, or whatever way makes you remember it more, has most effect on you, could you uh read us the start of the prologue.

TESTAMENT: Well, you know the beautiful thing about the prologue, it's done by a chorus, um which is like a bunch of people, or it can be one person sometimes, but chorus implies music doesn't it. And the prologue is written in iambic pentameter, so in a rhythmical speech. Da-dun, da-dun, da-dun-, it's wicked. Um so you can actually rap it quite well.

HOLLIE: Lovely.

TESTAMENT: But I've never done it before, Hollie. But I've never rapped it before!

HOLLIE: Oh no, well I'm not a rapper, so I'm not gonna do it.

TESTAMENT: Don't judge me!

HOLLIE: [chuckling] Okay, I won't judge you, I won't judge you.

TESTAMENT: Um yeah, so I'm gonna try and rap the prologue. Check it.

"Two households, both alike in dignity, in fair Verona, where we lay our scene, from ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean." - That's a big quote there.

"From forth the fatal loins of these two flows a pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life; where misadventures piteous overthrows doth with their death bury their parents' strife.

The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love, and the continuance of their parents' rage, which, but their children's end, nought could remove is now the two hours' traffic of our stage; the which if you with patient ears attend, what here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend."

HOLLIE: Oh! Very, very nice.

TESTAMENT: Yeah, but like, there's bars in there, there's lyrics in there that you can take out, get it in your brain.

HOLLIE: Rap it.

TESTAMENT: Get it locked.

HOLLIE: Sing it. Read it.

TESTAMENT: Get it in your body, get it in your mind.

HOLLIE: Shout it.

TESTAMENT: Yeah. Post it!

HOLLIE: [laughs] Get it in your body, get it in your mind. I think that is a good note to finish on. Get it in your body, get it in your mind. And good luck.

TESTAMENT: You've got this.