Grade 10
Romeo and Juliet Scene-by-Scene Questions

The Prologue
1. In which northern Italian city is the play set? 
   Verona
2. What is the purpose of the prologue? 
   It introduces the play by outlining the basic plot and telling us that it will end in tragedy. 
   The basic themes of love, fate, hatred and death are introduced. It also highlights the 
   destructive role of the families’ conflict and the power of love.
3. Describe how the mood is conveyed through specific phrases and words. 
   The references to ‘death-marked love’, ‘fatal-loins’ and the fact that we are about to 
   embark on a ‘fearful passage’ tells the audience to expect something deeply tragic.
4. The prologue is written in the form of a sonnet. 
   a. Briefly discuss the structure of the sonnet and explain what type of sonnet this is. 
      It is an Elizabethan or Shakespearean sonnet. The 14 lines can be divided into three 
      quatrains and a rhyming couplet. 
   b. Suggest why the use of this poetic form is appropriate for Romeo and Juliet. 
      Traditionally, sonnets are used by poets as a means of expressing and declaring their 
      love. This play is a tragic love story and thus the sonnet form seems appropriate. It is 
      set apart from the prose which begins in the first act.

Act 1: 
Scene 1: 
1. Romeo and Juliet is essentially a love story. Why do you think Shakespeare begins it 
   with a violent street fight? 
   The scene holds the attentions of the audiences as it is full of violence and action. It 
   gives immediate evidence of the feud which we have been told about in the prologue.
2. For which family do Gregory and Sampson work? 
   The Capulets
3. A pun is a play on words. It is a form of joking, using words which sound the same but 
   have different meanings. 
   a. Write down the words in the first four lines which create the pun. 
      ‘coal’; collier’; ‘choler’ and ‘collar’ 
   b. What does Sampson mean when he says ‘we’ll not carry coals’ in line 1? 
      He says that they will not be treated like lowly servants – carrying coal was 
      considered a lowly and dirty task. 
   c. What does the word ‘choler’ mean? 
      ‘Choler’ means ‘anger’.
4. There are a number of bawdy jokes made in this scene. 
   a. What is the purpose of these? 
      They entertain the audience and reflect something of the nature of the characters. 
      The bawdy jokes also contrast strongly with the purer love that will be seen between 
      Romeo and Juliet.
b. Explain the bawdy pun which Sampson makes when he says ‘Ay, the heads of maids, or their maidenheads – take it in what sense thou wilt.’
Sampson plays on the word ‘head’. He will take from the girls either actual head or their virginity (maidenheads). In other words, he will cut off their heads or rape them.

c. Gregory continues with ‘Draw thy tool, here comes of the house of Montagues’.
Explain this pun.
The word ‘tool’ means sword or male genitals.

5. Benvolio’s name means ‘well-wishing’. How does our first encounter with him help to establish him as a ‘well-wishing’ character?
When Benvolio comes upon the brawl, he tries to stop it and to restore peace. He does not wish to fight with Tybalt.

6. What impression do you have of Tybalt and his attitude to this feud? Refer to the text to substantiate your answer.
Tybalt is aggressive; he hates the word ‘peace’. He supports the feuds and fuels it too. He is confident and arrogant, and sets himself apart from the servants, whom he refers to as ‘heartless hinds’.

7. Prince Escalus scolds Capulet and Montague. What punishment will they suffer if their followers fight in the street again?
Capulet and Montague will be put to death. It is their responsibility to keep their followers in order.

8. Romeo is introduced as a typical romantic lover. Describe his behavior, with specific reference to the text and what he says to illustrate this point.
Romeo is sad and depressed and tearful. He wants to be alone with his sorrow as his love for Rosaline is not returned. He cannot sleep, seems distracted and obsessed with love. His responses seem excessive and he cannot be consoled.

9. What advice does Benvolio give to his lovesick cousin?
Benvolio suggests that Romeo ‘examine other beauties’. In other words, he should try to forget this suffering and find another beauty to love.

Scene 2:

1. Count Paris asks Lord Capulet if he may marry Juliet.
   a. Who is Count Paris?
   Count Paris is a wealthy, handsome young man. He is related to Prince Escalus.
   b. How old is Juliet?
   Juliet is almost 14 years old.
   c. What condition does Lord Capulet make on Juliet’s behalf concerning the proposal?
   Paris must woo Juliet and win her love. When she is ready, Lord Capulet will consent to the marriage.

2. Why does Romeo decide to gatecrash the Capulets’ feast?
He sees the guest list for the feast and sees the name of Rosaline, his beloved, on it. He wishes to catch a glimpse of her.

3. How are Benvolio’s words ‘And she shall scant show well that now seems best’ prophetic?
Romeo falls in love with Juliet and immediately forgets about Rosaline.

**Scene 3:**

1. What do we learn of the Nurse’s character in this scene?
   She is a great chatterer with a lively sense of humour; she is warm-hearted and affectionate towards Juliet, but can be rather crass and coarse.

2. Lady Capulet, the Nurse and Juliet reveal different attitudes to love and marriage. Write a detailed description of each’s view of love and marriage, making close reference to the text.
   Juliet says she sees marriage as an ‘honour’ which she does not dream of. She says that she would never do anything without her Mother’s consent. Lady Capulet is materialistic, interested in outward appearances (consider her references to Paris as book who needs a cover and how Juliet who gain social standing by marrying him) and what one can gain financially from a marriage. For her, it has nothing to with falling in love, but she expects Juliet to love Paris. The nurse focuses on the physical, sexual aspects of marriage and forsees the ‘happy nights’ for Juliet.

**Scene 4:**

1. Romeo is still depressed and lovesick. Quote one of his lines which shows his state of mind.
   ‘I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe’ or ‘Under love’s heavy burden do I sink’. There are many other lines that also reflect his sadness.

2. Write a paragraph in which you give your impression of Mercutio.
   Mercutio is very energetic and fun-loving. He has a great sense of humour and mocks Romeo. He sees love as being based on sex and scoffs at Romeo’s infatuation with Rosaline. He is quick-witted and highly imaginative, lively, wild and cynical.

3. What hint is given in this scene that something tragic will happen?
   Romeo has a premonition of disaster when he says ‘Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,/ Shall bitterly begin his fearful date/ With this night’s revels…’

**Scene 5:**

1. Romeo sees Juliet for the first time. How are his words ‘Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!’ both ironic and ominous?
   It is ironic and ominous because Juliet will die – her beauty will be too great for ‘use’; she is too special for this earth, so she will be taken somewhere greater.

2. Discuss the metaphor Romeo uses in ‘so shows a snowy dove trooping with crows when he describes Juliet.
   Romeo compares Juliet to a ‘snowy dove’. He associates her with something white: pure, virginal and innocent. A dove is also associated with beauty and peace. By comparison, the other women are like crows: ugly and commonplace.

3. How does Tybalt react when he recognizes Romeo and what is Lord Capulet’s reaction?
   Tybalt is outrages and wants to kill Romeo. Lord Capulet tries to calm him down but has to become forceful and insist that Tybalt ‘endure’ Romeo’s presence. Tybalt suppresses his rage for the moment but he vows he will get his revenge later.
4. Romeo approaches Juliet and their first words form a perfect sonnet.
   a. Why is the poetic structure so appropriate here?
      Their words complement each other; they are joined together in love. Remember
      that the sonnet was the way in which love was expressed by poets.
   b. The language and the images they use are associated with holiness. Quote three
      examples which illustrate this statement and explain what the ‘holy’ images reflect.
      ‘holy’; ‘shrine’; ‘pilgrims’; ‘devotion’; ‘palmer’; ‘prayer’; ‘saints’. The holy imagery
      reflects the purity and goodness of their love. This suggests there is something
      almost sacred about it.
5. ‘My only love, sprung from my only hate!/ Too early seen unknown, and known too
   late!’
   a. What does Juliet mean in these lines?
      Not knowing who Romeo was, Juliet had no time to stop herself from falling in love
      with him. Now it is too late: her first and only love is from the only family that the
      Capulets hate.
   b. In what tone would she say them and why?
      There is regret, anxiety and fear in her tone; but none of these feelings are as strong
      as the love that she has for Romeo.

Act 2:
Prologue:
1. ‘And she steals love’s sweet bait from fearful hooks.’ Discuss the effectiveness of this
   metaphor.
   Juliet is compared to a fish and Romeo to the ‘sweet bait’ on a hook. Just as a fish risks
   being caught and killed, so is the relationship that she is forming with Romeo a
   dangerous one. She wants him desperately but there is a huge risk involved because of
   the deep hatred between the families, not to mention the fact that the Prince has
   warned both families that any further disturbance of the peace would result with those
   involved ‘lives [paying the] forfeit’.

Scene 1:
1. What do Benvolio and Mercutio not know about Romeo in this scene?
   They do not know that Romeo is no longer in love with Rosaline. They do not know that
   Romeo is now in love with Juliet

Scene 2:
1. Light and darkness are often used in this play contrasting symbols.
   a. What qualities does Romeo give to Juliet by using light as a symbol for her?
      Light is a symbol used to represent beauty, goodness, warmth and love. To Romeo,
      Juliet is the embodiment of these qualities.
   b. Quote two examples of images which refer to light in lines 1 to 22.
      ‘Juliet is the sun’; ‘What light through yonder window breaks?’; ‘Two of the fairest
      stars in all the heaven’; ‘The brightness of her cheek...lamp’.
2. What does Juliet’s famous line ‘O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?’ mean?
   She is asking why his name has to be Romeo.
3. Why does Juliet say that Romeo must not swear by the moon?
Juliet sees the moon as inconstant. It waxes and wanes thus changing its shape during the course of the month. Thus if Romeo were to swear by the moon, his oath would prove to be easily changed and inconstant. She asks him to swear by something that is more permanent and steadfast.

4. Juliet is more practical than Romeo in this scene. Give evidence to support this statement.

Juliet is quite rightly worried that Romeo may be discovered and if he is discovered, he will be killed. Juliet also feels that the encounter and the declarations of love are happening too rapidly and she is wary of him playing games with her. He, on the other hand, is a romantic lover who is full of passion and his speech is littered with adoration. He seems not to care about the practicalities.

5. What arrangements do the two lovers make at the end of the meeting?

Juliet will send a messenger to Romeo at nine o’ clock the next day to find out the arrangements that Romeo has made for their wedding the next day.

**Scene 3:**

1. How do we know that Romeo and Friar Lawrence have a close relationship?

Romeo trusts the Friar and seeks his advice. Romeo immediately tells the Friar that he has met and wooed Juliet. Friar Lawrence asks where Romeo has been the previous night and scolds Romeo as a father would. But unlike Romeo’s father, Friar Lawrence knows all about Rosaline and of Romeo’s melancholy surrounding her. This shows a close relationship between Romeo and the Friar.

2. How does Friar Lawrence react when Romeo asks him to marry him and Juliet that very day?

He is astounded and immediately questions Romeo about the disappearance of Romeo’s love and intense feelings for Rosaline. The Friar then suggests that a young man’s love is superficial. He scolds Romeo for this sudden change of affection which he tells Romeo is a weakness.

3. In one respect I’ll thy assistant be/ For this alliance may so happy prove/ To turn your households’ rancour to pure love.

Refer to these lines and explain why Friar Lawrence agrees to marry the lovers. Friar Lawrence hopes that a marriage between Romeo and Juliet will turn the hatred that the families have for one another into ‘pure love’. He marries them in the hope of reconciliation between the families.

**Scene 4:**

1. Mercutio and Benvolio are concerned because Tybalt has challenged Romeo to a duel. Mercutio then makes a joke and says that Romeo is already dead. How has Romeo ‘died’ according to him?

Mercutio mocks Romeo by stating that one look from Rosaline could kill Romeo. Mercutio is therefore suggesting that the power of love has killed Romeo because Rosaline does not return his love.
2. When Romeo enters, how does he show that his depressed mood has changed?
   Romeo responds to this teasing with jokes and puns of his own. Romeo is light-hearted
   and witty. Mercutio takes note of this and says ‘Now thou art sociable. Now art thou
   Romeo’. Mercutio is glad that Romeo is back to his old self again.

3. What is the message which the Nurse must give to Juliet?
   The Nurse gives Juliet the message that Juliet should go to Friar Lawrence’s cell under
   the pretence of going to confession. There she and Romeo will be married.

**Scene 5:**

1. How do we know that Juliet is impatient and agitated at the beginning of the scene?
   Juliet makes reference to time throughout her speech and makes a point of saying that
   the Nurse has been away for ‘three long hours’. Juliet suggests that the Nurse is taking
   an eternity because she states that ‘She [the Nurse] is lame’.

2. In what ways does the Nurse tantalise and tease Juliet?
   The Nurse manages to keep the suspense by continuously changing the topic,
   complaining about her aches, and speaking of irrelevant things when Juliet is asking after Romeo.

**Scene 6:**

1. What warning does Friar Lawrence give Romeo concerning strong emotions?
   The Friar warns Romeo that intense and over-strong emotions tend to burn themselves
   out and he advises Romeo to ‘love moderately. Long love doth so’.

**Act 3:**

**Scene 1:**

1. At the beginning of the scene, Mercutio accuses Benvolio of being quarrelsome and hot-
   tempered. Discuss the irony of this.
   Benvolio is not eager to fight but rather it is Mercutio who is ready to fight. Mercutio
   seems to want to provoke good-natured Benvolio simply for the sake of having a fight.

2. When Romeo arrives on the scene, how Tybalt insult him?
   Tybalt calls Romeo a villain.

3. How does Romeo react to the insult? Explain and account for his reaction carefully.
   Romeo calmly ignores the insult and says that the love he now has for Tybalt frees him
   of any anger that he should feel toward Tybalt because of the insult. The reason for this
   is now that Romeo is married to Juliet, he and Tybalt are close relatives. Romeo
   however, does not explain this to Tybalt. Romeo tells Tybalt that he is not a villain and
   that Tybalt does not know what is happening.

4. Quote a line which shows that Mercutio is shocked and disgusted by Romeo’s response
   to Tybalt’s insults.
   ‘O calm, dishonourable, vile submission.’

5. How is Mercutio fatally wounded?
   Mercutio is outrages by what he regards as Romeo’s cowardly reaction. Mercutio thus
   draws his sword and challenges Tybalt. Romeo attempts to verbally stop them but as he
   physically tries to separate the fighters; but Tybalt wounds Mercutio under Romeo’s
   arm.
6. Mercutio continues to use puns even as he is dying. Explain his pun in ‘Ask for me tomorrow and you will find me a grave man.’
The puns play on the word ‘grave’ which means serious but it also is the place where the dead are buried. It is a very dark joke as Mercutio knows that he is dying.

7. After killing Tybalt, Romeo says ‘O, I am fortune’s fool!’
a. What does he mean?
   Romeo is saying that he is a victim of fate or chance. He suggests that he has no control of what is happening to him.
b. Do you agree with him?
   Romeo was not compelled in any way to fight Tybalt. He had the choice. He was driven by an understandable but not justifiable rage and wish to avenge Mercutio’s death. Perhaps if he had allowed the law to take its course, events would have turned out differently. Then it would have been Tybalt who would have been condemned to death for murder.

   Benvolio generally relays what happened in a straightforward way but one can see his bias and subjectivity in his choice of adjectives as he refers to ‘young’ Romeo and ‘brave Mercutio’.

9. What punishment does Prince Escalus decide upon at the end of the scene?
   Capulet and Montague will be heavily fined. Romeo is banished from Verona. If he returns, he will be put to death.

Scene 2:
1. At the beginning of the scene, Juliet wants time to move quickly. Why is she so impatient for the night to come?
   She will be seeing Romeo that evening. She is eager to see him and consummate their marriage.
2. The Nurse comes in saying ‘He’s dead, he’s dead, he’s dead…’
a. To whom is she referring?
   The Nurse is referring to Tybalt.
b. What conclusion does Juliet immediately jump to?
   Juliet immediately thinks that it is Romeo who has died.
3. Where is Romeo at this point and what arrangements do Juliet and the Nurse make?
   Romeo has made his way to Friar Lawrence’s cell. The Nurse will take him Juliet’s ring and arrange for me to come and say a last farewell to Juliet.

Scene 3:
1. Friar Lawrence tells Romeo that he has not been condemned to death but to banishment. How does Romeo respond to this news?
   Romeo replies that banishment is worse than death and that by giving him this cruel news, Friar Lawrence is killing him.
2. The Nurse arrives and explains how grief-stricken Juliet is. How does Romeo react to this?
   Romeo becomes even more desperate and draws his dagger to stab himself.
3. What is Friar Lawrence’s opinion of Romeo at this point? Do you agree with him?
Friar Lawrence grows angry and impatient with Romeo. He tells Romeo that he is not behaving like a man and that by killing himself, Romeo would destroy Juliet. He reminds Romeo that he is lucky only to be banished. He says that Romeo is ungrateful as there is much to be happy about. One is inclined to agree with Friar Lawrence because Romeo is being overly emotional and is only thinking of himself. It is right that Friar Lawrence tells Romeo to pull himself together and to use his reason, not his emotions, to govern his actions.

4. How does Friar Lawrence console Romeo at the end of the scene?
Friar Lawrence tells Romeo to go to Juliet and comfort her and then leave for Mantua in the morning. When Romeo is gone and the time is right, Friar Lawrence will announce Romeo and Juliet’s marriage; reconcile their friends and ask the Prince to pardon Romeo and then he is sure that Romeo will be welcomed back with open arms.

Scene 4:
1. What decision does Capulet make in this scene?
   He decides that Paris and Juliet will marry on Thursday. The wedding feast will be small as they are still mourning the death of Tybalt.
2. How does his decision contradict his behaviour earlier in the play?
   Previously, Capulet told Paris that Paris must woo Juliet and gain her love. It seemed important that her feelings should be considered and that she should marry for love. Now Capulet has made the decision for Juliet and he will simply inform her of it.

Scene 5:
1. After spending the night with Juliet, Romeo must leave quickly. As he climbs down the ladder, Juliet says: O God, I have an ill-divining soul/ Methinks I see thee, now thou are so low/ As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
   a. What do her words mean?
      Juliet suggests that her soul predicts bad fortune. She sees Romeo far below her and he looks like someone dead at the bottom of a tomb.
   b. Why is this image of foreboding so appropriate?
      This is disturbing because at the end of the play, Juliet sees Romeo dead as she wakes up in the tomb.
2. Lady Capulet thinks that Juliet is mourning for Tybalt. What plan does she have to take on Romeo and how does Juliet react?
   Lady Capulet plans to send someone to kill Romeo. Juliet thus pretends to be pleased by the news and says that she would like to arrange the poisoning of Romeo herself. In this way, Juliet would be able to protect Romeo.
3. Juliet speaks to her mother and refers to Romeo, saying ‘And yet no man like he doth grieve my heart.’
   a. How does her mother understand her words?
      Romeo has caused Juliet terrible grief by killing Tybalt.
   b. What does Juliet actually mean?
      Juliet is really grieving over Romeo who has been banished and that is breaking her heart.
4. How does Juliet react when her mother tells her that Paris will marry her in three days’ time?
   Juliet is shocked and angry and defies her Mother by saying ‘He shall not make me there a joyful bride!’ Juliet says that Paris has not courted her yet and she will not be married now. She states to her Mother that she would rather marry Romeo (who they think she hates) than marry Paris.

5. Describe Lord Capulet’s treatment of Juliet in this scene.
   Lord Capulet is unsympathetic and harsh. He tells Juliet that she is ungrateful and proud and that he will drag her to church. In Lord Capulet’s rage, he compares Juliet to ‘green-sickness carrion’ – essentially calling her rotting flesh. He is disgusted with Juliet and rants on about how he wants her to have a good marriage and that she is his daughter so he will marry her to whom he chooses. If Juliet refuses this marriage, Lord Capulet states that he will take no responsibility for her and she can starve.
   Even Lady Capulet is shocked by is unreasonable and violent response. One generally feels appalled by his treatment of Juliet.

6. Juliet finally turns to the Nurse for help. How does the Nurse respond?
   The Nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris, as Romeo is now banished and Paris is a ‘lovely gentleman’. The Nurse says that Paris is actually better than Romeo and this would be the most sensible thing to do. The Nurse is essentially pragmatic and unromantic. She is more concerned about Juliet’s prospects in life rather than her love life. She does not understand Juliet’s true feelings and provides no support.

7. How do Juliet’s last words ‘If all else fail, myself have the power to die’ reflect her state of mind?
   Juliet feels completely abandoned. Her last hope rests on Friar Lawrence and if he cannot help, then she has the courage and strength to kill herself.