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| ***Timeline for Romeo and Juliet***  |

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| **Act** | **Day** | **Time** | **Plot** | **Time Clues in the Text** |
| I : i | Sunday | Morning | The Montagues and Capulets fight in the streets and are broken up by Prince Escalus. Romeo is pining for Rosaline who has rejected him. | Line 167: Benvolio says that it is 9:00 am ("new struck nine"). |
| I : ii | Sunday | Afternoon | Lord Capulet and Paris talk about arranging a marriage to Juliet. Romeo and Benvolio learn that Rosaline has been invited to a party at the Capulet house. Benvolio suggests crashing the party so that Romeo can see that the other women are more beautiful than Rosaline is. | Line 20: Lord Capulet says that there will be a party tonight ("This night I hold an old accustomed feast"). Line 57: Romeo greets the servant with the word, "Godden", that was used to say "Good afternoon". |
| I : iii | Sunday | Evening | Lady Capulet tells Juliet that Paris wants to marry her. | Line 15: Lady Capulet says that it is "a fortnight and odd days" until Lammastide (August 1, which will be Juliet's 14th birthday), so this Sunday is sometime between July 4th and 18th. Line 100: the servant says "the guests are come, supper served up". |
| I : iv | Sunday | Evening | Romeo and friends arrive outside the Capulet house. | There are several references to carrying torches or lamps, so darkness has fallen. |
| I : v | Sunday | Evening & late evening | Romeo and Juliet meet at the party and fall in love. Tybalt is angry that Romeo came. | Several hours pass during this scene even though it takes only a few minutes to perform. It begins with the servants setting up and the guests arriving. It ends with the guests leaving. |
| II : i | Sunday | Late evening | Romeo looks for Juliet. Benvolio and Mercutio look for Romeo. |   |
| II : ii | Sunday | Late evening | The famous balcony scene: Romeo and Juliet decide that they will get married the next morning. | Line 169: Romeo tells Juliet to send for him tomorrow at 9:00 ("At the hour of nine"). |
| II : iii | Monday | Early morning | Romeo goes to Friar Laurence to arrange the wedding. | Line 1: Friar Laurence says, "The gray-eyed morn smiles". Line 32: "What early tongue". Line 39: "thy earliness doth ensure me". |
| II : iv | Monday | Noon | Benvolio and Mercutio are still looking for Romeo because Tybalt is planning to challenge Romeo to a duel. Romeo finds them. The Nurse arrives. Benvolio and Mercutio leave. The Nurse warns Romeo that he better not be toying with Juliet because Paris genuinely wants to marry her. | Line 118: Mercutio says, "the dial is now upon the prick of noon". The Nurse seems to have wasted 3 hours before finding Romeo. Lines 191-194: Romeo says that Juliet should come to Friar Laurence "this afternoon". Lines 200-203: Romeo says that "within this hour" a servant will deliver a rope ladder so that he can get into Juliet's room when night falls. |
| II : v | Monday | Afternoon | Juliet is upset that the Nurse is taking so long. The Nurse delivers Romeo's message. | Line 1: "The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse. In half an hour she promised to return." Line 10: "Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve is three long hours." |
| II : vi | Monday | Afternoon | Romeo and Juliet meet at Friar Laurence's cell and get married. | Shakespeare doesn't actually show the wedding ceremony on stage, but many productions do. |
| III : i | Monday | Afternoon | Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt. Romeo arrives, and Tybalt challenges him. Romeo refuses, so Mercutio fights Tybalt. Tybalt kills Mercutio, so Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince orders that Romeo be banished. | Line 4: Benvolio refers to the time of year when he says that "these hot days" are stirring "the mad blood". (It's not clear why Romeo didn't just stay with Juliet after the wedding.) |
| III : ii | Monday | Late afternoon | Juliet yearns for night to fall so that Romeo will be able to come. The Nurse tells her about Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. | Line 99: Juliet says that it has been three hours since the wedding ("thy three-hours wife"). There is much poetic imagery about the sun and night. |
| III : iii | Monday | Early evening | Friar Laurence tells Romeo that he has been banished. The Nurse comes to bring Romeo to Juliet. | Line 66: Romeo says that it has been one hour since the wedding ("An hour but married"), but he's probably being figurative not literal. Line 148: It is not yet dark. Friar Laurence tells Romeo to go to Juliet now but to leave for Mantua before the night watchmen (police) go on duty ("stay not till the watch be set"). Line 167: He repeats this warning and suggests that, if Romeo misses the deadline, he should wait until the watch goes off duty at daybreak. Line 164: The Nurse says, "it grows very late." Friar Laurence says, "good night" twice (166 and 173). |
| III : iv | Monday | Late evening | Lord Capulet decides that Juliet shall marry Paris on Thursday. | Line 18: Paris says that today is Monday. Lines 5-7: "'Tis very late ... I would have been abed an hour ago." Line 34: "it is so very very late." Line 17: Lord Capulet suggests that the wedding should be on Wednesday, but, in lines 19-21, he changes his mind: "Wednesday is too soon. O' Thursday let it be. O' Thursday, tell her, she shall be married to this noble Earl." |
| III : v | Tuesday | Early morning | Romeo leaves for Mantua after spending the night with Juliet. Juliet is told that she must marry Paris on Thursday morning - or else. | Lines 1-35: Romeo and Juliet playfully argue whether it is actually morning or still night. Line 13: Lady Capulet says, "Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn." Lines 154-155: Lord Capulet says, "Thursday next, to go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church." Line 162: "Get thee to church o' Thursday." Line 192: "Thursday is near." |
| IV : i | Tuesday | Late morning or afternoon | Paris talks to Friar Laurence about the upcoming wedding. Juliet goes to Friar Laurence, and he suggests a plan that she take a drug that will make her look dead so that she can sneak away with Romeo. Friar Laurence sends Friar John to Mantua with a message for Romeo. | The time of day is unclear, but it is not yet evening because Juliet says that she can come back "at evening mass" for her "confession" if Friar Laurence is busy with Paris now (lines 37-38). Line 1: Responding to what Paris has just told him, Friar Laurence says, "On Thursday, sir? The time is very short." Line 20: Paris says, "...on Thursday next." Line 42: Paris says, "Juliet, on Thursday early will I rouse ye." Lines 48-49: Friar Laurence says, "I hear thou must ... on Thursday next be married." Line 90: Friar Laurence says that "Wednesday is tomorrow" and that Juliet should take the drug "tomorrow night". Line 105: Friar Laurence says that the drug will make her sleep for "two and forty hours" (almost two days). Shakespeare probably added this extra time so that Romeo would have a believable amount of time to get the message and come back from Mantua. Most productions make it seem shorter. |
| IV : ii | TuesdayorWednesday | Early evening | Lord Capulet is arranging a big wedding celebration. Juliet returns from seeing Friar Laurence and pretends to be cooperating. | Line 39: Lady Capulet says, "'Tis now near night." There is a bit of confusion about the day in this scene. Both Lord Capulet and Juliet say that the wedding is tomorrow (Wednesday). Lady Capulet corrects them and says that it is on Thursday, but Lord Capulet continues to say "tomorrow" (lines 24, 35, 36, 37, 46). This might be intended to be a bit of comedy about Lord Capulet continually getting the day wrong in his rush to prepare the wedding, but Juliet makes the mistake too (line 35). Another explanation may be that this scene takes place the day after the previous scene. But Lord Capulet comments that Juliet has gone to Friar Laurence, and he is pleased that, on her return, the friar seems to have brought her to her senses (lines 11-22). |
| IV : iii | TuesdayorWednesday | Evening | Juliet drinks the drug. | Juliet twice mentions that the wedding is tomorrow (lines 8 and 22). The confusion with the days is continuing. This scene seems to take place right after the preceding one, but, if it is actually the next day (Wednesday), then we are back on schedule. If it is still Tuesday, then Juliet is taking the drug a day early. |
| IV : iv | WednesdaythroughThursday | Very late evening through early morning | Lord Capulet supervises the wedding preparations throughout the night. Paris arrives very early in the morning, which was the custom at the time. | I'm assuming that Thursday is the correct wedding day. (If you don't agree, then you can move everything that follows ahead one day.) Line 4: "The curfew bell hath rung, 'tis three o'clock" (in the morning). |
| IV : v | Thursday | Morning | The Capulets and the others discover Juliet's "dead" body. | Another possibility is that Juliet did take the drug on Tuesday night and that no one found her until Thursday morning. This would seem unlikely, but it would get us back on track - except that this means that Juliet is now scheduled wake up on Thursday night instead of Friday night. |
| V : i | Friday | Afternoon | In Mantua, Romeo learns from Balthasar that Juliet is dead. Romeo buys poison from the Apothecary. | No time of day is mentioned, but the scene begins with Romeo speaking about a dream that he had, so it *might* still be morning. Enough time has passed since the last scene for Balthasar to have arrived from Verona after having visited Juliet's tomb. The distance between the cities is 25 miles (40 km). A horse can comfortably travel at 6 miles per hour, although racehorses can reach 30 mph for short distances. So the trip might take fewer than 5 hours. Line 26: Romeo tells Balthasar that "I will hence tonight." Line 34: Romeo says, "Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight", which also indicates that the trip must take less than a day. He probably plans to leave early in the evening and expects to arrive very late at night. (If Juliet took the drug on Tuesday night, then this scene takes place on Thursday, and there is still time for Romeo to get back before she wakes). |
| V : ii | Friday | Evening | Friar Laurence learns that Friar John was unable to deliver the message to Romeo. Friar Laurence writes another letter to Romeo and leaves for the crypt to meet Juliet when she wakes. | Line 25: Friar Laurence says, "Within this three hours will fair Juliet wake." If Juliet took the drug late Wednesday night, and it lasts for forty-two hours, it must now be early Friday evening. (If she took it on Tuesday, then this is Thursday evening). |
| V : iii | FridaythroughSaturday | Late evening through early morning | Paris and a servant arrive at Juliet's tomb. Romeo and Balthasar arrive. Romeo gives Balthasar a letter (his suicide note) and sends him away. Paris confronts Romeo, and Romeo kills him. The servant goes to summon the watchmen. Romeo kills himself. Friar Laurence arrives and meets Balthasar. Friar Laurence finds the bodies. Juliet wakes up, and Friar Laurence tries to get her to leave. She refuses, and he flees when he hears the watchmen coming. Juliet kills herself. The watchmen arrive, find the bodies, and send for the Prince, the Capulets, and the Montagues. Balthasar and Friar Laurence are apprehended. The Prince, Capulets, Montagues, and others arrive. News of these events is spreading through the streets. We learn that Lady Montague died of grief earlier this evening because of Romeo's banishment. Friar Laurence, Balthasar, and the servant explain what happened. The Prince scolds Lord Capulet and Lord Montague, who finally end their feud. | As in Act I, scene v, several hours take place during this scene (night through dawn). Most productions will delete many of these events. There are many references to night and torches. Lines 14-17: Paris says twice that he will visit Juliet's tomb "nightly". This may suggest that it is indeed Friday and that this is the second night that Paris has visited the tomb. Line 130: Balthasar tells Friar Laurence that Romeo has been inside the tomb for "Full half an hour." Line 176: the Watchman says that Juliet has been lying here for "two days". This would be true if it is now the morning of the next day. Line 189: Prince Escalus says, "What misadventure is so early up that calls our person from our early rest?", also implying that it is now morning. Lines 305-306: the Prince says, "A glooming peace this morning with it brings. The sun for sorrow will not show his head." |