

The Character of Juliet

- At the beginning of the play Juliet appears to be quite childish. This is not surprising as we find out from the Nurse in Act 1 Scene III, that she is not yet fourteen years old.
- A beautiful thirteen year old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child, who has thought little about love and marriage. She is an obedient and dutiful daughter, who responds to the suggestion of marriage to Paris, as follows:

**"I look to like, if looking liking move
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly."**

- Lady Capulet, is very anxious that Juliet should marry young Paris. While Juliet is not particularly enthusiastic about the idea, she does not turn it down. — obedient
- She promises to see Paris at the ball and to decide if she can love him.
- However, all this changes when Juliet meets Romeo in Act 1 scene V and the pair fall madly in love.

- At the end of this scene Juliet is confused by her newfound love for Romeo; a Montague:

**"My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown and known too late
Prodigious birth of love it is to me
That I must love a loathed enemy."**

- In Act 2 scene II, Juliet again questions why Romeo must be her enemy. However, her love for him is so strong that for her, it makes their family feud unimportant:

**"O Romeo, Romeo!—Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet."**

- Juliet refuses to believe that Romeo is defined by being a Montague and she questions the very nature of names:

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet."

- When Romeo appears beneath her window, Juliet worries for his safety. She fears that he will be murdered if he is found on the grounds: - *Maturity more sensible*

"The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,

And the place death, considering who thou art,

If any of my kinsman find thee here."

- Here Juliet seems to be the more sensible of the two young lovers. She is practical and thinks about the consequences of Romeo's actions, while Romeo lets himself get carried away by his feelings. Although Juliet is the younger of the two, she seems to be the most mature. Falling in love has made her grow up quickly.

- In Act 3, however, Juliet's intense love for Romeo, makes her momentarily lose all reason as she tries to convince her husband to stay longer. She tries to tell him that **"it is the nightingale and not the lark"**, singing outside her window.

- Just after the lover's sad farewell, Juliet is confronted with the arranged marriage to Paris, which she rejects immediately, saying:

"Now by Saint Peter's church and Peter too

He shall not make me there a joyful bride!"

She is no longer the dutiful and obedient girl we saw in the first act as she openly defies her parents.

- When the Nurse suggests that Juliet should proceed as if Romeo were dead and marry Paris, Juliet rejects her only confidant and friend. *lonely - isolated*

"Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain"

- Isolated from her family and only friend, Juliet even sees death as an answer to her dilemma. She is willing to die rather than betray Romeo:

"If all else fail, myself have power to die"

- We see that Juliet is transformed from a childish, obedient young girl to a mature and independent woman, who makes life changing decisions.

- In Act 4 scene III, Juliet shows great courage, as all alone, she takes the Friar's potion, despite the horrors she imagines of being buried alive in the Capulet vault. She doesn't hesitate as she thinks of her love for Romeo:

"Romeo, I come; this do I drink to thee."

- When Juliet wakes in the vault and finds Romeo dead, she doesn't despair but firmly refuses to leave the tomb with the Friar.
- She shows heroic courage and resolution in killing herself with Romeo's dagger:

"O happy dagger!

This is thy sheath! There rust and let me die"

- So Juliet is transformed by love, from an innocent child to a woman of heroic strength and self-sacrifice.