

## Monologues and Soliloquies in 'Romeo and Juliet'

Both soliloquies and monologues are delivered by a **solitary speaker**. However, a monologue is addressed to an audience while a soliloquy is a speech the character gives to himself or herself. They are not speaking to anyone else, on or offstage. Soliloquies are a way for a character to **express their thoughts aloud**. They allow the audience to gain a **deeper insight** into that character's feelings.

### 'Romeo and Juliet' - Soliloquy

The soliloquies in 'Romeo and Juliet' are full of **heightened emotions**: passion, fear, impatience etc.

Through the soliloquies, we gain a **greater understanding** of the characters and we are more inclined to **empathise** with them as a result. Connecting with characters leads us to become **emotionally invested in the outcome** of the story.



On the following pages are extracts from some of the most famous soliloquies in 'Romeo and Juliet'.

You should **learn the extracts by heart** and **revise the full versions** of the soliloquies (Act and Scene numbers are given in each case for ease of reference).

Read and be able to reproduce the key points of the analysis below each extract.

*Act 2 Scene 2 'The Balcony Scene'*

*But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?*

*It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.*

*Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,*

*Who is already sick and pale with grief,*

*That thou her maid art far more fair than she.*

...

*See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!*

*O, that I were a glove upon that hand,*

*That I might touch that cheek!*

....

*O, speak bright angel! - for thou art*

*As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,*

*As is a winged messenger of heaven*

Romeo has secretly entered the Capulet orchard in search of Juliet. He sees her at her window, and is **overwhelmed by her beauty**. Romeo expresses himself in **poetic, romantic, language full of exaggerated images** in which he says that Juliet is brighter than the sun and more beautiful than the moon. He claims the 'envious moon' is 'sick and pale with grief' because Juliet is so much lovelier than she (the moon) could ever be. In another example of **hyperbole** (deliberate exaggeration), Romeo says that Juliet's eyes shine brighter than the stars. He wishes more than anything that he could be 'a glove upon that hand' upon which Juliet rests her cheek.

Romeo also uses **religious imagery** to convey his adoration of Juliet. He says she is a 'bright angel' and a like 'wingèd messenger of heaven' flying far above mere mortals.

*Act 2 Scene 2 'The Balcony Scene'*

*O Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou  
Romeo?*

*Deny thy father and refuse thy name,*

...

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title.*

Juliet delivers this **passionate soliloquy** as she stands on her balcony, unaware that Romeo is below. **She reflects on the importance of names** and wonders why Romeo's name should matter. After all, she says, **a rose would smell just as sweet** if it were called something else. Likewise, Romeo would keep the 'dear perfection' that he possesses no matter what he was called. **Juliet's words prompt Romeo to speak at last.** When she realises he has overheard her, Juliet decides it would be foolish to pretend to be shy. She proclaims her love for him and they vow to marry as soon as possible.



*Act 4 Scene 3 - Juliet takes the potion*

*I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins  
That almost freezes up the heat of life.*

...

*How if, when I am laid into the tomb,  
I wake before the time that Romeo come to redeem me?*

...

*Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink. I drink to thee.*

In this **powerful soliloquy**, Juliet expresses her **fears** about taking the potion the Friar gave her. She worries that it may not work or that the Friar might want her dead because he is afraid his part in the secret marriage will be revealed. Juliet is also worried that if the potion does its job she may wake in the tomb before Romeo arrives and go mad with terror at the sight of all her dead relations. As the soliloquy progresses, **Juliet grows increasingly desperate**, finally fearing that in her madness and terror at waking alone in the tomb she might kill herself. Nevertheless, she shows her **courage** as she drinks the potion in the end. This soliloquy shows that Juliet is a **realistic character with understandable worries and fears, but we also learn the depth of her love for Romeo**. She is willing to risk anything to be with him.