

ROMEO & JULIET - The dramatic element of Act three Scene five
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In the previous scene, we have heard Capulet talking with Paris about the forthcoming marriage between Paris and Juliet.

At the beginning of Act three Scene five, we learn that Romeo and Juliet have spent the night together. This, coupled with Romeo's recognition that if he 'stays [he will] die' (11), and our knowledge of what is likely to happen to Juliet if they are caught, provide the audience with a dramatic opening to the scene.

The exchange between Romeo and Juliet in which Romeo speaks of being 'put to death' (17) hints at future disturbance. It reminds us that despite their declaration of love for each other all is not well, there is a tense atmosphere lurking underneath the surface.

Juliet's exchange with her mother reveals that she mistakenly believes that Juliet weeps for Tybalt. The tension increases as Lady Capulet callously vows to have her revenge on Romeo;

*[We] shall give him [Romeo] such an unacustom'd dram
That he shall soon keep Tybalt company. (89 – 90)*

Lady Capulet uses dramatic irony. We, the audience, know that Romeo will indeed join Tybalt in the near future. At the same time, Juliet reveals in an aside to the audience 'God pardon him! I do, with all my heart.' (83). That Juliet deliberately seeks to deceive her parents into believing that she too wishes that Romeo was dead, heightens the drama of the scene. What if her parents find out the truth?

The vehemence with which Capulet attacks Juliet when she refuses to comply with his order that she must marry Paris is, arguably, the dramatic climax of the scene. He flies into a violent rage, threatening that he will 'drag thee [Juliet] on a hurdle thither.' (155). After the tirade of verbal abuse in which Juliet is called 'a disobedient wretch,' 'a tallow – face,' and 'green – sickness carrion,' Capulet suggests that he is prepared use physical force to make Juliet obedient. 'My fingers itch,' (164) he yells at her. The mounting terror of Capulet's repeated threats add to the drama of the scene. The contrast between the gentle opening of the scene and the savage events at the present moment, makes this scene so powerful.

The nurse's suggestion that Juliet should forget about the 'dishclout [Romeo]' and marry 'the lovely gentleman' Paris is unexpected. Earlier on in the play, the nurse described Romeo as

*An honest gentleman
And a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome
And a virtuous [gentleman]. A2 S5 55 –56*

Dramatic tension is built up as we consider whether or not the nurse will tell Juliet's parents that she is already married to Romeo if she refuses to follow her advice. Juliet's decision not to confide in the nurse in future, and her resolve that 'If all else fail, myself have the power to die.' (241) adds a further dramatic element to the scene.

In an exam answer, at this point, you may wish to write a paragraph about the position of the characters at various moments in the scene.

Remember to refer back to the original question in the final paragraph of your answer, and sum up your ideas.