

Romeo and Juliet – Sample Answer 2004 JC – A scene that you found happy or sad

2. Name a play you have studied.

Choose a scene from this play that you found either happy or sad.

Describe how the playwright conveys this happiness or sadness. (30 marks)

Note that you are not asked what happens in this scene but **how** the playwright uses language, stage directions, characterisation etc to convey the happiness or the sadness.

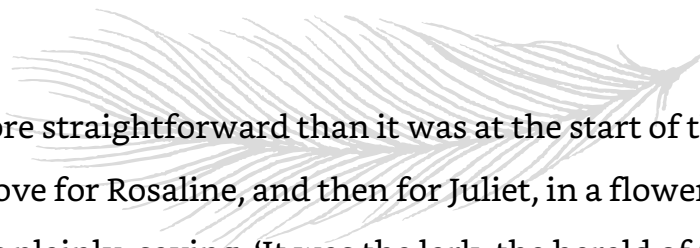
The obvious scene to choose here would be the scene in which Romeo and Juliet take their own lives, but if you can do something a little out of the ordinary – provided you can support your view – there is a better chance of your getting a higher mark.

Sample Answer:

The play I have studied is William Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', and the scene which I found particularly sad was Act 3 Scene 5.

The scene opens with the pair about to part after their first night together. Although it is only a few days since they first met, this parting is nonetheless extremely hard for them to bear. The language at the start of this scene is simple but effective. Juliet tries to pretend that it is not yet morning and that there is no need for Romeo to leave. We feel her longing and her pain when she pretends to believe that it is 'the nightingale, and not the lark' that sings outside.

Romeo shows a more mature side to himself than we have seen so far when he insists on leaving, because he knows to stay would mean death. His



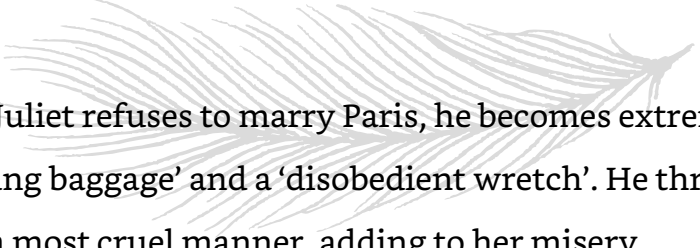
language is more straightforward than it was at the start of the play when he professed his love for Rosaline, and then for Juliet, in a flowery, extravagant way. He speaks plainly, saying, 'It was the lark, the herald of the morn:/No nightingale.' This simplicity makes his speeches more hauntingly sad and beautiful than any of his earlier, overblown rhetoric ever could have.

Although both Romeo and Juliet's words are romantic and full of love, their speeches contain constant references to death which foreshadow the tragedy that is to come. Romeo insists that he must leave or 'stay and die', but when Juliet begs him to stay he claims that he will do so and will embrace his end: 'Come, death, and welcome,' if that is what she wishes. At this, Juliet changes her tune and begs him to leave. Her love and her anguish are plain to see as she agonises over their situation: 'More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!'

The young lovers' conversation is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the Nurse, who warns Juliet that 'Your lady mother is coming to your chamber'. There is a sense of dramatic irony here as the audience knows that Capulet has agreed to give his daughter in marriage to Paris and that Juliet will soon hear this. Romeo leaves but not before promising to 'omit no opportunity/ That may convey my greetings, love, to thee'. His words do not comfort Juliet who has a premonition of disaster. The mood is darkened once more as she claims that she has 'an ill-divining are enough hints of the tragedy to come to make viewers at least suspect that such may be the case. Romeo takes his leave just as Juliet's mother is about to enter.

The situation does not improve with the entrance of Lady Capulet. She believes she is bringing news that will cheer her daughter after the death of her cousin Tybalt at Romeo's hand, but the news that Juliet is to marry Paris horrifies the young girl.

Before Lady Capulet can get to the bottom of the matter, Capulet arrives.



On hearing that Juliet refuses to marry Paris, he becomes extremely angry, calling her a 'young baggage' and a 'disobedient wretch'. He threatens her and speaks to her in a most cruel manner, adding to her misery.

Poor Juliet finds no support from her mother, despite pleading for her help and love: 'O, sweet my mother, cast me not away!' Lady Capulet is unmoved and, like Juliet's father, says that she will have nothing more to do with her. The scene could hardly be sadder nor Juliet's situation more pitiful, but there is more to come. The Nurse, who has been Juliet's companion and mother figure for many years, fails her too. She advises Juliet to marry Paris, calling him 'a lovely gentleman' and far better than Romeo. Juliet is completely alone. Romeo is gone, her parents have virtually disowned her, and now her last hope, the Nurse, has let her down. Juliet's isolation is heartbreaking.

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