

Read the passage below and answer the following questions.

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**Romeo Revisited**  
by Belinda Jones

The meeting was getting off to a slow start. Rick, the Grenville High drama club president, had just nominated *Romeo and Juliet* for the fall play.

There was a long silence in the warm classroom, broken only by the rustling of lunch sacks and the occasional crunching bite into a crisp apple. No one was sure that this was such a great idea.

No one but Shirley, the sophomore class president. "Oh, Shakespeare's so romantic!" she said. "But soft, what light from yonder window breaks. It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!"

Everyone feared she could go on if she wanted.

"Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon," Rick continued hesitantly, filling in the blank. Everyone was impressed, but Shirley and Rick's excitement wasn't catching on. The two were shoo-ins for the leading roles. What parts would that leave everyone else?

"Hey, Shakespeare's great and all, but can't we do one of his other plays?" Byron asked. He usually held back a little longer before speaking, but today no one else seemed to have the guts. Besides, that romantic stuff was not his cup of tea. "I mean, everyone knows the story of those 'star-crossed lovers.' The whole thing is such a cliché."

Mr. Peterson, the drama advisor, spoke up to defend the play. "Everyone knew the story in Shakespeare's day, too," he said. "Knowing the story helps audiences understand Shakespeare's poetic language. If we put on *Coriolanus*, some people might not be able to follow the action."

"Yeah. Whatever," Byron said, leaning his chair against the desk behind him.

"We could always update the story," a squeaky voice offered from the fringe of the group. It was Malcolm, a freshman new to the club.

"Sorry, kid, that's been done," Megan said. "Remember *West Side Story*? And didn't you see Baz Luhrman's 1996 version? Leonardo DiCaprio is to die for! 'Romeo, Romeo whyfore art thou . . . .'"

"It's *wherefore*," Lindsay corrected her.

"Wherefore *aren't* thou, Leonardo DiCaprio?" Megan said.

"Wherefore art thou, Rick?" Lindsay added under her breath. A couple of the girls laughed, but she immediately felt sorry she'd said it. Rick had been doing his best to help the group come to a decision.

Kate spoke up. "I'm all in favor of the balcony scene and the romance stuff, but I have to say I'm sick and tired of tragedy. Every time you turn on the TV, there's something tragic on the news. I mean, why can't we just rewrite the script and give it a happy ending?"

Mr. Peterson cleared his throat. "That's actually an interesting idea, Katie. You know, they did that in the eighteenth century. Rewrote Shakespeare's plays so they'd all have happy endings. We could bill it as an eighteenth century version of *Romeo and Juliet*."

"Hey, wasn't that about the time when all the guys wore powdered wigs?" Byron asked. He always seemed to know a little bit about everything, which people wouldn't

have minded, except that he acted like he knew it all. But the subject of powdered wigs had caught everyone's attention.

"Hold on a second," Malcolm said. "I don't know about anyone else, but I don't want to wear a powdered wig."

"And I'm not kissing any guy who's wearing one," Megan said with mock certainty. "Oh, come on, what difference does it make?" Rick asked. "We're actors. We do all sorts of stuff."

"Yeah, what the heck," Shirley said. "It'll be fun!"

"Yeah, well the closest I've ever come to a powdered wig is a powdered donut," Byron said, "and, man, those things set my teeth on edge."

In the heated discussion that followed, Mr. Peterson seemed to be the only one who didn't have an opinion about powdered wigs. After a while, he felt someone tap him on the shoulder. Everyone saw the advisor turn around. The group got quiet all at once.

It was Malcolm. When he saw that all eyes were on him, he addressed the whole group instead of just Mr. Peterson. "Don't you see?" Malcolm said excitedly. "We've got one group that agrees to wear powdered wigs, and one group that refuses to. It's the Montagues and the Capulets all over again."

"Kind of like shirts and skins in basketball!" Byron said.

"Let's see," Malcolm paused, ignoring Byron and pondering the plot. "Juliet prefers her men to wear natural coifs, so she crosses over the 'wig line' and falls in love with Romeo. The young couple convinces the others that feuding over hairdos is foolish. They make up and live happily ever after."

Rick looked pleased with Malcolm's suggestion. It appeared that producing *Romeo and Juliet* as the fall play was more than a possibility.

Just then the bell rang. Time to get back to classes. Everyone turned to Mr. Peterson for his opinion.

He sucked in his breath. "I think we've got an idea for an original production," he said. "A play that makes good-natured fun of Shakespearean tragedy, or of eighteenth-century hair styles, I'm not sure which. Let's all take a week to think about whether it will make a full-length play. We could think about the other tragedies, and how they might work in wigs. It might turn out to be a group of skits."

The students dispersed in chumps, talking excitedly. And the inevitable was heard in the halls of Grenville High: "To wig, or not to wig? That is the question."

**1. According to the highlighted text above, which word best describes the type of person Shirley seems to be?**

- A. unoriginal
- B. confident
- C. shy
- D. impatient

**2. Based on the information in the passage, the reader can infer that the fall play will be which of the following?**

- A. the original "Romeo and Juliet"
- B. "Coriolanus," one of Shakespeare's lesser known plays
- C. an updated "Romeo and Juliet" with a happy ending
- D. a group of skits making fun of Shakespearean tragedies or wigs

**3. Which of the following is the best summary of this passage?**

- A. Most of the members of the drama club would rather not perform Romeo and Juliet
- B. The drama club concludes that it is not possible to produce a traditional version of Romeo and Juliet
- C. Mr. Peterson saves the day by coming up with the solution to disagreements among drama club members
- D. Ideas begin to fly when drama club members discuss the possibility of performing Romeo and Juliet

**4. Based on the highlighted text above, the author uses the phrase "shirts and skins in basketball" in order to -**

- A. illustrate how silly the conflict in Romeo and Juliet was
- B. impart a sense of playfulness
- C. show how literary conflict has two sides just like a basketball game
- D. make the reader understand why the two families hated each other

**5. The highlighted word "coifs" in this passage means which of the following?**

- A. hairstyles
- B. items of makeup
- C. facial expressions
- D. articles of clothing