

Romeo Meets Juliet

by William Shakespeare *from Romeo and Juliet*

In this passage from Romeo and Juliet, Romeo first meets Juliet at a party held by her parents. Neither of them know who the other is; they are both the only children of feuding families. They are engaged in a flirtatious conversation.

Romeo.

[To Juliet.] If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this,—
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet.

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo.

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Juliet.

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Romeo.

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Juliet.

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Romeo.

Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is purg'd.
[Kissing her.]

Juliet.

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Romeo.

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urg'd!

Give me my sin again.

Questions

1. A palmer is another name for a religious pilgrim. What does "palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss" mean on the surface?
2. Romeo says, "let lips do what hands do." In light of the reference in question 1, what is he asking?
3. What does Romeo mean when he says, "Give me my sin again"?
4. The first 14 lines of this passage are a classic Shakespearean sonnet. Write the 12 rhyming words and the ending words of the rhyming couplet.

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. profane
2. mannerly
3. palmers
4. purg'd
5. trespass

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "If I **profane** with my unworthiest hand / This holy shrine"

- a. violate; disrespect b. approach; come near c. confess or admit d. adore or love

2. "you do wrong your hand too much, / Which **mannerly** devotion shows in this"

- a. masculine; manly b. excitedly or agitatedly c. courteous or gracious d. completely

3. "Have not saints lips, and holy **palmer**s too"

- a. hands b. pilgrim or worshipers c. lovers; admirers d. youths or young people

4. "Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is **purg'd**"

- a. purified; cleansed b. obvious; apparent c. increased or larger d. delightful or joyful

5. "O **trespass** sweetly urg'd! / Give me my sin again"

- a. go past; leave b. repeat; duplicate c. worship or adore d. sin or misbehave