between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Romeo and Juliet: Do you bite your thumb at us?

How does Shakespeare show that the feud has spread through all of Verona?

Lesson 3 of 33 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification



© 2026 Between the Lines. This sampler is free to use and print in your school. Please share the link to our website instead of the file.

What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Romeo and Juliet scheme for Literature Paper 1, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared task, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model and an exit ticket. Most Master tasks are What–How–Why paragraphs, and some are creative or other forms: in this lesson, a proclamation.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters. For students working towards a grade 4.
Strengthening	Prompts for What, How and Why, a paragraph planner and a checklist. For students working at grades 5 and 6.
Soaring	A debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner. For students aiming at grades 7 to 9.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

In the full scheme

- 33 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- Four Feedback Loop progress checks with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with a teacher guide, level guidance and annotated model answers
- A Soaring stretch booklet for students aiming at the top levels
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson
- The revision workbook and the model answer pack, to print for every student
- Every licence for the scheme also includes its 30 Raising Achievement drills for intervention sessions

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Lesson 3: Do you bite your thumb at us?

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND ACT 1 · 60 MINUTES

How does Shakespeare show that the feud has spread through all of Verona?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain how the quarrel spreads from two servants to the whole city in Act 1 Scene 1
- Analyse how Shakespeare contrasts Benvolio and Tybalt
- Write the Prince's proclamation, using exact detail and imagery from the scene

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 1 and on swords in the 1590s. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–20	Know	Pre-teach "disgrace", "quarrel", "hinds" and "coward". Read the extract aloud with four students as Sampson, Gregory, Abram and Benvolio, and you as Tybalt, then ask: who wants a fight, and who tries to stop it? Then tell students what happens next: citizens with clubs join in, both old fathers want to fight while their wives hold them back, and the Prince stops the fight and threatens death to anyone who brawls again.	4–9
20–30	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about why Tybalt hates a word, then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	10
30–35	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	11–12
35–53	Master	Students write the Prince's proclamation, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model proclamation in the last five minutes and ask two students to read theirs aloud as the Prince.	13–14
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	15

Do Now answers

1	Complete the opening line of the Prologue: "Two households, both alike in _____".	dignity
2	What does "star-cross'd" mean?	Blocked by the stars, which many Elizabethans believed shaped a person's life
3	What is a grudge?	A long-held feeling of anger against someone for a past wrong
4	Whose poem did Shakespeare use for the story of Romeo and Juliet?	Arthur Brooke's, The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet (1562)
5	Why did a young man of good family in the 1590s carry a sword?	To defend his honour: an insult to his name or family was expected to be answered

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Vocabulary

disgrace	shame; losing the respect of others
quarrel	an angry argument
hinds	servants; also female deer, so here an insult that makes them sound timid
coward	someone who runs away from danger

Reading

Act 1 Scene 1: the quarrel becomes a brawl

Sampson and Gregory are servants of the Capulets. In the street they meet Abram and Balthasar, servants of the Montagues. Benvolio is Romeo's cousin, a Montague; Tybalt is Juliet's cousin, a Capulet.

SAMPSON.
Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

ABRAM.
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON.
I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAM.
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON.
Is the law of our side if I say ay?

GREGORY.
No.

SAMPSON.
No sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY.
Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM.
Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMPSON.
But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAM.
No better.

SAMPSON.
Well, sir.
Enter Benvolio.

GREGORY.
Say better; here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

SAMPSON.
Yes, better, sir.

ABRAM.
You lie.

SAMPSON.
Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy washing blow.
[They fight.]

BENVOLIO.
Part, fools! put up your swords, you know not what you do.
[Beats down their swords.]
Enter Tybalt.

TYBALT.
What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?
Turn thee Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO.
I do but keep the peace, put up thy sword,
Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT.
What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee:
Have at thee, coward.

William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet (1597), Act 1 Scene 1

Word help **bear it**: put up with it · **washing blow**: a slashing sword stroke · **heartless hinds**: cowardly servants · **Have at thee**: on guard; I am coming for you

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school

Explode the quotation

Method

A simile and a list. Tybalt compares his hatred of peace to his hatred of hell, then names everyone else he hates.

Zoom in

“the word” is peace. Tybalt hates the idea of peace itself, and his list narrows from a whole family, “all Montagues”, to one man, “thee”.

“I hate the word As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee”

Effect

The audience sees that Tybalt cannot be reasoned with. Benvolio has just said he only wants to keep the peace, and Tybalt answers with a sword.

Purpose

Shakespeare makes Tybalt a man whose honour depends on hatred. In a city where young men carried swords and answered insults, one such man is enough to start a war in the street.

Hinge question

Sampson will bite his thumb at the Montagues, “which is disgrace to them if they bear it”. What does this show about how the fight starts?

A. The Montague servants start the fight by insulting Sampson first.

B. Sampson is afraid and wants to avoid a fight with the Montagues.

C. A small, rude gesture is enough to start a fight, because each side must answer an insult. **(the right answer)**

What the answers tell you

A means the student has the order wrong: re-read the opening lines and ask who makes the first move. B shows the student has missed the tone of Sampson’s swagger: point out that Sampson wants the Montagues to react: these may be your students who start on Securing.

Why the answer is right

Biting the thumb was a rude gesture, and to “bear it” without answering would be a disgrace, so honour forces the Montagues to react and a tiny insult becomes a brawl.

Master task: proclamation

Write the Prince’s proclamation, to be read aloud in the market place after the third brawl: what happened, who is to blame, and the new punishment for anyone who fights again.

© 2026 Between the Lines · Free to use and print in your school