

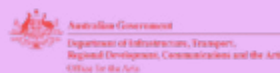
SUCH SWEET SORROW



ONLINE RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES © Bell Shakespeare 2026, unless otherwise indicated. Provided all acknowledgements are retained, this material may be used, reproduced, and communicated free of charge for non-commercial educational purposes within Australian and international schools.

BELL SHAKESPEARE



ABOUT BELL SHAKESPEARE

Bell Shakespeare is Australia's national theatre company specialising in Shakespeare and the classics. The company was founded by John Bell AO in 1990 with the aim of making Shakespeare and live performance accessible to all Australians, regardless of geographic location or socio-economic disadvantage. Bell Shakespeare is proud to deliver Australian theatre's most comprehensive and wide-reaching education program, which operates in approximately 93% of Australian electorates annually and is delivered to more than 80,000 students and teachers face to face each year. The national program includes in-school performances by The Players, student workshops, Artist in Residence, community and outreach work, engagement with refugee and Indigenous communities, the National Teacher Mentorship, scholarships for regional students, work experience, and a renowned Youth Justice program. Bell Shakespeare uses Shakespeare as a vehicle for self-reflection and transformation: as Ophelia says in Hamlet, "We know what we are, but know not what we may be."

ABOUT SUCH SWEET SORROW

One ancient grudge, one lifechanging connection, and one society forever changed. *Romeo and Juliet* remains a rollercoaster ride of passion and violence, and a tale that, generations on, we continue returning to. Join The Players as they retell Shakespeare's classic from youthful innocence to tragic conclusion, via modern commentary interweaved with Shakespeare's original text.

Such Sweet Sorrow is an engaging and interactive performance experience for students and teachers that will keep the audience on the edge of their seats, from first sight to final breath. In 50 minutes The Players will journey through the entire story, discussing character motivations, illuminating themes and analysing language techniques and narrative devices.

CREATIVE TEAM

TEAM ROMEO



ARI



SOPHIE



AMOS

TEAM JULIET



KEIDEN



HANNAH



LIBBY

CREATIVES AND CREW

SCRIPT

By Matt Edgerton and
Joanna Erskine

DIRECTOR

James Thomasson

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Nigel Poulton

VOICE CONSULTANT

Jack Starkey-Gill

STAGE MANAGERS

Jessica Twells

Alexis Worthing

ROMEO AND JULIET SYNOPSIS

There is a violent brawl on the streets of Verona, arising from the long-simmering tension between two noble families, the Montagues and the Capulets. Tired of seeing them endanger the populace, Prince Escalus bans further confrontation on pain of death. The young heir of the Montague family, Romeo, cares little for all this. He is obsessed with his love for a girl called Rosaline who will have nothing to do with him. His cousin Benvolio and friend Mercutio attempt to cheer him up. They encounter a servant of the Capulet household who unwittingly shows them an invitation to a masquerade ball at the Capulet house that night. When they read that Rosaline is attending the party, Benvolio and Mercutio suggest they all attend the party in disguise. They tell Romeo that he can then compare Rosaline with other young women, and discover there are many more women in the world to desire. Romeo doesn't want to attend at first as he has had a foreboding dream, but Mercutio cleverly makes light of his fears and Romeo decides to go.

At the Capulet household, Paris, a young relative of the Prince and an eligible bachelor, expresses interest in marrying the Capulet's only child, Juliet. Juliet's father, Lord Capulet, shows Paris respect, but expresses that he feels Juliet is too young to marry just yet – she is only thirteen. However, he tells Paris to woo Juliet and invites him to meet her at the party. Juliet's mother, Lady Capulet, approves of the union, and she and Juliet's Nurse tell Juliet about Paris' intentions and plan for marriage. They encourage her to meet Paris at the party and see what she thinks of him. Juliet does not show interest in Paris or the idea of marriage at all, but promises to give Paris a chance, with her parent's approval.

At the ball, Romeo and Juliet see each other for the first time. They feel an instant attraction, share witty banter and have their first kiss, before even finding out who the other is. It is only later that they find that they are from rival families. Juliet's cousin Tybalt recognises Romeo and is enraged that a Montague is at the Capulet party, but Lord Capulet forbids Tybalt from causing trouble and disrupting the party. Later, Romeo sneaks back into the Capulet grounds and overhears Juliet, at her window, declaring her love for him. Romeo jumps out of his hiding spot and declares his love for her as well. They decide to marry the next day. Romeo and Juliet are married in secret by their friend and adviser, Friar Lawrence. Juliet's Nurse is the only other person who knows about their union.

Later that afternoon, Romeo encounters Tybalt, who is still furious that Romeo was at the party and tries to pick a fight with him. When Romeo refuses to fight, secretly protecting his new wife, this angers Tybalt. Mercutio fights with Tybalt on Romeo's behalf, and is killed.

Enraged by the death of his friend, Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince then banishes Romeo to Mantua, and says that he must never return to Verona again.

Unaware of this, Juliet prepares to receive Romeo in her room for their wedding night. Friar Lawrence instils courage in the broken Romeo and tells him he should spend the night with Juliet, and escape to Mantua at dawn, where he will arrange for Juliet to follow. The Friar hopes that they may then start a new life together, away from Verona and the feuding families. The Nurse tells Juliet about Tybalt and Mercutio's death, and Romeo's banishment. Romeo and Juliet spend the night together, before he leaves early in the morning for Mantua.

Juliet is distraught, and her parents mistake her weeping for Romeo for grief about Tybalt's death. To bring her some joy, Lord Capulet decides to arrange Juliet's immediate marriage to Paris. Juliet reacts in disbelief and anger, appealing to her father and mother to delay the wedding. Lord Capulet violently threatens to disown his daughter if she does not agree to the marriage. Juliet asks the Nurse for her advice, and she tells Juliet to marry Paris and forget Romeo.

Determined to find another option, Juliet turns to Friar Lawrence. He gives her a potion to drink that will make her appear dead for 42 hours. He promises to send word to Romeo in Mantua to come and fetch her from the Capulet vault, where her family will lay her. Juliet drinks the potion and, believed dead by her family, is placed in the Capulet vault. But the Friar's messenger fails to reach Romeo, who hears only that Juliet is dead. He visits an Apothecary to collect a poison so that he can return to Verona and die beside Juliet.

Romeo travels by night to the Capulet tomb where he encounters Paris, who is mourning for Juliet. They fight and Paris is killed. Romeo breaks into the Capulet vault and sees Juliet, believing her dead. He drinks the poison and dies beside her. The Friar, who has discovered that his letter did not reach Romeo, hastens to rescue Juliet, who wakes as he enters. He tells her what has happened and that Romeo has killed himself. The Friar urges Juliet to leave with him, but she will not leave Romeo. Friar Lawrence flees. Wanting only to follow Romeo, Juliet stabs herself with his dagger and dies. The Prince arrives with the Montague and Capulet families where they find Romeo and Juliet dead. The Friar explains what has happened. The families finally realise the devastating impact of their generational war and prejudice, and the Montagues and Capulets say they will reconcile, once and for all.

ABOUT THE PLAY

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

Romeo and Juliet was Shakespeare's second tragedy and was most likely written between 1594 and 1596.

Romeo and Juliet is arguably one of Shakespeare's best-loved plays, spawning four centuries of spin-offs, including Sergei Prokofiev's beautiful classical music, countless sculptures and paintings, at least 24 operas, a number of musicals including *West Side Story*, pop songs and film versions.

While there is no proof that the story is in fact true, in the thirteenth century there were certainly two feuding Italian families. The Montecchi of Verona and the Capelletti of Cremona were locked in a political struggle. These two families are referred to in Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto VI. It is not known if they had children named Romeo and Juliet.

Romeo and Juliet borrows from a tradition of tragic love stories dating back to antiquity. One of these is Pyramus and Thisbe, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which contains parallels to Shakespeare's story. A sleeping potion to avoid unwanted marriage appeared in such stories in 4th Century AD, added by Greek novelist Xenophon. Italian writer Masuccio of Salerno added the idea of the lovers being star-crossed in 1476 and another brilliant Italian author, Luigi da Porto, set this scene in Verona and named the two feuding families (Montecchi and Cappellati) in 1530. As you can see, this story of two young, star-crossed, Italian, lovers had a huge journey before it landed in the hands of Shakespeare. Dramatists in Shakespeare's time were incredible bower-birds: borrowing and even outright stealing from other sources. Shakespeare stole plots, dialogue, character names and titles. But this was common: to Elizabethan playwrights, plots and characters were public property. There were no copyright laws at the time and there was only a loose sense of intellectual property.

It is known that Shakespeare based his play on a poem published two years before his birth. The poem was an English translation of the French translation of the original Italian. The English translation was *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) by Arthur Brooke, a poem of 3020 lines. It was based on Boastuau's French translation of a novella in Italian by Bandello.

Examining what Shakespeare kept, what he changed, and what he omitted from the original sources, is telling with regard to his values as a dramatist. He has many verbal parallels with Brooke, and has absorbed the atmosphere of an Italian summer with warm nights and sudden thunder storms. However, the original poem is now considered highly didactic, taking the moral position of the parents

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY



Figure 1: *Romeo and Juliet* in The First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, printed 1623

and standing as a warning to youth who disobey their elders. In Brooke's address '*To the reader*' prefacing his work he states:

And to this end, good Reader, is this tragical matter written, to describe unto thee a couple of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to dishonest desire; neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends; conferring their principal counsels with drunken gossips and superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity); attempting all adventures of peril for th' attaining of their wished lust; using auricular confession the key of whoredom and treason, for furtherance of their purpose; abusing the honourable name of lawful marriage to cloak the shame of stolen contracts; finally by all means of dishonest life hastening to most unhappy death.

Shakespeare managed to move beyond this, endowing the young lovers with independence and importance, revealing how adult fallacies can impact their own children's fate. As Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* draws to a close, Juliet's father Capulet looks at the bodies of the two young lovers and states that they are "poor sacrifices of our enmity". Shakespeare does not act as a moralist, judging youthful choices. He simply presents us with three-dimensional characters living real lives, and allows their humanity to unravel: as Harold Bloom states, 'Shakespeare stands back from assigning blame'.

The plight of young lovers has always appealed to writers and audiences alike. Throughout history many young people have fallen in love against their parents' wishes. Shakespeare's version of this story has survived as one of the most loved and respected because he allows us to see the world through the young lover's hearts and minds.

**FAMOUS LINES
FROM ROMEO
AND JULIET**

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene...

Prologue

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Abraham, Act 1, Scene 1

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee

Tybalt, Act 1, Scene 1

O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.

Mercutio, Act 1, Scene 4

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!

Romeo, Act 1, Scene 5

Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Romeo, Act 1, Scene 5

But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Romeo, Act 2, Scene 2

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love

And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other word would smell as sweet

Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,

My love as deep; the more I give to thee,

The more I have, for both are infinite.

Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2

Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow

That I shall say good night til it be morrow.

Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2

For this alliance may so happy prove,
To turn your households' rancour to pure love.

Friar Lawrence, Act 2, Scene 3

Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.

Friar Lawrence, Act 2, Scene 3

A plague o' both your houses!
They have made worms' meat of me!

Mercutio, Act 3, Scene 1

O, I am fortune's fool!

Romeo, Act 3, Scene 1

Give me my Romeo, and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

Juliet, Act 3, Scene 2

I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Romeo, Act 3, Scene 5

These violent delights have violent ends.

Friar Lawrence, Act 2, Scene 6

Is it even so? then I defy you, stars!

Romeo, Act 5, Scene 1

O true apothecary,
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

Romeo, Act 5, Scene 3

O happy dagger!

Juliet, Act 5, Scene 3

All are punished.

Prince, Act 5, Scene 3

For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

Prince, Act 5, Scene 3

KEY CHARACTER PROFILES

ROMEO

“Teach me how I should forget to think”

Act 1, Scene 1

Romeo is the only son of Lord and Lady Montague. Today, the name ‘Romeo’ is synonymous with love and lovers. In the play, Romeo’s passion drives him to kill himself when he believes that his love, Juliet, is dead. It is the overwhelming power of Romeo’s love that clouds his character, making him far more complex than his peers. His intensity of emotion is reflected in his conviction and extreme actions throughout the play. Love compels him to creep into the Capulet garden to see Juliet, anger compels him to fight and to kill, and despair compels him to suicide.

Romeo is a lover of women, a lover of poetry and a lover of love itself. However, he also philosophically struggles with love at the start of play, and the pain it causes him. He is not present at the opening family fight, and when informed of it he shows disapproval of the long-standing feud and even suggests that there is a fine line between love and hate, “Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love... O brawling love, O loving hate...” (Act 1, Scene 1). His love is by no means a simple or straightforward matter. At the beginning of the play, Romeo pines for Rosaline, “Out of her favour where I am in love” (Act 1, Scene 1), proclaims her beauty, “O, she is rich in beauty ...” (Act 1, Scene 1) and explains her lack of interest in him, “She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair/ To merit bliss by making me despair” (Act 1, Scene 2). He continues in his outburst on love, and in proclaiming the extremities of his emotion, Romeo unwittingly foreshadows the tragic events of the final act, “Do I live dead, that I live to tell it now.” (Act 1, Scene 1)

Romeo’s love for Rosaline disappears the instant he sees Juliet, and he can’t help but express the immensity of his newfound feelings in ardent poetry, “Forswear it, sight! For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.” (Act 1, Scene 5) Romeo’s love for poetry was present in his language in Act 1, Scene 1, however his manner of speech here could suggest his emotion is somewhat put on or artificial. He talks of love in a heightened, formal, distant manner and, most importantly, it is a love for someone we never even meet. Perhaps initially he is a self-indulgent and inexperienced teenager, but after meeting Juliet, he knows he has found something far greater, and that he has found his match. Juliet even compliments him, telling him, “You kiss by th’ book”, (Act 1, Scene 5). His love for Juliet develops beyond the mere crush he felt for Rosaline and Juliet’s clarity of observation challenges Romeo beyond superficial love, resulting in an intense passion. This is revealed through the development of his language

later in the play, “O my love, my wife! Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.” (Act 5, Scene 3) Romeo has an extremely close relationship with the Friar, who acts as his guide and mentor and is much more present in Romeo’s life than his own parents. Romeo relies on the Friar’s trusted guidance throughout the play, until the final act when he takes life, and death, into his own hands.

JULIET

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

Act 2, Scene 2

Juliet is the only daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet. She is just thirteen when she is told by her mother that girls of her age must marry, as Lady Capulet did herself. Her father Capulet agrees that Paris should woo Juliet, in time, and her mother tells her so. Knowing little of love and marriage, Juliet tells her mother that she will try to love Paris if it will please them, but is not particularly interested in the idea of marriage at all.

Unlike Romeo, Juliet has no friends of her own age. She is isolated and sheltered within the world of the Capulets. In the few days between meeting Romeo and her death, Juliet is transformed from child to woman. She questions the fickle nature of the Montague and Capulet feud, perhaps for the first time, and cannot understand why she cannot love someone simply because of a name. Her secret marriage to Romeo forces her already distant relationship with her parents to worsen, and her independence begins to grow. Juliet does appear to have a very close relationship with the Nurse who has cared for her since birth. However, Juliet must sever these ties too when the Nurse deserts her in Act 3. Juliet shows immense strength in response to her predicament and even manages to curse her lost bond with the Nurse, ‘Ancient damnation, O most wicked fiend...’ (Act 3, Scene 5) Juliet also bravely stands up to her father and mother when they arrange her marriage to Paris.

Juliet begins to show great maturity in her new relationship. She is able to criticise Romeo’s actions and decisions, while being profoundly in love with him. She keeps her wits about her and does not blindly follow Romeo after he kills Tybalt. She demonstrates immense courage, strength and willpower in her choices and actions. Juliet releases herself from her parents’ command by following the Friar’s plan, which will reunite her with Romeo in the Capulet tomb. Waking to find Romeo’s dead body, Juliet chooses the path of suicide, not out of loss and weakness, but out of intense love for Romeo.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

“Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.”

Act 2, Scene 4

Friar Lawrence is the main religious figure in the play and a close friend and mentor to Romeo. Romeo is able to confide in him in a way that he cannot with his friends, and only tells the Friar about his love for Juliet. The Friar also provides counsel to Juliet when she is deserted by her Nurse. He has an intimate knowledge of plants and their medicinal powers, and is well aware of the two opposites residing within nature – the power to heal and the power to kill. He creates the herbal sleeping potion that is crucial to Romeo and Juliet’s plan. The Friar shows compassion in his willingness to support the young lovers, in both marrying them and assisting with their escape. This act may seem careless, but it is the most political manoeuvre in the play and is born from seemingly honourable intentions. The Friar hopes that Romeo and Juliet’s union may bring peace between the Montagues and Capulets. In the final scene, Friar Lawrence shows some cowardice as he flees the tomb without Juliet, yet he does return to explain everything to Romeo and Juliet’s bereft parents, admitting his own part in the tragic story.

MERCUTIO

“Prick love for pricking and you beat love down”

Act 1, Scene 4

Mercutio is Romeo’s quick-witted friend and a relation of Prince Escalus. He is considered one of the most lyrical and fascinating characters in Shakespeare’s canon. He first appears in the play with Romeo in Act 1, Scene 4 where he mocks his lovelorn friend. Mercutio jokes frequently but is by no means a light character, as the complexity of his language, however crude, is socially perceptive and functions on many levels. He cares deeply for Romeo and constantly tries to free him from the bounds of romantic love. Mercutio’s death at the hands of Tybalt enrages a formerly peaceful Romeo. Mercutio jokes and entertains his friends (and the audience) until his final moments, playing the joker to the end. However, just before Mercutio dies, he turns to Romeo and his friends and curses the feuding families. Many critics say that Shakespeare almost had to kill Mercutio half way through the story, otherwise his vibrant flair and distrust in love would have dominated the story. Mercutio’s death is the key catalyst for Romeo’s downfall, and a major narrative turning point for the story.

TYBALT

“What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word As I hate hell,
all Montagues, and thee.”

Act 1, Scene 1

Tybalt is Juliet’s cousin and the beloved nephew of the Capulet household. He is fiercely loyal to the Capulet family, and referred to as the ‘Prince of Cats.’ Tybalt is renowned for being a skilled fighter, always willing for a fight, and long to hold a grudge. Much is noted of Tybalt in regards to his temper – characters refer to him as “fiery”, and his actions are always driven by his hot-headed passion and anger. Tybalt’s skills are acknowledged by Mercutio in Act 2, Scene 4. From Tybalt’s own lines, we know he is ready and willing to fight, and aware of the consequences: “Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.” (Act 1, Scene 1) He despises the Montagues, and his comments reflect a blind hatred, giving the audience no insight into the origin of the Capulet and Montague feud. He even says that he “hates” the word peace. Tybalt seems to care little for authority and struggles at the Capulet party when he is reprimanded by Juliet’s father. He kills Mercutio in a street brawl and is, in turn, killed by Romeo. His death is mourned heavily by the Capulet family, particularly Lady Capulet and Juliet’s Nurse.

LORD CAPULET

“...tis not hard, I think, / For men so old as we to keep the
peace”

Act 1, Scene 2

Lord Capulet is Juliet’s father and the head of the household. He has long been feuding with Lord Montague, Romeo’s father, but there is no suggestion in Shakespeare’s script as to the grounds for the feud. The Prince states it was ‘bred of an airy word’ (Act 1, Scene 1). We can see that Capulet commands respect when he reprimands Tybalt: “I’ll make you quiet!” (Act 1, Scene 5) His temper is on display both with Tybalt and later with Juliet, when she refuses to marry Paris. He appears to truly love his daughter but believes he knows what is best for her and will not hesitate to enforce it. At the end of the play, having realised the extent of his loss, he is remorseful and makes his peace with Lord Montague, “O brother Montague, give me thy hand” (Act 5, Scene 3). We see more of the Capulet parents than the Montague parents during the course of the play.

LADY CAPULET

“Marry my child, early next Thursday morn.”

Act 3, Scene 5

Lady Capulet is Capulet’s wife and Juliet’s mother. She reveals that she was married at an even younger age than Juliet: ‘By my count, / I was your mother much upon these years / That you are now a maid’. (Act 1, Scene 3). Lady Capulet is a somewhat distant mother to Juliet, leaving the maternal connection and child-rearing to Juliet’s Nurse. Lady Capulet also wants the best for her only child, and believes Juliet’s marriage to Paris to be a great opportunity. Lady Capulet is a model for the social role of women in high society Verona, playing the compliant wife, and expecting her daughter to do the same. When Juliet refuses to marry Paris, Lady Capulet abandons her daughter saying “Do what thou wilt, for I have done with thee.” (Act 3, Scene 5) We see at many points throughout the play that her relationship with her husband is somewhat strained.

THE NURSE

“Go girl, seek happy nights to happy days.”

Act 1, Scene 3

The Nurse has known Juliet since birth, being her wet nurse as a baby, and then primary caregiver. Though she is employed by the Capulet family she is also Juliet’s friend and confidante. She is the person closest to Juliet and is the only member of the household who is complicit in her relationship with Romeo. While initially very excited at the idea of Paris as a match for Juliet – “Why, he’s a man of wax!” (Act 1, Scene 3) – the Nurse goes to great lengths to help organise Juliet’s secret union with Romeo, defying the Capulet family. However, when Romeo is banished and Juliet’s parents insist she marry Paris, the Nurse sides with the Capulets. She withdraws her original support and advises Juliet to listen to her parents, signalling the end to their close relationship, unbeknownst to the Nurse.

BENVOLIO

“I do but keep the peace.”

Act 1, Scene 1

Benvolio is Montague’s nephew and Romeo’s cousin and friend. The name Benvolio derives from the Latin root meaning benevolent, good and charitable. He is a thoughtful character who tries to keep the peace between the Montagues and the Capulets. Benvolio tries several times in the play to defuse violent scenes in public places: “I drew to part them” (Act 1, Scene 1). Benvolio is instrumental in getting Romeo to forget Rosaline and “examine other beauties”, saying “Be ruled by me. Forget to think of her.” (Act 1, Scene 1) not realising this will lead Romeo to meet and fall in love with Juliet. Despite being so close to his cousin, Benvolio is none the wiser about Romeo’s romance with Juliet. Mercutio does accuse Benvolio of having a nasty temper when in private, however this may be joking and mockery.

PRINCE ESCALUS

“All are punished.”

Act 5, Scene 3

As the Prince of Verona, Escalus holds the position of political power and is therefore concerned with maintaining public peace and order at all costs. He appears in Act 1 proclaiming, “Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,” (Act 1, Scene 1) speaking against those who have begun the fight in the street. He banishes Romeo for killing Tybalt and then is seen again at the end of the play, delivering the final lines: ‘For never was a story of more woe/ Than this of Juliet and her Romeo’. (Act 5, Scene 3) Prince Escalus is also related to Mercutio, and so expresses that the Montague and Capulet feud has affected him personally, after Mercutio’s death – “And I, for winking at your discords, too have lost a brace of kinsmen.”

PARIS

“Younger than she are happy mothers made.”

Act 1, Scene 2

Paris is an eligible bachelor in Verona, and the man Capulet and Lady Capulet would like Juliet to marry. He is young, wealthy, handsome, of noble stature in society, and also a kinsman to Prince Escalus. Paris is disheartened when Capulet initially tells him that Juliet is too young to marry, yet honours Capulet’s decision. After Tybalt’s death, Paris is overjoyed to hear that Capulet has changed his mind and has arranged Juliet’s immediate marriage to him. He becomes quite presumptuous in his manner after Capulet has promised that Juliet will be his wife. He refers to Capulet as ‘father’: “My father Capulet will have it so” (Act 4, Scene 1) and greets Juliet as “my lady and my wife!” (Act 4, Scene 1) Paris visits Juliet in the Capulet tomb in Act 5, Scene 3 where he encounters Romeo. Paris is enraged to see a Montague at the Capulet tomb and fights Romeo. Paris is killed, saying to Romeo “If thou be merciful, open the tomb. Lay me with Juliet.”

THEMES AND DEVICES

LANGUAGE

Romeo and Juliet has an incredible range in style and content from sublime poetry and courtly verse, to casual modern prose and filthy humour. The play's language is rather rhetorical in the beginning and moves from verse into prose as the action progresses. This is especially true of the lovers. The only time Juliet returns to rhetoric is when she curses Romeo for the death of Tybalt. Theorists believe that Shakespeare clashes these styles of language deliberately. Romeo and Juliet's beautifully intimate goodbyes contrast with the Nurse and parent's dramatic and formal lamentations. "O woe, O woeful, woeful, woeful day". (Act 4, Scene 5) At a certain point in the play, in all aspects, the lovers become very separate from the rest of the action and characters, and their language mirrors this.

The sonnet form, used for the prologue and throughout the play, functions to remind the reader of love's formalities, yet challenges them at the same time. The young lovers flirt within the sonnet structure at the ball and then begin to engage in casual and connected prose. Juliet at times still wishes she was shielded by these formalities, such as when she says during the famous 'balcony' scene "fain would I dwell on form". (Act 2, Scene 2)

DRAMATIC IRONY

Dramatic irony and the audience relationship are vital components of *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare carefully exposes each character to particular knowledge of the events of the play, at precisely chosen times, whilst allowing the audience to always be an omniscient overseer of the action. In this way, the audience always knows more than the characters on stage, yet is unable to comment on the action or alert them to any misfortune. This technique works to build tension, creates conflict through miscommunication and instantly endows the audience with authority. As the audience are complicit with the young lovers' heartache and choices, they are invited to empathise with them on a more personal level. Only the Friar, Nurse and the audience are privy to the marriage and relationship of Romeo and Juliet.

Both Romeo and Juliet are faced with several situations in which they are forced to keep their love secret. For instance, when Romeo is faced with Tybalt's challenge he states: "The reason I have to love thee doth much excuse the appertaining rage to such a greeting... till thou shalt know the reason of my love." (Act 3, Scene 1) He cannot fight Tybalt because they are now related, but he can't let Tybalt know the reason for his submission. Only Romeo and the audience are aware of his predicament, and they observe how his silence has horrifying consequences for those around him, most notably Mercutio. Similarly, when Juliet's parents inform her that she

must now marry Paris, the audience are aware that she is already married, but her parents cannot understand her defiance. Again the audience share Juliet's struggle as she fights her parents, is rejected by the Nurse, accepts the potion from the Friar, and is isolated in her fight to preserve her love with Romeo. Before Juliet drinks the potion she must present a brave face to her parents and states: "Henceforward I am ever rul'd by you." (Act 4, Scene 2) Only the audience is aware of her false performance and the high emotional stakes of the situation she is in.

Soliloquies are an important element of dramatic irony in this text. Shakespeare affords his audience several intimate moments with both Romeo and Juliet in which they can share their joy, pain and personal struggles. The audience are made aware of their thoughts or inner monologue. Romeo shares his love for Juliet with us: "It is the east and Juliet is the sun" (Act 2, Scene 2) and Juliet shares her fear of consuming the potion "I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins" (Act 4, Scene 3). Shakespeare also utilises asides at several moments throughout the text in order to maintain the relationship between the title characters and the audience. When Juliet is informed that Romeo is in fact a Montague, she shares her realisation; "My only love sprung from my only hate" (Act 1, Scene 5). Similarly, Romeo discusses his relationship with Mercutio with the audience: "He jests at scars that never felt a wound" (Act 2, Scene 2). At times the audience are more aware of events than the title characters. When the lovers first meet at the ball they speak to each other, kiss, and are about to exit before being made aware that they are actually enemies. The audience however are privy to this from the very opening chorus of the play. Similarly, when Juliet is anxious of Romeo's arrival to her bed-chamber she says hopefully; "Gallop apace you fiery footed steeds" (Act 3, Scene 2). Juliet is unaware of the fight that has just taken place, and that Romeo has murdered her cousin, or that he has been banished. The audience ironically observe her joy whilst in full knowledge of the impending doom that awaits her.

Shakespeare's most brilliant use of dramatic irony in this play is, of course, Juliet's false 'death' and the timing of Romeo's arrival to the tomb. The audience are in full knowledge of Juliet's plan and they watch her closely, waiting for signs of her waking, as Romeo drinks his poison and dies beside her. She wakes just as he has passed away. There have been many instances during productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, where audience members have actually called out to the characters on stage, so emotionally involved in the action that they try and stop the tragedy unfolding before them.

SPACE

Shakespeare very astutely uses the device of space in *Romeo and Juliet* to create a sense of increasing tension as the fate of the two young lovers unfolds and the stakes continue to rise. The play starts in the town square, a very open, public communal setting and most of the action in the first half occurs in such a manner: for instance, the opening brawl and the Capulet ball. As the second half of the play unfolds, the space in which the action occurs continues to decrease. The drama moves to the interior rooms of the Capulet house, to the Friar's cell, and then concludes in the confines of the Capulet tomb. This technique not only personifies the increasing stakes, but also highlights the ever-growing isolation of the lovers from the rest of society.

FORESHADOWING, FATE AND THE STARS

In *Romeo and Juliet*, foreshadowing begins with the first lines of the play in the prologue, where the authoritative voice tells us unmistakably what will happen: "A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life." This motif then reoccurs throughout the play. On his way to the masquerade ball, Romeo says "My mind misgives some consequence yet hanging in the stars" and when fate delivers this consequence, Juliet's supposed death, he curses it, "Then I defy you, stars". (Act 5, Scene 1) When Romeo murders Tybalt just after his marriage to Juliet, he feels that the events are so desperately unlucky that destiny has made a fool of him, "O, I am fortune's fool". (Act 3, Scene 1) When Romeo is climbing down Juliet's balcony after their wedding night before he escapes to Mantua, Juliet says "Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low, as one dead in the bottom of a tomb". (Act 3, Scene 5) Romeo is literally below her, but her mind can't help but view the image as something more ominous. The Friar also unknowingly predicts where the lovers' relationship is heading, and pinpoints the fatal inevitability of such intense and pure young love, saying "These violent delights have violent ends" (Act 2, Scene 6). Literary critic Harold Bloom agrees and states that *Romeo and Juliet* is, 'an uncompromising, mutual love that perishes of its own idealism and intensity.' It is not mere chance or the stars that have fated them but the very nature of youthful, idealistic love.

Despite all, fate, choice and all-consuming love are just three factors to blame for the lovers' fatal endings, along with the parents, their feud, time, hasty actions, and more. A critic from the 1800's, William Hazlitt, felt that Shakespeare 'founded the passion of the two young lovers not in the pleasure they had experienced but on all the pleasures they had not experienced'; the excitement lies in its potential. In his book *Shakespeare's Language*, Frank Kermode says that he feels there is 'no moment when we are allowed to think that permanence or happiness is part of' the lovers' relationship.

Ironically, the only time Romeo decides to escape the fate of being “fortune’s fool”, “and shake the yolk of inauspicious stars,” he buys a poison, drinks it, dies, and literally sets his fate in stone (or gold as the statues erected in Romeo and Juliet’s honour are said to be.)

TIME AND THE TIMELINE

Time also plays an extremely important role in the play, and has a very interesting relationship with the notion of fate. Shakespeare uses this dramatic device in order to compress the events of the play into just three and a half days. Time seems to be the vehicle in which fate runs its course; they parallel one another. The lovers have very little time with each other. Romeo and Juliet fall in love immediately at the ball, profess their love in the ‘balcony’ scene, marry in a brief ceremony, then spend one night together before Romeo is banished to Mantua. Romeo and Juliet fight or constantly try to manipulate time. Juliet yearns for night to “Gallop apace” (Act 3, Scene 2) and ironically time certainly does race, until it tragically runs out. Again we see the young couple’s freewill fighting with a society, world and history beyond their control. Juliet even argues with time’s cruel hand, bemoaning that she should find out that Romeo is her enemy after she falls for him, saying “Too early seen unknown, and known too late!” (Act 1, Scene 5)

OPPOSITES AND ANTITHESIS

Shakespeare likes to think in opposites. It is one of the key ways that he presents complex issues in his many plays throughout his career. Think about one of his most famous lines, “To be, or not to be, that is the question” (*Hamlet*). It is a main feature in *Romeo and Juliet* and is present in the language, characters, themes and structure of the play. The use of opposites as a device is known as antithesis.

LOVE AND HATE

Love in the play is presented to us in contrasting ways. Many theorists believe that Romeo’s self-interested conceits at the start of the play are not worth our sympathy. However, Romeo shifts from fanciful love with Rosaline to something much more real with Juliet, and his use of language follows suit; from lofty distant poetry to connected active dialogue.

Even the family feud or hatred is presented on opposing levels. The action begins with the comical cursing of the Capulet and Montague servants, which is soon contrasted by the more serious, heightened swordplay of Tybalt and Benvolio. Romeo’s opening lines reflect the inconsistent nature that is inherent in this type of familial feud and the interconnectedness of love and hate; “O brawling love! O loving hate! O anything, of nothing first create! O heavy lightness! serious vanity! Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!” (Act 1, Scene 1) Northrop Frye states that for *Romeo and Juliet*, ‘their great love and their tragic death are bound up together as aspects of the same thing’ and that in this example, Romeo is using a union of opposites to express the complexity of this dilemma, and the confusion that results. In many ways the same ‘hot-blood’ seems to fuel both love and hate to their bitter ends. Love can’t avoid hate in this play. Romeo, who seeks to end the fighting and goes as far as to accept Tybalt as family, is ironically forced into a situation where he must fight, and kills Tybalt.

The love of Romeo and Juliet is also contrasted greatly to the indecent musings of Mercutio. Harold Bloom even suggests that Shakespeare had to be rid of the charming, powerful and crude Mercutio and his ideas on love, in order to make way for the two protagonists.

YOUTH AND AGE

In *Romeo and Juliet* the youth seem to exist in a separate realm to their parents and their customs are not understood by the older characters. It could be said that Juliet’s parents don’t really know who the real Juliet is, and the audience have a rather better idea. In fact, the lovers and their parents don’t even start the play aligned with one another, and the distance between them only continues to increase. The feud may have been begun by the older generation,

but it is currently being fueled and acted out by the youth. Despite their vocal vitriol, Lord Capulet and Lord Montague are rarely involved physically, are not violent, and at times even attempt to suppress the feud. Capulet even says in Act 1, Scene 2, “’tis not hard, I think, for men as old as we to keep the peace.”

Despite their social, political and familial authority, both sets of parents are unable to control the youths in either love or hate. The very nature of youthful love is fraught with extreme behaviour. In her introduction to the Oxford edition of the play, Jill Levenson states that, ‘although writers since antiquity have recognised and recorded the experience of adolescence, none had dramatized it so comprehensively’ as Shakespeare. As an audience we see Romeo change from melancholy to the height of first love, and from despair to calm. The authorial or adult figures are meant to represent all that is “wise and slow” as the Friar advises, yet their actions are also fraught with foolishness, sometimes more so than the clear-headed lovers. Both the Friar and Capulet plan weddings without much thought, and Capulet is especially quick to anger when he does not get his way. It is the youths who manage to transform themselves, and we observe their speedy growth. While Romeo grows in character and fortitude, it is Juliet who grows exponentially, from a girl to a mature, worldly woman in just three short days.

LIGHT AND DARK / DAY AND NIGHT

Allusions to and comparison of light and dark, and night and day, occur constantly throughout the play. However, this antithesis is most notable in the balcony scene and the morning after Romeo and Juliet spend their wedding night together. The morning scene presents a point in time between day and night when the sun is rising, but the lovers don’t want to face what this means. Romeo’s punishment if he is found in Verona after dawn is death, and so Juliet pleads for the night to stay, and the nightingale that represents it. Yet Romeo faces the cold truth that the lark, the bird that signals the morning, has arrived and therefore he must leave for Mantua. He exits completing the antithetical image with, “more light and light: more dark and dark our woes”. (Act 3, Scene 5)

At the end of the play, Romeo compares the darkness of death and the tomb to the light of Juliet’s beauty: “For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes this vault a feasting presence full of light... I still will stay with thee and never from this pallet of dim night depart again”. (Act 5, Scene 3)

DREAM AND REALITY

The youth of the play seem to have an innate awareness that love in all forms can be fraught and fleeting, and they seem to experience or discuss this in relation to dreams: “I dreamt my lady came and found me dead”, “I dreamt a dream tonight... that dreamers often lie”, “asleep where they do dream things true.” (Act 1, Scene 5) The Queen Mab speech discusses the power that love has over our dreams, and then Mercutio turns these dream-like images into a nightmare.

This contrast and mixture of illusion and reality blurs the lines between the daylight world and the dream-like state. The young lovers form their connection at night and, like the Queen Mab speech, supposedly carry their dreams with them into the light of day. It is as if the youth are witnesses to an order of things that matter more than the sunlit reality, or that perhaps they should be wary in the night because things might not be real. As Romeo says at the height of new love in the balcony scene: “O, blessed, blessed night! I am afeared being in night all this is but a dream, too flattering sweet to be substantial.” (Act 2, Scene 2)

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

In classic drama, a play was classed as either a comedy or a tragedy, but in Elizabethan drama there was a brand new notion of ‘comic relief.’ This was something many European audiences found intolerable. In the 1700’s, Voltaire criticised *Hamlet* as being ‘the work of a drunken savage for its blend of sublime passages with witless vulgarity.’

Romeo and Juliet contains Shakespeare’s most inspiring love poetry, but is also his filthiest play in regards to comedy. Comedy of various kinds is provided by the Nurse and Mercutio, and this offers a balance to the intense tragedy that dominates the second half of the play. In fact, for the performers and audience, the play feels more like a comedy in the first half and a tragedy in the second. Many believe that Shakespeare is again working with opposites, exploring the relationship and boundaries between comedy and tragedy. It has often been said that if *Romeo and Juliet* had taken a slightly different tone with the lover’s predicament, it would have turned into *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Northrop Frye believes that ‘*Romeo and Juliet* has more sparkle and wit than any other tragedy... so much that we may instinctively think of it as a kind of perverted comedy. It may be described as a type of comedy turned inside out.’

ADAPTATIONS OF ROMEO AND JULIET

OTHER ADAPTATIONS OF ROMEO AND JULIET

The best known cinematic versions of *Romeo and Juliet* are those directed by Franco Zeffirelli in 1968 and by Baz Luhrmann in 1996. However, also available is the BBC Shakespeare version of 1978 and the 2013 version directed by Carlo Carlei, with a certain amount of script adaptation by Downton Abbey writer Julian Fellowes. This story has inspired all kinds of adaptations, variations, parodies and responses, including:

- The ballet version by Prokofiev, which was a much-loved vehicle for the famous dancers Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev.
- Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, a musical set in 1950s New York. It premiered on Broadway in 1957, and the film version was released in 1961.
- John Madden's 1998 film *Shakespeare In Love*, imagines a romantic story about the writing of the play. It was co-written by playwright Tom Stoppard.
- The Canadian TV series *Slings & Arrows* includes the rehearsal of a production of *Romeo and Juliet* as its season 2 subplot.
- Joe Calarco's *Shakespeare's R&J*, which was performed by Bell Shakespeare in 2001.
- The Irish play *A Tender Thing* imagines Romeo and Juliet living into old age together.



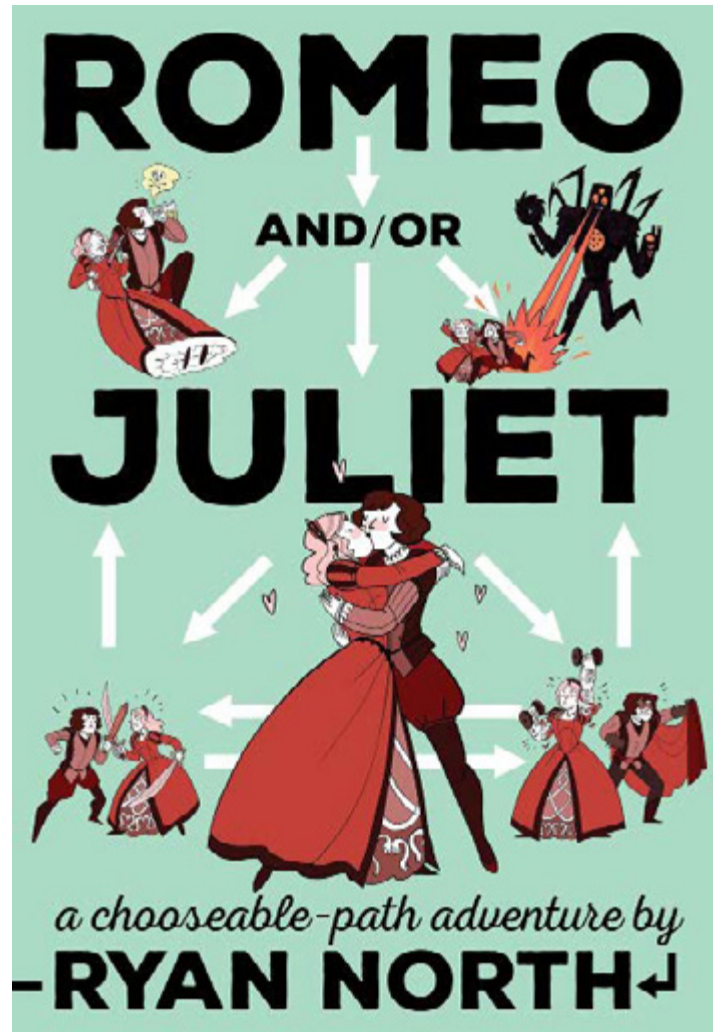
- *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011), an animated children's comic adaptation about garden gnomes.
- *Warm Bodies* (2013), a love story between a zombie named R and a girl named Julie, with tongue-in-cheek allusions to the original play, and even a balcony scene.
- Bollywood adaptation *Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela* is set in a fictional India where violence is an everyday occurrence. The son of a gun-running family falls in love with the daughter of a rival family. It is directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.
- The Broadway stage production from 2014 starring Condola Rashad and Orlando Bloom is available to watch in its entirety on YouTube
- The pop-musical & *Juliet* which features songs by Swedish songwriter Max Marti
- Of course, there are also countless artworks and songs that make reference to the lovers, including the same-titled track by Dire Straits, and *Love Story* by Taylor Swift.



Romeo + Juliet, 1996



Warm Bodies, 2013



Romeo and/or Juliet, 2016, Ryan North

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We recommend the following version of *Romeo and Juliet* for school students:

Robert Smith / Rex Gibson / Vicki Wienand / Richard Andrews (Eds), Cambridge School Shakespeare *Romeo and Juliet* (2014, Cambridge University Press)

The RSC version is also excellent and simple to follow, and the Arden is more thorough yet more challenging as the support material is very dense.

FUN ADAPTATIONS

North, Ryan, *Romeo and/or Juliet: A Chooseable-Path Adventure*, Riverhead Books, 2016 (choose to follow the original story or a series of mad-capped fictional plots)

Astbury, Kelly (dir.), *Gnomeo And Juliet*, Touchstone Pictures, 2011 (a sweet animated adaptation best suited for young students)

Madden, John (dir.), *Shakespeare In Love*, Miramax Films, 1998 (a fictional story following Shakespeare's own romance while he was writing *Romeo and Juliet*, with fun echoes of the original)

Levine, Jonathan (dir.), *Warm Bodies*, Mandeville Films, 2013 (a loose adaptation of the story, involving a romance between a zombie named R and a girl named Julie. Great for senior students)

WATCHABLE THINGS

There are countless film versions of *Romeo and Juliet* available, including Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 classic, Baz Lurhmann's 1996 modern adaptation, the musical *West Side Story* (1961), a 2013 film written by Downton Abbey's Julian Fellowes starring Hailee Steinfeld, and other adaptations as listed above.

Bell Shakespeare collaborated with ABC Splash on a series of high quality videos featuring performances and commentary, including scenes and explainers from *Romeo and Juliet*: [Shakespeare Unbound](#)

The second series of [Shakespeare Uncovered](#) includes an episode on *Romeo and Juliet* narrated by Joseph Fiennes

The BBC's [Shakespeare Unlocked](#) series includes material on this play

BOOKS WITH GOOD EXERCISES FOR TEACHERS TO USE TO INTRODUCE SHAKESPEARE:

Bayley, P., *An A-B-C Of Shakespeare* (1985, Longman Group)

Gibson, Rex, *Stepping Into Shakespeare* (2000, Cambridge University Press)

Gibson, Rex, *Discovering Shakespeare's Language* (1998, Cambridge University Press)

Winston, Joe and Miles Tandy, *Beginning Shakespeare 4–11* (2012, Routledge) This is aimed at teachers of younger children, but the principles still apply for secondary students.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Chubbuck, I, *The Power Of The Actor* (2005, Currency Press)

Crystal, David & Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary & Language Companion*, (2002, Penguin Books)

Dunton-Downer, Leslie & Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (2013, Dorling Kindersley)

Fantasia, Louis, *Instant Shakespeare* (2002, Ivan R. Dee)

Jackson, Russell, *Players of Shakespeare 2* (1988, Cambridge University Press)

Wells, Stanley, *Is It True What They Say About Shakespeare?* (2007, Long Barn Books)

SOME WEBSITES WITH GREAT RESOURCES

Bell Shakespeare's [Shakespeare Hub](#)

Shakespeare's Globe in London, which has a very comprehensive [Education section](#)

[The Royal Shakespeare Company](#), which has plot summaries and production records

[The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust](#) has some fun blogs and other bits and pieces

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

A PAIR OF STAR-CROSS'D LOVERS TAKE THEIR LIFE

A lot has to happen before Romeo and Juliet meet their untimely end, and the best way to learn a story is to tell it. There is a wealth of action in this play, but there are ways to help everyone keep track.

1. Divide the class into five groups.
2. Give each group responsibility for one of the play's five acts.
3. Each group must talk through their assigned act, and make a bullet-point list of the key actions that occur in that act (a meeting, a death, a plan laid).
4. That group must then decide for itself how to present their act. For example, is the plot summary best conveyed by...
 - talking through a list of bullet points on a smart board
 - a series of quotes pulled out of the text to show the progress of the story
 - performing mini-excerpts
 - acting out a mimed, summarised version
 - a series of tableaux, with titles projected on the smart board
 - a rap battle
 - or something entirely different?
5. Present each group's act in the correct order.

ACTIVITY 2

OPPOSING FORCES

Romeo and Juliet is a play full of oppositions: characters are opposed, images are opposed, ideals are opposed. These oppositions are presented in Shakespeare's choice of language and images, and are known as 'antithesis.'

1. Before you see the performance, look for examples of antithesis through imagery within the play. List one example for each of the following oppositions:
 - Light and dark
 - Fate and free will
 - Love and hate
 - Life and death
 - Public and private
 - Past and present
 - Fast and slow
 - Youth and age
 - Dreaming and reality

For example:

Light and Dark

Romeo and Juliet wish that it would still be night so that Romeo would not have to leave for Mantua. The lark represents morning while the nightingale represents night. Juliet says:

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day: It was the nightingale, and not the lark

Act 3, Scene 5

2. One you have chosen your examples, provide a quote from the play that clearly demonstrates the antithesis. Explain why you think these opposing forces are in conflict at this point.
3. **Extension** — Get into pairs and choose one pair of opposing forces e.g. Love and Hate, to work on. Each student chooses one side of the opposing forces each to represent, ie. either love or hate, and then individually develop an argument to defend your side, proving why your side is a stronger force. Use examples or quotes from the play of instances when you believe your force has dominated the action of the play.

Note: This final exercise can be enacted as a whole class debate with two separate panels representing each side.

ACTIVITY 3

ADAPTATIONS AND INSPIRATION DISCUSSION

Romeo and Juliet was most probably written by Shakespeare around 1594–1596. He took inspiration from two main sources – Brooke and Bandello.

Shakespeare's main source was *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, a narrative poem, first published in 1562 by Arthur Brooke, who is reported to have translated it from an Italian poem by Bandello. It was a very popular poem and was re-printed in 1582 and 1587. It had also been adapted at least once for the English stage, and made into a ballad. So Shakespeare was being very bold as a young writer selecting this very popular story as the basis for his play.

Shakespeare's major changes to the original text are:

- 1. Shakespeare telescopes the action from several months to three and a half days.** In Brooke's version, Romeo and Juliet's courtship is very long. They meet at Juliet's balcony, but even when it's snowing, her modesty doesn't allow her to let the freezing Romeo come inside.
- 2. Shakespeare reduces Juliet's age to 13.** In Bandello's version, Juliet is 18 years old. In Brooke's version she is 16. In both there is an emphasis that she is too young for marriage.
- 3. Shakespeare creates a central structure to the play.** The opening, closing and central scenes of the play all have the same form: both families on stage, with Prince Escalus adjudicating between them.
- 4. Shakespeare replaces the moralistic tone with one far more sympathetic to the young lovers.** As we might expect from Shakespeare, he is interested in the humanity of the characters. Arthur Brooke censures the children for ignoring parental advice, whereas Shakespeare is much more sympathetic to them. He is exploring this very modern notion of 'romantic love', which was only just displacing ideas of 'courtly love' at the time of writing.

Critical thinking: 'Interpret, analyse, evaluate'

Answer the following questions:

1. What do each of these changes do to the story? What is the effect on the audience?
2. Why do you think Shakespeare made these changes?
3. What do the changes tell us about the way Shakespeare crafts a story? His values?
4. Do you think Shakespeare made the right decision in making these changes? Why/why not?
5. How do you think the Elizabethans at the time Shakespeare was writing would have viewed his changes?
6. **Extension** – Once you have formed your own opinions, hold a classroom discussion to share all viewpoints. Are there opposing ideas and opinions in the classroom? Are there similarities of opinion?

ACTIVITY 4

MORAL AMBITIONS DISCUSSION

As discussed in Activity Two, Shakespeare adapted the story of *Romeo and Juliet* from other sources and made it his own. One of his major sources was Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. Below is a quote from Brooke's introduction

'To The Reader':

And to this end, good Reader, is this tragical matter written, to describe unto thee a couple of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to dishonest desire; neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends; conferring their principal counsels with drunken gossips and superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity); attempting all adventures

of peril for th' attaining of their wished lust; using auricular confession the key of whoredom and treason, for furtherance of their purpose; abusing the honourable name of lawful marriage to cloak the shame of stolen contracts; finally by all means of dishonest life hastening to most unhappy death.

1. Read the above extract.
2. Consider Brooke's language and underline any words in the passage that you are unfamiliar with. What do you think they mean? Then look up a definition and see if you were correct.
3. Compare and contrast Brooke's representation of the "superstitious" Friar with Shakespeare's Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*.
4. Compare each author's representation of the characters of Romeo and Juliet. How is Shakespeare's representation of the lovers different to Brooke's?
5. Compare each author's representation of parental influence. How do they differ?
6. Compare and contrast each author's use of language to describe Romeo and Juliet's love for each other.
7. What do you think are the main moral ambitions of Brooke and Shakespeare in their approach to telling the story of *Romeo and Juliet*?

ACTIVITY 5

SHAKESPEARE'S WORDS RESEARCH TASK: 'RESPOND AND CREATE'

Shakespeare was thought to have invented around 2000 words and many phrases during his lifetime. While some of these words may have already been in use during his time, his plays are the first recorded records of them. Many of these words and phrases first appeared in *Romeo and Juliet*. Before seeing the performance, research and create a list of words and phrases that Shakespeare invented that first appeared in this play.

1. Select one scene from the play, read it, then make a list of some of the words Shakespeare used in the scene that you have not heard of before.
2. What techniques can you find in the scene? List the techniques using a quote as evidence.
3. Take your list of Shakespeare's invented phrases from *Romeo and Juliet*, and use them to write a new scene. It might be an imagined scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, or one of your own creation.
4. **Extension** — Play Shakespeare and create five words and five phrases of your own. Share them with your classmates, and discuss how you might use them in regular conversation.

ACTIVITY 6**CLASS IDEAS BOARD READING, RESEARCH AND CRITICAL THINKING: 'RESEARCH AND RESPOND'**

1. Collect newspaper, magazine and internet articles about young love and family feuds throughout history. It might be a recent story, or one from a long time ago. Try and research stories from other countries and cultures than your own.
 2. Display found articles on a board in the classroom. Read what your classmates have contributed. Discuss as a class what the similarities and/or differences between the stories are.
 3. Discuss as a class the following questions:
 - Where do the stories originate from?
 - What are the key features of the culture/beliefs of these places?
 - How have these beliefs influenced these real life stories?
 - What are the key similarities between the stories and Romeo and Juliet?
 - What are the key differences between the stories and Romeo and Juliet?
3. **Extension activity: Creative Writing**
1. Create a new setting for a story involving young love and a family feud. Make sure you write about how the feud was originally born, and the nature of the culture of the setting, the key beliefs of the people involved, how the young lovers meet, etc.
 2. Write one scene from this story at a climactic moment, e.g. A young man and woman decide to tell their parents about their love.

ACTIVITY 7

THE CHORUS DRAMA: 'REHEARSE AND DELIVER'

The Chorus gives a narrative view of the story in the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*. In Greek Theatre the chorus was an ensemble who kept the narration of the story going, with three actors playing the characters in the story. In Baz Lurhmann's 1996 film, the chorus was presented by a television news reporter. The way the opening Chorus and the prologue are presented establishes the concept and tone for the production. Interestingly, the chorus in reciting the prologue, gives away the ending of the story.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

1. Make a list of all the facts about the play that we learn from the above prologue.
2. As a class try presenting the opening Chorus as an ensemble and then with individual students each taking a line. Experiment with the tone of speech e.g. excited, anxious, fearful, concerned, sad.
3. Imagine you are directing your own production of *Romeo and Juliet*. What is your concept? Where and in what time is your story set? How might you present the prologue in a way that fits with your directorial concept?
4. Discuss the following question: By stating the play's tragic conclusion at the beginning of the play, how does Shakespeare add to the drama rather than reduce it?

ACTIVITY 8

“'TIS KNOWN I AM A PRETTY PIECE OF FLESH.”

Romeo and Juliet is not simply about two people. Despite the vital role of the central couple, one of the reasons this play has lasted so long is the vividly drawn support characters. Mercutio, Tybalt, Juliet's Nurse and Mother, Paris, and more. All have distinct personalities, and their own unique ways of expressing themselves. All these characters are memorable, and it is easy to imagine the lives they would have had outside the play.

1. Choose one character in the play other than Romeo or Juliet.
2. Investigate your character. Go through the scenes where your chosen character is present or mentioned and look closely at
 - quotes from the play of lines said by the character
 - quotes from the play of lines said about the character
3. Write a short story about how they might have spent a day in the weeks leading up to the events of the play. You can write as if you are the character (first person), or tell the story as a narrator (third person). For many, you will be able to use their own descriptions of what they do to guide you. Friar Lawrence, for example, grows healing herbs.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

AFTER THE FEUD WRITING/SPEAKING/ CRITICAL THINKING: 'PERSONAL REFLECTION AND RESPONSE'

Who is to blame for the tragic events of *Romeo and Juliet*? It can be argued that many of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* could take responsibility for the final outcome of the story, and each has a role to play in the outcome.

1. For each character listed below, write how they could be responsible for the tragic events of the play:
 - Romeo
 - Juliet
 - Nurse
 - Prince Escalus
 - Friar Lawrence
 - Lord and Lady Capulet
 - Mercutio
 - Lord and Lady Montague
 - Tybalt
2. Once completed, cast the roles of the characters above, with one student playing each role. The rest of the class forms a jury. Ask each character to sit on the 'hot seat', a single seat placed at the front of the classroom, before the jury. Members of the jury can then ask them questions about the role they played in the story, and whether they could have helped avoid the tragic outcome. Characters must defend themselves and respond to accusations, using their knowledge of the story and other characters. Use quotes from the play to strengthen your case.
3. Following the above activities, play the judge and write your findings and opinion of who is to blame in a report, following the jury inquest. This should be your personal opinion, in the form of a judge's ruling. Your report should indicate which of the characters are to blame and in what ways, and may include excusing the behaviour of some characters who you believe should not be held accountable.

ACTIVITY 2

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

As you saw in the performance, the fate of Romeo and Juliet is the cause of much heated discussion. Was their tragic end inevitable or did they have a choice along the way to steer their life and love in another direction? Were their choices foolish, impetuous and driven by lust? Are they mere victims of the family feud or could they have thought further ahead and just waited to see where their relationship would lead? It is important to consider the turning points in the plot when decisions are made and how events would have been otherwise different.

1. Consider the following statement by literary critic Harold Bloom. What do you think he meant by this? **“Clearly Shakespeare took some risks in letting us judge this tragedy for ourselves”** Harold Bloom (1998)
2. Consider the following moments in the play and decide what your personal opinion is about the young lover’s actions. Go through the questions below and hypothetically imagine possible alternative paths for Romeo and Juliet.
 - What if Juliet had never met Romeo?
 - What if Mercutio didn’t step in for Romeo in the street fight?
 - What if Capulet never offered Juliet to Paris in marriage?
 - What if the lovers’ relationship had been discovered earlier, and at what point?
 - What if Capulet hadn’t stopped Tybalt from fighting at the ball?
 - What if Romeo and Juliet were older?
 - What if Romeo hadn’t found Juliet after the ball? Climbed the orchard wall? Heard her private thoughts?
 - What if the Friar refused to marry them?
 - What if the Nurse refused to play her part in the plan? What if she told Juliet’s parents about her secret?
 - What if the lover’s plan was different and what could an alternative option have been?
 - What would have happened, had Romeo and Juliet lived?
 - If the plan was successful, what would their lives have been like in Mantua? What would have happened to the Montagues and Capulets back in Verona, without their children?

Creative writing and critical thinking: 'viewpoints and narrative'

3. Considering the questions above, find quotes or moments in the play when characters have made decisions that dramatically affect their own lives or the lives of others. By analysing the text around their decision, argue how they were thinking, feeling and behaving at this point in the play.
4. Imagine you are a playwright. Choose one question from the list above and write a short alternative ending to the play drawing from your personal beliefs on how the character could have acted, or would have acted, had things been different.

ACTIVITY 3

THE SONNET

Along with his plays, Shakespeare wrote 154 love sonnets – 14 line poems. He also included several sonnets within his plays, namely *Romeo and Juliet*. As you saw in the performance, it is notable that Shakespeare gives Romeo and Juliet exactly 14 lines to speak to each other, before their first kiss. Read the below extract from Act 1, Scene 5:

Romeo If I profane with my unworhiest hand This holy shrine, the gentle sin 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 Oh 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 prayer's sake.

Romeo Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

Discussion and writing - 'Understand and identify'

1. Research the structure, rhyme and meter of a Shakespearean sonnet. List the components that make up these poems and the themes that they often discuss.
2. Choose one of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets to analyse, or analyse one as a class.
3. Read the sonnet and translate each line, so you understand the meaning.
4. Identify different symbols or imagery that Shakespeare is using in the sonnet. Can you identify any recurring themes, images or symbols?
5. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to have the first lines that the young lovers speak to each other form a perfect sonnet?

Performance Exercise: 'interact and create'

6. Get into pairs and read the extract between *Romeo and Juliet*.
7. Act out the scene using simple physical objectives e.g. Juliet needs to be as far away from Romeo as possible, he must be as close to her as possible. (then vice-versa) Repeat this exercise using a variety of character traits, such as a shy Juliet, confident Romeo, dominant Juliet, etc. Discuss which versions were more interesting, which made the most sense, and which did not suit the meaning. Make note of who had more power in each version, and why.

ACTIVITY 4

CULTURAL CLASHES RESEARCH AND WRITING: 'EXPLORE INTERCONNECTEDNESS'

Productions of *Romeo and Juliet* often use costume, characterisation and music to suggest cultural differences in the Montague and Capulet families. Shakespeare's script, however, does not indicate what the feud is based on. It is only clear that this feud has been fueled by hatred between the families, and has lasted for generations.

Around the world, and even in communities across Australia today, there are cultural feuds or clashes which have their origins deep in history. Here are just a few examples from the world over:

- Israel and Palestine
 - Iraq and Kuwait
 - Russia and Chechnya
 - The Northern Territory Intervention
 - Apartheid South Africa
 - France and England
 - Ireland and England
 - Northern Ireland – the Catholics and the Protestants
1. Select one of the above examples, or choose another historical feud. Complete a research task, compiling the following evidence for the feud:
 - Who is/was involved?
 - When did it begin?
 - Why did it begin?
 - How did it begin?
 - Who were some of the key figures involved in the feud?
 - How it is manifested today?

1. Use these questions as a basis for your research, but include any other relevant information you find to build a complete picture of the history of the feud.
 2. Create a fictional treaty or a peace plan for the feud. This may be a letter of agreement for the representatives of the feuding groups to sign, or a list of steps to be followed.

3. Using *Romeo and Juliet* as a model, write a short piece about two people caught up in the feud you have researched. They do not have to be in a romantic relationship, but they must have a meaningful connection, across enemy lines. How will they overcome the feud and find a way to maintain their relationship? You may choose to write this in any form:

- Short story
- Play (scene)
- Film (scene)
- Hip hop or rap
- Poem
- Song