

Romeo and Juliet

William Shakespeare

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Act I

Scene 1

A street fight breaks out between supporters and members of the Montague and Capulet families, between whom there is a long-standing blood feud of indeterminate origin.

The brawl is quickly dispersed, and the Prince arrives. He threatens death for any Capulet or Montague fighting in the streets of Verona. Afterwards, Benvolio, acting on Montague's instructions, questions Romeo about his recent melancholy behavior. Romeo eventually admits that he is hopelessly in love with an inaccessible lady.

Scene 2

Paris, speaking with Capulet and Lady Capulet, declares his desire to marry Juliet. Capulet considers Juliet too young to marry, but he grants Paris permission to woo her. He invites Paris to his feast that night and gives an invitation list to a servant. On the street, the illiterate servant asks Romeo to help him decipher the guest list. They decide to attend the party as well because Rosaline, the current object of Romeo's affections, is also invited.

Scene 3

Lady Capulet informs Juliet of Paris' intentions towards her. Juliet is noncommittal, but agrees to stay open-minded about the proposition. Their conversation takes place in spite of and around the nurse's loquacious reminiscences of Juliet's childhood.

Scene 4

Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio are on their way to the Capulet feast, disguised with masks. Romeo

asks to simply carry a torch and not dance because he has had a portentous dream. Mercutio mocks his concerns with a lengthy speech about Queen Mab, a faerie responsible for dreams.

Scene 5

Capulet welcomes Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio, fondly remembering his own youthful masquerades. Romeo asks a servant about Juliet, and Tybalt recognizes his voice. He calls for his rapier and plans to accost Romeo, but Capulet restrains him. Romeo and Juliet speak briefly, but manage to fall in love nevertheless. Only after they are separated do they learn one another's identities.

Act II

Scene 1

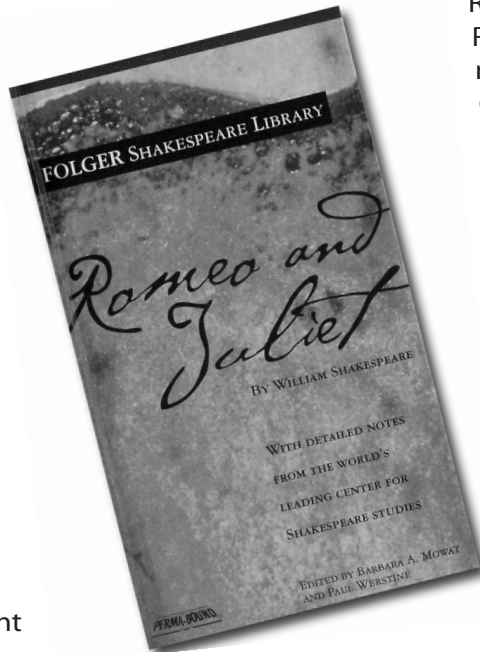
Romeo decides to return to the Capulet house, determined not to be separated from Juliet. He scales the wall into their garden. Mercutio and Benvolio search for him, but quickly abandon the cause as hopeless.

Scene 2

Hidden, Romeo observes Juliet enter the garden and, speaking to herself, declare her love for him. He reveals himself, and they lengthily describe their undying affection for one another. They are briefly interrupted by Juliet's nurse. Romeo and Juliet agree to marry, and Juliet hastens him from the garden, lest he be discovered and assaulted. She plans to send her ring to him the next day.

Scene 3

Romeo goes to Friar Lawrence and asks him to marry him and Juliet. Initially, the friar chides Romeo for being a somewhat inconstant lover, having been pining for Rosaline until that very evening. Eventually he agrees to the scheme, hoping that the union will help bring an end to the feud between their families.



Scene 4

The next morning, a letter arrives at the Montague house from Tybalt, challenging Romeo to a duel. Mercutio and Benvolio discuss the prospect and then encounter Romeo. Romeo and Mercutio engage in light-hearted witty banter, until Juliet's nurse and Peter arrive. The nurse gives Romeo Juliet's ring, as planned, and Romeo informs her of his agreement with Friar Lawrence.

Scene 5

The nurse returns to Juliet. After a long stream of vague answers and petty complaints, the nurse finally tells Juliet that Friar Lawrence has agreed to marry her to Romeo that afternoon.

Scene 6

Romeo and Juliet meet in Friar Lawrence's cell and are married.

Act III

Scene 1

Mercutio and Benvolio, in the midst of accusing one another of being bellicose, encounter Tybalt and other Capulets on the street. When Romeo arrives, Tybalt insults and challenges him. Romeo, cryptically citing his love for Juliet, refuses to fight. Mercutio, however, disdains Romeo's apparent cowardice and engages Tybalt. Romeo attempts to intervene, knocking down their swords, which allows Tybalt to mortally wound Mercutio. Overcome with grief and rage, Romeo assaults and kills Tybalt. The Prince, Montague, and Capulet arrive on the scene. Capulet demands Romeo's death for Tybalt's. Instead, the Prince exiles Romeo from Verona.

Scene 2

Juliet's nurse arrives with news that Romeo has slain Juliet's kinsman Tybalt, of whom she was fond. Initially she renounces her love for Romeo and variously deprecates him, but she quickly retracts her fit of pique and mourns Romeo's exile. The nurse promises to bring Romeo to her that night.

Scene 3

Friar Lawrence informs Romeo, who is hiding in his cell, that the Prince has withheld a death sentence and merely banished him from Verona. Romeo replies that they are one in the same, that to be

separated from Juliet is tantamount to a separation from life itself. The nurse arrives, bearing tidings of Juliet's grief. Romeo contributes little to the discussion, aside from threatening to kill himself. The nurse and Friar Lawrence contrive a plan for Romeo to meet Juliet that night before he must go into exile.

Scene 4

Paris, Capulet, and Lady Capulet discuss Paris' suit for Juliet's hand. Paris complains that there has been little time or mood to woo in the recent pall of grief. Capulet decides that Juliet and Paris will be wed in three days and dispatches Lady Capulet to inform Juliet of the decision.

Scene 5

Romeo comes to Juliet. They exchange endearments and commiseration until dawn, when Romeo slips away. Lady Capulet, assuming that Juliet's recent grief is at her kinsman's death, chides her for weeping so much. She informs her that she is to be wed to Paris in three days, and Juliet refuses. Capulet comes and is incensed at Juliet's refusal. He threatens to kick her out of the house if she remains recalcitrant. After Capulet and Lady Capulet leave, the nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris, deprecating Romeo and praising Paris.

Act IV

Scene 1

Paris and Juliet meet by chance while visiting Friar Lawrence. Juliet is openly hostile and rude to Paris. After he leaves, she begs the friar to help her avoid the marriage, threatening to kill herself instead of marry Paris. Friar Lawrence gives her a vial of a powerful sleeping potion that will make it appear she has died. He plans to inform Romeo of her mock death and to have him meet her when she wakes in the Capulet crypt.

Scene 2

Juliet returns home and, now armed with a plan to avoid her marriage to Paris, affects a change of mind, agreeing to the union. Her father is overjoyed and moves the wedding to the next day.

Scene 3

Juliet sends away the nurse. Before taking the potion, she engages in a long, morbid speculation about the prospect of waking surrounded by corpses and bones in the crypt.

Scene 4

The Capulets stay up all night making arrangements for the wedding. Capulet is evidently an encumbrance in the kitchen and is eventually ordered out. When Paris is heard approaching, Capulet orders the nurse to wake Juliet.

Scene 5

The nurse finds Juliet apparently dead. She, Capulet, and Lady Capulet mourn quite vocally, but Paris seems to feel more cheated than bereaved. Friar Lawrence arrives and admonishes their grief, claiming that Juliet has moved on to a better place. After the principals exit, Peter and the musicians banter.

Act V

Scene 1

Balthasar arrives in Mantua, where Romeo is in exile, and informs him of Juliet's death. Romeo immediately dispatches him to buy horses for their return to Verona. He purchases a powerful illicit poison from an apothecary, planning to kill himself next to Juliet in the Capulet crypt.

Scene 2

Friar John, who was supposed to deliver Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo, returns to Verona. He tells Friar Lawrence that he was unable to deliver the letter because the house he stayed in was quarantined under suspicion of bearing the plague. Friar Lawrence hastens to the Capulet burial vault, where Juliet will awaken in three hours.

Scene 3

Paris visits Juliet's burial site, scattering flowers in her memory. He discovers Romeo breaking into the crypt and attacks him. Romeo kills Paris, then drags the corpse into the vault. He bids farewell to Juliet, then drinks the poison. Juliet wakes to find Romeo poisoned and Paris slain. She kills herself with Romeo's dagger. Summoned by Paris' servant, the city watch, the Prince, Capulet, and Montague arrive at the bloody scene. Shocked into conciliation, Capulet and Montague call an end to their feud.

Shakespeare Timeline

- 1558** Coronation of Queen Elizabeth
- 1564** William Shakespeare born on April 23(?) in Stratford-upon-Avon to John and Mary Shakespeare.
- 1570** Queen Elizabeth excommunicated by Pope Pius V.
- 1573** Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton born; later becomes patron to Shakespeare.
- 1577** John Shakespeare, William's father, falls into debt and William is withdrawn from school.
- 1582** William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.
- 1583** Susanna Shakespeare is born.
- 1585** English colonists are sent to Roanoke Island. Hamnet and Judith are born. Shakespeare leaves Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1587** Queen Elizabeth orders the execution of her half-sister, Mary.
- 1588** The British navy defeats the Spanish Armada.
- 1589** Henry VI, Part I, Shakespeare's first play, is written and performed.
- 1591** Tea is introduced in England.
- 1592** Theatres are closed because of the bubonic plague.
- 1595** Theatres reopen as the plague eases. Shakespeare becomes a stockholder in the Chamberlain's Men.
- 1596** Shakespeare secures a coat of arms for his family. Hamnet dies and is buried on August 11.
- 1597** A second Spanish Armada is battered by bad weather before it reaches England. Shakespeare purchases a home in Stratford.
- 1598** The Globe Theatre is constructed.
- 1599** The Globe Theatre opens.
- 1601** Essex rebels against Queen Elizabeth. The Earl of Southampton is imprisoned for his part in the plot. John Shakespeare dies.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth dies. King James of Scotland succeeds her and becomes a patron to the Chamberlain's Men, who change their name to the King's Men.
- 1605** Catesby's Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament fails.

- 1607** The colony at Jamestown is established by Captain John Smith. Susanna Shakespeare marries Dr. John Hall on June 5. Edmund Shakespeare, William's youngest brother, dies.
- 1608** Shakespeare's first granddaughter, Elizabeth, is born. Mary, his mother, dies.
- 1609** Shakespeare's *Sonnets* published without his permission.
- 1610** Shakespeare retires to Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1611** Shakespeare writes *The Tempest*. The King James Bible is published.
- 1612** Gilbert Shakespeare, William's brother, dies.
- 1613** Shakespeare's final brother, Richard, dies.
- 1616** Judith marries Thomas Quincy. Shakespeare becomes ill, revises his will, and dies.
- 1623** Anne dies. The *First Folio* is published.

Author Sketch

Details about the life of William Shakespeare are sketchy at best, mostly deduced from various clerical records. His parents, John and Mary, were married sometime around 1557. William was the eldest son and the third of eight children. He was baptized on April 26, 1564. His supposed birth date of April 23 is based on the Elizabethan custom of baptizing a child three days after its birth. It is generally thought that he attended a local Grammar school, where he studied Latin rhetoric, logic, and literature.



At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, a local farmer's daughter eight years his senior. Some scholars speculate that the marriage was an unhappy one and that Shakespeare was forced to marry Hathaway because she was pregnant. The birth of their first daughter, Susanna, six months after their marriage lends some weight to the claim, as does Shakespeare's leaving her his "second best bed" in his will. Their twins Judith and Hamnet, named after friends, were born in 1585.

It is thought that Shakespeare began his theatrical career in London sometime around 1589. He was already well established when plague closed theatres in 1592. During the two years theatres were closed, he wrote book-length narrative poetry. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were written during this time and were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, presumed to be a friend and/or benefactor. Shakespeare also began writing *The Sonnets* during this hiatus from the theatre.

Theatres reopened in 1594, and he resumed writing plays. Hamnet died two years later in 1596. Shakespeare appears to have written for and acted with several companies before joining the Chamberlain's Men, with whom he remained for the remainder of his career. In 1599 the Chamberlain's Men built the Globe Theatre with Shakespeare as a partner in the enterprise. When Queen Elizabeth died and was succeeded by King John of Scotland in 1603, the Chamberlain's Men renamed themselves the King's Men.

Shakespeare apparently wrote little after 1612. The Globe Theatre caught fire and burned to the ground during a performance of *Henry VIII* in 1613. Sometime between 1610 and 1613, Shakespeare retired to a large house, properties, and moderate wealth in Stratford-upon-Avon. He died in 1616 on what is presumed to be his birthday, April 23, at the exact age of 52. He was buried at Holy Trinity Church, where he was also baptized.

Critical History

Early critical sources provide little information about the play, other than to indicate that it was popular. John Dryden provided the first extant detailed criticism, complaining in 1684 that the play would have been better if Shakespeare had allowed Mercutio to survive until the end of the play. In 1765 Samuel Johnson disagreed, claiming that Mercutio "lived out the time allotted him in the construction of the play." His surmise of the play is generally favorable, calling it "one of the most pleasing of our author's performances."

The Romantics continued to praise the play, as they did all things Shakespearean. Coleridge resumed the Mercutio discussion, arguing that his death is essential to the play because it provides

the catalyst to shock Romeo into action, thus advancing the plot through his exile. The love between Romeo and Juliet came to be viewed as an example *par excellence* of the emotion, but the play came to be increasingly considered flawed, an early effort at tragedy that lacks the technical prowess exhibited in *King Lear*, *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*. A.C. Bradley (1904) called it an “immature” work, and H.B. Charlton (1949) dismissed it, writing, “as a pattern of the idea of tragedy, it is a failure.” The main criticism leveled at the play is that it appears to be a tragedy of fate, not character, and thus its events are not inevitable.

The twentieth century split its opinion of the play. *Romeo and Juliet* remained immensely popular on stage, but academics generally reached a consensus on the play’s relative immaturity in relation to Shakespeare’s canon. In the late twentieth century, feminist and queer theorists reevaluated the work. Feminist readings of the play diverge widely, from investigating the destructive nature of patriarchal society to claiming that Juliet is liberated as a sexually desiring individual. Queer readings focus on homoerotic undercurrents in the bawdy jests and on the substitutions between objects and subjects of love.

Literary Sources and Precedents for *Romeo and Juliet*

While it is known that Shakespeare borrowed extensively from existing literature, it is not always possible to track exactly which texts he would have had access to, or if he actually read available texts. It is fairly certain that Arthur Brooke’s *The Tragedy of Romeus and Juliet* was Shakespeare’s immediate source for the basic plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. Whether Shakespeare was familiar with the other literary precedents is immaterial. The story itself has a history and an evolution.

The earliest easily recognizable precedent for *Romeo and Juliet* is Ovid’s story of “Pyramus and Thisbe” (sometimes spelled “Thisby”) in *Metamorphoses* (c.a. 8 A.D.). Pyramus and Thisbe, children from opposing families, fall in love. Their elopement turns into a double suicide through a series of misunderstandings and unlucky timing. Pyramus, erroneously thinking Thisbe dead, commits suicide. Thisbe, finding Pyramus’ body, fol-

lows his example. Shakespeare references Thisbe in *Romeo and Juliet* (II:4:42) and uses the story in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Xenophon of Ephesus’ *An Ephesian Tale* from the second or third century A.D. supplies the precedent for Juliet’s false poisoning and interment. Anthia seeks to avoid a planned marriage to Perilaos in honor of her love for Habrocomes. She begs Eudoxes, a physician, to give her poison. Instead he gives her a non-lethal sleeping potion. Instead of stabbing herself upon waking in the tomb, she dies of starvation.

The thirty-third novel in Masuccio Salernitano’s *Il Novellino* (1476) incorporates the basic plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. Mariotto and Giannozza marry surreptitiously. After Mariotto’s exile, Giannozza uses a sleeping potion provided by a friar to avoid a forced second marriage. Mariotto is beheaded, and the friar secrets Giannozza to a convent, where she dies of starvation and/or a broken heart. This different ending is hinted at in Friar Lawrence’s offer to hide Juliet in a convent.

Names and events coalesce in Luigi da Porto’s version, featuring Romeo and Guilietta, children of the Montecchi and Cappelletti families. In the mid-sixteenth century, Matteo Bandello rewrote Porto’s version in his *Novelle*. Arthur Brooke’s *The Tragedy of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), the direct source for *Romeo and Juliet*, is based on Pierre Boaistau’s translation of Bandello’s version. Shakespeare’s play follows the basic plot of Brooke’s poem, but makes major changes to the time frame, minor characters, and poetic elements.

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Other Works

PLAYS

The Comedies

All's Well That Ends Well, ca. 1602-3

As You Like It, ca. 1599
The Comedy of Errors, ca. 1593
Love's Labour's Lost, ca. 1594-95
Measure for Measure, ca. ca. 1604
The Merchant of Venice, ca.1596-97
The Merry Wives of Windsor, ca. 1597
A Midsummer Night's Dream, ca.1595-96
Much Ado About Nothing, ca. 1598-99
The Taming of the Shrew, ca. 1593-94
Troilus and Cressida, ca. 1601-2
Twelfth Night, ca. 1601-2
The Two Gentlemen of Verona, ca. 1592-93

The Histories

Henry IV, Part 1, ca.1596-97
Henry IV, Part 2, ca. 1598
Henry V, ca. 1599
Henry VI, Part 1, ca. 1589-90
Henry VI, Part 2, ca. 1590-91
Henry VI, Part 3, ca. 1590-91
Henry VII, ca. 1612-13
King John, ca. 1594-96
Richard II, ca. 1595
Richard III, ca. 1592-93

The Tragedies

Anthony and Cleopatra, ca. 1606
Coriolanus, ca. 1607-8
Hamlet, ca. 1600-1601
Julius Caesar, ca. 1599
King Lear, ca. 1605
Macbeth, ca. 1606
Othello, ca. 1604
Romeo and Juliet, ca.1595-96
Timon of Athens, ca. 1607-8
Titus Andronicus, ca. 1593-94

The Romances

Cymbeline, ca. 1609-10
Pericles, ca. 1607-8
The Tempest, ca. 1611
The Winter's Tale, ca. 1610-11

Disputed

Using textual and historical evidence, some critics identify Shakespeare as the author of all or parts of these plays, but there is not a definitive consensus. The *Two Noble Kinsmen's* attribution is the most confident.

The Two Noble Kinsmen, ca. 1613

The Reign of King Edward the Third, c.a. 1596
Sir Thomas Moore, c.a. 1590-1593

Poetry

A Funeral Elegy by W.S., ca. 1612
A Lover's Complaint, c.a. 1591
The Passionate Pilgrim, 1599
The Phoenix and the Turtle, ca. 1601
The Rape of Lucrece, ca. 1593-94
The Sonnets, ca. 1593-1609
Venus and Adonis, ca. 1592-93

Media Versions

CD

Romeo and Juliet, Cambridge UP, 1997
Romeo and Juliet, Audio Partners, 2005

DVD/VHS

Romeo and Juliet, Madacy Records, 1936
Romeo and Juliet, Hallmark, 1956
Romeo and Juliet, Paramount, 1968
Romeo and Juliet, A&E Home Video, 1976
Romeo and Juliet, Kultur Video, 1989
Romeo and Juliet, Morningstar, 1993
Romeo + Juliet, 20th Century Fox, 1996

General Objectives

1. To read a Shakespearean tragedy.
2. To navigate difficult/unfamiliar language.
3. To develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.
4. To access multiple readings.
5. To follow and understand divergent thematic threads.
6. To visualize the staging of a play.
7. To track intertextual references.
8. To note and understand various rhetorical devices.
9. To deploy literary terminology.
10. To gain a deeper appreciation of literature through close-reading and analysis.

Specific Objectives

1. To compare/contrast the themes of violence and romance.
2. To evaluate the role of chance/fate in the plot.

3. To discuss the play's historical context and its importance.
4. To analyze the play's compression of time.
5. To differentiate between sexual and romantic love as presented in the play.
6. To track the evolution of gender/power relations.
7. To discuss the significance of Rosaline.
8. To integrate an understanding of the play's dramatic and poetic elements.
9. To consider the function of the literary apparatus surrounding the play.
10. To evaluate the quality of the play as an example of tragedy.

Literary Terms and Applications

For better understanding of Shakespeare's style, present the following terms:

Hyperbole: deliberate overstatement for emphasis. Much of the play is hyperbolic. One of the more memorable examples occurs when Friar Lawrence chides Romeo for suddenly loving Juliet instead of Rosaline, saying that his cheeks are still stained by tears shed for the latter: "Lo, here upon your cheek the stain doth sit / Of an old tear that is not washed off yet" (II:3:79-80).

Liebestod: a love-death motif. When Capulet learns of Juliet's apparent death, his speech to Paris is highly sexualized: "Hath death lain with thy wife . . . deflowerèd, . . . My daughter he hath wedded." (IV:5:42-45). Romeo's long speech in the Capulet crypt echoes this eroticising of death (V:3:74-120).

Oxymoron: a rhetorical device that combines contradictory or incongruous terms. Since *Romeo and Juliet* is in many ways a study in sharp contrasts, it is unsurprising that oxymorons are used extensively. Examples include "move me to stand" (I:1:11), "My only love sprung from my only hate!" (I:5:152), and "sweet sorrow" (II:3:199-200).

Paronomasia: word play, punning. A commonly cited example is the homonymic pun on collier, choler, and collar (I:1:2,3,5). It is interesting to note that Shakespeare also used this same sequence in *Henry IV, Part 1*.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Ballet Adaptations-DVD/VHS

Romeo and Juliet, Video Artists International, 1956
Romeo and Juliet, Kultur Video, 1966
Romeo and Juliet, Arthaus Musik, 1989
Romeo and Juliet, Image Entertainment, 1992
Romeo and Juliet, Euroarts, 2000

DVD/VHS

Hamlet, Castle Rock, 1996
Henry V, MGM, 1989
Much Ado About Nothing, MGM, 1993
Othello, Turner Home Entertainment, 1995
Shakespeare in Love, Miramax, 1999
Twelfth Night, Image Entertainment, 1996
West Side Story, MGM, 1961
William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, Sony Pictures, 2004

Internet

Glossary of Technical Theatre Terms
<http://www.theatre crafts.com/glossary/glossary.shtml>
Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto: British Library
<http://prodigi.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/search.asp>
Web English Teacher
<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/romeoandjuliet.html>

Literature

Fred D'Aguiar, "Pyramus and Thisbe," *After Ovid: New Metamorphoses*
Arthur Brooke, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*
Christopher Marlowe, *Faustus*, "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love"
Ovid, "Pyramus and Thisbe," *The Metamorphoses, Book IV*
Petrarch, "Sonnet I," "Sonnet XII," "Sonnet XXXIX"
Sir Walter Raleigh, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd"
Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella*
Sophocles, *Antigone*
Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti*
Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*

Nonfiction

The Book of the Courtier, Baldassare Castiglione
Imagining Shakespeare: A history of Text and Visions, Stephen Orgel
Poetics, Aristotle
Understanding Romeo and Juliet, Alan Hagar, supplies samples from earlier versions of the story

Reference

The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film, Ed. Russell Jackson
The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare, Ed. Oscar James Campbell
Shakespeare's Bawdy, Eric Partridge
The Shakespeare Book of Lists, Michael LoMonico
Shakespeare's Language: A Glossary of Unfamiliar Words in His Plays and Poems, Eugene F. Shewmaker

Teaching

The Chortling Bard!: Caught'ya Grammar with a Giggle for High School, Jane Bell Kiester

Theatre

Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach, Patrick Tucker
Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History, Eds. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson
Shakespeare in Sable: A History of Black Shakespearean Actors, Errol Hill
Shakespeare's Globe Playhouse: A Modern Reconstruction in Text and Scale Drawings, Irwin Smith
Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres, Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa
This Wooden 'O': Shakespeare's Globe Reborn, Barry Day

Themes and Motifs

Themes

- love
- fate
- chance
- conflict
- death
- division
- power
- time
- generations
- eroticism

Motifs

- contrasting imagery and themes. ex: love/hate, light/dark, night/day, age/youth, public/private, crowds/isolation, life/death, sexual love/romantic love, male/female.
- classical references
- sexual imagery
- indulgence in violence and romance
- disaster as result of misunderstandings or chance occurrences
- eroticisation of death

Meaning Study

1. From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
 A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life
 (Prologue:5-6)
 (The crucial phrase in this passage is "star-crossed," an astrological reference to fate. The Prologue seems to indicate that Romeo and Juliet are fated to tragedy. However, this line does not definitively place Romeo and Juliet as a tragedy of fate. "Star-crossed" could simply mean "unlucky," it could intentionally mislead the audience to heighten tension, or Romeo and Juliet could both be fated and tragically flawed.

Another interesting crux is the "take" in line 6. Literally, the lovers "take" their lives "from forth the fatal loins" of their parents, i.e. their lives literally derive from their parents (biologically), and the paths of their lives also derive from their parents (socially). Obviously "take their life" refers to their eventual suicides, and since the circumstances that drive them to suicide are created by their parents, the three meanings are intertwined.)

2. O son, the night before thy wedding day
 Hath death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
 Flower as she was, deflowerèd by him.
 Death is my son-in-law; death is my heir.
 My daughter he hath wedded. (IV:5:41-45)
 (This love/sex/death motif recurs several times throughout the play. It first appears in Act I when Juliet says, "My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (I:1:149) and is repeated in Romeo's monologue while standing over Juliet's apparent corpse in the Capulet crypt. In this particular scene, Capulet is addressing Paris after Juliet's "body" is found by the

Nurse. The strongly erotic language in all three passages is an example of the Liebestod, love/death motif.)

3. What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
(II:2:46-47)
(These lines are some of the richest in implication. Juliet's assumption is that language orders the world. In denying Romeo's name, she seeks to escape the ordering of her world, specifically the order of her parents, which makes her love affair with Romeo impossible. These lines also imply that names and the ordering they represent are external to identity, that a rose would be a rose if called something else, or that Romeo could continue to be his essential self with a different name. Her imagination of consummating their union supports this differentiation: "Romeo / Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen. / Lovers can see to do their amorous rites / By their own beauties" (III:2:6-9). Literally, the "untalked of and unseen" refers to stealth, but the image also places the lovers' bodies outside of sight and speech, reducing them to pure sensation.)
4. But come, young waverer, come, go with me.
In one respect I'll thy assistant be,
For this alliance may so happy prove
To turn your households' rancor to pure love.
(II:3:96-99)
(After objecting to Romeo's sudden change of heart ("waverer"), Friar Lawrence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet, hoping that their union will help close the rift between the Capulets and Montagues. This passage is an example of irony. Romeo and Juliet's marriage does, in fact, bring an end to the feud between their families, but not in the manner Friar Lawrence intends. If "happy" were changed to "unhappy," the lines would accurately predict the play's ending.)
5. See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love,
And I, for winking at your discords too,
Have lost a brace of kinsmen. (V:3:302-305)
(The Prince, addressing Capulet and Montague, blames them for the demise of their children, saying that their unrestrained

feud has been punished by heaven. The "brace of kinsmen" he refers to are Mercutio and Tybalt. The "kill your joys with love" is another example of the many paradoxical formulations in the play.

This is a difficult passage to interpret. Coming at the end of the action, it seems to moralize the preceding action, making the play more about the consequences of Capulet and Montague's "hate" than about the reality of Romeo and Juliet's "love." However, since the majority of the play concerns itself with Romeo and Juliet, this moralization is in many ways external to the actual dynamics of the narrative. The exact meaning of "scourge is laid upon" and "heaven finds means to kill" is also variable. They can be read as 1) rhetoric, i.e. "Look what you've done" 2) intimating that a deity has actively interfered and "punished" the families, which would transform an understanding of the seemingly random events leading to the tragedy or 3) a statement about the nature of the universe and its mechanisms of cause and effect, i.e. the death of Romeo and Juliet proceed naturally and inevitably from the feud between their families. These three are not necessarily mutually exclusive.)

6. No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as
a church door, but 'tis enough. 'Twill serve.
Ask for
me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave
man. I
am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A
plague o'
both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a
mouse, a
villain that fights by the book of arithmetic!
Why the
devil came you between us? I was hurt under
your
arm. (III:1:100-108)
(Even in his dying moments, Mercutio refuses to take responsibility for his actions. His death is ultimately caused by his own impulsive aggressiveness, but he displaces the blame on the Capulet/Montague feud, "A plague o' / both your houses;" Tybalt's swordsmanship, "a / villain that fights by the book of arithmetic;" and Romeo's interference, "I was hurt under your / arm." It is indicative of

Mercutio's basic personality that he jests at his imminent demise: "Ask for / me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man." His cursing of "both your houses" reminds us that, though he is Romeo's friend, he is related to the Prince, not the Capulets or Montagues.

The death of Mercutio and its relative necessity in the play's action has been debated throughout the play's critical history. Samuel Taylor Coleridge provides one of the more convincing arguments. He places Mercutio's death as the hinge of the play. Because he is so likable, his death provides a convincing catalyst to force Romeo into action, which results in Tybalt's death, Romeo's banishment, and eventually Romeo and Juliet's suicide. If Tybalt did not kill Mercutio, Romeo's slaying of Tybalt would be inexplicable, and if Mercutio were less affable, his death would not be a believable catalyst. Also Mercutio's relation to the Prince provides a reasonable explanation of Romeo's exile in place of execution.)

7. Indeed, I shall never be satisfied
With Romeo till I behold him—dead—
Is my poor heart (III:5:98-100)
(In this scene, Juliet is speaking about the death of Tybalt and Romeo's exile with her mother, Lady Capulet. The scene is full of double meanings, playing on the difference between Juliet and Lady Capulet's level of knowledge. Lady Capulet, ignorant of Juliet's marriage to Romeo, understands the lines to read "I shall never be satisfied with Romeo till I behold him dead." The audience understands the lines to read "I shall never be satisfied with Romeo till I behold him. Dead is my poor heart." The hyphens denoting pauses bracket off the "dead" and make it a hinge. This doubling of meaning is significant because it implicitly recognizes the audience's presence. In most scenes, the audience is a mute observer. In this scene, the differentiation between levels of knowledge engages the audience in the production of meaning in a more direct fashion, since the audience compares its own knowledge to Lady Capulet's.)
8. There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,
Doing more murder in this loathsome world
Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not

sell.

I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none.
(V:2:84-88)

(Romeo is speaking to the apothecary, who has just sold him poison with which he plans to kill himself. Romeo, considering the poison a balm to his injured soul, claims that money does more damage than poison. While this is a cogent argument, it is strange in the context of the play, which rarely references wealth. It is, perhaps, a reference to the otherwise unexplained origins of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues.)

9. MERCUTIO

'Tis no less, I tell you, for the bawdy hand of
The dial is now upon the prick of noon.

NURSE

Out upon you! What a man are you?

MERCUTIO

One, gentlewoman, that God hath made, him-
self to mar. (II:4:114-118)

(In this scene, the nurse and Mercutio take an immediate dislike to one another. This animosity is a reflection of their roles in the scheme of the play. Each is a foil to their respective companion. Mercutio's impulsive aggressiveness contrasts sharply to Romeo's quickness to love, and the nurse's opportunistic attitude towards husbands highlights Juliet's resolve. The "himself" is an interesting hinge, referring to either God or Mercutio. If it refers to Mercutio, it foreshadows his death. His bellicose nature leads him to duel Tybalt, thus marring himself.)

10. FRIAR LAWRENCE

I hear some noise.—Lady, come from that nest
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep.

A greater power than we can contradict
Hath thwarted our intents. Come, come away.

Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead,
And Paris, too. Come, I'll dispose of thee
Among a sisterhood of holy nuns.

Stay not to question, for the watch is coming.

Come, go, good Juliet. I dare no longer stay.

JULIET

Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.

(V:3:156-165)

(Several critics have questioned why the friar abandons Juliet at such a critical moment, after having been at the center of her scheming from the beginning. A superficial explanation posits that the friar is made timid by the obvi-

ous consequences of his actions, the corpses of Romeo and Paris. Indeed, the noise he hears is the approach of the watch. However, the length of his speech after “I hear some noise” belies a sense of urgency. In context, he seems more intent on secreting Juliet from the corpses and her immediate reaction to them than he does on escaping. Thus when he leaves at Juliet’s bidding, one assumes that he has predicted and accepted her plan to kill herself, rather than fled from a noise.

The “A greater power . . . hath thwarted our intents” seems to argue in favor of *Romeo and Juliet* being a tragedy of fate, that a “greater power” has interfered. Of course, this begs the question of what that greater power is. It could refer to fate, chance, a deity, or the unchangeable natures of the characters. His offer to hide her in a nunnery is perhaps a reference to an older version of the story in which Juliet is hidden in a convent after Romeo’s death.)

Comprehension Study

1. Is *Romeo and Juliet* a tragedy of character or fate?
(If you sift through the secondary literature, you will find numerous persuasive arguments for either position. As usual, there is not a “right” reading of the play. This is not to say that a reading is arbitrary, simply that the play is rich enough to support conflicting positions.)

*The term “tragedy of fate” is often leveled as an accusation of imperfection. This reading supposes that the ultimate downfall of the protagonists is the result of fate or chance, rather than a tragic flaw in one or more of the characters. There is ample evidence in the text to support this claim. The Prologue brands *Romeo and Juliet* “star-crossed,” and the plot often advances through seemingly chance occurrences. Romeo’s meeting Juliet at the ball, his chance encounter with Tybalt that leads to his banishment, and Friar John’s inability to relay the crucial message to Romeo in Mantua are the product of chance. *Romeo and Juliet* cry out to “Fortune” repeatedly.*

Despite the ubiquitous hand of fate in the play, it is possible to read the characters’ eventual tragedy in their personalities, which would make it a “tragedy of character.” Certainly Mercutio’s death, while aided by a chance encounter and Romeo’s botched intervention, is a product of his rash, bellicose personality. That Romeo is hopelessly in love with Rosaline at the beginning of the play indicates that he is predisposed to the sort of behavior he indulges in with Juliet. Indeed the majority of principal characters are inclined to impulsive behavior, which flaw may be read as the origin of their tragedies.)

2. Analyze the significance of Rosaline as a character.
(Rosaline is a ghost character. She has no lines and is never present on stage, unless she attends the Capulet feast to which she is invited. The main references to her are Romeo’s lovesick yearnings, Benvolio’s advice to find a more responsive object of desire, and Friar Lawrence’s chiding Romeo about his quick change of heart. That Romeo is already in love at the beginning of the play can be read variously.)

Often Romeo’s declaration that his love for Juliet is purer and more intense than his love for Rosaline is taken at face value, and the love between Romeo and Juliet is idealized. Thus Rosaline serves as a contrast to highlight the purity of Romeo’s love for Juliet. Alternately, one can claim that Juliet, in returning Romeo’s affection, simply encourages him, thus fulfilling Benvolio’s prescription. This interpretation supports a character-tragedy reading. It is also possible to use Romeo’s love for Rosaline to infer an implicit understanding of the nature of love. Queer Theorists argue that, in light of Romeo’s love for Rosaline, the love between Romeo and Juliet is not a unique flash of perfection. Rather it is a moment in a continuous series of Desire, and thus the subjects and objects of Desire are interchangeable without respect to the uniqueness of the individuals.)

3. Discuss the compression of time in the play.
*(The action of *Romeo and Juliet* takes place over the course of four or five days. Act I begins around 8:55 a.m. Sunday. That*

evening Romeo attends the Capulet feast, where he meets Juliet. The next day, they are married, Romeo kills Tybalt, and they spend the night. Romeo leaves for exile around dawn Tuesday. Later that day, Capulet promises Juliet's hand to Paris, and she drinks the sleeping potion. Although the action is apparently continuous, Act V may be presumed to take place on Thursday, skipping Wednesday. That Friar Lawrence says the sleeping potion lasts "two and forty hours" and that the Watchman says Juliet "here hath lain this two days buried" support this read.

However, there are numerous textual clues that hint at a much longer time frame. When the Nurse urges Juliet to marry Paris and disparages Romeo, Juliet complains about the Nurse's sudden shift, noting that she "hath prais'd him . . . above compare / so many thousand times". This may be hyperbole, but it coincides with a number of other implications of a long time frame. Romeo's exile to Mantua is another ambiguity. One assumes that Mantua, in order to be an effective place of exile, must be more than a few hours ride from Verona. Also, Friar John is unable to deliver Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo because the house he stays in is quarantined under suspicion of the bubonic plague. It is unlikely that such a quarantine would have been lifted after only one day. Similarly, it seems unlikely that Capulet could prepare for a wedding overnight, and the engagement between Paris and Juliet is absurdly brief. Finally, although the play is somewhat about love at first sight, the depth of the emotional bond between Romeo and Juliet more closely resembles the bond between long-term lovers.

Some critics dismiss the time paradox as a combination of carelessness on Shakespeare's part and gullibility on his audience's part. While this may be true, it is facile and ignores how the discrepancy of time frames functions in the play. The short-term time frame serves to heighten the dramatic effect. It compresses events and adds a tone of desperate urgency. The long-term time frame ensures that the audience is more deeply emotionally engaged. The deep-seated passion between long-term lovers is com-

pressed into the urgency of love at first sight.)

4. In what way are females represented as objects?
(There are two sides to this question. In relation to her family and society, Juliet is an object to be acted upon and traded. Her father arranges her marriage to Paris without consultation and threatens to kick her out of the house if she balks his will. She is principally housebound, while Romeo is free to wander Verona as he pleases. One could argue that her relationship with Romeo perpetuates this power dynamic. He pursues her. He is active, coming to her, while she communicates primarily through agents.)

However, as a sexually desiring subject, Juliet begins to empower herself. She desires, which is the act of a subject, rather than an object. In pursuing her desire, she begins to act independently, secretly marrying Romeo and then effecting her plan to avoid marrying Paris. It is important to note, however, that this rejection of convention leads to her death, which is perhaps the only liberation available in her social context.)

5. Contrast/compare the play's handling of romantic and sexual love.
(As are many of Shakespeare's plays, Romeo and Juliet is full of bawdy jokes, puns, and allusions. The penis is variously referred to as "tool," "weapon," "rope," "tail," "yard," "poperin pear," and "prick." The bawdy jokes of the male characters tend to consider women as interchangeable objects of desire, which contrasts sharply with Romeo and Juliet's primarily romantic love of one another as individuals. These two kinds of "love" exist as polar opposites in the play, but it would be a mistake to divorce romantic love from sexual relations. Romeo and Juliet clearly anticipate consummating their marriage and make several references to it. The question, then, is why do they not consummate their marriage? The literal answer is that they do not have time to do so. However, their lack of a sexual relationship is necessary to the plot. First, it allows the story to continue through the planned marriage between Juliet and Paris. Since in Elizabethan England a consummated mar-

riage was binding, Juliet could have avoided marrying Paris by revealing her marriage to Romeo, instead of drinking the potentially fatal sleeping potion. Also, their incomplete relationship can be regarded as a furtherance of their tragedy. In this, as in other aspects of their relationship, they are foiled by chance and circumstance.)

6. Consider the function of the external apparatus surrounding the play.
(The play is encased in a secondary apparatus, the primary function of which is to make the play more accessible. The textual notes, definitions, preface, author biography, notes on Elizabethan theatre, essays, line numbers, and other external impositions are designed to make the play easier to read and understand and to place the text in a bio-historical context. The underlying assumption is that the actual text is removed enough from the average reader's experience and context that mediation of the reading experience is necessary. Even the play itself is mediated, having been edited, corrected, and cobbled together from various versions.)

While most reading experiences are mediated by such impositions as footnotes and introductions, Shakespeare's plays are well suited for discussing the editorial apparatus because their secondary material is so extensive and intrusive. Useful discussion questions include:

- How does the editorial apparatus affect your reading experience?
 - How do editorial decisions affect the text?
 - Of what would the "pure" text consist?
 - Is the secondary material useful/necessary?
 - Is it possible/useful to divorce the play itself from the material encasing it?)
7. Distinguish between the play's dramatic and poetic elements.
(This is primarily a distinction between form and substance, insofar as it is possible to differentiate the two. The play is formally drama. It is dialogue divided into scenes and acts, and the plot proceeds roughly along the classical five act structure. The material itself is often poetic, both in sentiment and structure. The Prologue is an English sonnet, and

much of the dialogue is in iambic pentameter, some sections rhymed. So the play is drama at the macro level and poetry at the micro level.)

8. Contrast Romeo and Paris.
(Paris is in many ways analogous to Rosaline. At the beginning of the play, Romeo is in love with Rosaline, but she is displaced by his passionate love for Juliet. Juliet begins the play ambivalent about the prospect of marriage, but she falls desperately in love with Romeo. In an inversion of the Rosaline/Juliet displacement, Capulet seeks to displace Romeo by substituting Paris as Juliet's husband. This reversal of roles is most poignantly evident in their disposition at Juliet's tomb. Paris strews the ground with flowers, acting like a bereaved suitor, while Romeo appears with a crowbar, acting like a grave robber intent on desecrating her burial site.)
9. In what way is impulsiveness a characteristic common to the principal characters and a driving force of the plot?
(The main characters of Romeo and Juliet are generally impulsive, quick to fight or love. This impulsiveness is evident as early as the initial scene, in which the Capulets and Montagues engage in a street fight with little provocation. The whirlwind love between Romeo and Juliet can best be described as indulgent and impulsive. Tybalt's insistence of accosting Romeo and reluctance to be tempered by Capulet at the ball, his part in the fight that leads to his demise, Mercutio's quick temper, and Romeo and Juliet's suicides are all impulsive. Even the older characters make sudden, unpredictable decisions, such as when Capulet suddenly promises Juliet's hand in marriage to Paris, he moves forward the date of the wedding, and Montague promises to build a gold statue of Juliet. Only Friar Lawrence has lines counseling prudence and measured decisions.)
10. Why does Capulet rush Juliet's marriage to Paris?
(Capulet's initial reason for rushing Juliet into marriage after having previously protested that she was too young to marry is that her grief over Tybalt's death is oppressive and

unhealthy and he hopes that a happy marriage to Paris will snap her out of it. This line of reasoning is odd, considering Juliet's apparent ambivalence to both Paris and the prospect of marriage. Furthermore, if Capulet intends the marriage to end Juliet's mourning of Tybalt, his violent insistence after her adamant refusal is even stranger, unless it can be explained as a fit of pique. It would be useful to discuss whether Capulet has ulterior motives. In light of his agreement with Paris early in the play, Capulet seems to use Juliet's grief as an excuse to rush her betrothal. It follows then, that his moving the date of the wedding forward after Juliet suddenly becomes quiescent is an attempt to seal the arrangement before she has time to change her mind.)

How Language Works

1. Romeo's offer to cut out his "name" is an extension Juliet's earlier "What's in a name?" speech: "O, tell me, Friar, tell me, / In what vile part of this anatomy / Doth my name lodge? Tell me, that I may sack / The hateful mansion" (III:3:114-117). However they contrast sharply in implication. Juliet's assertion that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet seems to assume that objects are separate from language. The obvious absurdity of Romeo attempting to excise his name from his body implies that names are inseparable from their objects.
2. The image of women presented in the banter of minor characters and in Capulet's abrupt decision to marry off Juliet assumes women to be objects, taken or given at will: "'Tis true, and therefore women, being the / weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall. There- / fore I will push Montague's men from the wall and / thrust his maids to the wall" (I:1:16-19). The violence in this image of rape is curious, since Romeo and Juliet's ostensible love between equals ends in violence of a different sort. The main difference is that Juliet does violence to herself, instead of having violence externally imposed.
3. Early in the play, Romeo complains that Rosaline is indifferent to his affections:

She'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit,
And, in strong proof of chastity well armed,
From love's weak childish bow she lives
uncharmed.

She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
(I:1:216-222)

(This passage raises the possibility that Romeo's love for Juliet is fueled by her apparent acceptance/availability. If this is true, then once again the play hinges on chance, since Romeo chances to overhear Juliet speaking about her feelings for him before she notices his presence in the garden.)

4. It is perhaps significant that Juliet is the first to raise the possibility of marriage to Romeo: "If that thy bent of love be honorable, / Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow" (II:2:150-151). In reading these lines, one wonders whether Capulet's stated intention of allowing Paris to woo her has either prompted her to consider marrying at all, since she seems initially ambivalent to the prospect, or has compelled her to seek Romeo as a husband in order to escape Paris.
5. Mercutio's bellicose inclinations are apparent when he deprecates Romeo's refusal to fight Tybalt: "O calm, dishonorable, vile submission! / Alla stoccato carries it away. / Tybalt, you ratchatcher, will you walk?" (III:1:74-76)
6. At the opening of Act V, Romeo has a premonition of good news: "If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep, / My dreams presage some joyful news at hand" (V:1:1-2). Since the audience knows that Friar Lawrence's letter should be arriving, these lines confirm their expectations and then renders the subsequent tragedy more forceful.

Across the Curriculum

Drama

1. Choose one character and read his or her lines aloud. Make a list of defining characteristics and discuss the character in relation to the themes of the play and the other charac-

ters.

2. Act out scenes from the play. Discuss the difference between reading the play and experiencing it. Identify elements of the play that seem primarily literary or theatrical. Does hearing the play spoken clarify the meaning of difficult passages?
3. Attend a stage production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Discuss the relationship between the play as read and as performed, specifically the role of text as notes for a performance. Does seeing the play performed change your understanding of the play?
4. Rewrite the balcony scene to reflect contemporary experience and speech patterns and then perform it in class. Where would the scene be set? How would *Romeo and Juliet* be transformed? Does the transformation change the meaning of the passage?
5. Research and make an oral presentation on The Globe Theatre. Explain the Elizabethan theatrical experience, the history of the Globe, its reconstruction, and Elizabethan theatrical practices.

Gender Studies

1. Analyze each character in relation to gender stereotypes. Are they portrayed as stereotypically masculine or feminine. Do any of the characters act in a manner not commonly associated with their biological gender?
2. In a chalk talk, explain the social role of women in Elizabethan England. What were their rights? How were they defined? How was their experience different from men's? Does Juliet conform to Elizabethan expectations of young women?
3. Examine every reference to sexual activity in the play. Are there multiple views on sexuality in the play? What is the dominant view? Is there a power relation implicit in the play's understanding of sexuality?

Biography

1. Make a timeline of William Shakespeare's life. Present the timelines and discuss the difficulties in dating certain events and time periods

of his life.

2. Research and present the various anti-Stratfordian theories, i.e. the theories that claim that William Shakespeare did not author the plays attributed to him. Include the proffered substitute authors, such as Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, The Earl of Derby, The Earl of Rutland, The Earl of Southampton, The Earl of Essex, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Queen Elizabeth I, King James, El Spar, and Edward De Vere.

Film/Video

1. Watch *West Side Story* and discuss it in relation to *Romeo and Juliet*. Does the contemporization of the context alter the content? Do the major thematic elements remain the same? How would you make the play relevant to your own context?
2. Watch a film version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Discuss how the speech patterns of the actors change the lines, specifically how emphasis and pronunciation provide meaning. Also examine the difference between theatre and film as media. For example, what options are available to cinematographers that are unavailable to stage directors?

Journalism

1. Write obituaries for Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Romeo and Juliet.
2. Compose a review of the play. Examine online and print literary reviews and mimic the general format. Include a plot summary, comparisons to other literary works, and a judgment of its literary merit.
3. Summarize the events of Act V, scene 3 in a news article.

Language

1. Using a computer art program, illustrate a glossary of theatre terms. Include act, actor, backstage, baffle, black box, blackout, casting, centre stage, character, comedy, company, dénouement, dues ex machine, dialogue, director, downstage, dramatic irony, dramatis personae, dress rehearsal, ensemble, entrance, epilogue, exit, exeunt, flashback, forestage, groundling, in the round, melodrama, mime, monologue, morality play, off-

stage, plot, producer, prologue, props, raked stage, repertoire, satire, scene, scenery, set, soliloquy, stage, stage directions, stage hand, stage left, stage right, tragedy, tragic-comedy, upstage, and wings.

2. Keep a reading journal as you read *Romeo and Juliet*. List every phrase that seems important or particularly aesthetically appealing. Discuss your selections with your classmates.
3. Search the play for shifts in the language. Note rhymes that have shifted (ex: prove/love), words the meaning of which have shifted, words no longer used in common usage, and references no longer familiar to most readers. Discuss the significance of these changes. In what way is literature rooted to the time of its creation and in what ways does it transcend its origin?

Composition

1. Compose an English sonnet (iambic pentameter, rhyme scheme of abab cdcd efef gg) about a topic of your choice. Discuss the experience of writing to such a strict form and use your experience to reevaluate the text of *Romeo and Juliet*.
2. Rewrite the ending of the play as you see fit. What do you change? And why? Discuss your alternate endings in class.
3. Choose two characters from the play and write an essay comparing/contrasting them. Be sure to consider their personalities, relationships with other characters, family affiliations, actions, attitudes, and functions in the plot. Possible pairings include: Romeo/Paris, Romeo/Mercutio, Romeo/Juliet, Mercutio/Tybalt, Mercutio/Nurse, Nurse/Friar Lawrence, Capulet/Montague, Prince/Capulet and Montague.
4. Select what you consider to be the most significant scene in the play and write an essay explaining it. Incorporate direct quotes, paraphrases, and MLA style citations.
5. Compose the letter that Friar Lawrence tried unsuccessfully to send to Romeo in Mantua. What exactly does the friar try to tell Romeo? How is it phrased?

6. Rewrite an act of the play as a short story, following the actual events of the play as closely as possible. Does rewriting the play change your understanding of the events and/or themes? Do you keep the setting the same, or do you make it contemporary? How do your changes affect the meaning of the act?

Social Studies

1. In a group, make a printed guide to common careers available in Elizabethan England. Include: apothecary, armorer, barber, blacksmith, Chandler, cutler, factor, fowler, fuller, glazier, glover, joiner, landlord, lawyer, mercer, milliner, nurse, ostler, saddler, sawyer, steward, tailor, tutor, and warrener.
2. Make an oral report on Elizabethan currency. Describe each denomination's relative value, material, and approximate contemporary value. Include: penny, pence, shilling, pound, sovereign, royal, noble, angel, crown, half crown, sixpence, groat, threepenny piece, threepenny piece, halfpenny piece, and farthing.
3. Make a pamphlet on Elizabethan fashion, either men's or women's. Include labeled illustrations. For men's fashion, include: codpiece, shirt, doublet, jerkin, sleeves, ruff, hose, girdle, hat, boots, shoes, and drawers. For women's fashion, include: chemise, bodice, stomacher, gown, sleeves, wings, ruffle, corset, bum-roll, farthingale, tippit, gloves, and shoes.

Medicine

1. Romeo commits suicide by taking a fast acting poison. Research poisons used during the Renaissance and make an oral presentation with your findings. Speculate about likely poisons Romeo may have used.
2. Renaissance medicine was often based on an understanding of the four humours: choler, blood, phlegm, and black bile. In a chalk talk, describe the theory of the four humours, their corresponding elements, qualities, and personality traits.
3. Make a medicinal glossary for Elizabethan terms for common illnesses. Include: ague, apoplexy, consumption, dropsy, falling sickness, flux, French pox, gaol fever, green sickness, gripping in the guts, planetstruck, pox,

scurvey, spleen, and tympany.

Literature

1. Using the British Library's online archives at <<http://prodigi.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/search.asp>> compare a quarto version of *Romeo and Juliet* to the version you have read. Are there substantial differences in content? Reexamine the role of editors in light of your findings.
2. Read Ovid's version of the Pyramus and Thisbe myth. In what way is this story a antecedent to *Romeo and Juliet*?
3. Research and present Aristotle's theory of drama in the *Poetics*. Does *Romeo and Juliet* follow the criteria strictly, or does it diverge in crucial areas?
4. Track and explain the play's classical references, including: Cynthia, Diana, Cupid, Aurora, Venus, Jove, Echo, Titan, Dido, Thisbe, Phoebus, Phaeton, Cleopatra, Dido, Helen, and Hero.
5. Read a selection of sonnets by Petrarch and Sir Philip Sidney. Does their vision of love coincide with *Romeo and Juliet*'s? Are there similarities of language, sentiment, structure, or rhetoric?
6. Read selections from Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, Shakespeare's immediate source for *Romeo and Juliet*. Is it significant that Shakespeare did not write the play purely from imagination? Note major differences between the play and poem, especially the role of Mercutio.

Art

1. As a group, sketch sets for performance of scenes from the play. Include exact dimensions, scenery, and major props. Discuss the importance of the props and setting to the meaning of the play.
2. Sketch drawings of what you consider to be the most significant moments of the play. Indicate the significance of each drawing in its title. Present and discuss the drawings in class.
3. Transform a section of dialogue from *Romeo and Juliet* into a comic strip. Incorporate

stage directions into the drawings. Discuss how you perceive the meaning of the selection you chose.

4. With a group, design a poster advertising a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Include graphic art, as well as performance information like location, dates, times, a cast list, and admission prices.

Alternate Assessment

1. Reading the appropriate play, compare *Romeo and Juliet* to Titania and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Anthony and Cleopatra in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Hamlet and Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Petruchio and Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Henry V and Katherine in *Henry V*, Troilus and Cressida in *Troilus and Cressida*, Duke Orsino and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, or Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
2. Read *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, or *Titus Andronicus*. Discuss the play in relation to *Romeo and Juliet* as an example of a tragedy. Are there structural similarities in the plot? How is the tragedy effected in the play? Which do you prefer? Does one play adhere more closely to the classical definition of tragedy?
3. Write a short scene that takes place after the events of *Romeo and Juliet*. Resolve these questions: Do Capulet and Montague have the golden statues made? Do Capulet and Montague keep the peace? Is Friar Lawrence punished for his role in *Romeo and Juliet*'s marriage and deaths? Does Paris marry someone else?
4. Read a critical essay on *Romeo and Juliet* and present the critic's views to your class. Summarize the main ideas and provide examples from the text. Afterwards, comment on your opinion of the arguments. Support your opinion with evidence.

Standardized Test Prep

Analogies

Using the following list of common analogy patterns, create a test of twenty analogies. Trade tests with a partner, take them, and then switch back to grade.

Action and Meaning (shiver : cold), Age (puppy : dog), Antonyms (large : small), Cause and Effect (explosive decompression : pulmonary embolism), Class and Member (rodent : rat), Defining Characteristic (genius : intelligence), Definition (visage : expression), Degree (angry : livid), Function (keyboard : typing), Group and Member (whale : pod), Location (sunset : west), Manner (laugh : snicker), Part and Whole (lens : glasses), Relation (father : son), Sex (bull : sow), Symbol and Symbolized (heart : love), Synonyms (happy : merry), Time Sequence (incubate : hatch), Tool and Purpose (knife : cut), Worker and Work (engineer : build), Worker and Place (sailor : ship), Worker and Product (photographer : photograph), Worker and Tool (photographer : camera)

ex: Romeo : Montague

- a) Tybalt : Prince
- b) Nurse : Friar Lawrence
- c) Juliet : Capulet
- d) Capulet : Montague

The correct answer is c. Romeo is Montague's son, as Juliet is Capulet's daughter. The analogy pattern is Relation.

Vocabulary

Closely read a scene from the play, and record every word that you do not already know. Look up each word, supply a definition, and determine whether the word is 1) unfamiliar because it is no longer used in contemporary English 2) unfamiliar because its meaning has shifted since the play was written or 3) simply a word that you did not know.

Critical Reading

Read the following section and mark the most appropriate answer for each question.

JULIET

1 Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.
5 Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO

It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious
streaks
So lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund
day
10 Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

JULIET

Yond light is not daylight, I know it, I.
It is some meteor that the sun exhaled
To be to thee this night a torchbearer
15 And light thee on thy way to Mantua.
Therefore stay yet. Thou need'st not to be
gone.

ROMEO

Let me be ta'en; let me be put to death.
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon gray is not the morning's eye;
20 'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow.
Nor that is not the lark whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads.
I have more care to stay than will to go.
Come death and welcome. Juliet wills it so.
25 How is 't, my soul? Let's talk. It is not day.

____ 1. All of the following statements about Juliet may be inferred from the passage EXCEPT
a) She is angry at Romeo for having killed Tybalt.
b) She does not want Romeo to go to Mantua.
c) She is aware that dawn approaches.
d) She is familiar with the garden.

____ 2. The "soul" in line 25 refers to
a) Juliet
b) Romeo's soul
c) Juliet's soul
d) Romeo

____ 3. Larks sing at
a) afternoon
b) sunset
c) sunrise
d) midnight

____ 4. "Reflex" in line 20 means
a) reduction
b) reflexive motion
c) reaction
d) reflection

____ 5. The main point being discussed in this passage is
a) whether the bird is a nightingale or lark
b) whether it is morning or night
c) whether it is time for Romeo to depart
d) whether the light in the sky is the sun or moon

____ 6. In line 11, Romeo says that he must leave or die because of
a) Juliet's family.
b) the Prince's banishment.
c) Romeo's family.
d) Tybalt's ghost.

____ 7. Juliet's claim that it is not morning is meant to express
a) reluctance to see Romeo leave
b) confusion about time
c) a poorly trained ear
d) her contrary personality

____ 8. The "so" in "so thou wilt have it" in line 18 means
a) therefore
b) because
c) and
d) if

____ 9. All of these statements about Romeo can be inferred from the passage EXCEPT
a) He would rather stay than go.
b) His agreement signifies his feelings about Juliet, not his thoughts about the time of day.
c) He is humoring Juliet to avoid a fight.
d) He thinks the Prince will execute him, if given the opportunity.

____ 10. The mood of the passage can best be described as
a) humorous
b) melancholy
c) poignant

Vocabulary Exam (Contemporary)

_____ 1. portentous

- a) foreboding
- b) overweight
- c) sea-faring
- d) aggressive

_____ 2. boisterous

- a) short and stocky
- b) loud and noisy
- c) musically inclined
- d) insincere

_____ 3. visage

- a) a sighting of someone or something
- b) first glance
- c) face or facial expression
- d) costume

_____ 4. prolixity

- a) wordiness
- b) physical closeness
- c) lightning
- d) convulsions

_____ 5. effeminate

- a) indiscriminately attracted to women
- b) having female qualities
- c) physically attractive
- d) introspective, quiet

_____ 6. lamentation

- a) feud
- b) misunderstanding
- c) challenge
- d) mourning

_____ 7. calamity

- a) mutual hatred
- b) wind
- c) disaster
- d) fate

_____ 8. usurer

- a) wooer
- b) chief constable
- c) gravedigger
- d) moneylender

_____ 9. puling

- a) fighting
- b) whining
- c) kissing
- d) pushing

_____ 10. pensive

- a) thin, narrow
- b) deeply thoughtful
- c) besieged
- d) a vase

_____ 11. inexorable

- a) appearing sick or tired
- b) worthy of scorn
- c) incapable of being expressed in words
- d) relentless

_____ 12. maw

- a) sword
- b) marriage rights
- c) mouth or jaws
- d) tedium

_____ 13. inauspicious

- a) unfavorable
- b) unsuspecting
- c) not noticeable
- d) lacking appetite

_____ 14. omit

- a) to announce a death
- b) to leave out
- c) to circumambulate
- d) to weep copiously

_____ 15. inundate

- a) to retract a pronouncement
- b) to stab through the torso
- c) to flood or overwhelm
- d) to go into exile

Vocabulary Exam (Shakespearean)

_____ 1. an

- a) however
- b) when
- c) or
- d) if

_____ 2. mark

- a) money
- b) wound
- c) rouge
- d) target

_____ 3. caitiff

- a) unplanned
- b) drunk
- c) miserable
- d) unpleasant

_____ 4. dram

- a) small draught
- b) threat
- c) knock on a door
- d) shove

_____ 5. hie

- a) there
- b) hurry
- c) (exclamation of surprise)
- d) he

_____ 6. Zounds

- a) goddess of death
- b) guardians or soldiers
- c) (a strong oath)
- d) screams of pain

_____ 7. shrift

- a) scabbard
- b) short journey
- c) nightdress
- d) absolution

_____ 8. withal

- a) with
- b) inside
- c) now
- d) quickly

_____ 9. rood

- a) rod
- b) Christian cross
- c) rude
- d) astride

_____ 10. morrow

- a) marrow
- b) tomorrow
- c) moroseness
- d) morning

_____ 11. divers

- a) (exclamation of surprise)
- b) swimmers
- c) various
- d) sword

_____ 12. ell

- a) house
- b) (unit of measurement)
- c) snake
- d) rope

_____ 13. gossamers

- a) cobwebs
- b) gowns
- c) dreams
- d) kisses

_____ 14. doublet

- a) jacket
- b) rhyme
- c) sibling
- d) (term of endearment)

_____ 15. dishclout

- a) heavy blow
- b) fool
- c) kitchen servant
- d) dishrag

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the characters who fit these descriptions.

- _____ 1. is killed by Tybalt
- _____ 2. kills Tybalt
- _____ 3. is unable to deliver a letter to Romeo
- _____ 4. Prince's kinsman
- _____ 5. secretly marries Romeo and Juliet
- _____ 6. Romeo's father
- _____ 7. Juliet's father
- _____ 8. banishes Romeo
- _____ 9. Juliet's arranged husband
- _____ 10. gives Juliet's ring to Romeo
- _____ 11. helps the illiterate servingman
- _____ 12. gives a potion to Juliet
- _____ 13. decides to advance the day of Juliet's wedding
- _____ 14. commits suicide with poison
- _____ 15. commits suicide with a dagger

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for True, F for False, or O for Opinion.

- _____ 1. Romeo is shallow.
- _____ 2. Capulet and Montague end their feud.
- _____ 3. At the beginning of the play, Romeo is in love with Rosaline.
- _____ 4. Mercutio introduces Romeo to Juliet.
- _____ 5. The Prince threatens to execute any Capulet or Montague caught fighting in the streets.
- _____ 6. The nurse informs Juliet's mother of her marriage to Romeo.
- _____ 7. Paris loves Juliet.
- _____ 8. The Capulets and Montagues are equally powerful families.
- _____ 9. Romeo dances at the Capulet feast.
- _____ 10. The Apothecary sells Romeo a sleeping potion.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Reading Comprehension (20 points)

Formulate the following lines from the play in your own words using the space provided.

1. Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books
But Love from love, toward school with heavy looks
-

2. Nurse, will you go with me into my closet
To help me sort such needful ornaments
As you think fit to furnish me tomorrow?
-

3. Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die.
-

4. I must hear from thee every day in the hour,
For in a minute there are many days.
-

5. No warmth, no breath shall testify thou livest.
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
To paly ashes, thy eyes' windows fall
Like death when he shuts up the day of life.
-

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Evaluate the role of chance in the play.
2. Describe the events of Act 5 Scene 3.
3. Compare the Montague family to the Capulet family.
4. List and describe the various deaths in the play.
5. Why is the play a "tragedy"?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

Identify speakers of quotations.

- _____ 1. My sword I say. Old Montague is come / And flourishes his blade in spite of me.
- _____ 2. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
- _____ 3. What, wilt thou wash him from his grave with tears?
- _____ 4. Alas, my liege, my wife is dead tonight.
- _____ 5. Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift / Riddling finds confession but riddling shrift.
- _____ 6. A plague o' both your houses! / They have made worms meat of me.
- _____ 7. He shall not make me there a joyful bride!
- _____ 8. I do bite my thumb, sir.
- _____ 9. If ever you disturb our streets again, / You lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
- _____ 10. Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford / No better term than this: thou art a villain.
- _____ 11. If love be blind, love cannot hit its mark.
- _____ 12. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
- _____ 13. Here, sir, a ring she bid me give you, sir.
- _____ 14. Such mortal drugs I have, but Mantua's law / Is death to any he that utters them.
- _____ 15. I could not send it (here it is again) / Nor get a messenger to bring it thee, / So fearful were they of infection.

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions:

- _____ 1. Where do Romeo and Juliet first meet?
- _____ 2. What allows Tybald to stab Mercutio?
- _____ 3. What does Friar Lawrence give to Juliet before her second wedding?
- _____ 4. Where are Romeo and Juliet wed?
- _____ 5. Why is Romeo banished from Verona?
- _____ 6. To where is Romeo banished?
- _____ 7. Why are Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio allowed in the Capulet house?
- _____ 8. Why does Capulet want Juliet to marry Paris?
- _____ 9. Why does Capulet move forward the date of Juliet's wedding?
- _____ 10. What does Juliet threaten to do if the Friar does not help her avoid marrying Paris?

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the words that complete each quotation.

1. My only _____ sprung from my only _____!
2. That which we call a _____ / By any other word would smell as _____.
3. Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet _____ / That I shall say "Good night" till it be _____.
4. And in this borrowed likeness of shrunk death / Thou shalt continue _____ and _____ hours.
5. Thy tears are _____; thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a _____.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. How is Romeo and Juliet's affair similar to the Montagues' and Capulets' feud?
2. In what way is the play also poetry?
3. Describe the structure of the play.
4. Using examples from the play, define the term "womanish."
5. Argue that the main characters either are or are not one-dimensional.

Answer Key

CRITICAL READING

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. A | 3. C | 4. D | 5. C |
| 6. B | 7. A | 8. D | 9. C | 10. C |

VOCABULARY- CONTEMPORARY

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. B | 3. C | 4. A | 5. B |
| 6. D | 7. C | 8. D | 9. B | 10. B |
| 11. D | 12. C | 13. A | 14. B | 15. C |

VOCABULARY- SHAKESPEAREAN

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. D | 3. C | 4. A | 5. B |
| 6. C | 7. D | 8. A | 9. B | 10. D |
| 11. C | 12. B | 13. A | 14. A | 15. D |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Mercutio | 9. Paris |
| 2. Romeo | 10. Nurse |
| 3. Friar John | 11. Romeo |
| 4. Paris | 12. Friar Lawrence |
| 5. Friar Lawrence | 13. Capulet |
| 6. Montague | 14. Romeo |
| 7. Capulet | 15. Juliet |
| 8. Prince | |

Part II: True, False or Opinion

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. O | 2. T | 3. T | 4. F | 5. T |
| 6. F | 7. O | 8. T | 9. F | 10. F |

Part III: Reading Comprehension (20 points)

Answers will vary.

- approx: Lovers eagerly come together and grudgingly part.
- approx: Nurse, will you help me pick the things that I will need tomorrow?
- approx: Become enamored of another woman, and you will forget the present one.
- approx: You must write often because your absence make time seem to move slowly.
- approx: You will appear to be dead.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Capulet | 9. Prince |
| 2. Romeo | 10. Tybalt |
| 3. Lady Capulet | 11. Mercutio |
| 4. Montague | 12. Romeo |
| 5. Friar Lawrence | 13. Nurse |
| 6. Mercutio | 14. Apothecary |
| 7. Juliet | 15. Friar John |
| 8. Sampson | |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

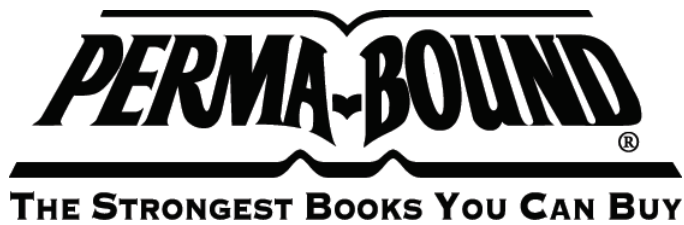
- the Capulet feast
- Romeo's intervention
- a sleeping potion
- in Friar Lawrence's cell
- because he killed Tybalt
- Mantua
- they are masked
- his social position, relation to the Prince, and handsomeness
- because she seems overwrought with grief at Tybalt's death
- kill herself

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

- love, hate
- rose, sweet
- sorrow, morrow
- two, forty
- womanish, beast

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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