

# ROMEO AND JULIET/ WEST SIDE STORY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND ARTHUR LAURENTS

# LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## SYNOPSIS (Romeo & Juliet)

The Montagues and the Capulets, two noble families in fourteenth century Verona, are engaged in a bitter feud which disturbs the peace of the city. The Prince of Verona warns that any further disturbances will be punished by death. At the beginning of the play Romeo, a Montague, professes love for the fair Rosaline, Capulet's niece who has vowed never to love. Benvolio, Romeo's friend, advises Romeo to forget Rosaline. When Romeo learns that Rosaline is attending the Capulet feast, he and two friends, Benvolio and Mercutio go to the feast as uninvited guests. At the feast the first sight of Juliet, Capulet's daughter, drives all thoughts of Rosaline out of Romeo's mind. He falls immediately and passionately in love with Juliet. Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, recognizes Romeo's voice and is about to attack him when Capulet, honoring the rules of hospitality, restrains him.

On his way home from the feast, Romeo escapes his two friends in order to be alone. Hoping to catch another glimpse of Juliet, he leaps over the wall of Capulet's orchard. Under Juliet's balcony he overhears Juliet and is overjoyed to discover that she also loves him. After an impassioned exchange of mutual love, Romeo leaves to arrange for their immediate marriage. He consults his friend and confidant, Friar Laurence, who agrees to help because he sees Romeo and Juliet's marriage as a means to end the Montague-Capulet feud. Romeo sends Juliet's Nurse with instructions for Juliet to meet him at Friar Laurence's cell so that they can be secretly married that afternoon.

Following the wedding, the scene shifts to a public street where Benvolio and Mercutio, ignorant of Romeo's marriage to Juliet, are strolling. Encountering Tybalt, Mercutio taunts Juliet's cousin unmercifully. Romeo enters, and Tybalt, still angry over Romeo's attentions toward Juliet, insults him. Unable to understand Romeo's forbearance over Tybalt's insults, Mercutio draws his sword and attacks Tybalt. Striving to preserve the peace, Romeo intervenes. In the melee Tybalt fatally wounds Mercutio. Enraged, Romeo then kills Tybalt. When the Prince learns of the incident, he banishes Romeo from Verona.

Juliet's grief over her cousin's death soon gives way to despair because of her separation from Romeo. Her despair becomes desperate when Capulet insists upon her immediate marriage to Paris, an admirable and likeable young nobleman of Verona. Seeking advice, she goes to Friar Laurence, who provides her with a drug that will render her unconscious, but to all outward appearances she will be dead. Friar Laurence sends Friar John with a message to Romeo in Mantua. Juliet takes the potion, and the grief-stricken Capulets, thinking that she is dead, place her body in the family vault.

Friar John is unavoidably detained and fails to deliver the message to Romeo that Juliet's death is only counterfeit. Instead Romeo hears from his servant Balthasar that Juliet is dead and in her tomb. Romeo, determined to die at Juliet's side, buys poison from an apothecary. Accompanied by Balthasar, Romeo is opening Juliet's tomb when Paris, knowing only that Romeo is an enemy of the Capulets, attacks him. Romeo reluctantly fights and kills Paris. During the fight Romeo's servant and Paris's page flee to seek help. Alone with Juliet's apparently dead body, Romeo takes the poison and dies. When Juliet awakes and sees her dead husband beside her, she kills herself with Romeo's dagger. The Capulets, the Montagues, and the Prince of Verona arrive on the scene to discover the bodies of Paris, Romeo and Juliet. Learning the full story from Friar Laurence, Montague and Capulet are so overcome by the tragedy of the young lovers that they end their feud and make peace.

## SYNOPSIS (West Side Story)

Two rival New York street gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, are fighting over the same turf. The Jets, led by Riff, are second and third-generation "Americans," and the Sharks, led by Bernardo, are recently arrived Puerto Ricans. Riff is planning a rumble with the Sharks and seeks out Tony, formerly a leading member of the Jets who has lost interest in gang warfare and now works at Doc's drugstore. Tony reluctantly agrees to attend a settlement house dance where the Jets and the Sharks will make arrangements for a war council. At the settlement house dance the two gangs maintain a hostile truce

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and refuse to mix in spite of the efforts of Glad Hand, the social worker, to bring them together. Tony arrives at the dance and sees Bernardo's sister Maria across the room. It is love at first sight for both of them. Forgetting entirely the hostile gang members around them, they move into each other's arms and dance. Reality intrudes when Bernardo breaks them apart. Not wanting to fight with their girls present or on the neutral ground of the settlement house, Bernardo and Riff arrange for a war council at Doc's drugstore.

After the dance Tony goes alone into a back alley and looks up at the building where Maria lives. She appears on the fire escape, and she and Tony profess their love for one another. They agree to meet the next day at the bridal shop where Maria works. At midnight the Jets and Sharks confer at Doc's drugstore to establish the time, place and rules of their rumble. Tony, striving to limit the violence of the rumble, convinces each gang to choose its best fighter and have the two of them battle it out without weapons. Schrank, an unsympathetic plainclothes police officer, enters the drugstore and warns all the boys that there better not be any trouble in his district.

The next day, as agreed, Tony goes to the bridal shop where he finds Maria and Anita, Bernardo's girl friend. Although Anita believes that Maria is making a mistake by seeing Tony, she leaves the two lovers alone together. Being in the bridal shop, Tony and Maria decide that it would be fun to conduct a mock wedding, but soon they both realize that they truly mean the vows that they are exchanging.

That night the Jets and Sharks meet under the highway where Diesel, selected by the Jets as their best fighter, and Bernardo, champion of the Sharks, are preparing to fight. Tony, responding to Maria's plea to stop any fight from taking place, arrives on the scene to extend his hand in friendship to Bernardo, but Bernardo regards Tony's friendship as cowardice and insults him. Riff, leader of the Jets and Tony's best friend, becomes so enraged by Bernardo's insults that he hits him. Bernardo and Riff draw their knives simultaneously. The fight ends with Riff's death. Seeing his best friend dead, Tony, unable to restrain himself, kills Bernardo with Riff's knife. A free-for-all breaks out, but, when police sirens are heard in the distance, both gangs disperse.

Maria is waiting for Tony in the bedroom of her family's apartment when she learns about her brother's death from Chino, the boy whom her family has selected for her to marry. Chino takes a gun from the apartment and goes out to look for Tony. When Tony comes into her bedroom from the fire escape, Maria lashes out at him in anger but then, overcome by her love, falls into his arms. They consummate their love and make plans for

the future. Tony intends to borrow money from Doc, and Maria is to meet him at the drugstore so that they can run away and build a peaceful life for themselves someplace else. After Tony leaves and just before Maria is to meet him at the drugstore, Schrank arrives at the apartment and insists that she accompany him to the police station. Maria begs Anita to go to the drugstore so that Tony would understand the delay. Although grief-stricken and bitter over Bernardo's death, Anita agrees.

The Jets, who have gathered at the drugstore, prevent Anita from seeing Tony, who is in the basement with Doc. The gang members taunt Anita so unmercifully that she angrily reports Maria's death. When Tony hears this false report, he rushes into the streets seeking death at Chino's hands. To his joy Tony sees Maria in the distance. As he runs toward her, Chino appears, raises his gun and fires. Tony dies in Maria's arms as both Jets and Sharks gather around them. Maria grabs the gun, threatens both gangs, and savagely reproaches them all for killing Tony. Then, breaking into tears, she hurls the gun away and sinks to the ground. The Jets and Sharks, subdued by the tragedy and death their enmity has caused, come forward. Two Jets and two Sharks pick up Tony's body and carry him off while Maria, grief-stricken but proud, follows.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born and educated at Stratford-on-Avon. He married Anne Hathaway when he was eighteen. The following eight years are a mystery, and much has been speculated concerning his activities during this time. He reappears in London in 1588. Shakespeare's career as a successful actor and playwright in London after this time is well documented. He retired in 1611 and returned to Stratford-on-Avon where he died and was buried in 1616.

One of the crowning masterpieces of the American musical theater, *West Side Story*, was first conceived by choreographer Jerome Robbins and conductor-composer Leonard Bernstein. The book was written by Brooklyn born Arthur Laurents, a successful Broadway playwright of both musical and non-musical productions and also screen plays. A few of his well known works are *Gypsy*, *Do I Hear A Waltz?* and *Hallelujah, Baby!*

### CRITIC'S CORNER

*Romeo and Juliet*, the tender love story written by Shakespeare in 1594, is a familiar favorite to the theater, movie and television audiences in many guises. The story has been revised, adapted, and produced countless times with or

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without music, in a different setting, with or without period costumes, but always with the youthful lovers and their tragic fate.

A retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* came originally from Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein. They wanted to write a musical with a social point of view as well as perception and depth that would be a contemporary version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Six years later, in 1955, the pair discarded the Jewish-Catholic theme in favor of the American--Puerto Rican problem. The Broadway production opened in September, 1957 and ran for 734 performances. After a nationwide tour, the play was revived in New York in 1960 and in 1968. The movie version with Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer, released in 1961, was a box office success and received ten Academy Awards, including best motion picture of the year.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze dramatic structure
2. To examine the elements of tragedy in literature and life
3. To compare Shakespearean tragedy with modern musical drama
4. To observe the nature of young love as it is revealed in dramatic literature
5. To recognize the destructive effects of unreasoned hatred and social conflict
6. To determine how young people cope or fail to cope with the problems that confront them
7. To note how adults and adult authorities understand or fail to understand the needs of youth

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the parallel elements and the dissimilarities in the plots of *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*

2. To examine the actions of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* and to show how these actions lead to inevitable tragedy
3. To compare the manner in which Shakespeare develops his tragedy with the manner in which Laurents develops his
4. To observe the passionate nature of young love as it is revealed in *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*
5. To recognize that the Montague-Capulet feud and the social conflict between the Jets and the Sharks create an atmosphere in which tragedy is unavoidable
6. To analyze the characters of Romeo, Juliet, Tony and Maria and show how they cope or fail to cope with the problems that confront them.
7. To explain how well or how poorly Capulet, Montague, the Prince of Verona, Friar Laurence, Juliet's Nurse, Schrank, Krupke, Glad Hand, and Doc understand the needs of youth

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in the plays. Explain the meaning each has in these plays. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. banishment (p. 84, l. 11)

*[a decree ordering a person to leave his homeland or forbidding him to return. Prince Escalus has banished Romeo for killing Tybalt. When Romeo hears the judgment, he is distraught because the sentence separates him from Juliet:*

*Be merciful, say death;  
For exile hath more terror in his look,  
Much more than death. (p. 84, l. 12)]*

2. war council (p. 157; p. 166; p. 170; p. 171)

*[a meeting of two hostile factions in which they determine the rules of war to be observed. In this context the formal term, "war council," is used several times to refer to a meeting between the Jets and the Sharks, two teenage gangs. At Doc's Drugstore they establish the rules for their rumble. This formality illustrates the boys' seriousness about gang loyalty and honor.]*

3. star-crossed lovers (p. 19, l. 6)

*[lovers born under an unfavorable star and, therefore,*

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*doomed to destruction. Most Elizabethans firmly believed in astrology; they believed that human destiny was influenced by the movement of the stars and the planets. Romeo and Juliet's tragic fate indicated the probability that they were born under an unfavorable star.]*

4. Without a gang you're an orphan. (p. 147)

*[For Riff and the other Jets, membership in the gang is the most important thing in their lives. They live in the midst of dirt, poverty, vice and violence; they are products of broken or unhappy homes. Only in the gang can they feel security or know self-respect. Riff's dedication to the gang is expressed earlier: "I say I want the Jets to sail, to hold the sky!" (p. 142) When he sings, Riff again clearly shows that the gang is his first loyalty:*

*When you're a Jet,  
You're a Jet all the way  
From your first cigarette  
To your last dyin' day.  
When you're a Jet,  
If the spit hits the fan,  
You got brothers around,  
You're a family man!  
You're never alone,  
You're never disconnected! (p. 143)]*

5. He jests at scars that never felt a wound. (p. 49, 2. 1)

*[This is Romeo's response to the previous verbal exchange between Mercutio and Benvolio. Romeo's friend, Mercutio, is making off-color jokes about Romeo's love-struck passion. (Neither are aware that the object of his affection has shifted from mere infatuation with fair Rosaline to true love with Juliet.) After the two friends leave, Romeo compares their lack of understanding with the unintentional cruelty of those who make fun of being wounded. Love, like non-fatal wounds, can be terribly painful. A never-wounded comrade-in-arms may easily joke about a friend's wounds because he does not feel the pain. Similarly, one may ridicule a friend's love because he has never felt the intense suffering which so often accompanies romantic love.]*

6. I got a feeling there's a miracle due . . . (p. 148)

*[Unlike Romeo, who moons over the fair Rosaline before seeing Juliet at the Capulet ball, Tony has no romantic interest before the settlement house dance. However, Tony feels that something wonderful is about to happen. His mood shows us that he is ready to fall in love. Tony's feeling foreshadows the love at first sight he experiences the moment his and Maria's eyes meet:*

*Tony and Maria slowly walk forward to meet each other. Slowly, as though in a dream, they drift into the steps of the dance, always looking at each other,*

*completely lost in each other; unaware of anyone, any place any time, anything but one another. (p. 154)*

*As they dance, Tony tells Maria, "I felt, I knew something-never-before was going to happen, had to happen." (p. 155)]*

7. Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books,  
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.  
(p. 54)

*[After parting with Juliet, Romeo uses this simile to describe his feelings as a lover. He compares lovers with schoolboys. When lovers come together, they do so with the enthusiasm of schoolboys escaping from their books. Lovers part reluctantly like schoolboys returning to school. The simile not only shows a comparison but a contrast. Lovers approach each other enthusiastically and part reluctantly; schoolboys approach their studies reluctantly and part with their studies enthusiastically.]*

8. WE ALL KILLED HIM; and my brother and Riff.  
(p. 223)

*[Three boys have died violently at the hands of other boys. Bernardo has killed Riff in a knife fight; Tony has stabbed Bernardo to death with Riff's knife. (p. 193) Now Chino has avenged Bernardo by shooting and mortally wounding Tony. Although each boy has been killed by a specific individual, Maria's cry makes it clear that guilt must be shared by all. The hatred and prejudice of all the "Americans" and all the Puerto Ricans have bred the violence that ruins so many lives. At the end of Romeo and Juliet Prince Escalus also concludes that everyone must share in the guilt for the death of the young lovers:*

*Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague,  
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; all are punished. (p. 130, l. 291)]*

9. Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man. (p. 75, l. 100)

*[Even on the occasion of his own death, Mercutio cannot resist making a bitter joke. The pun, or play on words, was a popular device with Elizabethan dramatists and apparently greatly enjoyed by Elizabethan audiences. English with its multiple meanings for many words and its extensive number of homonyms is an excellent language for punning. Mercutio's pun is a play on the double meaning of "grave." As an adjective the word means serious or somber; as a noun it means tomb or burial place. Mercutio is using "grave" in the adjectival position modifying man. However, realizing that he has been*

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*fatally wounded, he means he will be in his grave tomorrow.*

*The play on words is still evident in dramatic literature. The most humorous song in West Side Story, which follows the tragic deaths of Riff and Bernardo, derives part of its humor from the double meanings which can be attached to certain words and phrases:*

### A-RAB

*In my opinion, this child don't need to have his head shrunk at all. Juvenile delinquency is purely a social disease.*

### ACTION

*Hey, I got a social disease! (p. 208)*

*Here the boys are playing on the two meanings of "social disease."*

10. You saw how they dance; like they have to get rid of something quick. That's how they fight. (p. 181)

*[Anita is saying that the boys' tremendous energy and intense emotion bottled up within them must be released. When the release, comes, it is impulsive and explosive. Frustrated and hemmed in by poverty and prejudice, the boys find one outlet in wild dancing. A rumble provides another means of directing their pent-up anger against a world they did not make. The Sharks and the Jets regard each other as the embodiment of their hatred. Unable to fight back at a hostile society, they fight each other. Readers must decide for themselves whether or not Anita's explanation justifies the violence of a rumble.]*

## COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the two plays.

### Questions 1 - 5 Literal Level

1. What is the nature of the feuds in *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*?

*[The feud in Romeo and Juliet is between two noble families of Verona, the Montagues and the Capulets. The young men of both families frequently engage in sword fighting in the streets of Verona. This street violence culminates in the death of Romeo's friend, Mercutio, and Juliet's cousin, Tybalt. (pp. 75-77) Shakespeare does not reveal the cause of the Montague-Capulet feud, nor does he show any significant difference in the social status of either family.*

*The gang warfare in West Side Story grows out of the*

*hostility between two ethnic groups. The Jets consider themselves "Americans." They are the children of earlier immigrants to New York's West Side. Tony, for example, is of Polish descent. The Sharks are the children of the more recently arrived Puerto Rican immigrants. The Jets regard the Sharks as unwanted interlopers on their "turf." The Sharks feel that they have just as much right to the streets as the Jets. They meet violence with violence. Riff, Bernardo and finally Tony die as a result of their gang warfare. The Jet-Shark feud is much more clearly motivated than the Montague-Capulet feud. Another significant difference between the two feuds is that the warring factions in Verona are of the nobility while the Jets and Sharks are deprived youths from the lowest level of society.]*

2. Compare the Capulet ball with the dance at the settlement house.

*[The ball and the dance occur early in both plays and provide a kind of neutral ground for the warring factions. Although Romeo is an uninvited guest, Capulet will not violate the laws of hospitality by allowing Romeo to be harmed while a guest in his house. (p. 43) At the settlement house Glad Hand with the help of Officer Krupke maintains an uneasy peace between the Jets and the Sharks. (p. 153) The ball and the dance are the occasions for both pairs of lovers to meet and fall in love at first sight. The only essential difference between the two events is that the Capulet ball is a rich, lavish affair held in a palace; the settlement house dance is a comparatively plain, much less formal occasion held in a converted gym in a poor neighborhood.]*

3. How does Romeo try to keep the peace in Verona? How does Tony try to prevent a rumble? Is Romeo or Tony successful?

*[Having fallen in love with Juliet, Romeo wants very much to obey the prince's commands and avoid any fighting with Juliet's kinsmen. He tries desperately to prevent a duel between Mercutio and Tybalt. Romeo's interference gives Tybalt the opportunity to run Mercutio through with his sword. (p. 75) Enraged over his friend's death, Romeo then kills Tybalt. (p. 77)*

*Tony, who now loves Maria, attempts to act as peacemaker between the Jets and the Sharks. Like Romeo, he fails. Tony's shout causes Riff to hesitate and gives Bernardo the opening to stab Riff. In the melee that follows Tony kills Bernardo. (p. 193) Both young men lack the experience or the skill to be effective peacemakers.]*

4. What plan is put into operation so that Romeo and Juliet can live together happily? How do Tony and

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Maria plan to live out their lives happily? How are both plans foiled?

(Even though romeo has killed Tybalt and Tony has killed Bernardo, both pairs of lovers hope and plan to be forced into marriage with Paris. He provides he with a potion that, when taken, will give the appearance of death. Friar Laurence also sends a letter of explanation to Romeo, who then could come and free Juliet from her tomb. The lovers could escape from Verona and live together in exile. (pp. 102-104) instead of receiving Friar Laurence's message. Romeo hears from Baltasar that Juliet is dead. (p. 116) Friar John, the bearer of Friar Laurence's letter, is accidentally delayed. (p. 119) Distraught over Juliet's death, Romeo purchases poison, enters her tomb, and drinks the poison. (pp. 122-123) When Juliet awakes and finds her beloved dead she takes her own life. (p. 126).

*After Bernardo's death, Tony and Maria plan to meet at Doc's drugstore and then run away. (p. 212) After Tony and Maria part, Schrank appears and insists that Maria accompany him to the police station. Maria sends Anita to Doc's with the message that she has been delayed. After suffering vile abuse from the Jets, Anita maliciously lies by saying that Chino has shot and killed Maria. (pp. 216-219) When he hears this lie, Tony rushes out seeking death at Chino's hands. Then he sees Maria alive, but, before he can reach her, Chino shoots him down. Tony dies in Maria's arms. (p. 223) A capricious fate destroys Romeo and Juliet. Fate combined with malice ruins Tony and Maria's chance for happiness.]*

5. Identify the following pairs of characters in *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*. The first character in each pair is taken from *Romeo and Juliet*; the second from *West Side Story*. When identifying these pairs of characters, compare their functions in both plays. (a) Mercutio--Riff (b) Tybalt--Bernardo (c) Paris--Chino (d) Friar Laurence--Doc (e) Prince Escalus--Schrank.

*[a. Mercutio, a witty young man, is Romeo's close friend and a firm supporter of the Montagues in their feud. Unaware of Romeo's love for Juliet and still filled with hatred for the Capulets, Mercutio duels with Tybalt and dies as a direct result of Romeo's interference.*

*Riff, leader of the Jets and Tony's close friend, has nothing but hatred for all Sharks. After Bernardo insults Tony, Riff attacks the Shark leader with a knife. Riff is killed when Tony tries to stop the fight.*

*b. Tybalt is Juliet's hot-headed cousin whom Romeo*

*kills to avenge Mercutio's death. Even though Tybalt is a kinsman, Juliet forgives Romeo.*

*Bernardo, whom Tony kills in hot blood, is Maria's brother. Because Maria feels very close to her brother, her first reaction is to hate Tony, but her love is so great that she forgives him.*

*c. Paris, a nobleman of Verona, is the young man that Juliet's parents intend her to marry. Capulet attempts to force his daughter to marry Paris. Later Romeo is forced to kill Paris in a duel outside Juliet's tomb. Chino is a quiet Puerto Rican boy who intends to marry Maria. It is Chino who shoots down Tony to avenge Bernardo's death.*

*d. Friar Laurence secretly marries Romeo and Juliet. He tries to help the young lovers escape Verona and find happiness. An accident foils his plan.*

*Doc, Tony's employer, helps Tony by providing a hiding place where he can wait for Maria and by giving him money to run away. Doc's help proves as useless as that of Friar Laurence.*

*e. Prince Escalus, the ruler of Verona, is the authority figure who forbids dueling between the Montagues and the Capulets. The prince's attempts to keep the peace are ineffective.*

*Schrank, a police officer, is the chief authority figure in *West Side Story* and is also ineffective in preventing violence between the warring factions. Schrank is a much less noble character than the prince; in fact, Schrank's prejudice contributes to the atmosphere of hatred.*

*Readers should readily see that these pairs of characters have parallel roles in the two plays.]*

### Questions 6 - 8 Interpretive Level

6. Compare Romeo and Juliet with Tony and Maria. How are the lovers similar? How are they different?

*[Both Romeo and Tony are young men, probably in their late teens. Juliet is only fourteen, and, although Maria is somewhat older, she, like Juliet, is innocent, having recently arrived from Puerto Rico. The lovers in both plays are members of warring factions and fall deeply in love at first sight in spite of the hostility of their respective families and friends. Because of their youth and inexperience, neither couple is able to cope with the violence that threatens and finally overwhelms them.*

*Unlike Romeo and Juliet, who are married by Friar Laurence, Tony and Maria never legally marry. However, they do make personal vows to one another in the bridal shop. (pp. 184-185) Readers may regard this private ceremony as a kind of parallel to Romeo and Juliet's marriage. A truly significant difference between*

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*the two pairs of lovers is their social backgrounds. Although the Montagues and the Capulets are feuding, there is no real difference in the social position of the two families. Romeo and Juliet are members of the privileged class with identical cultural backgrounds. Tony and Maria, on the other hand, are from poor families with different ethnic backgrounds.*

*The nature of the lovers' tragedy is also somewhat different. Romeo and Juliet are basically victims of fate and suffer individual tragedy. Tony and Maria's tragedy, although partially the result of Anita's malice, is primarily a social tragedy. Also, only one lover dies--Tony--and Maria survives to grieve for him.]*

7. Are Romeo and Juliet at all responsible for the tragedy that overwhelms them? Are Tony and Maria responsible for their tragedy? Explain.

*[Reader opinion may vary on Romeo and Juliet's degree of responsibility for their own tragedy. Certainly, they are not responsible for the Montague-Capulet feud. Nevertheless, Romeo himself contributes to the violence on Verona's streets by killing Tybalt in revenge for Mercutio's murder. In spite of his love for Juliet and his fervent desire for peace between their families, Romeo lacks the kind of self-control necessary to avoid a fight with Tybalt. Some readers may feel that Juliet must bear part of the responsibility for their tragedy. She lacks the courage to defy her father or to reveal her secret marriage. Therefore, she resorts to a death simulating drug to avoid marriage to Paris. Perhaps Romeo and Juliet are simply too young to realize that immediate escape from Verona offers them their only hope for lasting happiness. They wait too long, and fate intervenes to destroy them.*

*Readers may also draw a variety of conclusions about Tony and Maria's responsibility for their tragedy. Like Romeo, Tony kills in anger in spite of his desire for peace. Although Maria is a somewhat stronger personality than Juliet, she is naive in believing that the rumble between the Jets and the Sharks can be prevented. The prejudice and violence of their environment are too much for them. Because of their youth and inexperience, they lack those qualities of leadership and diplomacy to avoid tragedy.]*

8. Is there any hope for future peace between the warring factions at the end of either play? Give reasons for your opinion.

*[The prospect of future peace is clearly indicated at the end of Romeo and Juliet. Grief-stricken over the deaths of their children, Capulet and Montague make their peace:*

### CAPULET

*O brother Montague, give me thy hand.  
This is my daughter's jointure, for no more  
Can I demand.*

### MONTAGUE

*But I can give thee more,  
For I will raise her statue in pure gold,  
That while Verona by that name is known,  
There shall no figure at such rate be set  
As that of true and faithful Juliet.*

### CAPULET

*As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie,  
Poor sacrifices of our enmity. (p. 130, 1. 296)*

*Whether or not the young men of the feuding families will respect this peace may be a matter for speculation, but the conciliatory words that end the play strongly suggest that peace will now reign in Verona.*

*The prospect of peace between the Jets and the Sharks at the end of West Side Story is hinted rather than clearly indicated. As Tony lies dead, Maria makes a mute appeal for peace:*

*Maria now turns and looks at Chino, holds her hand out to him. Slowly he comes and stands by the body. Now she looks at Action, holds out her hand to him. He, too, comes forward, with Diesel, to stand by the body. Pepe joins Chino . . . . Music starts as the two Jets and two Sharks lift up Tony's body and start to carry him out. The others, boys and girls, fall in behind to make a procession, the same procession they made in the dream ballet, as Baby John comes forward to pick up Maria's shawl and put it over her head. (p. 224)*

*The audience can hope that the Jets and Sharks have learned their lesson about the destructive power of blind prejudice. However, the conditions--the deprivation and ethnic differences--that bred the gang warfare still exist.]*

### Questions 9 and 10 - Critical Level

9. In your opinion, which play--Romeo and Juliet or West Side Story--has greater social relevance? Why?

*[Opinions may vary, but most readers will probably find West Side Story the more socially relevant play. First of all, it has a modern, recognizable setting. Tony and Maria are modern teen-agers with whom readers can readily identify. Unlike the Montagues and Capulets, who are socially alike, the Jets and the Sharks represent a social problem that still exists today. The conflict and lack of understanding between certain racial and ethnic groups continues to explode frequently into violence.*

*Whichever play readers regard as the more socially*

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relevant, they can reasonably conclude that both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* illustrate the disastrous consequences of senseless street-warfare. The blind hatred in both plays destroys love and leads to inevitable tragedy.]

10. Which of the two plays would you rather see produced? Give reasons for your preference.

[Either preference should be accepted. Many readers might prefer to see *West Side Story*, agreeing with Norris Houghton, who states in his introduction, "As a rule, the texts of musicals make unsatisfying reading. They are skeletons that need music and dancing, color and light to flesh them out. *West Side Story* is no exception." (p. 8) Houghton develops this idea further in the same paragraph:

... comparison of the contemporary play (*West Side Story* with its Renaissance predecessor (*Romeo and Juliet* forces one to remark that frequently its music and its dance pick up where its text leaves off, to lift it toward the heights of poetic rhapsody that Shakespeare's verse accomplishes unaided.

There may be some readers who would prefer to see *Romeo and Juliet* produced. A well-performed production could help them overcome the hurdle of the less familiar language. Shakespeare's flights of imagination and glorious poetry may need to be heard to be appreciated fully. As evidence of this, one could cite the recent film version of *Romeo and Juliet* which used teen-aged actors in the lead roles. This film was well received by young audiences.]

### Questions 11 - Creative Level

11. Both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* illustrate the disapproval of family and friends that occurs when two people from hostile groups fall in love. Write an essay or a short story describing the problems that might confront young lovers today who come from different racial, ethnic, religious, or economic backgrounds. What troubles might they expect? How could such lovers successfully overcome their difficulties?

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Dramatize parallel scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*. The following are possible choices:
- the Capulet feast — the settlement house dance
  - Romeo below Juliet's balcony — Tony at Maria's fire escape
  - Romeo and Juliet's secret marriage — Tony and Maria's exchange of vows at the bridal shop
  - the street fight involving Tybalt, Mercutio and Romeo — the rumble under the highway

2. Play excerpts from recordings of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*
3. Write alternative endings for *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* in which the lovers avoid tragedy and find happiness. Prepare scripts for these endings and present them before the class. Decide which endings are better — the original or the rewritten.
4. Debate the following statement:  
Adults are unsympathetic to the needs of youth.

### ALTERNATIVES FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Prepare a bulletin board display, using sketches, drawings or photographs of scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*
2. Conduct a research project on the Elizabethan theatre. Specific areas of research might be the following:
- The Globe Theatre
  - Dramatic Conventions in the Elizabethan Theatre
  - The Elizabethan Audience
  - Shakespeare's Life and Work
  - The Sources for *Romeo and Juliet*
3. Construct a model of the Globe Theatre and identify the acting areas.
4. Topics for discussion or composition:
- The Problems of Teenage Love and Marriage
  - Teenage Gangs
  - Social Conflict in Modern America

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[Commentary on *West Side Story*, especially the music and the choreography]



**ROMEO AND JULIET  
WEST SIDE STORY**

**TEST A**

**Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)**

Match each underlined word with its definition listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. . . . he was ware of me, and stole into the covert of the wood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The date is out of such prolixity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Romeo doff thy name, and for thy name which is no part of thee, take all myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. O swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon, that monthly changes in her circled orb.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy be heaped like mine, and that thy skill be more to blazon it, then sweeten with thy breath this neighbour air.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Gentlemen, for shame, forbear this outrage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade to waned ashes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Such mortal drugs I have . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Bernardo carries a chip on his sardonic shoulder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It's just his neurosis that oughta be curbed.

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| a. put off, discard | g. bitterly scornful |
| b. deadly           | h. waited            |
| c. proclaim         | i. mental illness    |
| d. proximity        | j. stop              |
| e. pale             | k. hidden place      |
| f. sphere           | l. wordiness         |

**Part II: True or False (10 points)**

In the space provided write true if the statement is completely true or write false if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Romeo falls in love with Juliet because the fair Rosaline has rejected him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Juliet's nurse is a good and wise woman whose advice helps the young lovers in their quest for happiness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Friar Laurence believes that Romeo and Juliet's marriage may put an end to the Montague-Capulet feud.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Friar Laurence gives Juliet a deadly potion so that she can avoid marrying Paris by committing suicide.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The lovers in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* cannot cope with the hatred and violence around them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Even before meeting Maria, Tony has lost his enthusiasm over being a Jet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bernardo is ashamed because he is Puerto Rican.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Maria begs Tony to run away before the Jets and the Sharks rumble.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Although bitter and grief-stricken over Bernardo's death, Anita goes to Doc's drugstore with the intention of telling Tony why Maria has been delayed in meeting him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. *West Side Story* has greater social significance than *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The best dramatic label for *Romeo and Juliet* is (a) melodrama (b) tragicomedy (c) tragedy of fate (d) tragedy of character.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Montague-Capulet feud is (a) the result of their social differences (b) a power struggle for control of Verona

**ROMEO AND JULIET**  
**WEST SIDE STORY**

Test A continued

- (c) the result of Romeo and Juliet's marriage (d) never clearly motivated.
- \_\_\_ 3. Tybalt's character may be best described as (a) hot-tempered (b) slow to anger (c) cowardly (d) witty.
- \_\_\_ 4. The climax of *Romeo and Juliet* is (a) Romeo and Juliet's balcony scene (b) Romeo and Juliet's wedding ceremony (c) the fight in which Mercutio and Tybalt are killed (d) the death of Paris.
- \_\_\_ 5. When Romeo hears the report of Juliet's death, he (a) buys poison (b) vows to kill Paris (c) seeks his own death at the hands of Paris (d) looks for Friar Laurence to determine whether or not the report is true.
- \_\_\_ 6. At the settlement house dance Glad Hand (a) wants the Jets and the Sharks to mix socially (b) tries to keep the Jets and the Sharks apart (c) calls the police when a fight breaks out on the dance floor (d) arranges a war council between the Jets and the Sharks.
- \_\_\_ 7. To solemnize their love Tony and Maria (a) go to a priest to be married secretly (b) exchange private vows at the bridal shop (c) run away to be married by a justice of the peace (d) go to Doc's drugstore where they promise to love each other forever.
- \_\_\_ 8. Tony kills Bernardo because Bernardo (a) refuses to let him see Maria (b) calls him a coward (c) attacks him with a knife (d) kills Riff.
- \_\_\_ 9. Anita tells the Jets at Doc's drugstore that (a) she will kill Tony (b) Maria has been detained by Schrank (c) Chino is dead (d) Maria is dead.
- \_\_\_ 10. At the end of *West Side Story* future peace between the Jets and the Sharks is suggested by (a) the new leaders of each gang promising to end their warfare (b) two Jets and two Sharks lifting Tony's body and starting to carry him out (c) Schrank and Krupke arresting the biggest trouble makers in each gang (d) both gangs going to Doc's drugstore to settle their differences peacefully.

Part IV: Parallel Scenes (10 points)

Five of the ten scenes or situations from *Romeo and Juliet* listed below have parallels in *West Side Story*. In the space provided check those that are paralleled in the modern musical.

- \_\_\_ 1. Romeo's expression of love for the fair Rosaline
- \_\_\_ 2. the Capulet feast
- \_\_\_ 3. Romeo and Juliet's balcony scene
- \_\_\_ 4. Romeo and Juliet's wedding
- \_\_\_ 5. Mercutio's and Tybalt's death
- \_\_\_ 6. Romeo's banishment
- \_\_\_ 7. Capulet's insistence that Juliet marry Paris immediately
- \_\_\_ 8. Juliet's taking the drug that simulates death
- \_\_\_ 9. Romeo's suicide
- \_\_\_ 10. Juliet's suicide

Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. To what extent, if any, are the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* responsible for their tragic fate? Support your conclusions with evidence from both plays.
2. Compare or contrast the Montague-Capulet feud with the Jet-Shark gang warfare.

ROMEO AND JULIET  
WEST SIDE STORY

TEST B

Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

Match each underlined word with its definition listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Why such is love's transgression.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Where's Potpan, that he helps not to take away? He shift a trencher? He scrape a trencher?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain, deny what I have spoke.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. My words would bandy her to my sweet love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. . . . any man should buy the fee-simple of my life for an hour and a quarter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Give me some aqua-vitae.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Shall I believe that unsubstantial Death is amorous, and that the lean abhorred monster keeps thee here in dark to be his paramour?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. All this I know, and to the marriage her nurse is privy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Schrank has a charming, pleasant manner, which he often employs to cover his venom and his fear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. This child is depraved, on account he ain't had a normal home.
- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| a. poison             | g. wooden plate           |
| b. gladly             | h. liquor                 |
| c. lover              | i. shovel                 |
| d. offense            | j. hit back and forth     |
| e. aware of a secret  | k. utterly without morals |
| f. absolute ownership | l. hopeful                |

Part II: True or False (10 points)

In the space provided write true if the statement is completely true or write false if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The cause of the Montague-Capulet feud is never satisfactorily explained.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Juliet's cousin Tybalt tries to make peace between the Montagues and the Capulets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Paris, the nobleman whom Capulet wants Juliet to marry, is a likeable and admirable young man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The Prince of Verona banishes Romeo for breaking the peace and killing Tybalt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The lovers in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* are fully responsible for their own tragic fates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Riff believes that nothing is more important than being a Jet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Schrank and Krupke are sympathetic toward the Jets and the Sharks because they realize that society is to blame for their gang warfare.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. At their war council Bernardo and Riff agree to settle their differences with a knife fight.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* ends with the deaths of both young lovers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The hatred between the Jets and the Sharks is more clearly motivated than the Montague-Capulet feud.

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Most of the dialogue in *Romeo and Juliet* is written in (a) flowery prose (b) blank verse (c) rhymed couplets (d) free verse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The personification of law and order in Verona is (a) Capulet (b) Montague (c) Friar Laurence (d) the Prince.

**ROMEO AND JULIET  
WEST SIDE STORY**

Test B continued

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Romeo's friend and confidant who tries to help him and Juliet find happiness is (a) Friar John (b) Friar Laurence (c) Benvolio (d) Mercutio.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Romeo kills Tybalt because Tybalt (a) is a Capulet (b) has insulted him (c) has mortally wounded Mercutio (d) has forbidden him to see Juliet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Friar Laurence provides Juliet with a drug that she can use (a) to poison Paris (b) to commit suicide (c) to forget Romeo (d) to counterfeit her death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When Capulet and Montague find the bodies of Romeo and Juliet in the tomb, they (a) blame the Prince for failing to keep the peace (b) promise to honor each other's loss by erecting golden statues (c) vow to continue their feud until one or the other of their houses is completely destroyed (d) weep over the foolishness of young lovers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Riff and Bernardo's final decision at their war council is to have (a) a free-for-all without weapons (b) a free-for-all with any weapons available (c) the best man in each gang fight without weapons (d) a knife fight between the two leaders.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Maria is delayed in meeting Tony at Doc's drugstore because (a) Schrank insists on her going to the police station (b) Chino locks her in her bedroom (c) Anita physically restrains her (d) her parents come home and she is unable to leave the apartment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When Tony hears the report of Maria's death, he (a) takes poison from Doc's drugstore (b) vows revenge against Chino (c) assumes leadership of the Jets and promises to drive the Sharks from their turf (d) runs into the street seeking death at Chino's hands.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When Tony dies, Maria blames (a) the Sharks for his death (b) the Jets for his death (c) herself for his death (d) all of them for his death.

Part IV: Parallel Characters (10 points)

Certain characters in *Romeo and Juliet* have their counterparts in *West Side Story*. In the space following each of the Shakespearean characters listed below write the name of the corresponding character in *West Side Story*.

1. The Prince of Verona \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mercutio \_\_\_\_\_
3. Tybalt \_\_\_\_\_
4. Friar Laurence \_\_\_\_\_
5. Paris \_\_\_\_\_

Part V: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. In what ways are *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* similar? How do the two plays differ?
2. Who is responsible for the tragic consequences in both *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*? Support your opinion with evidence from both plays.

**ROMEO AND JULIET  
WEST SIDE STORY**

**ANSWER KEY**

**TEST A**

**Part 1: Vocabulary (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. k | 6. j  |
| 2. l | 7. e  |
| 3. a | 8. b  |
| 4. f | 9. g  |
| 5. c | 10. i |

**Part II: True or False (10 points)**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. false | 6. true  |
| 2. false | 7. false |
| 3. true  | 8. false |
| 4. false | 9. true  |
| 5. true  | 10. true |

**Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a  |
| 2. d | 7. b  |
| 3. a | 8. d  |
| 4. c | 9. b  |
| 5. a | 10. b |

**Part IV: Parallel Scenes (10 points)**

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| 1.   | 6.   |
| 2. ✓ | 7.   |
| 3. ✓ | 8.   |
| 4. ✓ | 9. ✓ |
| 5. ✓ | 10.  |

**TEST B**

**Part 1: Vocabulary (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. h  |
| 2. g | 7. c  |
| 3. b | 8. e  |
| 4. j | 9. a  |
| 5. f | 10. k |

**Part II. True or False (10 points)**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. true  | 6. true  |
| 2. false | 7. false |
| 3. true  | 8. false |
| 4. true  | 9. false |
| 5. false | 10. true |

**Part III. Multiple Choice (20 points)**

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. b  |
| 2. d | 7. c  |
| 3. b | 8. a  |
| 4. c | 9. d  |
| 5. d | 10. d |

**Part IV: Parallel Characters (10 points)**

1. Schrank
2. Riff
3. Bernardo
4. Doc
5. Chino

**ROMEO AND JULIET**  
**WEST SIDE STORY**

**TEACHING NOTES**

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