

“Romeo and Juliet”

By
William Shakespeare



Study Guide

Before The Show

Synopsis

Verona is home to two feuding noble houses, the Montagues and the Capulets. In response to the constant brawling between members of these families, the Prince of Verona has issued an edict that will impose a death sentence on anyone caught dueling. Against this backdrop, young Romeo of the house of Montague has recently been infatuated with Rosaline, a niece of Capulet. Rosaline is quickly forgotten, however, when Romeo and his friends disguise themselves and slip into a masque ball at Capulet's house. During the festivities, Romeo catches his first glimpse of Juliet, Capulet's daughter. In one of Shakespeare's most memorable scenes, Romeo steals into the garden and professes his love to Juliet, who stands above on her balcony. The two young lovers, with the aid of Friar Lawrence, make plans to be married in secret.

Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, later discovers that Romeo has attended the ball, and he sets out to teach the young Montague a lesson at the point of his sword. Romeo is challenged by Tybalt, but tries to avoid a duel between them since he is now married to Juliet (making Tybalt a kinsman). Mercutio, Romeo's best friend, takes up Tybalt's challenge and is killed in the ensuing fight. Enraged, Romeo slays Tybalt in turn. As a result of this bloodshed, the Prince proclaims that Romeo is to be banished from Verona for his actions. Romeo has time to consummate the marriage and bid farewell to Juliet, though he hopes to be reunited with her once the Capulets learn that they are man and wife.

The Capulets, meanwhile, press for Juliet to marry Paris, a cousin to the Prince. Juliet, relying again on Friar Lawrence, devises a desperate plan to avoid her parent's wishes. She obtains a drug that will make her seem dead for forty-two hours; while she is in this state, Friar Lawrence will send word to Romeo of the situation so that he can rescue her from her tomb. Unfortunately, fate will not be so kind; the letter from Friar Lawrence is delayed. Romeo instead hears

second-hand news that Juliet has died. Grief-stricken, Romeo purchases poison and hastens to Juliet's tomb to die at her side. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence has discovered to his horror that his letter did not arrive, and he means to take Juliet away until he can set things aright.

At the tomb, Romeo encounters Paris, who mourns for Juliet. Romeo slays Paris, then enters the tomb and downs his poison. As Friar Lawrence comes upon the scene, Juliet awakens only to find the lifeless body of her beloved Romeo lying beside her. Juliet takes the dagger from Romeo's belt and plunges it into her heart. Upon this scene, the Prince arrives—along with the Montague and Capulet parents—demanding to know what has happened. Friar Lawrence relates to all the tragic tale of Romeo and Juliet's secret marriage and their senseless suicides. The Montagues and Capulets, when faced with the terrible price that their feud has exacted, vow to put an end to the enmity between their two houses.



Characters

Montagues

Romeo...sole heir to the Montague fortune
Lord Montague...Romeo's father
Lady Montague...Romeo's mother
Benvolio...Romeo's cousin
Balthasar...Romeo's faithful servant
Abraham...Montague servant

Capulets

Juliet...sole heir to the Capulet fortune
Lord Capulet...Juliet's father
Lady Capulet...Juliet's mother
Tybalt...Juliet's cousin
The Nurse...Juliet's Nurse
Peter...Capulet servant

Sampson...Capulet servant
Gregory...Capulet servant

Additional Characters

Friar Lawrence...friend, advisor to Romeo and Juliet
Mercutio...Romeo's good friend; Prince's kinsman
Prince Escalus...Prince of Verona
Paris...Juliet's would be fiancé; Prince's kinsman
Rosaline...Romeo's first love
Friar John...Friar Lawrence's friend
Apothecary...A seller of arcane potions

Famous Quotes

- Romeo: He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
- Benvolio: By my head, here come the Capulets!
Mercutio: By my heel, I care not.
- Tybalt: Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford no better term than this: Thou art a villain.
- Juliet: Romeo, what's here? Poison? Drunk all, and left no friendly drop to help me after?
- Tybalt: Peace? Peace. I hate the word, as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.
- Juliet: O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon, who monthly changes in her circled orb, lest that thy love prove likewise variable.
- Prince: For never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo.
- Mercutio: A plague o' both your houses!
- Romeo: I am Fortune's fool!
- Juliet: You kiss by the book.
- Sampson: I will bite my thumb at them, which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.
- Juliet: My only love sprung from my only hate! Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

- Juliet: Goodnight, goodnight! Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow.
- Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
- Juliet: That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.
- Romeo: But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
- Romeo: I defy you, stars!
- Mercutio: Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.
- Apothecary: My poverty, but not my will, consents.
Romeo: I pay thy poverty, and not thy will.



Vocabulary

Words with which your students may wish to be familiar:

Prologue	Pernicious
Augmenting	Grievance
Transgression	Heretics
Cunning	Procure
Vile	Predominant
Intercession	Sallow
Waver	Lamentable
Unwieldy	Gallant
Fray	Martial
Exile	Eloquence
Fickle	Pensive
Vial	Enjoined
Wayward	Dismal
Loathsome	Pilgrimage
Remnants	Apothecary
Penury	Haughty
Sepulcher	Tomb
Ambiguities	Scourge

After The Show

Topics for Discussion

Encourage your students to share their thoughts about the production. Ask them why they think they reacted the way they did.

- 1.) Romeo and Juliet are often referred to as "star crossed lovers". What do you think this means?
- 2.) Given the short amount of time that Romeo and Juliet knew each other, do you think it is possible that they really loved each other?
- 3.) Romeo, Juliet, their parents, the Prince, and Friar Lawrence all blame themselves for the tragedy. Who do you think is most to blame and why?
- 4.) Both Romeo and Juliet defy the will of their parents in marrying each other. Do you think they were justified in their behavior? How might the play have ended differently if they had been obedient?

Quiz

- 1.) With whom is Romeo in love before he meets Juliet?
- 2.) Where do Romeo and Juliet first meet?
- 3.) Who, besides Romeo, wants to marry Juliet?
- 4.) Who arranges for Romeo and Juliet to be married?
- 5.) Which character does Tybalt kill when Romeo refuses to fight him?
- 6.) How does Juliet die?
- 7.) What punishment does Romeo receive for killing Tybalt?



Classroom Activities

1.) Would a car have saved Juliet?

Find Verona and Mantua on a map of Italy. Calculate the distance that Romeo and Friar John had to travel. How long would it take them to walk at an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour? How long would it take us to cover the same distance today with modern transportation?

2.) Speaking Shakespeare

Select a section of lines from the play. Create two columns on a piece of paper. In column one, write Shakespeare's lines. In column two, rewrite them, trying as closely as possible to reproduce the meaning of Shakespeare's text in your own words reflecting the syntax and structure of the original.

3.) Shakespeare's Verse

The most common meter used in Shakespeare's verse is iambic pentameter. It consists of a line ten syllables long that are accented on every second beat.

The following lines in iambic pentameter are from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*:

Īn sóoth, /Ī knów/nōt why/Ī ám/sō sád.

Īt wéa/riēs mé;/yōu sáy/Īt wéa/riēs yóu...

Try going around the class and have every student improvise a ten-syllable sentence in iambic pentameter.

4.) Create a Classroom Newspaper
Review with the students how to write a newspaper article. Then have them write about events in the play. Headlines might include, "New Brawl Upsets City Streets", "Prominent Local Citizen Banished", "Rash of Secret Weddings Plagues Verona" or one of their own. Have each student create an illustration to accompany his or her article.

When they are done compile the articles and art pieces into a classroom newspaper. Make enough copies for everyone in the class and if you like, the cast would love to receive a copy!

You can send them to:



TBA Theatre
P.O. Box 241104
Anchorage, AK 99524

