

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare



Act One <i>Fights and a Party</i>	The Prologue establishes the family feud and outlines the consequences for the two lovers. - There is fighting between two rival families, which is stopped by the Prince. - Romeo is unhappy because Rosaline, the object of his affections, doesn't love him. - Paris asks Lord Capulet for Juliet's hand in marriage, but Capulet tells him that she is not ready. Lord Capulet throws a ball. - Romeo and his friends crash the Capulet ball with the hopes of seeing Rosaline. This angers Tybalt. - Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love at first sight.
Act Two <i>A Secret Marriage</i>	- In the Capulets' Garden, Romeo overhears Juliet thinking aloud about how much she likes Romeo but is the son of her family's enemy. Romeo talks to her, and they decide to get married. - Romeo asks Friar Lawrence for help – he agrees to marry them. - Romeo meets Mercutio and Benvolio, and they tease the Nurse who gives a message to Romeo from Juliet - After the Nurse tells Juliet the plan to marry that afternoon, they get married in secret.
Act Three <i>Deaths</i>	- Tybalt kills Mercutio in a fight; in revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince exiles Romeo from Verona as punishment. - R & J spend the night together before R leaves the city. - Juliet's parents tell her that she must marry Paris in two days, but she tells them she can't. during an intense argument.
Act Four <i>Plans and Potions</i>	- Juliet asks the Friar to help, whose plan involves faking her death. - Using Friar Lawrence's potion, Juliet fakes her own death. Friar Lawrence sends Romeo a letter telling him about the plan and to rescue her from her family tomb. - Juliet's family think she's dead so bury her in the family tomb.
Act Five <i>Unhappy Ending</i>	- Romeo doesn't get the Friar's letter. He believes J to be dead and goes to her tomb to kill himself after buying some poison. - Paris sees Romeo going to the tomb, they fight, and Romeo kills Paris. He places Paris' body in the tomb, lies next to Juliet and drinks the poison. - Friar Lawrence finds out that Romeo didn't get the letter so goes to the tomb. As he arrives, Juliet wakes up. Juliet refuses to go with him, and he doesn't want to get into trouble for Romeo's death, so the Friar leaves. - When Juliet realises that Romeo is dead, she kills herself. - Everyone comes to the tomb, where the Friar has to explain what has happened. - Grieving, Montague and Capulet realise that their feud has caused the suicides of their children so agree to make peace.

Context:

Verona: R & J set in Verona in the fourteenth century. Verona was a rich, lively, cultured city but had been afflicted by violence for centuries. Political leaders clashed with religious leaders for power, status and wealth and many people were obliged to take sides.

Women: Society in the 16th century was patriarchal: men were dominant, and women were inferior and expected to marry as young as 12. Noblewomen like Juliet would have received some education but there was little freedom in most areas of life for women. Lower class women received no education, and many would have worked as some sort of servant.

Queen Elizabeth I: Provided a powerful example of a strong female in a male-dominated society, living by rules established by men. She was not representative of women in wider English society and was celebrated as an exceptional woman. Admired by Shakespeare and led England to great wealth, prosperity, and national confidence.

Tragic Hero: *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy and the characters of Romeo and Juliet can be seen as *tragic heroes* (main character whose downfall brought about by own actions or *tragic flaw*). Both are guilty of loving too much and too quickly and acting too rashly.

The Plague: Elizabethan England and Renaissance Verona were badly affected by outbreaks of the painful, deadly, and contagious 'black death'. Many parents (including Shakespeare) lost children to the plague, and it provides a metaphor for Mercutio's final curse as the Montagues and Capulets all lose children. Romeo doesn't get the letter because Friar John is detained for fear he may have the plague.

Tragic Genre:

Tragedy means-

1. An event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress
2. A play dealing with events of this kind, creating an unhappy ending, with a downfall of the main character.

Tragedy is a genre of story in which a hero is brought down by his/her own flaws, usually by ordinary human flaws – flaws like greed, over-ambition, or even an excess of love, honour, or loyalty. Shakespearean tragedies usually end with the death of the protagonist, which restores harmony to the community.

Tragic Terms:

Protagonist
Antagonist
Downfall
Tragic Villain
Tragic Hero
Dramatic Irony
Patriarchy
Catharsis
Anagnorisis
Peripeteia
Hubris
Hamartia



Key Characters:

- **Romeo:** Well-respected Montague. Falls in love with the daughter of his family's enemy and marries her in secret – kills her cousin in a rage and commits suicide wrongly believing Juliet to be dead.
- **Friar Lawrence:** Like a father to Romeo – wise, trusted, tries to help but actions lead to R&J's deaths.
- **Mercutio:** Romeo's friend, playful, witty but aggressive – gets caught in the middle of the feud.
- **Benvolio:** Romeo's loyal cousin, peacemaker and opposite to Tybalt.
- **Prince Escalus:** Represents law and order, impartial and fair.
- **Juliet:** 13-year-old Capulet. Defies family and gender expectations to marry the son of her family's enemy – overcome by grief at Romeo's death and commits suicide.
- **Capulet:** Feuding with Montague. Begins as doting father but becomes aggressive and controlling.
- **Lady Capulet:** Not particularly close to her daughter, defers to her husband.
- **Nurse:** Devoted nanny to Juliet, talkative, well-meaning but irresponsible.
- **Tybalt:** Juliet's cousin- aggressive and consumed with hatred for the Montagues

Themes:

Love – Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight. Their young love is genuine but destructive and impulsive. Romeo's 'love' for Rosaline is a passing infatuation and he learns what true love is. There are numerous references to sex and Romeo and Juliet's relationship reflects physical desire too. Courtly love is mocked as lacking passion.

Conflict and Honour – Personal and family reputation was crucial in the 16th Century. Honour is important to all the characters – they can't ignore insults and have to defend the honour of their family. Characters like Benvolio and the Prince show how difficult it is to avoid the feud.

Gender – Women in the play are able to exert little influence. Capulet sees Juliet as his property and feels that she should be grateful for the match with Paris. Juliet is aware that virtue and chastity were more important to women than men and they had to be chaste to secure a good marriage. Men were expected to be logical rather than emotional.

Family and Marriage – Wealthy people often married not for love but for money, power, and status. Juliet is torn between her duty to her family and her desire for happiness. Romeo and Juliet are willing to give up their families for marriage.

Fate – The prologue establishes the idea that fate is to blame for the actions in the play. Many instances of luck impact on the characters.

Religion – Provided a set of moral rules to live by and represented by Friar Lawrence who is trusted by all. Suicide is seen as a 'mortal sin'. Religious imagery is often used by characters.

Quotes:

'A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life' (Prologue)

'My child is yet a stranger in the world' 'She is the hopeful lady of my earth' (Act 1 Sc 2)

'It is too rough, Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like a thorn' (Act 1 Sc 4)

'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright' 'Did my heart love till now?' 'I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall, Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter'st gall!' 'O! I am Fortune's fool' 'If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding bed'

'My only love, sprung from my only hate! Too early seen unknown and known too late!' (Act 1 Sc 5)

'But soft what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun' 'O, Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?'

'Deny thy father and refuse thy name' 'Swear not by th' inconstant moon' 'Parting is such sweet sorrow' (Act 2 Sc 1)

'For this alliance may so happy prove, To turn thy households' rancour to pure love' (Act 2 Sc 2)

'These violent delights have violent ends' (Act 2 Sc 5)

'O calm, dishonourable, vile submission' 'A plague o'both your houses!' 'O sweet Juliet, thy beauty hath made me effeminate' 'fire-ey'd fury be my conduct now' 'Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill' (Act 3 Sc 1)

'Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch!' (Act 3 Sc 5)

'Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink: I drink to thee.' (Act 4 Sc 3)

'My lady's dead! Oh curse the day that I was born!' (Act 4 Sc 5)

'Thus with a kiss I die' 'O happy dagger, This is thy sheath: there rust, and let me die' 'All are punished' 'For never was there a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo' (Act 5 Sc 3)

Techniques:

Adjective, verb, simile, metaphor, repetition, enjambment, juxtaposition, contrast, oxymoron, adverb, imperative, imagery, iambic pentameter, blank verse, sonnet, suspense, allusion, chorus, foreshadowing, dramatic irony, humour, monologue, soliloquy.

Symbolism and Motifs

Light and dark imagery, religious imagery, nature imagery, poison and death, night and dreams.

Key

Vocabulary:



Scene

Dialogue

Character

Protagonist

Antagonist

Elizabethan

Tragedy

Genre

Prologue

Sonnet

Verona

Patriarchal

Feud

Monologue

Conflict

Honour

Gender

Masculinity

Femininity

Marriage

Fate

Destiny

Courtly

Romantic

Maternal

Paternal

Poison

Suicide

Humour

Ambiguity

Predicament

Unease

Shakespeare's

Purpose:

- Actions have consequences.
- We should appreciate the love we have.
- We should take note of omens.
- Children should have more freedom.
- Conformity to the expectations of society.
- Devastating impact of conflict.