



Discovery Guide 2014



Romeo and Juliet

Directed by Lesley Schisgall Currier

Costume Design – Abra Berman Lighting Design – Jackson Currier

Properties Design - Joel Eis Set Design – Jackson Currier

Sound Design – Billie Cox Fight Director - Richard Pallaziol

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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare from Stratford-Upon-Avon, England, lived from 1564 to 1616. *Romeo and Juliet* was first published in the year 1597 and seems to have been written around the same time as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard II*; 1595 to 1596.

Shakespeare's primary source was an English poem by Arthur Brooke called *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). The 1996 film version, *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes is the most successful of all films based on one of Shakespeare's plays.

DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS

Romeo and Juliet is one the greatest plays ever written with beautiful poetry and language which deeply touches our emotions. The theme of teenage rebellion is universal; lies to parents, sneaking around, keeping secrets, making bad decisions, getting into trouble, and authority figures who try to help but often fail.

The style of the play is a black and white world in which the passion of the Romeo and Juliet brings color to the world. They speak in oxymorons; opposites coexisting at the same time ("sweet sorrow"). The world of which their parents speak of doesn't seem right once they meet and fall in love.

The word "passion" comes from the Latin word for "suffering" – a strong and barely controllable emotion which brings with it incredible pleasure and intense sadness; an emotion that colors our black and white world with a palette of brilliant highs and lows.

The Story of Romeo and Juliet

In Verona, Italy, two noble families – the Capulets and the Montagues – have been feuding enemies for a long time; nobody remembers exactly why but the violence is as fresh as it happened yesterday.



When two Capulet servants brawl in the street with two Montague servants, the Prince of Verona decrees that further public violence will result in death for the perpetrators.



Romeo (age 17) has not been coming home nights and his friend, Benvolio, learns that Romeo is hopelessly in love with a girl who spurns his advances, causing his sadness. Benvolio tells Romeo to forget her and consider other young beauties of Verona.



Meanwhile, Lord Capulet purposes a marriage arrangement for his daughter Juliet with Count Paris, and invites Paris to a party that night to meet Juliet (age 13).



Romeo and Benvolio learn of the party and make a plan to join the festivities in order to see Romeo's love, Rosaline, who is invited to the party.

As Lady Capulet prepares Juliet to meet Count Paris, we learn that Juliet's Nurse has a bawdy sense of humor and is delighted that Juliet will soon marry.



Romeo and Benvolio meet up with friends, including the volatile Mercutio, and the young men plan to crash the Capulet party, disguised in masks because they are Montagues.



At the party, Romeo sees Juliet and immediately forgets Rosaline – who? Romeo and Juliet touch hands, then kiss, then discover they have each fallen in love with an enemy.



Later that night, in the street, Tybalt (Juliet's cousin), who saw Romeo at the party, challenges Romeo to a duel. Romeo refuses to fight his love's cousin. An incensed Mercutio pulls his sword on Tybalt and is accidentally dealt a fatal blow when Romeo steps in to stop them.



Romeo then kills Tybalt and is banished from Verona after secretly marrying Juliet.

In the face of Tybalt's death, Juliet is forced to marry Count Paris but refuses. Her father threatens to cast her out into the streets.



The Friar who married Romeo and Juliet hatches a plan to give Juliet a potion that will induce a death-like state to avoid marrying Count Paris. The plan goes horribly wrong when Romeo returns to find his love “dead” and kills himself. Juliet wakes up to find Romeo really dead and kills herself to be with her Romeo forever after.



Characters in Romeo and Juliet

Scene – Verona, Italy, home of an ancient feud between
the Capulets and the Montagues

Lord Capulet – Juliet's Father
Lady Capulet – Juliet's Mother
Juliet, their only daughter
Tybalt, her cousin
Nurse to Juliet
Peter, a servant
Gregory, a servant
Old Capulet, a relative

Lord Montague – Romeo's Father
Lady Montague – Romeo's Mother
Romeo, their son
Benvolio, his friend
Mercutio, another friend, kinsman of the Prince
Balthazar, Romeo's page
Abraham, a servant

Prince of Verona
Count Paris, an eligible bachelor
Friar Lawrence
Friar John
Apothecary, maker of potions

DISCUSSION IDEAS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

1. What are the similarities and differences between *Romeo and Juliet* as Shakespeare wrote it and Marin Shakespeare Company's *Romeo and Juliet*? (or a film version of the play you may have watched)
2. How does music/dance help to tell the story in *Romeo and Juliet*?
3. What other time and/or place might *Romeo and Juliet* be set in?
4. What is the relationship like between Romeo/Juliet and their parents? How do they act towards one another?
5. What would it be like to be a parent? Do you like your child? Do you worry about them?
6. How are the Capulets and the Montagues different from each other?
7. What is an "enemy"? What does it mean to be an enemy?
8. Have you ever been "picked on" by another? How did that feel? How did you react to the situation?
9. Have you ever been to another country or a foreign, unfamiliar place? How did that make you feel?
10. How might the play end differently?

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET

1. Students pretend to be a character from the play: Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio, Lord or Lady Capulet, Prince, Nurse, etc. Students can use gestures and short vocalizations, different walks or dance moves, etc.
2. Pair of students take turns pretending to be Parent/Teen: "Where were you last night? Go to bed! Clean your room!"
3. Students pretend to be enemies. What does that look and feel like? How do you express animosity towards another? No violence, please.