



Romeo & Juliet

Discovery Guide for Teachers

Marin Shakespeare

Teen Touring Company 2012

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About the Teen Touring Company

Marin Shakespeare's Teen Touring Company is open by audition to teenagers from all over the Bay Area. The Teen Company offers free performances to schools and senior centers in Marin County and beyond, performing a different Shakespearean play each year. This year we are presenting *Romeo and Juliet*. This famous story of a love doomed to fail has been treated in many different ways. It has been adapted for ballet and opera and has inspired dozens of popular songs. In *West Side Story* we see the story become a tragic interracial love affair. A modernized film version, "William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet", stars Leonardo Di Caprio and Claire Danes as the "star-crossed lovers." Marin Shakespeare's Teen Touring Company have created their own black and white version of the play to share with you.

The plot of *Romeo & Juliet* is easy to follow, however, some of Shakespeare's language may be challenging for students unfamiliar with Elizabethan English. This is where the art of acting comes in to effect. When actors perform plays on the stage the audience is able to grasp concepts easier than if they have only read the plays on the page. We hope your students, by watching the unfolding of Shakespeare's great story in performance by their peers, will gain a greater appreciation for and enjoyment of *Romeo and Juliet*.

About the Play

The story of Romeo and Juliet was popular in various printed versions in Shakespeare's day, the first version having appeared in Italian in 1476. Of course, the idea of star-crossed lovers goes back much earlier to stories such as Pyramus and Thisbe, Hero and Leander and Troilus and Cressida (all of which appear in various Shakespeare plays.) Scholars believe Shakespeare's play was written in 1594. It was certainly a product of his mid-career, when his writing skills had become polished and his poetic structure most balanced. Earlier Shakespeare plays show an evolving dramatic talent; later plays show a complexity of ethical dilemma and use of language. *Romeo and Juliet* is Shakespeare at his most glorious use of poetic language. One example of this is that when the two lovers first meet, their dialogue forms a complete sonnet.

Plot Synopsis~Romeo & Juliet

*“Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean...” - Prologue*

Shakespeare begins the play with another sonnet that outlines the story of the play.

The two chief families in Verona are the rich Capulets and the equally wealthy Montagues. There is an old quarrel between them, that extends to the followers of both sides. Fierce words and sometimes bloodshed ensue when there is an encounter between a Montague and a Capulet, thus disturbing the happy, quiet streets of Verona.

“At this same ancient feast of Capulet’s sups the fair Rosaline whom thou so lovest, with all the admired beauties of Verona: Go thither; and, with unattainted eye, compare her face with some that I shall show, and I will make thee think thy swan a crow!”- Benvolio to Romeo

At the home of Old Lord Capulet there is a great supper and every noble in Verona is invited, except the Montagues. Benvolio encourages Romeo, the only son of Lord Montague, to go to the feast to see Rosaline, Romeo’s unrequited beloved. In going to the supper Benvolio hopes that Romeo will fall out of love with Rosaline when he notices the other beautiful girls of Verona.

“Did my heart love till now? foreswear it, sight! For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.”- Romeo

Romeo is suddenly struck with the exceeding beauty of a lady who he sees dancing. Romeo begins speaking out loud these praises for this young maid when Tybalt, a nephew of Lord Capulet, recognizes the voice of the young Montague. Tybalt intends to kill Romeo but is stopped by Lord Capulet, who doesn’t want bloodshed at his party. Tybalt, forced to be patient against his will, restrains himself, but swears that Romeo will pay for his intrusion.

“If I profane with my unworhiest hand this holy shrine, the gentle fine is this: My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.” – Romeo

The dancing being done, Romeo watches for the lady; and disguised by his mask, he proceeds in the gentlest manner to take her by the hand, calling it a shrine. They are both instantly in love with each other and their words form a perfect sonnet, as they compare their love to holy sacraments.

Plot Synopsis~Romeo & Juliet ~ Page 2

*My only love sprung from my only hate! Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me, that I must love a loathed enemy.”- Juliet*

Unfortunately, Romeo and Juliet soon discover that they are in love with their alleged enemy. Romeo cannot go back to his home that night, his heart still belongs wherever Juliet is. He climbs over the orchard wall of the House of Capulet and speaks of his love for Juliet, only to overhear Juliet on her balcony saying how much she loves him.

*“O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard. Being in night, all this is but a dream, Too
flattering-sweet to be substantial.” - Romeo*

Through their encounter on Juliet’s balcony they swear their undying love for one another, and become engaged to be married the next day.

*“Holy Saint Francis, what a change is here! Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear,
so soon forsaken? young men’s love then lies not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.”
- Friar Lawrence to Romeo*

Romeo reveals his new passion for Juliet to Friar Lawrence and this confuses the Friar because he thought Romeo was in love with Rosaline. Friar Lawrence has tried for years to end the quarrel between the two feuding families and agrees to marry Juliet to Romeo in hopes that their marriage will end the quarrel. That same day, Romeo’s friends, Benvolio and Mercutio, are walking through the streets of Verona and meet Tybalt and other kinsmen of the Capulets. A quarrel starts brewing between Tybalt and Mercutio when Romeo walks onto the scene.

*“Romeo, the hate I bear thee can afford no better term than this,--thou art a villain.”
- Tybalt*

Tybalt wants to kill Romeo for coming to the Capulet dinner the night before, but Romeo will not fight Tybalt because he doesn’t want to hurt anyone Juliet loves. Thus, Mercutio begins to fight with Tybalt.

*“A plague o’ both your houses! ‘Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to
death! a braggart, a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the devil
came you between us? I was hurt under your arm.” - Mercutio to Romeo*

While Romeo is trying to stop the two from fighting, Mercutio is stabbed by Tybalt. With his best friend dead, Romeo becomes enraged and steps up to Tybalt’s challenge.

Plot Synopsis~Romeo & Juliet ~ Page 3

“O, I am fortune’s fool!” – Romeo

Romeo and Tybalt fight and Tybalt falls to his death. Romeo can’t believe that after everything was going so well with Juliet, he has committed such a crime as murder. When everyone hears of the brawl all the citizens of Verona come to bear witness to what sentence the Prince will pass on young Romeo. After hearing the story from the eyewitness, Benvolio, the Prince decides to banish Romeo from Verona forever. Before he leaves for Mantua, Romeo visits Juliet and consummates their marriage.

“Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch! I tell thee what: get thee to church o’ Thursday, or never after look me in the face: Speak not, reply not, do not answer me; My fingers itch. Wife, we scarce thought us blest that God had lent us but this only child; But now I see this one is one too much, and that we have a curse in having her: Out on her, hilding!” - Lord Capulet on Juliet

Romeo has not been gone a day, before the Old Lord Capulet proposes a match for Juliet. The husband he had chosen for her -- not dreaming that she is already married -- is Count Paris, a gallant, young, and noble gentleman. Juliet pleads not to marry Paris, but her father orders her to marry Paris that Thursday.

“Hold, daughter: I do spy a kind of hope, which craves as desperate an execution. If, rather than to marry County Paris, thou hast the strength of will to slay thyself, then is it likely thou wilt undertake a thing like death to chide away this shame, that copes with death himself to scape from it: And, if thou darest, I’ll give thee remedy.” - Friar Lawrence

Juliet goes to the Friar for counsel, intent on killing herself rather than marry Paris. Friar Lawrence offers her a sleeping potion that makes her look like she is dead. The Friar says she will awaken after her family carries her to the tomb, where all the dead Capulet’s bodies are laid out. The Friar will write to Romeo, who will come and take her away with him. Juliet decides to follow this plan, and drinks the potion.

“Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee to-night. Let’s see for means: O mischief, thou art swift to enter in the thoughts of desperate men! I do remember the apothecary,--” – Romeo

News of the plan, however, never reaches Romeo, so when he hears Juliet has died, he believes his true love is really dead; he vows to die by her side that very night. Romeo knows of an apothecary who carries every deadly poison, and buys a lethal dose to take with him to Verona.

Plot Synopsis~Romeo & Juliet ~ Page 4

“O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.” – Romeo

Romeo enters Juliet’s tomb and sees her supposed dead body. He takes the potion and dies after kissing his beloved one last time. Juliet wakes, and sees her husband dead.

“Yea, noise? then I’ll be brief. O happy dagger! This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die.”- Juliet

Not wanting to live without Romeo, Juliet decides to stab herself with Romeo’s dagger and kill herself.

“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 punish’d.”- Prince

The discovers what has happened, and puts the blame on the old Lords for having kept the feud going between the families for so many years. Then the fathers, realizing their hate has killed their only children, decide to make peace. They will make gold statues of one another’s children in hopes that Romeo and Juliet will be remembered forever for ending the war between the families -- and to remind the fathers of the costly lesson they have learned.

*A glooming peace this morning with it brings
The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head:
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardon’d, and some punished:
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Romeo and Juliet

Montagues:

Lord Montague ~ The leader of the house of Montague, sworn enemy of the Capulets.

Benvolio ~ Best friend to Romeo, his name means "well wisher." He never begins any fight with a Capulet, but will fight if he needs to in order to break up a brawl. He brings Romeo to the Montague feast hoping to snap him out of his love fantasy.

Mercutio ~ Best friend to Romeo, not afraid to start a fight with any of the Capulets. A joker, he always has some dark, witty retort to anyone who dares challenge his intelligence. His name comes from the word "mercurial" -- quickly changing.

Romeo ~ The only son of Lord Montague. He lives in a fantasy world where he always has a true love. "Virtuous and well-govern'd youth."

Capulets:

Lord Capulet~ The leader of the house of Capulet, sworn enemy of Montague.

Lady Capulet~ Wife to lord Capulet and mother to Juliet. She forces the idea of marriage into Juliet's head, and always tries to do what her husband wants.

Nurse~ Very loving and outspoken, the confidante of Juliet who is always ready to help whenever Juliet wishes.

Tybalt~ Juliet's fiery cousin who hates Montagues like he hates hell. He has no desire to be friendly or peaceful with anyone; he only hates.

Juliet~ The only daughter of Lord Capulet, who is not yet fourteen years old and has to already be thinking of getting married.

Citizens of Verona:

Friar Lawrence~ Spiritual advisor of the Montagues and the Capulets, as well as all of Verona. He wants to end the quarrel between the two families. He is also a gardener, and knows a lot about medicinal herbs.

Prince~ Makes the laws of Verona, passing judgement on all criminals of the city. He wants Verona to be a peaceful place.

Lesson Plans

Figurative Language Alive: Balcony Scene Charades

What To Do

1. Break students up into groups of three.
2. Give each group a line of figurative language from the balcony scene, written on a 5x7 index card. These lines are provided below. If the students are less familiar with the play, you might want to write the ten quotes on the blackboard.
3. Each group has three minutes to plan how they will represent the ideas as charades for the rest of the class. They need to act out the line of poetry without using words.
4. When the students are ready, have each small group act out its line, while the rest of the class guesses which quote they are performing.
5. When the audience has finished guessing (successfully or not), ask a member of the group to say the quote or write the line on the board.
6. Wrap up with a discussion on the power of the images in the balcony scene, and the different ideas of love. (If you are studying poetic analysis, you can ask the students to identify specific examples of different figures of speech.)
7. EXTENSION EXERCISE: Ask the students to create a list of love images from popular songs and do the exercise again. This should lead to a discussion of how love imagery is both universal and different over the past 400 years.

What You Need

Handout of lines from 2.2
10 5x7 cards or blackboard

How Did It Go?

Did the students have fun both acting out and guessing the lines? Were they successful in identifying specific lines and examples of figures of speech from the text? If you tried the extension activity, what did the students learn about how Shakespeare's expression of love compares and contrasts with contemporary expressions of love?

“Here’s Much to do with Hate, but more with Love”:

Types of Love in Romeo and Juliet

What to Do

1. In a large group discussion, students will brainstorm the types of love they see represented by characters in the first two acts of the play. These should include:
 - a. **unrequited love**: Romeo for Rosaline, Paris for Juliet
 - b. **romantic love**: Romeo and Juliet
 - c. **parental love**: Lord and Lady Capulet for Juliet, Lord and Lady Montague for Romeo, Nurse for Juliet
 - d. **friendship**: Romeo and Benvolio, Romeo and Mercutio, Romeo and Friar Lawrence, Nurse and Juliet
 - e. **love of family honor**: Tybalt, Mercutio, Romeo
2. Assign students in pairs or small groups to find and cite examples from the text that illustrate each of these types of love. For example, Romeo’s crush on Rosaline could be illustrated by the lines, “She has forsworn to love, and in that vow/ Do I live dead that live to tell it now” (1.1.231-2)
3. When they have found a number of examples from acts one and two, have the students share their findings with the class by reading them aloud and providing line citations for each category of love.
4. You can then do the *Figurative Language Alive* exercise with the new group of quotes the students have generated.
5. What other types of love can the students discover in the play. For example, love of self becomes very important to both Tybalt and Mercutio in 3.1; it may also motivate the fears behind Juliet’s soliloquy in 4.3.

What You Need

A text of *Romeo and Juliet*

How Did It Go?

Were the students able to list, define, and apply to characters in the plays different kinds of love? Were the students able to find solid textual evidence and cite lines from the play to illustrate types of love as they apply to *Romeo and Juliet*?

Figurative language from Romeo and Juliet 2.2- The Balcony Scene

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon!

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls.

There lies more peril in thine eyes than twenty of their swords.

I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes.

It is too rash...like the lightning which doth cease to be ere one can say it lightens.

This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, may prove a beautiful flower.

My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep.

Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books, but love from love toward school with heavy looks.

Study Questions

Things to think about when watching the play

1. How many different kinds of love are there in this play?
2. Different groups are at war during the play: the Montagues and the Capulets, the older characters versus the younger ones. What is the relation between love and war?
3. How does this ancient story of Romeo and Juliet relate to things happening in the world today?

Things to think about after watching the play

1. What was the most memorable part of the play for you?
 2. Who was your favorite character and why?
 3. Do you think the lovers would have died at the end of the story had they told their parents about their secret marriage? Was Juliet a dutiful daughter or not? Should she have lied to her parents?
4. What would you have done to help or save the lovers had you been in Friar Lawrence's or the Nurse's situation?
5. Who is right and who is wrong in the play? Are things black and white in the play? Did the costume and set design add to the story? Did it make you think about black and white, right and wrong, in different ways?
6. In your opinion, what is the most important lesson that this story offers?