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Mr. Coleman wrote several background essays for *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the informational notes found at the bottom of most pages.

About This Program

This program was designed to help you discover the world of Shakespeare and in particular the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare's plays were meant to be seen and heard. In his day, rowdy audiences responded to them with applause, tears, and jeers. The plays were printed mainly for the use of actors, so naturally students did not study them as they do today.

This book takes the fear out of studying Shakespeare and puts back the fun. Our approach to *Romeo and Juliet* is different in several important ways.

- Every student will be creating a character or persona that will live within the context of the play. You will participate every day, not just the days you are reading the part of one of the characters with lines in the text.
- You will find that Shakespeare is not that difficult, contrary to what you might have heard. We have provided you with a number of guiding features, such as on-page plot summaries,

word and phrase definitions, and historical insights, to help you with the places that might be troublesome.

- By examining the thoughts of the characters through improvisation and then applying your understanding of the character's actions to the script, you will speak and hear the words of Shakespeare as he intended. You'll find that the words on these pages come to life when the art of theatre is used to study them.



Have fun with this program. While you probably won't mount a full production of *Romeo and Juliet*, you will learn to hurl insults Shakespearean-style (you vile, lean-witted cur!). You will learn to use hand and body gestures, expressive speech, and blocking (simple movements) as you read. If you trust yourself and jump

into examining this world through the eyes of Shakespeare's characters and your own personas, you will truly have a Shakespeare-ience.

Strategies for Reading Shakespeare

You will find many features in this book designed to help you understand Shakespeare’s language. In addition, there are some basic reading strategies that active readers use for all types of text. As you prepare to read *Romeo and Juliet*, you may find the following strategic plan useful.

Preview. First, to get a general idea of the events in the play, “read the edges” of the text. Read the summaries at the top of each page. Then skim the definitions and questions in the side margins and examine any images that appear. This will give you a general idea of what the text is about before you actually begin to read it.

Visualize. Try to put yourself “into” the Renaissance by picturing the setting in your mind’s eye. Try to envision how the characters might look and sound as they move within their surroundings. Studying images and reading through the setting and stage directions will help to fire up your imagination.

Read. Read a page using the side notes to help with difficult words and phrases. Go back and reread the page a second time or as many times as necessary until you can understand the text without using the side notes. You should expect that this will be more difficult in the beginning and take

more time than reading modern writing, but don’t be discouraged. Most students find that comprehension becomes easier and easier as the play goes on.

Connect. Active readers often make connections with the text. An event in their reading might remind them of something that happened to them or a friend, or they might see similarities between the text and a movie, book, or TV show they have seen. Also, because Shakespeare is quoted so frequently, readers are likely to come across familiar phrases and sayings.

Evaluate. As you read, evaluate the characters’ words and actions and form opinions about them. Do you agree or disagree with how they act? What are their motives? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Do certain actions make you change your mind about a character?

Enrich. Surround your study of *Romeo and Juliet* with humor and high-interest material. The notes at the bottom of most pages and the essays at the back of the book provide background information. The “Tales from the Stage” feature contains colorful theatrical anecdotes. The suggestions for props and in-class staging also help to immerse you in Shakespeare’s world.

Preparing for Speaking Parts

At least once during your study of *Romeo and Juliet*, you will be assigned a speaking part to perform for an upcoming class. In order to feel comfortable in this role and to respect the efforts of other students reading with you, you will need to prepare beforehand. If you are unsure about how to do this, try using the following plan.

Comprehend. Make sure you understand the meaning of what your character says. If you are unsure, use the reading strategies on page 12.

Analyze. Determine your character's attitude during the scene. What mood is he in? Does this mood change during the scene? Are her thoughts and what she says the same? Or does she say one thing and mean another? What is your character's motivation? What does he want? What is his attitude toward other characters in the scene? Is there a conflict? What is it?

Plan. Decide how you will use your body and voice to create your character. What gestures will you use? Where and when will you move? How will you use your voice? Changes in the tempo (fast, slow); pitch (high, low); and quality (nasal, raspy, etc.) of your voice can help the audience understand your character. If needed, you can put sticky notes in your text to remind you of where you want to change your voice or move.

Practice. You probably won't have a chance to rehearse with others in your scene, but you should still practice your own part. Ask a friend or family member to read lines with you and/or videotape you. You can also practice reading your part in front of a mirror and/or into a tape recorder.

Warm Up. Here are a few exercises to make your voice and body more flexible and responsive.

- Stand tall and inhale on a count of four; hold your breath for a count of four; and then exhale on a count of eight. Make sure that your shoulders are relaxed and do not rise up as you breathe. Your lower stomach area should be slowly moving out as you inhale, and in as you exhale.
- Next, repeat the same exercise and while you are exhaling, hum the letter M. You will feel a tingle in your face from the vibration of the sound. After you have done this several times, try a few tongue twisters. Here is one to start with:

Amidst the mists and coldest frosts,
With stoutest wrists and loudest boasts,
He thrusts his fists against the post
And still insists he sees the ghosts.

- Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend over slowly and reach for or touch the floor. Relax and breathe. Bend your knees more and then straighten your legs slowly. Slowly round up your body to a standing position. Repeat the whole exercise twice.

Act and React. As you present your scene, remember to face the "audience" and speak loudly enough to be heard throughout the room. If you hold your book up, your voice will project out and not down into the book. Finally, listen, really listen, to what the other characters are saying so that you can respond realistically and pick up cues promptly.

How to Have a Shakespeare-ience

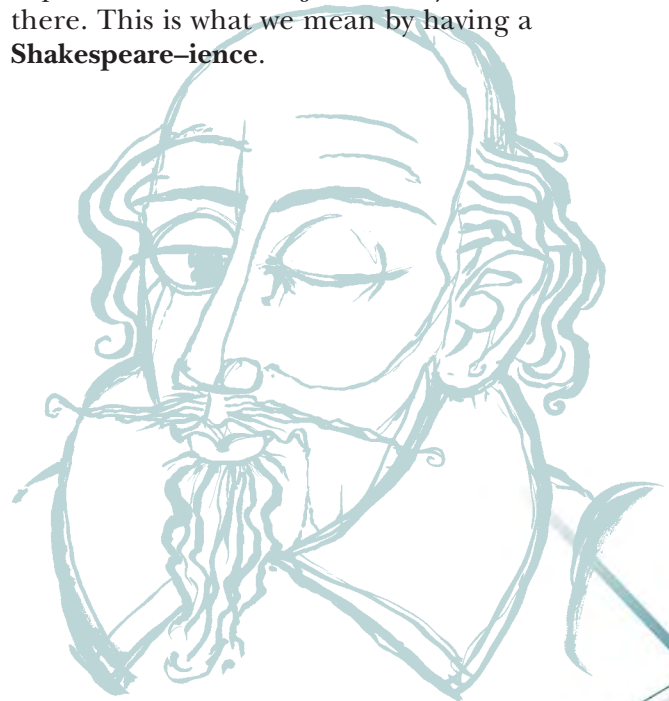
There is an old saying that to really understand someone you need to walk a mile in his or her shoes. This study of *Romeo and Juliet* borrows from that old adage by asking you to study this play by becoming a character from 14th-century Verona. You will “walk” for many days in that person’s “shoes.”

By seeing the world of Verona through eyes other than your own, you will gain a new perspective and interact with other characters that shape that world. Not all of the characters that you create actually speak within the text of the play, but all are affected by the circumstances and actions of the speaking characters. So you may not be Romeo, but you may be his attendant or Valentine, Mercutio’s brother. You may not be Juliet, but you may be Rosaline or Juliet’s maid.

All of you will be part of the action of the play, and from time to time will be called upon to be one of the traditional speaking characters as well. In addition, you will be creating events and situations that are only implied by the action of the play. For example, there is a masquerade banquet and dance that takes place at the Capulet house. If you were a servant to the Capulets, what would your duties be in preparing for the festivities? And if you were to create a scene that happens just before or just after the banquet with the other servants, what do you think would be the focus of that scene? And,

as the story of the play unfolds, how do the various events that take place affect you and your world?

You will be discovering what life was like in the world of Verona hundreds of years ago. The creation of your character, or **persona**, as we will call it throughout the rest of this book, will be based on elements in the text, historical information, human nature, and your imagination. You will discover the events that influenced the lives of the people of this Italian town and ultimately played important roles in the unfolding of this story. By being immersed this way in the story and the play, you will experience *Romeo and Juliet* as if you were there. This is what we mean by having a **Shakespeare-ience**.



Choosing Your Persona

There are dozens of people that make up the population of Verona, as seen in the following lists. Your instructor may assign one of these characters to you or may ask you to choose your own. In either case, you will begin with only a name or occupation. It will be your job to develop this persona and turn him or her into a

complete character. You will begin by answering questions and developing a personality profile for your persona. The easiest way to keep track of your character is to use a journal. As the play progresses, you will find questions and directions, labeled **Persona Journal** and **Persona Action**, which will guide you.

Nonspeaking Characters Mentioned in the Play

Signor Martino	Lucio	Sisters of County	Daughters of Capulet's
County Anselme	Rosaline, cousin to	Anselme	Uncle
Signor Placentio	Juliet	Widow Vitruvio	Livia
Valentine, brother of	Signora Martino, wife	Nieces of Signor	Helena
Mercutio	of Signor Martino	Placentio	
Signor Valentio, cousin	Daughters of Signor	Wife of Capulet's Uncle	
of Tybalt	Martino		

Citizens of Verona

The following people make up Verona's population. They include all kinds of occupations, all ages, and all levels of society. They may be neutral or they may sympathize with either the Capulets or the Montagues.

Cook	Apothecary	Painter	Money maker
Masker	Ink maker	Barber	(coinage)
Watchman	Wine maker	Candle maker	Goldsmith
Attendant	Church official	Serf/peasant	Scribes
Page	Small landowner	Scribe	Soap maker
Squire	Guard stable keeper	Baker	Fishmonger
Jester	Potter	Soldier	Hatters
Secretary	Farmer	Carpenter	Cabinet maker
Copyist	Mule driver	Steward (oversaw lord's	Lawyer
Astrologist	Street cleaner	estate)	Merchant
Maid	Tailor	Craftsman	Dye worker
Dueling master	Furrier	Blacksmith	Inn keeper
Physician	Shoemaker	Beekeeper	Butler
Seamstress	Tannery worker	Shepherd	Master of Falconry and
Embroiderer	Mill worker	Hunter	the Hunt
Launderer	Beer maker	Tax collector	Jester
Crier	Olive oil maker	Rent collector	Count/Countess
Weaver	Roofer	Toll collector on rivers,	Duke/Duchess
Emissary	Stone mason	bridges, or roads	
Musician	Iron/lead worker	Notary	
Minstrel	Wood carver	Banker	

Understanding Improvisation

It is possible that you have heard the word improvisation in connection to theatre, music, stand-up comedy, or dance. Improvisation may sometimes be referred to as role-playing. In this study of *Romeo and Juliet*, improvisation exercises before each scene will be used as a discovery tool to explore the characters and the events in the play.

Literally, to improvise is to speak or act out a situation without a script or preconceived way of presenting the scene. You are given the framework of the situation such as the conflict and the characters, and without advanced planning, you make up the scene dialogue spontaneously. In the situations you examine, you must find a way to resolve the conflicts and overcome the obstacles in order to accomplish the objectives of the characters. Your concentration should be directed toward the situation and the other participants, while you keep an open mind about what your character is experiencing. In addition, be receptive to any new information introduced by your partner(s). An honest reaction on your part is what is expected.

Improvisation trains people to think on different levels. It helps develop imagination, concentration, self-esteem, self-confidence, observation skills, listening skills, problem-solving skills, and thinking skills.

The following exercises will introduce you to the process of improvisation.

Partner Activities

- You meet someone and fall in love instantly. Now tell them.
- You tell a trusted friend that against your parent's wishes, you are going to marry someone they hate.
- Tease a friend about someone they have fallen in love with.

- Respond to someone who has insulted your best friend.
- Warn your best friend about someone they are interested in dating.

Group Activities

With a group of seven to ten students, improvise waiting in an express checkout line (only ten items) at a grocery store. One customer has more than ten items, and their friend keeps bringing more items as you wait. The checkout person is working their first day after completing training.

With a group of ten to fifteen students, improvise a situation where a local radio station is doing a remote location set-up, and as a promotion is giving away tickets to an upcoming concert. There are only three pairs of tickets to give away, and more than ten people show up to win them. Each person must convince the DJ to give him or her the tickets.

Romeo and Juliet Warm-ups

- Capulet and Lady Capulet are making a list of guests for the feast, and planning all of the other details for the party.
- Romeo is convincing his parents that he should be allowed to go out that evening (without telling them he is going to the Capulet party).
- Romeo tries to explain to his parents where he has been all night.
- Romeo begins to speak to his parents about the Capulet feud, intending to test the waters about dating Juliet.
- Rosaline sees Romeo talking to Juliet and now decides that she wants Romeo for herself. She plans what to do to win him back while discussing her thoughts with a friend.
- Romeo tries to talk to Benvolio about his love for Juliet.

Welcome to Renaissance Verona!

It is July, and you are a citizen of Verona, a city in northern Italy. You have awakened on this wonderful summer morning and begun your day. You make your way to the town square for a reason in keeping with the occupation and/or social status of your persona: to shop, to sell, to meet a friend, to hear the latest gossip, to go for a walk, and so forth. You enter the square and mime your chosen task. Keep in mind that Verona has not been peaceful for quite a while, due to a long-standing feud between two important Veronese families—the Capulets and the Montagues. This feud has forced many people to take sides and has made the whole town tense.

As you go about your morning's business and quietly improvise conversations with other townsfolk, someone instigates a mild verbal confrontation with another citizen. You look around to see what is taking place, and "in persona," you enter into the disagreement by hurling insults at others. Gradually, three distinct groups begin to form—those who side with the Capulets (who gather on the side of the classroom closest to the door), those who favor the Montagues (who are on the opposite side of the room), and a third group that is, for the time being, neutral

(grouped at the back of the classroom). Safe within the protection of your group, you continue to hurl insults at the other two groups.

When the activity ends, answer the following questions in your Persona Journal.

- What were you doing before the confrontation began?
- How did it start?
- Which group did you join?
- How did you react to the insults directed towards you?
- Were you surprised by the reactions of others in your group? in the other groups?



Romeo *and Juliet*

ACT I



Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film of *Romeo and Juliet*.

*“A pair of
star-cross’d
lovers . . .”*

Cast of Characters

THE HOUSE OF CAPULET

JULIET

LORD CAPULET her father

LADY CAPULET her mother

NURSE servant to Juliet

PETER servant to the Nurse

TYBALT first cousin to Juliet and nephew to Lady Capulet

2 CAPULET Capulet's kinsman

SAMPSON servant to Capulet

GREGORY servant to Capulet

POTPAN servant to Capulet

other SERVANTS

THE HOUSE OF MONTAGUE

ROMEO

LORD MONTAGUE his father

LADY MONTAGUE his mother

BENVOLIO first cousin to Romeo and nephew to Lord Montague

BALTHASAR servant to Romeo

ABRAHAM servant to Montague

OTHERS

CHORUS actor who introduces Acts I and II

ESCALUS prince of Verona

PARIS young nobleman and kinsman to the Prince

PAGE servant to Paris

MERCUTIO friend to Romeo and kinsman to the Prince

FRIAR LAWRENCE Franciscan priest

FRIAR JOHN Franciscan priest

APOTHECARY pharmacist from Mantua

MUSICIANS, CITIZENS, TORCH-BEARERS, GUARDS,

SERVANTS, ATTENDANTS, WATCHMEN, KINSMEN from both houses

TIME the fourteenth century

PLACE Verona and Mantua, cities in northern Italy

One actor referred to as the **CHORUS** appears on stage and speaks directly to the audience. He previews the events of the play, explaining that it involves two feuding families and the tragedy that occurs when their children meet and fall in love.

THE PROLOGUE

[Enter CHORUS.]

CHORUS. 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.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
 Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
 Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
 Which but their children's end naught could remove,
 * Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
 The which, if you with patient ears attend,
 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

? Skim this speech and decide how you think it should be spoken. Is the Chorus serious or lighthearted, loud or soft, still or moving?

3 **mutiny:** fighting

4 **civil blood:** blood of Verona's citizens

6 **star-cross'd:** doomed; **take their life:** are born

7 **misadventur'd piteous overthrows:** tragic events

12 **traffic:** action

14 **What . . . mend:** We'll try to fill in any details that I've left out of this introduction.



* “. . . two hours' traffic . . .” Could Shakespeare's actors really have performed *Romeo and Juliet* in only two hours? Although he says so in his prologue, today's actors find it difficult to play it in less than three, so it is nearly always cut for stage or screen. To perform *Romeo and Juliet* in two hours, the actors would have to speak at a rate of about 200 words per minute. To see for yourself how hard this is, try reading aloud the above prologue (a sonnet) in thirty seconds.

Setting the Scene

ROMEO AND JULIET

Act I, scene i or Boys Will Be Boys

Critical Query: What's troubling the men of Verona?

From the Prop Box

Ribbons of three different colors. The Capulet household wears one color; Montagues another. All others wear the third color.

Insults and Vulgar Vocab

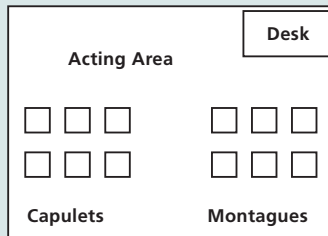
<i>poor-John</i>	dried fish, a cheap food thought to reduce the sex drive
<i>maidenhead</i>	virginity
<i>thrust, push, feel, stand, pretty piece of flesh, tool, naked weapon</i>	words used because of their sexual meaning

Time Capsule

In Shakespeare's day, people took astrology and horoscopes very seriously. Romeo and Juliet are referred to as "star-cross'd" lovers because the position of the stars was unfavorable when they were born.

Classroom Set Design

Move desks back to allow space for an acting area. Those from the house of Capulet sit on one side of the room; Montagues sit on the other. Family crests or banners may be drawn and put on the walls to identify sides. Royalty and neutral citizens may sit on either side.



Warm-up Improv 1

Several young men are hanging out, making silly jokes, and bragging about how macho they are. A rival gang appears and makes threats. Friends from both groups appear and a brawl begins. The police arrive to break things up and everyone scatters.

Warm-up Improv 2

(Use after page 30.) You are at your school locker with one or two friends. You are head-over-heels in love, but the object of your affection is ignoring you. Your friends try to cheer you up. The bell rings and everyone heads for class.

The scene opens on a public square in Verona, Italy. Two Capulet servants, Sampson and Gregory, enter carrying swords and small shields [bucklers]. They begin to trade silly puns and boast about their adventures with women.

ACT I.

Scene i. A Public Place

[Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY armed with swords and bucklers.]

- * **SAMPSON.** Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals.
GREGORY. No, for then we should be colliers.
SAMPSON. I mean, an we be in choler we'll draw.
GREGORY. Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.
SAMPSON. I strike quickly, being moved. 5
GREGORY. But thou art not quickly moved to strike.
SAMPSON. A dog of the house of Montague moves me.
GREGORY. To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand:
therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.
SAMPSON. A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take 10
the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.
GREGORY. That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest goes to
the wall.
SAMPSON. True; and therefore women, being the weaker vessels,
are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's 15
men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall.
GREGORY. The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.
SAMPSON. 'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I have
fought with the men I will be cruel with the maids, I will cut
off their heads. 20

Act I Scene i

PERSONA JOURNAL

Where are you this morning? What are you doing?

1-4 These lines include several puns based on the words **carry coals** (submit to insults), **colliers** (workers or dealers in coal), **in choler** (angry), **collar** (hangman's noose).

7 dog: contemptible man

10 take the wall: A drainage ditch ran down the center of many streets. A person of superior rank was usually granted the privilege of walking closest to the wall since this was the cleanest route.

12 goes to the wall: pushed to the wall or to the rear

? What three words would you use to describe each servant? How can you move and read the lines to illustrate these qualities?

- * **Playing to the Crowd** Is a string of coarse jokes and a street brawl any way to start a love story? Shakespeare may have done it this way to capture the attention of his informal open-air theatre audience. Playgoers called "groundlings" paid little admission and had to stand up through the entire show. Uneducated and easily bored, they were given to heckling the actors. How better to entertain them than with crude humor and violence?

As Sampson and Gregory continue to brag, two Montague servants appear, and Sampson urges Gregory to pick a fight. The servants from both houses begin to insult each other.

Act I Scene i

GREGORY. The heads of the maids?

SAMPSON. Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY. They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMPSON. Me they shall feel while I am able to stand: and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh. 25

GREGORY. 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor-John.—Draw thy tool; Here comes two of the house of Montagues.

[Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR.]

SAMPSON. My naked weapon is out: quarrel! I will back thee. 30

GREGORY. How! turn thy back and run?

SAMPSON. Fear me not.

GREGORY. No, marry; I fear thee!

SAMPSON. Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin.

GREGORY. I will frown as I pass by; and let them take it as they list. 35

* SAMPSON. Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

ABRAHAM. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON. I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAHAM. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? 40

SAMPSON. [Aside to GREGORY.] Is the law of our side if I say ay?

GREGORY. [Aside to SAMPSON.] No.

22 or their maidenheads: a bawdy pun meaning he will rob the women of their virginity

? How would you read the lines that have sexual references so that the audience will not miss your meaning?

28 poor-John: salted fish of very poor quality; **tool:** sword, and a sexual pun

? **31** What is Gregory implying about Sampson?

33 marry: originally meant "Virgin Mary," but during this time period it was an exclamation comparable to "really," "indeed," etc.

35 list: please

36 bite my thumb: insulting gesture

PERSONA JOURNAL

How would your invented character react to these puns, insults, and sexual references?

41 of our side: on our side

* **The Fine Art of Thumb-Biting** Have you ever bitten your thumb at anyone? Probably not. But you're surely familiar with more up-to-date rude gestures, some of which have lost their sting from overuse. Perhaps it's time for thumb-biting to make a comeback. Here's how: put the end of your thumb between your teeth. Then yank your thumb forward, clicking the nail against your upper teeth. Done with the proper vigor, this gesture is sure to cause offense.

The taunting grows until a brawl breaks out. When Benvolio (a Montague) and Tybalt (a Capulet) enter, Benvolio tries to make peace. Tybalt, however, seems eager for a fight.

SAMPSON. [To ABRAHAM.] No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY. [To ABRAHAM.] Do you quarrel, sir? 45

ABRAHAM. Quarrel, sir! no, sir.

SAMPSON. But if you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAHAM. No better.

SAMPSON. Well, sir. 50

[Enter BENVOLIO.]

GREGORY. Say 'better'; here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

SAMPSON. [To ABRAHAM.] Yes, better, sir.

ABRAHAM. You lie.

SAMPSON. Draw, if you be men.—Gregory, remember thy swashing blow. 55

[They fight.]

BENVOLIO. Part, fools! put up your swords; you know not what you do.

[Beats down their swords.]

[Enter TYBALT.]

TYBALT. What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? Turn thee Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO. I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword, Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT. What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee: Have at thee, coward!

[They fight.]

[Enter several of both Houses, who join the fray; then enter CITIZENS with clubs.]

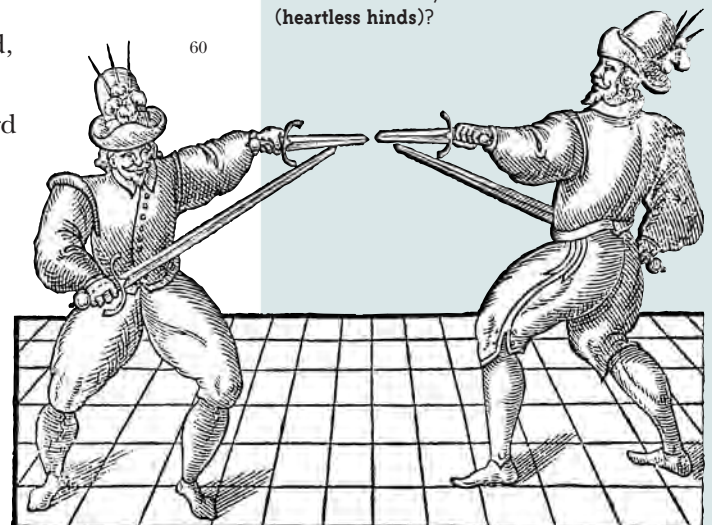
47 am for you: I am ready to fight you.

? What happens to the boasts of the servants when they actually meet their rivals?

55 swashing: slashing sword blow

? How do Benvolio and Tybalt differ from one another?

58 Art . . . hinds: Are you fighting with these cowardly servants (heartless hinds)?



Citizens join the rioting, which becomes more and more heated. The Lords Capulet and Montague enter ready to do battle, but their wives restrain them.

Act I Scene i



A street fight suddenly breaks out. (Zeffirelli, 1968)

PERSONA ACTION

If you are in the square, join the brawl using stage fighting. You may also want to use your invented insults now, but remember that the audience needs to see and hear the main characters.

* **CITIZEN.** Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

65

65 bills, and partisans: long-handled weapons with blades

[Enter CAPULET in his gown and LADY CAPULET.]

CAPULET. What noise is this?—Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET. A crutch, a crutch!—Why call you for a sword?

CAPULET. My sword, I say!—Old Montague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

70

[*gown*] robe

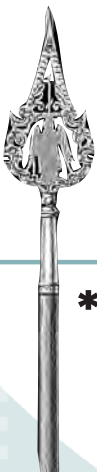
68 A crutch, a crutch: Lady Capulet mocks her aged husband by suggesting that he needs a crutch, not a sword.

[Enter MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE.]

MONTAGUE. Thou villain Capulet!— Hold me not, let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE. Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

? How does the attitude of the wives differ from that of their husbands?



* **“Clubs, bills, and partisans!”** This scene features an array of Renaissance weaponry, including a rapier—a lightweight, two-edged sword that had been invented fairly recently. Lord Capulet enters calling for his “long sword.” Old-fashioned even then, this was a weighty, two-handed weapon with a blade about two inches wide and more than a yard long. As his wife suggests, Lord Capulet is probably too old to even lift it anymore.

Prince Escalus enters and commands that the fighting stop. With his patience strained, the Prince declares that if fighting erupts again, those who disturb the peace will die. All leave except the Montagues and Benvolio. Lord Montague asks Benvolio how the fight began.

[Enter PRINCE ESCALUS, with ATTENDANTS.]

- * **PRINCE.** Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
 Profaners of this neighbour-stainèd steel,—
 Will they not hear?—What, ho! you men, you beasts, 75
 That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
 With purple fountains issuing from your veins,—
 On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
 Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground
 And hear the sentence of your movèd prince.— 80
 Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
 Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets;
 And made Verona's ancient citizens
 Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments, 85
 To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
 Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate:
 If ever you disturb our streets again,
 Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
 For this time, all the rest depart away:— 90
 You, Capulet, shall go along with me;—
 And, Montague, come you this afternoon,
 To know our farther pleasure in this case,
 To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.—
 Once more, on pain of death, all men depart. 95

[Exeunt PRINCE and ATTENDANTS; CAPULET, LADY CAPULET, TYBALT, CITIZENS, and SERVANTS.]

MONTAGUE. Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?—
 Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

? What mood is the Prince in? How might his voice and actions differ from others on the stage?

74 Profaners . . . steel: Those who misuse weapons stained with their neighbors' blood.

76 pernicious: destructive

79 mistemper'd: used for an evil purpose

80 movèd: angry

81 airy word: careless or insulting remark

85–87 Cast by . . . hate: throw aside normal garb to carry weapons rusted (**Canker'd**) from disuse to stir up your malignant (**canker'd**) hate

89 forfeit of the peace: penalty for breaking the peace

93 farther pleasure: what else I have to say

? Who does the Prince blame for all the fighting? What warning does he give?

PERSONA JOURNAL

How did the events in the square affect you? Do you take sides?

96 abroad: opened

- * **Family Feud** Shakespeare was a friend of the Earl of Southampton, whose neighbors, the Danvers and the Longs, had been feuding for at least 100 years. In 1594—possibly the year before *Romeo and Juliet* was written—this feud exploded into several murders. Because Shakespeare may have been in Southampton's home when the murders took place, he may have drawn on first-hand experience for the fight between the Capulets and Montagues.

TALES FROM THE STAGE

Women were not allowed to perform on Elizabethan stages, so Shakespeare's female characters were first portrayed by teenaged males. A woman wouldn't play Juliet until 1662. Later, another kind of gender-switching was tried in Shakespeare's plays. Women played male characters, including Hamlet and Richard III. In the 1800s, Charlotte Cushman was an especially celebrated Romeo, playing opposite her sister Susan's Juliet. A newspaper printed the following review of Charlotte's performance in December 1835.

"It is enough to say that the Romeo of Miss Cushman is far superior to any Romeo we have ever had. The distinction is not one of degree, it is one of kind. For a long time Romeo has been a convention. Miss Cushman's Romeo is a creation, a living, breathing, animated, ardent human being. Miss Cushman looks Romeo exceedingly well; her deportment is frank and easy; she walks the stage with an air of command; her eye beams with animation."



Two images of the Cushman sisters in their roles as Romeo and Juliet.

Setting the Scene

ROMEO AND JULIET

Act II, scenes i and ii or Pledges of Love

Critical Query: Do you think it's possible to fall in love this fast?



Word Play: Imagery

Imagery refers to an author's use of words for their appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Such language carries a powerful emotional impact, providing the reader or listener with vivid mental images. *Romeo and Juliet* overflows with images of all kinds, especially those of light and dark. Be on the lookout for them as you read scenes i and ii. (For more about imagery, see pages 10–11.)

Behind the Scene

Scene ii in this act, one of the most famous in all of Shakespeare, is known simply as the “balcony scene.” It is so familiar that it is often a subject of satire or parody. Try your hand at turning romance into laughter by converting the balcony scene into a soap opera, a cartoon strip, or a Saturday Night Live skit.

Famous Quotes from Scene ii

But soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun.

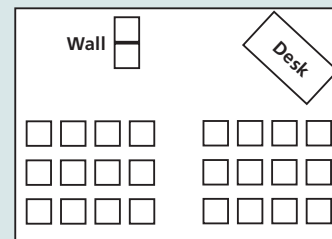
O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

Good night, good night! parting is such sweet sorrow.

Classroom Set Design

Set up the room with regular Capulet/Montague divided seating and an acting area at the front of the classroom. Juliet should use the teacher's desk as her “balcony.” Two desks or chairs can serve as the orchard wall.



Warm-up Improv: Trust Me

You fall in love with a used car (or another item of your choice). You want the salesperson to promise not to sell it until the weekend when you say you'll return with the

money. The salesperson doesn't know whether he/she can trust you or not and wants more proof of your good intentions.

Reacting to the Play

Analysis

1. In your opinion, was the love between Romeo and Juliet deep and true, or were they just two immature adolescents who acted irrationally? Defend your position.
2. Select one of the three letters (Tybalt's challenge to Romeo, Friar Lawrence's explanation to Romeo, and Romeo's explanation to his father) and consider the possibility of how the play might have changed if any of the three letters had been delivered.
3. What if Romeo and Juliet had not died? What do you think their married life would have been like fifteen years later?
4. In small groups, examine the concept of cause and effect by creating a cause-effect chain beginning with Mercutio's death and continuing through the end of the play. A sample chain has been started below.

**Tybalt kills Mercutio
and so
Romeo kills Tybalt
and so
Romeo is banished
and so**

5. Identify some situations in today's world where two lovers might find obstacles because of their birthrights or beliefs.

6. Judging from the play, how do you think gender roles have changed since the Renaissance?

Literary Elements

A **tragedy** is a serious work of literature that narrates the events leading to the downfall of a **tragic hero**, who is usually of noble birth. His downfall is a result of a **tragic flaw** or fatal character weakness. For example, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the hero's flaw is ambition. In *Othello*, it is jealousy. In your opinion, who is the hero (or heroine) of *Romeo and Juliet*? What is his/her tragic flaw?

Writing

1. In your opinion, which characters and/or events are responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet? What role do you think fate plays? Explain your ideas in an expository essay.
2. Whom would you choose for a personal adviser—the Nurse, Juliet, Mercutio, or Friar Lawrence? Write an essay commenting on how that character influences others in the play and why his or her philosophy appeals to you.
3. Write a short parody of *Romeo and Juliet*.
4. Choose one scene from the play and rewrite the dialogue in modern English.