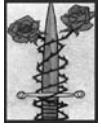




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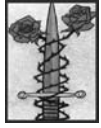
To the Teacher

As any teacher or student who has read Shakespeare knows, his plays are not easy. They are thought-provoking and complex texts that abound with romance, deceit, tragedy, comedy, revenge, and humanity shown at its very worst as well as its very best. In short, to read Shakespeare is to explore the depths and heights of humanity.

The *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are designed by teachers for teachers to help students navigate this journey. Each guide is broken into six sections of four activities and one review. At the end of each guide is a final test, a variety of culminating activities, and an answer key. The activities are meant to aid textual comprehension, provide creative

opportunities for the reader to make personal connections with the text, and help busy teachers gain quick access to classroom-tested and age-appropriate activities that make the teaching of Shakespeare an easier task.

Each regular activity, as well as each culminating activity, can be modified to be an individual or a group task, and the reviews and tests can be used as quick comprehension checks or formally scored assessments. The guides may be used in conjunction with the Barron's *Shakespeare Made Easy* texts or alone. Ultimately, the *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are intended to assist teachers and students in gaining an increased understanding of and appreciation for the reading of Shakespeare.



Introduction to the Play

Background to *Romeo and Juliet*

The story of Romeo and Juliet was known throughout Europe and England before Shakespeare wrote his version for the stage in about 1597. The main source for the play was the poem by Arthur Brooke entitled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. Brooke's version, printed about 30 years before Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, emphasizes that Romeus and Juliet are ill-fated lovers and shows the contrast between their love and the hate between their parents. The legend behind his poem came from other literature in France and Italy. These earlier versions may also have influenced Shakespeare. One Italian version of the story is from 1530 by Luigi Da Porto. In his version, the young lovers are called Romeo and Guilietta. As in Shakespeare's play, Da Porto's story is set in Verona, Italy, and the young lovers are children of feuding parents, the Montagues and Capulets.

Even earlier, a similar story came from the Italian writer Masuccio of Salerno. In this account, two lovers are married by a friar in secret. The boy, Mariotto, kills someone in a quarrel and is banished. His lover, Gianozza, takes a sleeping potion from the friar and is entombed in order to avoid marriage with someone her father wishes her to marry. After she takes the potion and is presumed dead, the friar frees her from the tomb so he can take her

to her lover. Mariotto does not hear about the plan, however, because pirates capture the messenger sent from the friar. Mariotto arrives at Gianozza's tomb, is recognized, and is killed. Gianozza joins a convent and dies of grief.

Shakespeare was not afraid of using familiar material in his plays. However, Shakespeare made some interesting adjustments to the plot to give his play more passion and drama. Shakespeare took the action that occurs in Brooke's poem over nine months and compresses it into a few days. For example, in Brooke's poem, many days pass between the ball and Romeo and Juliet's meeting in the garden, instead of everything occurring on the same night. In Brooke's version, Romeo and Juliet are married for about two months, and each night Romeo visits Juliet by climbing up a rope ladder to her room. In Shakespeare's version, Romeo and Juliet only have one night together as man and wife. This collapsing of time makes the events of the play more tragic and emotional.

Due to the strong love story and the memorable characters, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* quickly became one of Shakespeare's most popular works. Even today, *Romeo and Juliet* remains a favorite because of the passion and sadness of the love story and the beauty of the poetry in the play.

Synopsis of *Romeo and Juliet*

Prologue

This sonnet gives the plot and theme of the entire play: the story of the romance of two young lovers. Because of the death of these two “star-crossed lovers,” the parents of the children end their bitter feud.

Act one, Scenes 1 and 2

Samson and Gregory, who are related to the Capulets, express their hatred of the Montague family. This hatred is a result of an ancient feud between the two families. Servants from the house of Montague walk by, and Samson and Gregory taunt them. They begin to fight with swords. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to stop the fight, but when Tybalt, a Capulet, enters the scene, the fighting grows worse. Prince Escalus of Verona arrives and orders all brawls to end under penalty of death.

Romeo’s parents, the Montagues, are worried about Romeo’s moody sadness. They ask Benvolio to try to find out what is bothering Romeo. He talks with Romeo and discovers that Romeo is swooning with love over Rosaline, but she does not return his affection. Benvolio persuades Romeo to go to a masked ball given by the Capulets in order to compare Rosaline with other lovely young women. There, Benvolio argues that Romeo will see that he does not need to pine for Rosaline when there are other beautiful young women that Romeo could love.

Meanwhile, Count Paris is at the Capulets’ estate, asking for permission to marry Juliet. Capulet gives his consent only if Paris wins Juliet’s love and if he can wait for two years because she is only thirteen.

Act one, Scene 3

Juliet’s nurse and her mother speak to Juliet about Count Paris’s wish to marry her. They feel that Paris would be a good match for Juliet, and Juliet responds by saying she will “look to like” Count Paris, but will not proceed with any relationship without her parents’ consent.

Act one, Scene 4

Romeo and his friends proceed to the Capulets’ ball. On the way, Mercutio gives a long and beautiful speech about the Fairy Queen Mab, who can influence the dreams of people. Just as they are entering the dance, Romeo feels fear about the future.

Act one, Scene 5

At the Capulets’ masked ball, Romeo instantly falls in love with a young woman whose beauty teaches the “torches to burn bright.” He speaks to her, and they kiss. The beautiful young woman is called away, and the Nurse tells Romeo that his new love is Juliet, daughter and only heir of the Capulets. Juliet also learns that the young man she has fallen in love with is a Montague and “the only son of your great enemy.”

During the ball, Tybalt realizes that Romeo has crashed the party, but he is forbidden by Capulet to cause any trouble at the dance. However, Tybalt swears to pay back Romeo later.

Act two, Chorus

In this sonnet, the Chorus tells how Romeo's love for Rosaline has died, and Juliet is now Romeo's new love. Even though they are forbidden to meet, their love is stronger than any other claim on their lives.

Act two, Scene 1

Mercutio and Benvolio look for Romeo after the dance. Mercutio makes fun of Romeo's affection for Rosaline, little realizing that Romeo is now in love with Juliet.

Act two, Scene 2

Romeo is in the Capulets' garden under Juliet's window. He overhears her as she says to the night that she is in love with Romeo. He tells her that he is in the garden, and they exchange passionate words of love. Juliet asks Romeo if he is willing to commit to marriage, and he says he will. They part with great sadness but look forward to a secret marriage.

Act two, Scene 3

Romeo meets the Friar, who is collecting weeds and flowers for medicine. Romeo tells the Friar that he doesn't love Rosaline anymore but loves Juliet instead and wishes the Friar to marry

them. The Friar is unsure of Romeo's heart since he changed his mind so fast. He cautions, "Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast." Still, the Friar likes the idea of making peace between the Montagues and Capulets, and he agrees to marry the pair.

Act two, Scene 4

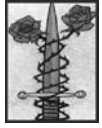
Romeo meets up with Mercutio and Benvolio. Because of his new love for Juliet, Romeo is in a more social mood, and Mercutio notes, "Now art thou sociable. Now art thou Romeo." The Nurse arrives looking for Romeo and asks if he is serious about his relationship with Juliet. He says yes, and tells the Nurse to have Juliet tell her family she is going to confession, but instead she will be married to Romeo at Friar Lawrence's cell.

Act two, Scenes 5 and 6

Juliet waits impatiently for the Nurse to return with news about Romeo. Upon returning, the Nurse is tired and out of breath, but she enjoys delaying the good news to Juliet. She finally tells Juliet to go to Friar Lawrence's cell where Romeo waits to marry her. At Friar Lawrence's cell, Romeo and Juliet once again declare their love for one another, and the Friar leads them to the church to be married.

Act three, Scene 1

Romeo is in the streets of Verona after his wedding, and meets his friends Benvolio and Mercutio. His friends are in an argument with Tybalt over Romeo's presence at the Capulets'



ACTIVITY 3

Love Is in the Air

Act one

Background William Shakespeare has many characters talking about love in this act, perhaps to foreshadow how the characters will react to the events that are to come.

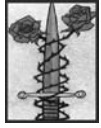
Directions After rereading the following lines that each character speaks, write a few sentences that tell what these lines show about how the character thinks of or regards love.

Romeo (Scene 1, lines 170–178, 180–189):

Benvolio (Scene 1, lines 220–222; Scene 2, lines 46–51):

Juliet (Scene 3, lines 67–99):

Mercutio (Scene 4, lines 17–18, 23–24, 27–32):



ACTIVITY 4

Gossip Columnist at the Ball

Act one, Scene 5

Background The fact that a Montague slipped into a Capulet party would have been big news for a gossip columnist considering that both families were wealthy and well-known. Several important things happen in this scene that should interest the people of Verona.

Directions Imagine that you are a gossip columnist for the *Verona Daily Times*, and you have sneaked into the Capulets' masquerade ball. When people have their identities hidden, they are more likely to be free in their actions and words. Write a rough draft of the story you will run in the next edition of your paper. Be sure to include details of people who attended, any fights that occurred, and, of course, what goes on between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet at this fateful party. Write your story below. Use an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.



ACTIVITY 5

Review

Directions Answer the following. Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.
For 4, 7, and 10, write true (T) or false (F) in the space provided.

- ___ 1. In Prince Escalus's speech, we are told that the Capulets and Montagues have had how many fights?
- two
 - three
 - four
 - five
- ___ 2. The play takes place in what country?
- Great Britain
 - France
 - Italy
 - Spain
- ___ 3. Who attempts to calm down the feuding servants and keep the peace?
- Mercutio
 - Tybalt
 - Romeo
 - Benvolio
- ___ 4. True or false: Romeo has been acting melancholy lately because he loves Juliet, but she is a Capulet and therefore forbidden to him.
- ___ 5. What advice does Benvolio give to Romeo about his troubles with love?
- send his love flowers
 - look at other girls
 - talk to his [Romeo's] parents about it
 - talk to his love's father to try and get his approval
- ___ 6. How old is Juliet?
- 12
 - 13
 - 14
 - 16
- ___ 7. True or false: Juliet is completely against being paired with Paris.
- ___ 8. How does Romeo accidentally find out about the Capulet party?
- He reads the guest list for an illiterate servant.
 - He finds an invitation on the street.
 - He overhears Capulet speaking to a friend.
 - none of the above
- ___ 9. Why is Tybalt so angry at the party?
- He wants to dance with Rosaline, but she doesn't want to dance with him.
 - He hates parties, but he was forced to go.
 - He finds out that Romeo is there but can't fight him.
 - He thinks Juliet is too young to be set up with Paris.
- ___ 10. True or false: As Romeo and Juliet are "falling in love" at the ball, they already know that their relationship will be forbidden because of who their parents are.