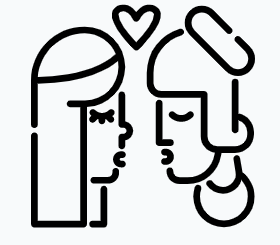
GCSE English Literature

Remote Learning Booklet

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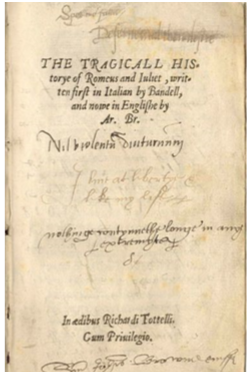
**Class:**

**Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet**



Lesson 1: How was Shakespeare inspired to write this play?

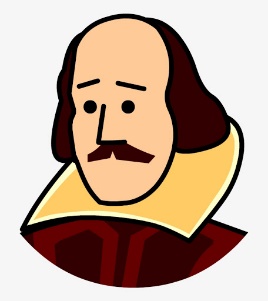
Background Information

* Shakespeare is known as England’s most famous playwright; he lived from ​1564 – 1616​. ​His plays can be divided into Histories​ ​(e.g. Henry VI), ​Comedies​ ​(e.g. Midsummer’s Nights Dream), and ​Tragedies​ ​(e.g. Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet).
* Shakespeare was writing during ​the Renaissance​ which was a period between the 14​th​ to 17​th​ centuries where there was an expansion of artistic expression. This expression freed itself from the​ restrictions​ of previous centuries. Romeo and Juliet is suspected to have been written at the beginning of Shakespeare’s career from around ​1597-1579​.
*  Plays were an incredibly ​popular and central medium of entertainment​ during the Elizabethan and Jacobean era.​ ​Shakespeare’s plays were the mass media of London for the day. The importance of ​entertainment​ of the plays must be understood when studying them; intense critical analysis is important, but should not detract from the big-picture view that these were first-and-foremost written to entertain​.

History of Romeo and Juliet

* Who was the audience? Shakespeare was writing for what ​John Lennard ​calls a​ ​“cross-class” audience​, this is because members would have been from both the lower and middle classes. His plays often contain ‘lower-class’ humour i.e. bawdy and crude jokes to​ entertain​ alongside refined language.
* The difference between classes is reflected in some of the characters. For example, the nurse is meant to ​represent the lower class ​which is clear from the ​sexual jokes​ that she makes when talking to Juliet.

However, Shakespeare also used more refined language which the literate audience members would have appreciated. For​ ​example, the ​sonnet structure​ may have been appreciated by the richer and more educated audience

Where did the inspiration come from?

While Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet may be the most famous story about ‘two star-cross’d lovers’ taking their lives, Shakespeare is not the first person to use this concept. Indeed, the story of Romeo and Juliet​ spans across cultures and stands the test of time​. There were many before Shakespeare the earliest written piece being in 1562.

Test your knowledge by answering the questions below:

1. When did Shakespeare live from and to?
2. What are the types of play Shakespeare wrote?
3. What was the name of the period he was writing in?
4. Why did he write plays?
5. Who did he write them for?
6. How did he try to meet the needs of the lower class audience?
7. How did he try to meet the needs of the upper class audience?
8. Did Shakespeare come up with the Romeo and Juliet concept?

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If you are struggling with this reading, watch these videos and make 5 of your own points about the context of the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrib1-6fbXY>

**Genre**

While Romeo and Juliet is known as one of the greatest love stories of all time, it is also very important to note that it is a ​tragedy​.

Tragedies have been used as a form of entertainment throughout history and tend to have certain common characteristics.

Aristotle​ ​outlined the key elements to a tragedy (it is important to note that Shakespeare had likely not read Aristotle’s works, though some people believe he had at least a general sense of the key ideas):

● Catharsis​ ​– a tricky term which can generally be understood as ​a purging (removing) of pity and fear among the audience through the action of the play​ – for example, when something tragic happens

● Hamartia​ ​– tragic error made by the character (something more than the simplistic ​‘fatal flaw”’​). For example; a foolish decision made by a character which leads to disaster.

● Senecan tragedy​ (a set of Ancient Roman tragedies) were ​bloody and sensationalist​ – elements of this violence can be seen in Romeo and Juliet, such as the fighting

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| **Answer the questions to show your understanding** | |
| What genre is Romeo and Juliet? |  |
| What is an example of Catharsis from the play? |  |
| What is an example of Hamartia from the play? |  |
| At what point can we see elements of a Senecan Tragedy in the play? |  |

**Want to know a bit more about the genre?** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ft9p-tUALc>

**Setting**

The play is set in ​Verona​, which is modern-day Italy. Shakespeare placed the setting of the play in both a ​temporally and a geographically distant place.​ This distance would give the audience a sense of safety from which they could experience catharsis.

As the audience doesn’t have to worry that the issues of the play could infect their world, they can escape from their mundane rainy lives in England to hot and passionate Verona.

Why did Shakespeare set his plays in foreign lands?

Shakespeare was sometimes highly critical of the English monarchy, setting his plays in faraway places like Verona permitted him to critique society and the monarchy without being ​accused of treason.​ It also allowed him to ​explore subversive themes​ such as suicide, war and hostility in a safe space.

In addition, these settings added a sense of ​‘foreignness’​ to the play, meaning new ideas could be explored with greater ease. In Romeo and Juliet, the​ hot temperature​ of Verona is associated with increased passion so is an apt setting for this ​passionate tale.

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| **Bullet point 3 easy to remember ideas about the setting that you will use in future essays:** | |
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Sum up the learning today in 5 key words…

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Lesson 2: What happens in Romeo and Juliet?

**Act 1**

Act 1 Scene 1:​ The action starts with a fight on the streets of Verona between the Montagues and Capulets. The fight breaks up and the Prince threatens the patriarchs of the families that if another fight like this breaks out they will pay with their “​lives ​”.

Act 1 Scene 2:​ After this, Paris, a young nobleman, asks Lord Capulet for Juliet's hand in marriage. Lord Capulet believes Juliet is too young but invites Paris to a feast that he is throwing, giving Paris an opportunity to ​“woo” ​ Juliet.

Act 1 Scene 3:​ The audience is then introduced to Lady Capulet, Juliet and her Nurse. They have a conversation about marriage and Juliet reflects that it is a fate that ​“I dream not of.''

Act 1 Scene 4: ​ The audience is then introduced to a ​lovesick ​Romeo who through the encouragement of Mercutio chooses to go to Capulet’s feast to distract himself from how much he misses Rosaline.

Act 1 Scene 5: ​The two lovers meet in this scene at Capulet’s feast and fall in love, but quickly find out that they belong to the opposing families.

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**Act 2**

Act 2:​ Prologue

Act 2 Scene 1: ​Mercutio and Benvolio are looking for Romeo after the ​“feast”​.

Act 2 Scene 2:​ This is the iconic​ balcony scene​ where Romeo and Juliet confess their love for each other and plan to be married.

Act 2 Scene 3:​ Romeo meets with the Friar to ask if he will marry Romeo and Juliet. Despite the Friar’s reservations he agrees to marry the couple, hopeful about the peace it could bring to the families.

Act 2 Scene 4:​ The Nurse meets with Romeo, Romeo tells her that Juliet should meet him in Friar Laurence’s cell. They make plans to consummate the marriage.

Act 2 Scene 5: ​The Nurse tells Juliet about what she and Romeo had discussed.

Act 2 Scene 6: ​In this scene, Romeo and Juliet are secretly married by the Friar.

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**Act 3**

Act 3 Scene 1​: Tybalt challenges Romeo to a fight but Romeo refuses. Mercutio steps in and is killed by Tybalt. Romeo is then filled with a ​murderous rage ​and kills Tybalt. The Price hears about this from Benvolio and then banishes Romeo.

Act 3 Scene 2:​ While Juliet waits at home for her new husband, the Nurse returns to tell Juliet the news about Romeo’s banishment. Juliet is distraught about it.

Act 3 Scene 3: ​The Friar tells Romeo about his ​banishment ​and Romeo is troubled and threatens to kill himself. The Nurse comes with news saying Juliet is in the same state. The Friar comes through with a plan to save the couple. He sends Romeo to ​Mantua​.

Act 3 Scene 4: ​In light of ​Tybalt’s death,​ Capulet decides (in hopes of making Juliet feel happier) that his daughter ​must ​marry Paris without asking her opinion.

Act 3 Scene 5: ​Juliet is told about her fate to marry Paris. She ​refuses ​to marry him which leads to her father ​threatening to disown​ her. Juliet goes to the Friar to help.

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**Act 4**

Act 4 Scene 1: ​Paris goes to the Friar in preparation for the wedding; Juliet is also there but tries to ​ignore ​Paris’ advances. When Paris leaves Juliet starts to weep asking for advice from the Friar. He sets in motion a plan to rescue the lovers. He gives Juliet a ​potion ​that will make it look like she's dead and tells Friar John to go to Mantua to tell Romeo of the plan.

Act 4 Scene 2: ​Juliet comes back from the Friar’s cell revealing that she will marry Paris and so the wedding is moved up.

Act 4 Scene 3: ​Juliet soliloquises her fears about the plan but takes the potion. Act 4 Scene 4: ​The Capulets prepare for the wedding.

Act 4 Scene 5: ​The Nurse finds Juliet’s​ ‘dead body’ ​and the family begins to grieve as the wedding turns into a funeral.

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**Act 5**

Act 5 Scene 1: ​Romeo hears news of Juliet’s death in Mantua and, unaware of the Friar’s plan, finds an apothecary who gives him a poison.

Act 5 Scene 2: ​Friar John tells Friar Laurence that he was unable to give Romeo the letter outlining the plan.

Act 5 Scene 3: ​Paris protects Juliet’s tomb, Romeo enters trying to find Juliet the two fight and Paris dies. Romeo sees Juliet, drinks the poison, dies, Juliet wakes up as Friar Laurence arrives, he then goes outside as he hears voices. Juliet then takes Romeo's dagger and stabs herself. The families of the lovers enter the scene and agree to make peace.

Sunday morning

Create your own timeline for Romeo and Juliet

Please see the detailed

Romeo and Juliet: Overview of Text for a detailed summary of each scene and key quotations.

Thursday morning

Use the Act/Scene notes and summarise the key events in the order that they happened. As a challenge, can you also add in key quotations?

Struggling to follow the order of events? Want more detail Try researching: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/romeo-and-juliet/story/scene-by-scene>

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHARACTERS**

Juliet |​ The two eponymous (title) characters are immediately established as possessing the central relationship of the play; their relationship develops quickly​ which makes it incredibly passionate​. Juliet is extremely young in comparison to Romeo and so it is highly possible that this is her first real relationship. Their initial interaction is incredibly flirtatious, which juxtaposes​ the terrible and debilitating tension it goes on to cause, but is also evidently ​pure​ and passionate​. Their love for each other is potently strong, obviously demonstrated by how they both end up committing suicide as a result.

Rosaline |​ Although we never see Rosaline within the play, she plays an important role as she serves to show the audience the difference between lust and love. It is due to Rosaline that the audience is introduced to Romeo acting as a ​Petrarchan lover​.

Lord Montague | The Lord is Romeo’s father, and he clearly has a lot of love and respect for his son. He is a minor character in the plot and mainly serves to ​further the tension between the Montagues and Capulets - however, he is also the character who​ resolves this conflict at the end of the play as he learns about the fate of his son.

Lady Montague | Also a minor character, Lady Montague also has a lot of love and affection for her son; upon finding out about his death, she eventually dies from grief.

Mercutio​ | This is Romeo’s best friend, it is important to note that Mercutio is also a ​foil​ for Romeo. While Romeo is an ​emotional romantic​, Mercutio is a ​cynical​ man focused on the physical parts of love. It is clear that they deeply care for each other, at first when Romeo is heartbroken after Rosaline Mercutio makes jokes making his long ‘Queen Mab’ speech in attempts to make Romeo feel better. Later in Act 3 when Mercutio dies Romeo is overcome with a murderous rage. The reaction that the audience sees from Romeo illustrates the extent of love that Romeo had for Mercutio. The only other time that the audiences see a similar reaction from Romeo is when he finds out about Juliet’s ‘death’.

Tybalt | Tybalt is a Capulet, and has a fight with Romeo in the third act, which results in Romeo killing Tybalt in revenge for Mercutio’s death. He is Romeo’s main rival.

Friar |​ The Friar acts as a father figure for Romeo.

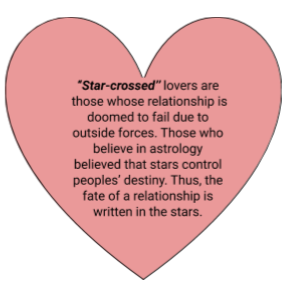
Chart Romeo’s relationships, with 1 being the strongest and 0 being the weakest.

Challenge: Justify your decisions. Use ‘because’ or equivalent to explain why you put certain characters at certain points, or higher/lower than others.

Lesson 3: How does Shakespeare address the theme of fate through the prologue?

**Fate and Freewill**

Fate is the concept that there are forces outside of human control which predetermine ​what happens in our lives, there’s nothing we can do to change what is happening to us now or what will happen to us in the future. Freewill is the exact ​antithesis (opposite) of this as it claims that there are no outside forces and all the actions we take are just a result of us exercising our own ​choices​. We therefore have the ability to change what happens to us in the future based on the choices we decide to make in the present.

**Prologue**

The ​prologue ​identifies a theme of fate as it tells the audience what is going to happen before it happens, this is a ​dramatic tool ​used to ​create tension​. Through telling the audience exactly what is going to happen at the beginning of the play, it is evident that the characters are unable to escape their impending doom. ​Thus, it is evident that fate is in control​. Shakespeare even tells the audience how long the story will be, referencing the ​“two hours’ traffic of our stage”. ​ This reference to the length of the play further increases the tension as the audience are in constant anticipation of the two protagonists.

The tension and anticipation is resolved when the prophecy is finally fulfilled. Here the emotions of the audience climax which result in ​catharsis​ (relieving of emotion).

**Superstition**

The ​Elizabethan era ​was a very ​superstitious time, many believed in concepts such as destiny and many believed that their lives were written in the stars. Through referring to the lovers as​“star-crossed” Shakespeare shows how even the planets have an opposition to this relationship. It could also show the audience that their love is different from others and how it has a spiritual connection.

**Freewill**

Ideas of fate and destiny can be perceived as contradictory to the religious beliefs ​of the time. While many people were superstitious and believed in fate, many people were religious and believed that God gave humans free will to do as they please.

➔ Shakespeare uses this tension between the two beliefs to introduce a ​philosophical argument on ​freewill vs. predestination​: does anyone really have a choice in their life or is everything predetermined? Arguments for each side are explored through the play.

If you need some help on this; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofX_ytQ4AcY>

Shakespeare’s use of the sonnet form

The ​sonnet form is used throughout the play. Sonnets are poetry of love and Shakespeare’s use of the form adds to the romance of the two lovers’ growing romance. The form could also be used by Shakespeare because it has a very regular rhyme scheme and rhythm​. The regularity of the form adds to the theme of fate as through it the audience is able to anticipate the inevitable rhythmic timing.

By using this sonnet form in the prologue, which already introduces the element of foreshadowing​, Shakespeare could be reinforcing the idea that everything in the world is planned and predestined ​and that nothing we do is ever spontaneous because it is already written in the stars somewhere. This revelation can have one of two effects on the audience:

● The revelation could be ​comforting to the reader, filling them with a sense of hope that if things are meant to happen they will.

○ For example, in the love story of Romeo and Juliet despite so many things being in the way of their love (Romeo was ​infatuated ​with Rosaline, they come from feuding families, Juliet was about to be betrothed to Paris etc), they still wanted to be together. Here, love conquers all.

● The revelation could be unsettling to the audience as ​predestination ​would also mean that no one really has control of what they do and so free will as a concept doesn't really exist. The very concept of fate and destiny means that you could not change the course you are already on.

○ Romeo exclaims “I defy you stars” ​, this phrase in itself is ​paradoxical (a contradiction) as the idea you can change the plan of something you felt was destiny is, by definition, inevitable​. However, it reveals a lot about Romeo's character, as even though it is impossible to defy the stars, Romeo is persistent.

Read the text and answer the questions to show your understanding

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| **What is fate?** |
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| **What is freewill?** |
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| **What is the effect of the quotation ​“two hours’ traffic of our stage”?** |
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| **What is catharsis?** |
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| **Why does Shakespeare refer to the lovers as ‘star-crossed’? (2 effects)** |
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| **How does the use of sonnet form add to theme of Fate?** |
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“Romeo and Juliet were responsible for their own deaths” Explain why a student may agree with this statement and then explain why they may disagree.

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Find a key quotation from the play linked to fate or freewill that hasn’t already been mentioned. Explode for meaning and links to these ideas.

Lesson 4: How are the gender roles of men presented in the play?

Highlight key information about how male characters are presented in the opening of the play

Gender is an important theme within Romeo and Juliet as it contributes to the characters and their development. However, it can still be a source of conflict as the characters do not always adhere to the roles which they are traditionally supposed to fulfil. It is important to note that even though the play is set in a patriarchal society which was oppressive to women, men also had their own social rules that they had to follow.

**Masculinity and violence**

The concept of masculinity is a key theme in Romeo & Juliet as it dictates the way in which the male characters behave towards each other and towards the female characters.

From the beginning of the play we know there is a feud between the Montagues and Capulets however the audience doesn’t know the cause of this. Instead, all they are told in the prologue is that it is an “ancient grudge”. No one knows what the feud is about and so it has been manipulated into something based on male pride, with no side willing to back down to create peace.

Masculinity and male pride is often associated with destructive behaviour, as shown in Act 1 Scene 1. The fact Shakespeare positions this scene as the opening one is a structural tactic to show how male conflict and violence pervades (infiltrates across) the play. It also presents to the audience the calibre of the feud and the lengths that men will go to defend their pride.

An argument begins between men from each household. As neither side are prepared to lose face and back down a fight starts.

➔ Abraham asks “Do you bite your thumb at me, sir ?” The simple question leads into a fight.

➔ This fight is escalated by the “fiery Tybalt” who exclaims he “hates” the word peace, “Hell” and the “Montagues”. In essence, the men would rather fight than be perceived as cowards.

**Hegemonic masculinity**

In the first scene, the character of Sampson is in the play to express the traditional beliefs of masculinity. Sampson believes in what some call hegemonic masculinity which is the idea that male dominance is established through the submission of women as well as their actions of aggression.

● Sampson (a Capulet) argues that “women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague’s men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall”.

This belief encapsulates what it was to be a man in Elizabethan times. It is filled with violence ​and ​aggression ​as well as the ​submission of women ​and ​sexual imagery.

Sampson states that he will ​“push Montague’s men from the wall” and then take their women and ​“thrust his maids to the wall”, ​ this​ crude language ​is suggestive of rape. The men feel as though they have the right to do this because women are the ​“weaker vessels”. ​ This phrase is Biblical allusion from​ 1Peter3:7​ which tells men to​‘ honour their wives’​ because they are the​ “weaker vessels”.

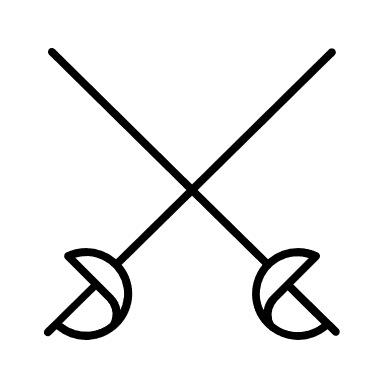
Shakespeare uses this ironically as he has flipped the verse upside down. While the Bible uses women’s supposed weakness as a reason for men to be kind Sampson uses it as a reason to take advantage. This is interesting to note as it tells the audience a lot about the character of Sampson as well as the way the idea of masculinity has evolved. Similar to the way that no one knows what the​ “ancient grudge” is about and so it has been degraded to just male pride, the concept of masculinity which was once about honour is compromised and is just a ​show of violence and aggression​.

This is also supported by the ​crude language ​by Sampson as he talks about his ​“naked weapon” being out. This has a double meaning as it can ​literally ​be about his weapon as they are about to engage in a fight. However it could be meant ​figuratively ​as a ​sexual Innuendo of a phallic image (here his penis is a weapon which can be used against women). The fact that he talks of it as a weapon expresses again reinforces the male domination​ over women.

Make reference to 2 more scenes in the play where overt (obvious) masculinity causes problems in the play

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| **Act / Scene** | **Key events / quotations and how masculinity causes issues** |
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Make a spider diagram / mind map of male characters linked to ideas of violence and conflict



Support: Short video with references to conflict <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpAuYC4GKsQ>

Challenge: Grade 9 essay on male aggression <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjVwdXtewEI>

Lesson 5: How are the gender roles of women presented in the play?

While the male characters struggle to navigate what it is to be a man within the confines of Elizabethan’s societal expectations surrounding masculinity, the women are also restricted by their role as women within society.

**Marriage**

During the Elizabethan period marriage was often used by important families as a way of making new alliances and spreading their power and influence. Daughters were often married off by their fathers who decided on a suitable man for them to marry. This sort of arrangement is how the audience is first introduced to Juliet.

Act 1 Scene 2 shows Paris asking Lord Capulet for Juliet’s hand in marriage. However, at this point in the play Lord Capulet doesn’t act like a normal Elizabethan father, instead he wants his daughter to be older before she marries and also wants Juliet to marry someone she loves.

➔ He says ​“ But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart My will to her consent is but a part.” This implies that Juliet has a choice in who she marries and that if she doesn’t like Paris then she won’t have to marry him.

However, this perceived choice in future partner is short lived. After Tybalt's death Lord Capulet changes his mind and agrees to let Paris marry Juliet. In Act 3 Scene 5, he asks his wife to tell Juliet, saying “​Have you delivered to her our decree?”. ​ The word ​“decree” ​ has connotations with ​law ​and ​royalty​. Here it is evident that Lord Capulet believes he is a king in his own home and so everything he says goes.

Lord Capulet’s true​ authoritarian demeanour​ is revealed when Juliet refuses to marry Paris saying “I will not marry yet”. This created an explosive response from Lord Capulet. He calls his daughter “​Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought So worthy a gentle man to be her bride” ​saying that if she does not do as she is told he “will drag thee on a hurdle thither. Out, you green sickness, carrion! Out, you baggage!”. ​ The ​listing ​of insults used encapsulates her father’s lack of respect for his daughter as well as his frustration at societal gender norms being ignored. The use of ​punctuation breaks up Lord Capulet’s speech and suggests how emotional and outraged he was at this attempt of insolence.

Lady Capulet’s response echoes that the expectation on women in this context was to follow the rule of their husband as she shows contempt for Juliet’s actions, calling her a ‘fool’ and does not support her daughter’s opinion or wishes.

Answer the following questions:

1. How did ‘important families’ often view the idea of marriage?

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1. In Act 1 Scene 2, how does Lord Capulet differ from what would be expected of an Elizabethan father?

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1. Summarise Lord Capulet’s actions in Act 3 Scene 5.

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1. What is the effect of the insults used?

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1. What were the expectations on women at the time?

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**A picture containing indoor, person, sitting, bed

Description automatically generatedMother**

A woman’s role within the play was to become a wife and mother. In ​Act 1 Lady Capulet talks about how she fears her daughter, who is only 14, will die unmarried. She says her daughter should start to ​“think of marriage now” because girls ​“Younger than (Juliet) Here in Verona” ​ have gotten married. Juliet's mother even comments that she was Juliet’s ​“mother much upon these years” which means that Lady Capulet was already wedded with a child by the time she was Juliet’s age.

**Objects**

Women are not just seen as wives and mothers within the play but they are also perceived by men as ​sexual objects​, even from the first act.

In ​Act 2 Scene 1 Mercutio ​subverts the convention of romantic poetry when describing Rosaline’s body. He ​lists her body parts ​saying; “​ I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,/By her high forehead and her scarlet lip, /By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,”. ​Here, Mercutio is ​sexualising Rosaline’s body and seeing her purely as an object for gratification (pleasure). Moreover, the Friar notes​“Young men’s love lies not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes” and even the nurse makes jokes about female sexual subservience as she notes that Juliet will “rest but little” when Romeo visits. This is filled with ​dramatic irony as the audience know that Juliet will soon be dead (resting in peace), which fills the beginning of the scene with new tension.

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the primary role for women in Verona?

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1. How else are they viewed by males in the play?

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1. Write 3 quotations from the play that show women are often objectified.

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A person sitting in a room

Description automatically generated Courtship

Normally in courtship the male would actively pursue a passive female for her hand in marriage. However, Juliet plays an ​active role in their relationship instead of a passive one. She does not wait around for Romeo to find her but instead uses the Nurse and Friar to help facilitate their relationship and marriage.

She also ​breaks conventions through proposing to Romeo. She demands that he shows his devotion to her saying ​“If that thy bent of love be honorable, Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow”. ​ This ​assertive sentence identifies Juliet as a girl who knows what she wants and is not afraid of the consequences of her desires.

Sexuality

Juliet does show some denial of Romeo’s advances in Act 1 Scene 5, but in a clearly flirtatious way which suggests she is engaged with his desire from the outset. She welcomes the enjoyment of physical love with her new husband.

➔ She says “ ​ I have bought the mansion of a love, But not possessed it, and though I am sold, Not yet enjoyed.” ​ This means that Juliet has fallen in love with Romeo so she now belongs to him, though “not yet enjoyed” is innuendo for the consummation of the marriage.

Summarise how Juliet seems to subvert (not match to) the traditional expectations of a woman in the play:

Lesson 6: How are ideas about love presented in the play?

Romeo and Juliet is widely regarded as one of the​ greatest love stories ever told​. Shakespeare tells the story of two young people who are so in love that they would rather die than live without each other.

The​ theme of love​ is interwoven into every scene in the play, the different forms of love are also explored by Shakespeare. He contrasts the purity of first love with the passionate and uncontrollable force of the emotion. He uses existing conventions, as well as his own elaborate language and imagery, to present love as:

● Unrequited

● Elevated and holy

● Physical

● Linked with violence and death

**Unrequited Love**

Unrequited love is portrayed through Romeo’s infatuation with Rosaline; instead of bringing him joy he becomes depressed as his love is one sided and she doesn’t feel the same way.

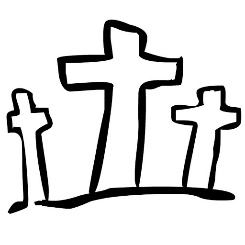
In Act 1 Scene 1, Romeo uses a range of ​oxymorons ​to express his emotions about love. ​“O brawling love, O loving hate”. The ​verb ​“​brawl” is used as an ​adjective ​here and has connotations ​of fighting (which emphasises the conflict within the play). The​ oxymoron ​between “​brawling​ ” and “​love” ​represents the ​contrast ​between Romeo and Juliet’s love with the quarrelling and violence of the family feud. It also ​foreshadows ​the amount of violence that will occur throughout the course of the play between the families, and links with the important theme of the coexistence of love and hate.

The unending ​list ​of Romeo’s ​oxymorons from ​“feather of lead,” “​bright smoke,” “cold fire,” to ​“​sick health,” suggests Romeo’s inability to comprehend what is in front of him and his overall confusion on love. In addition to this, it strongly alludes to Romeo’s immature and inexperienced character, and his tendency to make rushed decisions.

This is reinforced when Juliet says in Act 2 Scene 2 ​“​too rash, too unadvis’d, too sudden, too like the lightning”, ​ the ​​listing builds to the ​simile ​which encapsulates Romeo’s character as someone who is reckless and impulsive.

1. Highlight all the quotations

2. List all the techniques/methods on this page:

**Religion and love**

The​ pure and chaste religious imagery​ when Romeo and Juliet meet is contrasted to ​Act 5 Scene 3​ where the imagery becomes sexualised. In many cultures sex is a way of ​consummating​ a marriage and thus completes the unification of a couple. Here the couple are ​unified in death​ and the sexual imagery is ​symbolic of the consummation of their unity in the afterlife​.

➔ Romeo drinks to his death from a round vial which in Elizabethan times was an ​allusion to female sexuality​.

➔ This combines with the action of Juliet killing herself with a dagger, a ​phallic symbol ​which could also be seen as representing a​ re-consummation of the marriage.

This highlights how they had a love that was transcendental and able to connect them across three levels; ​physically, mentally and spiritually. ​The fact that the two lovers die together also cements their eternal devotion for each other.

**Physical Love**

This concept of love being both ​emotional and physical​ is exemplified in various places throughout the play.

In Act 1 Scene 4​, Mercutio says that if ​“love be rough with you, be rough with love” ​ . This alludes to the ​sexual nature of love which is physical and not pure. This also suggests that love can also be “rough” ​ emotionally which is evident in the way that Romeo is suffering from unrequited love​.

****The Friar shows his lack of emotional understanding in this scene as he says that​“Young men’s love lies not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes” ​ , essentially disregarding the idea that love can be something from the heart. This could be seen as Shakespeare shining light on the superficial nature of love, perhaps cloaking the whole play in ​irony ​and showing a fresh view of love, which contradicts the more romantically idealised conventions of the time. This idea is further explored as the Friar says that Romeo was only ​“doting” ​for Rosaline. This sexual form of love is not just focused on by the men. The Nurse checks out Romeo’s body and comments that his​ ​ “leg excels all men’s ​ ” . The Nurse’s sexualised view of Romeo contrasts with the emotional attachment Juliet feels towards him. Perhaps Shakespeare is stressing how Romeo and Juliet’s love ​transcends the conventional ideas​ of love that we see from Lady Capulet, the Nurse and Mercutio.

If you want to know more about the theme of love in the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFrFePKJKVU>

**Violence and death**

Within Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare manages to fuse together many​ powerful emotions​. The passionate love of Romeo and Juliet is ​unsettled by the violence ​and conflict that takes place in the play. However, while some might think that the ​conflict corrupts​ their love it actually ​fuels ​it and makes it more ​powerful​. The ​amalgamation ​of love and the violence is what characterises the ​drama as a tragedy.

Love is also linked with violence and death in many other ways within the play.

➔ In Act 1 Scene 1, Sampson and Gregory describe acts of violence and rape with the use of a ​“naked weapon” ​ . ​ The word “​naked” ​ fills the description with both sexual ideas of intimacy but also highlights an idea of truth. The ​juxtaposition ​of this with ​“weapon” ​ which has ​connotations of violence​ again highlights how there is an ​overlap​ between love and hate.

◆ It is said along with desires to ​“thrust [Montague’s] maids to the wall” ​ and to rape the women. Rape can be seen as violence infiltrating what is supposed to be an act of love and intimacy.

➔ The use of the ​sonnet form​ ​which was conventionally used to depict love is used by Shakespeare to describe death and feud. He uses ​blood-filled imagery ​of ​“civil blood makes civil hands unclean” ​which ​highlights ​how this play is contained within ideas of love but is just as much to do with hate and fighting.

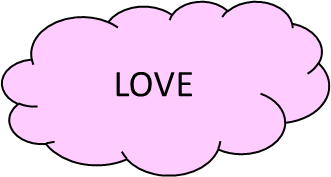
➔ The marriage of Romeo and Juliet is described as ​“violent delights” ​ by Friar Lawrence. This use of ​oxymoron​ emphasises the difference between the two ideas but also highlights a connection between them. The use of the ​adjective​ ​“violent” ​ echoes the fighting that has gone on within the novel. However, the use of the ​verb​ ​“delights” ​ , rather than love also puts emphasis on how the violence occurs within the indulgence rather than the relationship

➔ The almost ​prophetic words​ of Juliet that her ​“grave is like to be [her] wedding bed” again highlights an intersection between violence and death with love. The image of a wedding bed is interesting as it suggests consummation of a marriage and finality which has links to death which is also final.

Complete a mindmap for how love is presented in the play by summarising notes from your reading today and adding references to further related events and characters from the play:

*Unrequited Love*

*Religion and Love*



*Violence and death*

*Physical Love*

1. Highlight all the quotations

2. List all the techniques/methods on this page: