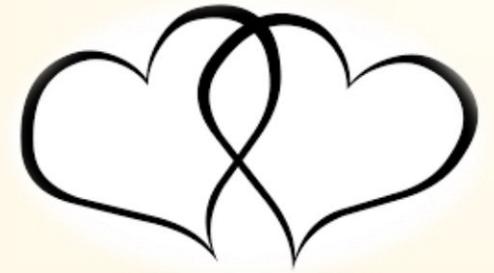


Romeo & Juliet

Revision of key characters, themes and
context

Key Themes

Love



Love is one of the major themes in the whole play. It is shown in several different ways. These include:

- Romantic love (Seen with R&J)
- 'Arranged' love (Seen with Paris & J)
- Love in Friendship (seen with J & the Nurse and R & Mercutio)
- Love in families (Seen with Lord Capulet & J)

Romantic love...

- Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline at the start of the play
- Romeo and Juliet first meet
- The 'balcony' scene
- The wedding night
- The death scenes



'Arranged' love...

- Lady Capulet suggests Paris to Juliet before the ball
- Paris and Lord Capulet's first discussion
- Lord Capulet and Juliet argue



Friendship love...

- Juliet's relationship with the nurse
- Mercutio defends Romeo to Tybalt
- Mercutio & Benvolio joke around just before the fight scene



Familial love...

- Lord Capulet is protective of Juliet
- Juliet and her mother are distant
- Juliet has close, almost mother/daughter bond, with the Nurse
- Tybalt is fiercely defensive/protective of his family
- Benvolio is concerned about Romeo at the start of the play



Fate and Free Will



From the very opening to the play we are led to understand that fate is to blame for the tragedy. It is then referred to throughout the play. Some points include:

- Prologue
- R&J both have a sense of foreboding at different points
- Mercutio curses the families
- Romeo murders Tybalt
- The confusion surrounding the 'death' plan

Prologue...

- Many reference to fate - 'star crossed', 'death-mark'd love'
- Gives hints to the fact that their relationship will end in tragedy - the outcome cannot be changed no matter what they do - doomed from the start



Foreboding...

- Juliet makes a chilling prediction of Romeo's death in Act 3 scene 5
- Romeo realises he has played into Fate's hands - "I am Fortune's Fool!"
- Romeo challenges Fate when he hears of Juliet's death "I defy you stars!"
- Romeo is concerned that going to the Capulet party will end badly



Mercutio...

During the scene in which he is killed, Mercutio curses the families.

"A plague o' both your houses!"

He says this 3 times for emphasis. He blames their feud for his death and so calls upon Fate to exact revenge on them all.



Tybalt's murder...

During the scene in which he kills Tybalt, Romeo speaks about Fate.

"I am Fortune's Fool!"

He knows at this point that he will be executed (the Prince's warning) and realises that he has played right into Fate's hands. If he had not killed Tybalt, the rest of the events would be very different.

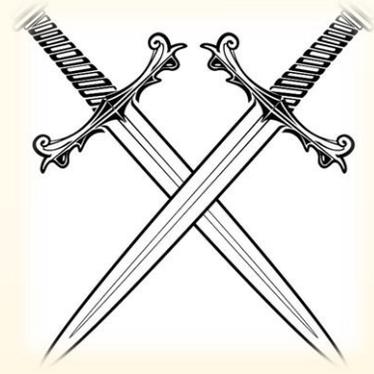


The 'Death' Plan...

- Juliet's letter does not reach Romeo - the plague in a neighbouring town prevents it being delivered
- This leads to Romeo's coming back to Verona and his suicide
- Juliet's actual death occurs because she sees Romeo has taken poison
- All of this links back to the prologue and the events which Fate had set out for the lovers



Violence and Conflict

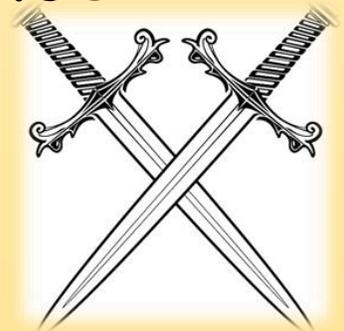


Violence is clear throughout the whole play.
Some points include:

- Opening scene in which the servants begin a fight
- Tybalt fights with Romeo and kills Mercutio
- Romeo kills Tybalt
- Lord Capulet and Juliet argue

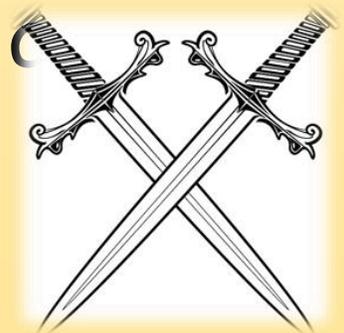
Act 1 Scene 1...

- The Capulet servants "bite their thumb" - a deliberately offensive gesture designed to provoke
- The feud includes everyone - "the quarrel is between our masters and us, their men"
- Tybalt is introduced as a fiery and conflict loving character "Peace? I hate the word.."
- The families are punished and warned by the Prince for the third time.



Tybalt fights Romeo...

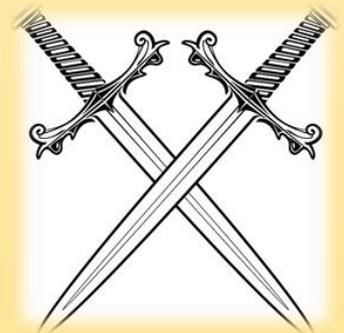
- Tybalt is looking for revenge - he deliberately calls Romeo insulting names ('boy', 'villain') in order to provoke him to fight
- Romeo will not (due to the marriage and the internal conflict this brings) but this makes matters worse - Mercutio sees it as "vile submission" and fights Tybalt himself
- The violence is brought to head when Mercutio, neutral character, is killed



Romeo kills Tybalt...

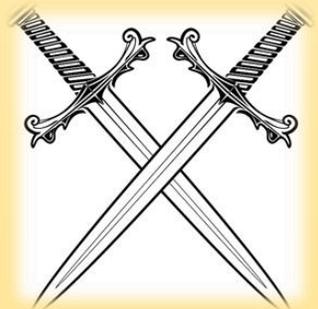
A turning point for Romeo - he has never been involved in violence up to this point. Shows that the conflict is now so great that even previously passive characters become aggressive.

"Either thou or I or both must go with him."



Lord Capulet and Juliet...

- Juliet, for the first time, openly defies her father
- His anger at this is clear - he changes from a previously understanding and protective father to an aggressive and violent one. "Hang, starve...", "My finger itch"
- This also causes conflict between Juliet and Lady Capulet - "I have done with thee."
- Juliet's relationship with the Nurse also breaks down here - the conflict leaves Juliet feeling isolated



Key Characters

Romeo



Romantic character (hence the name!); associated with love throughout the whole play.

- Infatuation - with Rosaline at the start of the play - emphasises his romantic and dreamy nature
- Love at first sight with Juliet
- Willing to go to extremes for love - goes against family/friends and marries Juliet in secret, takes abuse from Tybalt and would rather die than live without Juliet
- Avenges Mercutio's death - the **ONLY** time he is violent and this is his turning point - destroys any chance of future happiness.

Romeo - Key Quotes



- "It is the East, and Juliet is the Sun!"
- "I do protest I never injured thee, but love thee better than thou canst devise."
- "I am Fortune's Fool!"
- "I defy you stars!"
- "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night."
- "My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss"

Juliet



Juliet, despite appearing innocent and sweet, is actually a fiercely determined young woman...

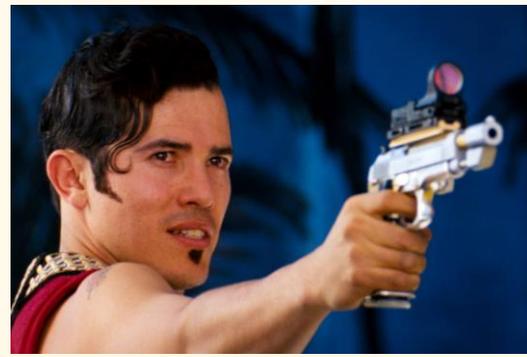
- Falls instantly in love with Romeo - willing to go against her father and society's expectations to be with him.
- Close relationship with the Nurse - uses the bond and the affection to her advantage - the Nurse is her confidante.
- She is courageous - carries out the Friar's plan and places great trust in both him and Romeo, openly defies her father, telling him she will not marry and that she hates her family.

Juliet - Key Quotes



- My only love sprung from my only hate!
- Take him and cut him out in little stars, and he will make the face of heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with night...
- O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris...
- ...and left no friendly drop to help me after! I will kiss thy lips. Haply some poison yet doth hang on them...
- O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
- And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay and follow thee my lord throughout the world.

Tybalt



A very aggressive and violent character; mostly associated with conflict throughout the play.

- Involved in the very dramatic opening scene - refuses to part peacefully which indicates straight away the type of character he is
- Seeks vengeance for what he believes to be a deliberate insult from Romeo
- Murders Mercutio (a neutral character) as a result of his hot headedness and hostility to others

Tybalt - Key Quotes



- To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.
- Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford no better term than this: thou art a villain.
- Peace? I hate the word as I hate Hell, all Montagues and thee
- This, by his voice, should be a Montague.— Fetch me my rapier, boy.
- What dares the slave come hither...

Mercutio



Romeo's hot tempered best friend and neutral character in the play. He is both aggressive (won't back down from a fight) and humorous.

- Tries to give Romeo advice about his unrequited love for Rosaline and takes him to the Capulet ball
- Shows his lack of fear of Tybalt and his own aggressive streak when Tybalt is looking for Romeo
- Steps in to fight when Romeo won't - Mercutio can't understand why he wouldn't defend himself
- Is killed as a direct result of the feud between the families and curses them all

Mercutio - Key Quotes



- If love be rough with you, be rough with love.
- True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain
- Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man
- They have made worms' meat of me.
- A plague o' both your houses

Nurse



Juliet's closest confidante throughout the play, The Nurse treats Juliet as her own child and wants the best for her.

- Helps Juliet to arrange her secret marriage to Romeo
- Acts as messenger for Juliet
- Appears to betray Juliet and suggests she "marry with Paris" - says this really to keep her safe
- It is at this point their relationship breaks down beyond repair

Nurse - Key Quotes



- I am the drudge and toil in your delight
- ...if you should lead her into a fool's paradise, as they say, it
a very gross kind of behaviour...
- I can tell her age unto an hour.
- I think it best you married with the county
- Lamb...Ladybird...

Lord Capulet



Juliet's powerful, protective and, at times, brutal father.

- Initially Lord Capulet is very protective of his daughter and won't allow Paris to marry her until he feels she ready
- He is the only character able to control Tybalt - he manages to stop him fighting at the ball (but only by threatening violence himself)
- He is outraged by Juliet's defiance about her potential marriage and we see the full extent of his anger
- After her death, he is remorseful and speaks about Juliet's beauty and importance

Lord Capulet - Key Quotes



- And, to say truth, Verona brags of him to be a virtuous and well-governed youth.
- My child is yet a stranger in the world.
- Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play, alone, in company, still my care hath been to have her matched
- And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, for, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee
- Death lies on her like an untimely frost upon the sweetest flower of all the field

Contexts

The Patriarchal Society

- The society was ruled by men - fathers were of prime importance
- The dominant male in the household had control over his wife and daughter
- It was his role to make the decisions in the home - they had to be the best decisions for his family and not just used to assert authority
- The male would hold all of the family wealth

Family Honour

- Family honour was of great importance during the Elizabethan era. If a family had honour, they would be treated with respect and admiration.
- It was considered the male's role to protect and defend the honour of his family/family name.
- If a man was insulted by being called a liar or in some other way questioning his nobility or courage, he would be expected to duel to defend both his own honour and that of his family.

Family Honour

- Duelling was dangerous and illegal, so it was often done in places where there was little chance of being caught.
- Most men were armed with swords - usually rapiers - and these would be used to fight an enemy.
- Duelling was often used to settle personal disputes.

Parents and Children

- Father's role to protect his family and the family name
- Mother was expected to keep her children safe and be at home with them
- Households usually included many people - especially wealthy ones. The father was expected to provide for, and keep track of, everyone in the household
- Wives and children were subservient to the father in the household

Parents and Children

- Male children were given more privileges and freedom than females children
- Males grew up to strive for the status of their parents
- Males often had the opportunity for education
- Girls were expected to be married off between the ages of 12-15
- The marriage would be to someone of their father's status or better
- Wealthy families would have nurses to look after the children on a daily basis

Have a go...

In Act 1 Scene 3, Lady Capulet talks with her daughter about the prospect of marriage.

Starting with this extract, write about how Shakespeare presents parents and children.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Lady Capulet and Juliet's relationship in the extract
- How Shakespeare presents parents and children in the play as a whole