

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT OUR VISIT

1. DBS CHECKS FOR OUR PERFORMERS

We operate a rigorous selection process where the identity of all prospective performers is checked thoroughly. All of our performers are recently DBS checked to enhanced level, and they are all instructed to bring their DBS disclosure with them for every performance we do. They will also have Photo-ID with them. Under Data Protection law, we are not permitted to share personal data of our performers on their behalf, either prior to, or during their visit, ie. DBS disclosure numbers, dates of birth, photographs. However, should you wish to see this information on arrival, they will produce this for your inspection. We are equally happy to confirm their identity by telephone, should you require this, during the time that they are on your premises.

Please be aware that retention of and/or copying or photographing of our performers' personal data documents contravenes GDPR regulations and as such we politely request that you do not retain or replicate any such documents unless the following process is followed:

1. The performer consents in writing to their personal data being retained and/or copied.
2. The performer has their documents returned to them personally and witnesses any such copies being securely destroyed before departure from your premises.
3. You email brian@manactco.org.uk to confirm that this information has been consensually copied and furthermore securely destroyed.

2. PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE:

manACTco has Public and Employers Liability Insurance: Policy number 550.194.951; dated 24/09/2021, arranged with AXA Insurance UK plc, where the minimum amount of cover provided by the policy is no less than £5 million. Contact us if you would like to see a copy of the evidence of cover.

3. GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT:

The performers will bring with them bags containing soft costumes and small props, but we do NOT use scenery, lighting rigs, or any equipment whatsoever. During set-up we have requested that we have the performance space to ourselves for preparation, therefore no children should be in the performance hall whilst we are setting up. It is important that this is adhered to. By the time we are ready to allow the audience into the performance space all the preparations will be complete without any risk to the children.

Please note that MANACTCO (Manchester Actors Company) is NOT responsible for the supervision of your children at any time; therefore your school must ensure that there is sufficient supervision throughout the performance, and that the performance hall is clear of children before and after the session.

4. USE OF RECORDING/PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT DURING THE PERFORMANCE:

UNDER THE LAWS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS , Video or other recording of the performance and workshop is strictly **NOT PERMITTED**. If you wish to take STILL PHOTOGRAPHS then this is possible, but must be arranged with the performers BEFORE the performance has commenced.

COVID-SECURE PRESENTATIONS 2022

Despite Government changes to the legal requirements with regard to COVID, things are still far from normal, and the risk from Covid-19 variants is ever-present, so our school presentations will continue to reflect the on-going risk associated with Covid-19. We have laid down some ground rules with regard to visiting schools to ensure that all of our visits are SAFE and COVID SECURE, in order to best protect school staff, students, and also our performers. These procedures have worked extremely well since we resumed touring back in early November 2021, and we will continue these procedures through for the foreseeable future. It is our intention that at all times the performers will have as little close contact as possible with students and school staff during the entirety of our visit, and we request that schools assist us to achieve that aim. Where we need action from school staff to achieve a secure visit then this will be highlighted below **in yellow**. These arrangements will remain in place for as long as necessary.

1. GENERAL:

All of our performers have been fully (double) vaccinated before contracted to work with us, and they will be routinely health-checked in Manchester each morning before setting off to visit schools. They will apply hand sanitiser BEFORE entering school premises, and will wear face-masks upon arrival at school and throughout their time on school premises, EXCEPT during the period of setting up the performance area; during the actual performance; and during the follow-up Q&A session. It is our intention throughout our visit that the performers will remain at least two metres from school staff when arriving at school and being escorted to and from the performance area; and will remain at least five metres from the audience during the whole presentation.

2. ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL RECEPTION:

In advance of our visit we will inform our school booking contact of the names of the performers who will be visiting you on the day, in order to make the signing-in process as easy as possible. All our performers have recently been DBS checked to enhanced level. They will bring with them their DBS certificate, and also relevant Photo-ID. As soon as the performers arrive at the school gates they will telephone the school reception to inform them of their arrival and to receive any instructions, if necessary, about entering the school building.

It is our intention that our performers have as little contact as possible with students and school staff during the entirety of our visit, and so **it would be extremely helpful that once the group arrives with you and have signed in, that they should be escorted to the performance area as quickly as possible, and not left in your school reception area unattended for any length of time.**

3. SETTING UP IN THE PERFORMANCE AREA.

There is no set to erect, and our group will arrive each with a bag containing costume changes and small props that are specific to each performer. During set-up we request that we have the performance space to ourselves for preparation, therefore no students and a minimum of staff should be in the performance hall whilst we are setting up. By the time we are ready to allow the audience into the seating area all the preparations will be complete. Our performance is presented front-on to the audience, and **we would request that the seating is arranged to accommodate this prior to our visit.** For our part, we will work to a maximum audience size of 240. Up to that number, how many you actually want to have attending the performance is entirely up to you: it's all a matter of how many you can fit into the performance seating area, and still maintain any social distancing rules your school has in place at the time of our performance. **We request that school staff are responsible for ensuring that the audience are seated correctly, and that our performers will not be involved in seating the audience.** It is our intention that the performers will remain a MINIMUM of 5 metres from the audience at all times, and so **we request that the front occupied row of the seating area is at least 5 metres from the performing area** to allow the performers the chance to keep their distance from the audience at all times. The performers will mark out a boundary on the performing area itself which we will not cross, to ensure that we maintain the minimum of 5 metres from the front of the audience throughout.

4. DURING THE PRESENTATION.

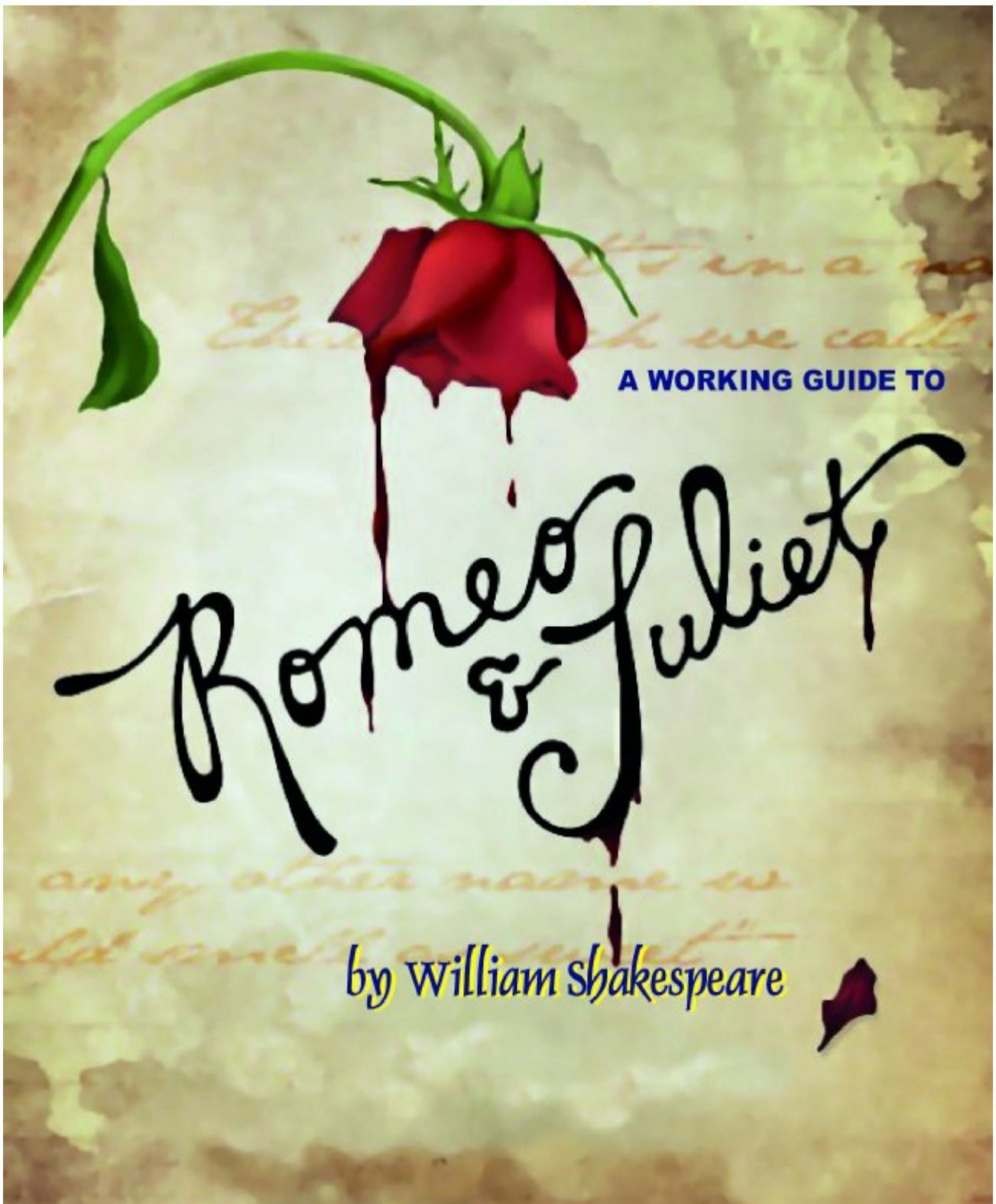
Each performance lasts approx. 60 minutes. Despite any restrictions, you can expect that our performers will present a robust, lively, powerful, well-spoken, well-acted professional performance of the play. After the performance there is an OPTIONAL Q&A session that can last up to a maximum of 30 minutes. This session will be directed by the performers, and will involve a dialogue with the audience, to encourage the students to delve deeper into the text, and ask any relevant questions that they would like to be answered. These Q&A sessions are often quite lively, but we will maintain our 5 metre minimum distance AT ALL TIMES.

5. AFTER THE PRESENTATION IS COMPLETE.

Once the presentation is complete then the performers will retreat to the rear of the performance area. **Often at schools, once the presentation has finished some students and staff members like to have quick chat with the performers, which we usually like to encourage, but under these current conditions we CAN NOT allow this to happen.** We want to maintain our distance at all times throughout our visit. Once the seating area is totally cleared of staff and students, our performers will start to pack up costumes and props, and prepare to leave the premises, replacing their face masks. **We request that one member of staff remains behind to safely escort our group back to the school reception and off the premises,** to ensure that we do not encounter other staff or students on the way.

These measures will ensure that our school visit will be as safe as possible for all parties, and also ensure that the presentation to the audience will be as robust as ever.

manchester actors company present



INFORMATION PACK

SPRING 2022

INTRODUCTION:

HELLO TEACHERS!

This is our Teachers' Pack to compliment the performance of 'ROMEO AND JULIET' we will presenting at your school. Inside this pack there is lots of information about Shakespeare's enduring classic tragic romance, and also about our version, which is a working guide to the play. In this pack you will find articles about the plot, characters and themes of the play, as well as detail about what you will see in our version; some background information about the origins of the play; about Shakespeare; and about Manchester Actors Company. We are thrilled to be performing ROMEO AND JULIET again - it was probably first performed back in 1595! The most important thing about our visit is to enable our young audiences to experience ROMEO AND JULIET as a piece of theatre, rather than an exercise in academic study, and to experience live theatre rather than watching a film or DVD of the play. No matter how excellent these may be, viewing a recorded version remains a largely passive exercise, and very different to the thrill of engaging moment-by-moment in live action, as this gripping story unfolds right there in front of you. We aim to give a dynamic, well-spoken performance, which will give a clear overview of the plot, making the play easy to understand, as a springboard to help students develop their responses to the themes, characters and plot of this world-famous romantic tragedy. By bringing the text alive, we also hope to stimulate ideas for discussion and essays, projects and practical work. The ingredients of ROMEO AND JULIET - spiritual friendship, romantic love, death, conflict, loyalty and fate - make it one of the most exciting of Shakespeare's plays to study.

ROMEO AND JULIET is probably Shakespeare's most famous play, played out against a violent background of hate and rivalry that is still recognisable in modern life. Set against a long history of family feuding between the Montagues and the Capulets, Romeo Montague falls hopelessly in love with Juliet Capulet, and from the very beginning fate has decided that the two of them are doomed... The couple have a feeling that things will go badly for them: Romeo thinks something is 'hanging in the stars', while Juliet says a 'faint cold fear thrills through my veins' They believe their love can conquer their families hate, but it is proven to be too fragile, and because of their ill-fated star-crossed love a series of events, both comic and tragic, unfolds in a very short space of time as true love turns to tragedy.

After the performance, of course, we have our 30-minute interactive workshop, 'Meet the Characters', which is a face-to-face interactive discussion, guided by actors in the company, where the audience can talk directly to the fascinating characters, and ask any questions they may have and develop the plot and characters. This invaluable, practical teaching aid allows students to examine contrasting personalities and motives, and helps to explain/expand/explore the play even more. This allows the students to better understand the motives of these characters, and to clarify parts of the story that students may otherwise not fully understand. It is a great opportunity for students to unlock the story and to examine it in greater detail. Please, if there is any part of the play, or any specific characters that you would like this Q&A session to concentrate on, or any area you would specifically like us to mention, then let the actors know before the Q&A session begins, and we'll do our best to meet your needs.

Many thanks for inviting us into your school this Spring. We hope you enjoy the performance and workshop, and trust that this pack will add value to our visit.

A HISTORY OF 'ROMEO AND JULIET'

THE MOST EXCELLENT AND LAMENTABLE TRAGEDIE OF ROMEO AND JULIET was most likely written somewhere between 1591 and 1595, though it cannot be precisely dated. It was among Shakespeare's most popular plays during his lifetime and, along with Hamlet, is one of his most frequently performed plays. Today, the title characters are regarded as archetypal young lovers. Romeo and Juliet belongs to a tradition of tragic romances stretching back to antiquity. In the 16th Century there was a trend among writers and playwrights to publish works based on Italian novellas—Italian tales were very popular among theatre-goers—and Shakespeare may well have been familiar with William Painter's popular 1567 collection of Italian tales titled 'Palace of Pleasure'. This collection of novelle included a version in prose of the Romeo and Juliet story named "The goodly History of the true and constant love of Romeo and Julieta", which in itself was a dramatisation of the popular poem 'The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet' by Arthur Brooke (1562). Shakespeare took advantage of the popularity of Painter's collection, and *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are all from Italian novelle. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is also a dramatisation of Arthur Brooke's accurate translation from Italian, and whilst Shakespeare follows Brooke's poem closely, he also adds extra detail to both major and minor characters (in particular the Nurse and Mercutio).

Believed to have been written somewhere between 1591 and 1595, the play was published in two quarto editions prior to the publication of the First Folio of 1623. These are referred to as Q1 and Q2. The first printed edition, Q1, appeared in early 1597, printed by John Danter. Because its text contains numerous differences from the later editions, it is labelled a 'bad quarto'; the 20th-century editor T.J.B. Spencer described it as "a detestable text, probably a reconstruction of the play from the imperfect memories of one or two of the actors", suggesting that it had been pirated for publication. An alternative explanation for Q1's shortcomings is that the play (like many others of the time) may have been heavily edited before performance by the playing company. In any event, its appearance in early 1597 makes 1596 the latest possible date for the play's composition. The superior Q2 called the play *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet*. It was printed in 1599 by Thomas Creede and published by Cuthbert Burby. Q2 is about 800 lines longer than Q1. Its title page describes it as "Newly corrected, augmented and amended". Scholars believe that Q2 was based on Shakespeare's pre-performance draft (called his foul papers), since there are textual oddities such as variable tags for characters and "false starts" for speeches that were presumably struck through by the author but erroneously preserved by the typesetter. It is a much more complete and reliable text, and was reprinted in 1609 (Q3), 1622 (Q4) and 1637 (Q5). In effect, all later Quartos and Folios of *Romeo and Juliet* are based on Q2, as are all modern editions since editors believe that any deviations from Q2 in the later editions (whether good or bad) are likely to arise from editors or compositors, not from Shakespeare.

The First Folio text of 1623 was based primarily on Q3, with clarifications and corrections possibly coming from a theatrical promptbook or Q1. Other Folio editions of the play were printed in 1632 (F2), 1664 (F3), and 1685 (F4). Modern versions—that take into account several of the Folios and Quartos—first appeared with Nicholas Rowe's 1709 edition, followed by Alexander Pope's 1723 version. Pope began a tradition of editing the play to add information such as stage directions missing in Q2 by locating them in Q1. This tradition continued late into the Romantic period. Fully annotated editions first appeared in the Victorian period and continue to be produced today, printing the text of the play with footnotes describing the sources and culture behind the play.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare employs several dramatic techniques that have garnered praise from critics; most notably the abrupt shifts from comedy to tragedy (an example is the punning exchange between Benvolio and Mercutio just before Tybalt arrives). Before Mercutio's death in Act three, the play is largely a comedy. After his accidental demise, the play suddenly becomes serious and takes on a tragic tone. When Romeo is banished, rather than executed, and Friar Lawrence offers Juliet a plan to reunite her with Romeo, the audience can still hope that all will end well. They are in a "breathless state of suspense" by the opening of the last scene in the tomb: If Romeo is delayed long enough for the Friar to arrive, he and Juliet may yet be saved. These shifts from hope to despair, reprieve, and new hope, serve to emphasise the tragedy when the final hope fails and both the lovers die at the end. Shakespeare also uses sub-plots to offer a clearer view of the actions of the main characters. For example, when the play begins, Romeo is in love with Rosaline, who has refused all of his advances. Romeo's infatuation with her stands in obvious contrast to his later love for Juliet. This provides a comparison through which the audience can see the seriousness of Romeo and Juliet's love and marriage. Paris' love for Juliet also sets up a contrast between Juliet's feelings for him and her feelings for Romeo. The formal language she uses around Paris, as well as the way she talks about him to her Nurse, show that her feelings clearly lie with Romeo. Beyond this, the sub-plot of the Montague-Capulet feud overarches the whole play, providing an atmosphere of hate that is the main contributor to the play's tragic end.

Romeo and Juliet has been adapted numerous times for stage, film, musical, ballet and opera. During the English Restoration, it was revived and heavily revised by William Davenant. David Garrick's 18th-century version also modified several scenes, removing material then considered indecent, and Georg Benda's operatic adaptation omitted much of the action and added a happy ending. Performances in the 19th century, including Charlotte Cushman's, restored the original text, and focused on greater realism. John Gielgud's 1935 version kept very close to Shakespeare's text, and used Elizabethan costumes and staging to enhance the drama. *Romeo and Juliet* may be the most-filmed play of all time. The most notable theatrical releases were George Cukor's multi-Oscar-nominated 1936 production, Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 version, and Baz Luhrmann's 1996 MTV-inspired *Romeo + Juliet*. The latter two were both, in their time, the highest-grossing Shakespeare film ever. *Romeo and Juliet* was first filmed in the silent era, by Georges Méliès, although his film is now lost. The play was first heard on film in *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, in which John Gilbert recited the balcony scene opposite Norma Shearer. Shearer and Leslie Howard, with a combined age over 75, played the teenage lovers in George Cukor's MGM 1936 film version. Neither critics nor the public responded enthusiastically. Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* was described as being "full of beautiful young people, and the camera, and the lush technicolour, make the most of their sexual energy and good looks." Zeffirelli's teenage leads, Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, had virtually no previous acting experience, but performed capably and with great maturity. Baz Luhrmann's 1996 *Romeo + Juliet* and its accompanying soundtrack successfully targeted a young audience of similar age to the story's characters. Far darker than Zeffirelli's version, the film starred Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo and Claire Danes as Juliet. The musical *West Side Story*—set among New York gangs—featured the Jets as white youths, equivalent to Shakespeare's Montagues, while the Sharks, equivalent to the Capulets, are Puerto Rican. The 1994 film *The Punk* uses both the rough plot outline of *Romeo and Juliet* and names many of the characters in ways that reflect the characters in the play. In 2006, Disney's *High School Musical* made use of *Romeo and Juliet*'s plot, placing the two young lovers in rival high school cliques instead of feuding families.

THE PLOT

The play, set in Verona, begins with a street brawl between Montague and Capulet supporters who are sworn enemies. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to stop the fighting, but is himself embroiled when the rash Capulet, Tybalt, arrives on the scene. After citizens outraged by the constant violence beat back the warring factions, Prince Escalus, the ruler of Verona, attempts to prevent any further conflicts between the families by decreeing death for any individual who disturbs the peace in the future.

Romeo, the son of Montague, runs into his cousin Benvolio, who had earlier seen Romeo moping in a grove of sycamores. After some prodding by Benvolio, Romeo confides that he is in love with Rosaline, a woman who does not return his affections. Benvolio counsels him to forget this woman and find another, more beautiful one, but Romeo remains despondent.

Meanwhile, Paris, a kinsman of the Prince, seeks Juliet's hand in marriage. Her father Capulet, though happy at the match, asks Paris to wait two years, since Juliet is not yet even fourteen. Capulet dispatches a servant with a list of people to invite to a masquerade and feast he traditionally holds. He invites Paris to the feast, hoping that Paris will begin to win Juliet's heart.

Romeo and Benvolio, still discussing Rosaline, encounter the Capulet servant bearing the list of invitations. Benvolio suggests that they attend, since that will allow Romeo to compare his beloved to other beautiful women of Verona. Romeo agrees to go with Benvolio to the feast, but only because Rosaline, whose name he reads on the list, will be there.

In Capulet's household, young Juliet talks with her mother, Lady Capulet, and her nurse about the possibility of marrying Paris. Juliet has not yet considered marriage, but agrees to look at Paris during the feast to see if she thinks she could fall in love with him.

The feast begins. A melancholy Romeo follows Benvolio and their witty friend Mercutio to Capulet's house. Once inside, Romeo sees Juliet from a distance and instantly falls in love with her; he forgets about Rosaline completely. As Romeo watches Juliet, entranced, a young Capulet, Tybalt, recognizes him, and is enraged that a Montague would sneak into a Capulet feast. He prepares to attack, but Capulet holds him back. Soon, Romeo speaks to Juliet, and the two experience a profound attraction. They kiss, not even knowing each other's names. When he finds out from Juliet's nurse that she is the daughter of Capulet—his family's enemy—he becomes distraught. When Juliet learns that the young man she has just kissed is the son of Montague, she grows equally upset.

As Mercutio and Benvolio leave the Capulet estate, Romeo leaps over the orchard wall into the garden, unable to leave Juliet behind. From his hiding place, he sees Juliet in a window above the orchard and hears her speak his name. He calls out to her, and they exchange vows of love. Romeo hurries to see his friend and confessor Friar Lawrence, who, though shocked at the sudden turn of Romeo's heart, agrees to marry the young lovers in secret since he sees in their love the possibility of ending the age-old feud between Capulet and Montague. The following day, Romeo and Juliet meet at Friar Lawrence's cell and are married. The Nurse, who is privy to the secret, procures a ladder, which Romeo will use to climb into Juliet's window for their wedding night.

The next day, Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt—Juliet's cousin—who, still enraged that Romeo attended Capulet's feast, has challenged Romeo to a duel. Romeo appears. Now Tybalt's kinsman by marriage, Romeo begs the Capulet to hold off the duel until he understands why Romeo does not want to fight. Disgusted with this plea for peace, Mercutio says that he will fight Tybalt himself. The two begin to duel. Romeo tries to stop them by leaping between the combatants. Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm, and Mercutio dies. Romeo, in a rage, kills Tybalt. Romeo flees from the scene. Soon after, the Prince declares him forever banished from Verona for his crime. Friar Lawrence arranges for Romeo to spend his wedding night with Juliet before he has to leave for Mantua the

following morning.

In her room, Juliet awaits the arrival of her new husband. The Nurse enters, and, after some confusion, tells Juliet that Romeo has killed Tybalt. Distraught, Juliet suddenly finds herself married to a man who has killed her kinsman. But she resettles herself, and realizes that her duty belongs with her love: to Romeo.

Romeo sneaks into Juliet's room that night, and at last they consummate their marriage and their love. Morning comes, and the lovers bid farewell, unsure when they will see each other again. Juliet learns that her father, affected by the recent events, now intends for her to marry Paris in just three days. Unsure of how to proceed—unable to reveal to her parents that she is married to Romeo, but unwilling to marry Paris now that she is Romeo's wife—Juliet asks her nurse for advice. She counsels Juliet to proceed as if Romeo were dead and to marry Paris, who is a better match anyway. Disgusted with the Nurse's disloyalty, Juliet disregards her advice and hurries to Friar Lawrence. He concocts a plan to reunite Juliet with Romeo in Mantua. The night before her wedding to Paris, Juliet must drink a potion that will make her appear to be dead. After she is laid to rest in the family's crypt, the Friar and Romeo will secretly retrieve her, and she will be free to live with Romeo, away from their parents' feuding.

Juliet returns home to discover the wedding has been moved ahead one day, and she is to be married tomorrow. That night, Juliet drinks the potion, and the Nurse discovers her, apparently dead, the next morning. The Capulets grieve, and Juliet is entombed according to plan. But Friar Lawrence's message explaining the plan to Romeo never reaches Mantua. Its bearer, Friar John, gets confined to a quarantined house. Romeo hears only that Juliet is dead.

Romeo learns only of Juliet's death and decides to kill himself rather than live without her. He buys a vial of poison from a reluctant Apothecary, then speeds back to Verona to take his own life at Juliet's tomb. Outside the Capulet crypt, Romeo comes upon Paris, who is scattering flowers on Juliet's grave. They fight, and Romeo kills Paris. He enters the tomb, sees Juliet's inanimate body, drinks the poison, and dies by her side. Just then, Friar Lawrence enters and realizes that Romeo has killed Paris and himself. At the same time, Juliet awakes. Friar Lawrence hears the coming of the watch. When Juliet refuses to leave with him, he flees alone. Juliet sees her beloved Romeo and realizes he has killed himself with poison. She kisses his poisoned lips, and when that does not kill her, buries his dagger in her chest, falling dead upon his body.

The watch arrives, followed closely by the Prince, the Capulets, and Montague. Montague declares that Lady Montague has died of grief over Romeo's exile. Seeing their children's bodies, Capulet and Montague agree to end their long-standing feud and to raise gold statues of their children side-by-side in a newly peaceful Verona.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Romeo - The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. Though impulsive and immature, his idealism and passion make him an extremely likable character. He lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets, but he is not at all interested in violence. His only interest is love. At the beginning of the play he is madly in love with a woman named Rosaline, but the instant he lays eyes on Juliet, he falls in love with her and forgets Rosaline. Thus, Shakespeare gives us every reason to question how real Romeo's new love is, but Romeo goes to extremes to prove the seriousness of his feelings. He secretly marries Juliet, the daughter of his father's worst enemy; he happily takes abuse from Tybalt; and he would rather die than live without his beloved. Romeo is also an affectionate and devoted friend to his relative Benvolio, Mercutio, and Friar Lawrence.

Juliet - The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child who has thought little about love and marriage, but she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family's great enemy. Because she is a girl in an aristocratic family, she has none of the freedom Romeo has to roam around the city, climb over walls in the middle of the night, or get into swordfights. Nevertheless, she shows amazing courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo, even refusing to believe the worst reports about him after he gets involved in a fight with her cousin. Juliet's closest friend and confidant is her nurse, though she's willing to shut the Nurse out of her life the moment the Nurse turns against Romeo.

Friar Lawrence - A Franciscan friar, friend to both Romeo and Juliet. Kind, civic-minded, a proponent of moderation, and always ready with a plan, Friar Lawrence secretly marries the impassioned lovers in hopes that the union might eventually bring peace to Verona. As well as being a Catholic holy man, Friar Lawrence is also an expert in the use of seemingly mystical potions and herbs.

Mercutio - A kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo's close friend. One of the most extraordinary characters in all of Shakespeare's plays, Mercutio overflows with imagination, wit, and, at times, a strange, biting satire and brooding fervor. Mercutio loves wordplay, especially sexual double entendres. He can be quite hotheaded, and hates people who are affected, pretentious, or obsessed with the latest fashions. He finds Romeo's romanticized ideas about love tiresome, and tries to convince Romeo to view love as a simple matter of sexual appetite.

The Nurse - Juliet's nurse, the woman who breast-fed Juliet when she was a baby and has cared for Juliet her entire life. A vulgar, long-winded, and sentimental character, the Nurse provides comic relief with her frequently inappropriate remarks and speeches. But, until a disagreement near the play's end, the Nurse is Juliet's faithful confidante and loyal intermediary in Juliet's affair with Romeo. She provides a contrast with Juliet, given that her view of love is earthy and sexual, whereas Juliet is idealistic and intense. The Nurse believes in love and wants Juliet to have a nice-looking husband, but the idea that Juliet would want to sacrifice herself for love is incomprehensible to her.

Tybalt - A Capulet, Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. Once drawn, his sword is something to be feared. He loathes Montagues.

Capulet - The patriarch of the Capulet family, father of Juliet, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy, for unexplained reasons, of Montague. He truly loves his daughter, though he is not well

acquainted with Juliet's thoughts or feelings, and seems to think that what is best for her is a "good" match with Paris. Often prudent, he commands respect and propriety, but he is liable to fly into a rage when either is lacking.

Lady Capulet - Juliet's mother, Capulet's wife. A woman who herself married young (by her own estimation she gave birth to Juliet at close to the age of fourteen), she is eager to see her daughter marry Paris. She is an ineffectual mother, relying on the Nurse for moral and pragmatic support.

Montague - Romeo's father, the patriarch of the Montague clan and bitter enemy of Capulet. At the beginning of the play, he is chiefly concerned about Romeo's melancholy.

Lady Montague - Romeo's mother, Montague's wife. She dies of grief after Romeo is exiled from Verona.

Count Paris - A kinsman of the Prince, and the suitor of Juliet most preferred by Capulet. Once Capulet has promised him he can marry Juliet, he behaves very presumptuous toward her, acting as if they are already married.

Benvolio - Montague's nephew, Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend, he makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places, though Mercutio accuses him of having a nasty temper in private. He spends most of the play trying to help Romeo get his mind off Rosaline, even after Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet.

Prince Escalus - The Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. As the seat of political power in Verona, he is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs.

Friar John - A Franciscan friar charged by Friar Lawrence with taking the news of Juliet's false death to Romeo in Mantua. Friar John is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo.

Balthasar - Romeo's dedicated servant, who brings Romeo the news of Juliet's death, unaware that her death is a ruse.

Sampson & Gregory - Two servants of the house of Capulet, who, like their master, hate the Montagues. At the outset of the play, they successfully provoke some Montague men into a fight.

Abram - Montague's servant, who fights with Sampson and Gregory in the first scene of the play.

The Apothecary - An apothecary in Mantua. Had he been wealthier, he might have been able to afford to value his morals more than money, and refused to sell poison to Romeo.

Peter - A Capulet servant who invites guests to Capulet's feast and escorts the Nurse to meet with Romeo. He is illiterate, and a bad singer.

Rosaline - The woman with whom Romeo is infatuated at the beginning of the play. Rosaline never appears onstage, but it is said by other characters that she is very beautiful and has sworn to live a life of chastity.

The Chorus - The Chorus is a single character who, as developed in Greek drama, functions as a narrator offering commentary on the play's plot and themes.

MAIN CHARACTER PROFILES

Romeo

The name Romeo, in popular culture, has become nearly synonymous with “lover.” Romeo, in *Romeo and Juliet*, does indeed experience a love of such purity and passion that he kills himself when he believes that the object of his love, Juliet, has died. The power of Romeo’s love, however, often obscures a clear vision of Romeo’s character, which is far more complex. Even Romeo’s relation to love is not so simple. At the beginning of the play, Romeo pines for Rosaline, proclaiming her the paragon of women and despairing at her indifference toward him. Taken together, Romeo’s Rosaline-induced histrionics seem rather juvenile. Romeo is a great reader of love poetry, and the portrayal of his love for Rosaline suggests he is trying to recreate the feelings that he has read about. After first kissing Juliet, she tells him “you kiss by th’ book,” meaning that he kisses according to the rules, and implying that while proficient, his kissing lacks originality. In reference to Rosaline, it seems, Romeo loves by the book. Rosaline, of course, slips from Romeo’s mind at first sight of Juliet. But Juliet is no mere replacement. The love she shares with Romeo is far deeper, more authentic and unique than the clichéd puppy love Romeo felt for Rosaline. Romeo’s love matures over the course of the play from the shallow desire to be in love to a profound and intense passion. One must ascribe Romeo’s development at least in part to Juliet. Her level-headed observations, such as the one about Romeo’s kissing, seem just the thing to snap Romeo from his superficial idea of love and to inspire him to begin to speak some of the most beautiful and intense love poetry ever written. Yet Romeo’s deep capacity for love is merely a part of his larger capacity for intense feeling of all kinds. Put another way, it is possible to describe Romeo as lacking the capacity for moderation. Love compels him to sneak into the garden of his enemy’s daughter, risking death simply to catch a glimpse of her. Anger compels him to kill his wife’s cousin in a reckless duel to avenge the death of his friend. Despair compels him to suicide upon hearing of Juliet’s death. Such extreme behaviour dominates Romeo’s character throughout the play and contributes to the ultimate tragedy that befalls the lovers. Had Romeo restrained himself from killing Tybalt, or waited even one day before killing himself after hearing the news of Juliet’s death, matters might have ended happily. Of course, though, had Romeo not had such depths of feeling, the love he shared with Juliet would never have existed in the first place. Among his friends, especially while bantering with Mercutio, Romeo shows glimpses of his social persona. He is intelligent, quick-witted, fond of verbal jousting (particularly about sex), loyal, and unafraid of danger.

Juliet

Having not quite reached her fourteenth birthday, Juliet is of an age that stands on the border between immaturity and maturity. At the play’s beginning however she seems merely an obedient, sheltered, naïve child. Though many girls her age—including her mother—get married, Juliet has not given the subject any thought. When Lady Capulet mentions Paris’s interest in marrying Juliet, Juliet dutifully responds that she will try to see if she can love him, a response that seems childish in its obedience and in its immature conception of love. Juliet seems to have no friends her own age, and she is not comfortable talking about sex (as seen in her discomfort when the Nurse goes on and on about a sexual joke at Juliet’s expense in Act I, scene 3). Juliet gives glimpses of her determination, strength, and sober-mindedness, in her earliest scenes, and offers a preview of the woman she will become during the four-day span of *Romeo and Juliet*. While Lady Capulet proves unable to quiet the Nurse, Juliet succeeds with one word (also in Act I, scene 3). In addition, even in Juliet’s dutiful acquiescence to try to love Paris, there is some seed of steely determination. Juliet promises to consider Paris as a possible husband to the precise degree her mother desires. While an outward show of obedience, such a statement can also be read as a refusal through passivity. Juliet will accede to her mother’s wishes, but she will not go out of her way to fall in love with Paris.

Juliet's first meeting with Romeo propels her full-force toward adulthood. Though profoundly in love with him, Juliet is able to see and criticize Romeo's rash decisions and his tendency to romanticize things. After Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished, Juliet does not follow him blindly. She makes a logical and heartfelt decision that her loyalty and love for Romeo must be her guiding priorities. Essentially, Juliet cuts herself loose from her prior social moorings—her nurse, her parents, and her social position in Verona—in order to try to reunite with Romeo. When she wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she does not kill herself out of feminine weakness, but rather out of an intensity of love, just as Romeo did. Juliet's suicide actually requires more nerve than Romeo's: while he swallows poison, she stabs herself through the heart with a dagger. Juliet's development from a wide-eyed girl into a self-assured, loyal, and capable woman is one of Shakespeare's early triumphs of characterization. It also marks one of his most confident and rounded treatments of a female character.

Friar Lawrence

Friar Lawrence occupies a strange position in *Romeo and Juliet*. He is a kind-hearted cleric who helps Romeo and Juliet throughout the play. He performs their marriage and gives generally good advice, especially in regard to the need for moderation. He is the sole figure of religion in the play. But Friar Lawrence is also the most scheming and political of characters in the play: he marries Romeo and Juliet as part of a plan to end the civil strife in Verona; he spirits Romeo into Juliet's room and then out of Verona; he devises the plan to reunite Romeo and Juliet through the deceptive ruse of a sleeping potion that seems to arise from almost mystic knowledge. This mystical knowledge seems out of place for a Catholic friar; why does he have such knowledge, and what could such knowledge mean? The answers are not clear. In addition, though Friar Lawrence's plans all seem well conceived and well intentioned, they serve as the main mechanisms through which the fated tragedy of the play occurs. Readers should recognize that the Friar is not only subject to the fate that dominates the play - in many ways he brings that fate about.

Nurse

The Nurse is a major character in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is revealed later in the play by Lord Capulet that the Nurse's real name might be Angelica (as the line could also be addressed to Lady Capulet). She is the personal servant, guardian (and former wet nurse) of Juliet Capulet, and has been since Juliet was born. She had a daughter named Susan who died in infancy, and then became wet-nurse to Juliet. As the primary person to like, she is therefore Juliet's foremost confidante. She is one of the few people, along with Friar Lawrence, to be made aware of the blossoming romance between Romeo and Juliet. The Nurse is sent by Juliet in act two, scene four to seek out Romeo the night after their first kiss and exchange of vows. The Nurse finds Romeo and soon after returns to Juliet with news of Romeo's continued affection. It is because of the Nurse's approval that Juliet ultimately decides to go through with marrying Romeo. Later, the Nurse is overcome with grief at the death of Tybalt, and she runs to Juliet and cries, "he's dead, he's dead, he's dead! We are undone, lady, we are undone! Alack the day! he's gone, he's kill'd, he's dead!" The Nurse is the one to deliver the news of Romeo's banishment to Juliet; in spite of Tybalt's murder coming from Romeo's hands, Juliet bids the Nurse to seek out Romeo for her at Friar Lawrence's cell for one final night with him before he flees to Mantua. When Juliet learns that her parents expect her to marry Paris, the Nurse urges the girl to go ahead with the marriage. Even though Juliet was already married to Romeo, the Nurse felt that Juliet would never see her husband again. Following this, Juliet feels betrayed and decides never to share any more of her secrets with the Nurse.

Capulet

Lord Capulet is the patriarch of the Capulet family, the father of Juliet, and uncle of Tybalt. He is very wealthy. He is sometimes commanding but also convivial, as at the ball: when Tybalt

tries to incite a duel with Romeo, Capulet tries to calm him and then threatens to throw him out of the family if he does not control his temper; he does the same to his daughter later in the play. Capulet believes he knows what is best for Juliet. He says that his consent to the marriage depends upon what she wants and tells Count Paris that if he wants to marry Juliet he should wait a while then ask her. Later, however, when Juliet is grieving over Romeo's being sent away, Capulet thinks her sorrow is due to Tybalt's death, and in a misguided attempt to cheer her up, he wants to surprise her by arranging a marriage between her and Count Paris. The catch is that she has to be "ruled" by her father and to accept the proposal. When she refuses to become Paris' "joyful bride", saying that she can "never be proud of what she hates", Capulet becomes furious; threatens to make her a street urchin; calls her a "hilding" (meaning "slut" or "whore"), "unworthy", "young baggage", a "disobedient wretch", a "green-sickness carrion", and "tallow-face". In addition to threatening to turn her out, he threatens to sentence her to rot away in prison if she does not obey her parents' orders. He then storms away, and his wife also rejects Juliet before following him. He fixes the day of the marriage for Thursday and suddenly advances it to Wednesday out of anger and impulse. His actions indicate that his daughter's wants were irrelevant all the way up to the point when he sees her unconscious on her bed (presumably dead) and later, when she is truly dead during the play's final scene.

Mercutio

With a lightning-quick wit and a clever mind, Mercutio is a scene stealer and one of the most memorable characters in all of Shakespeare's works. Though he constantly puns, jokes, and teases - sometimes in fun, sometimes with bitterness - Mercutio is not a mere jester or prankster. With his wild words, Mercutio punctures the romantic sentiments and blind self-love that exist within the play. He mocks Romeo's self-indulgence just as he ridicules Tybalt's hauteur and adherence to fashion. Mercutio is a force within the play that functions to deflate the possibility of romantic love and the power of tragic fate. Unlike the other characters who blame their deaths on fate, Mercutio dies cursing all Montagues and Capulets. Mercutio believes that specific people are responsible for his death rather than some external impersonal force.

Count Paris

Count Paris is a kinsman of Prince Escalus and seeks to marry Juliet. He is described as handsome, somewhat self-absorbed, and very wealthy. Paris makes his first appearance in Act I, Scene II, where he expresses his wish to make Juliet his wife and the mother of his children. Capulet demurs, citing his daughter's young age as a reason and telling him to wait until she is more mature. (Paris disagrees, however.) Nevertheless, Capulet invites Paris to attend a family ball being held that evening and grants permission to woo and attract Juliet. Later in the play, however, Juliet refuses to become Paris' "joyful bride" after her cousin Tybalt dies by her new husband Romeo's hand, proclaiming that she now wants nothing to do with Paris. Her parents threaten to disown (or cut ties with) her if she will not agree to the marriage. Then, while at Lawrence's cell at the church, Paris tries to woo her by repeatedly saying that she is his wife and that they are to be married on Thursday. He kisses her and then leaves the cell, prompting Juliet to angrily threaten to kill herself with a knife. His final appearance in the play is in the cemetery where Juliet is "laid to rest" in the Capulet family tomb. Believing her to be dead, Count Paris has come to mourn her death in solitude and privacy and sends his manservant away. He professes his love to Juliet, saying he will nightly weep for her (Act V, Scene 3). Shortly thereafter, Romeo arrives. Paris sees him and thinks he is trying to vandalize the tomb, so he tries to arrest him. They fight, and Romeo kills Paris. Romeo grants Paris' dying wish to be placed next to Juliet in the tomb.

THEMES

A theme is an idea that runs through a text. A text may have one theme or many. Understanding the themes makes the text more than 'just' a text - it becomes something more significant, because we're encouraged to think more deeply about the text, to work out what lies beneath its surface. There are several themes in *ROMEO AND JULIET*, these are:

The Forcefulness of Love

Romeo and Juliet is the most famous love story in the English literary tradition. Love is naturally the play's dominant and most important theme. The play focuses on romantic love, specifically the intense passion that springs up at first sight between Romeo and Juliet. In *Romeo and Juliet*, love is a violent, ecstatic, overpowering force that supersedes all other values, loyalties, and emotions. In the course of the play, the young lovers are driven to defy their entire social world: families ("Deny thy father and refuse thy name," Juliet asks, "Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, / And I'll no longer be a Capulet"); friends (Romeo abandons Mercutio and Benvolio after the feast in order to go to Juliet's garden); and ruler (Romeo returns to Verona for Juliet's sake after being exiled by the Prince on pain of death). Love is the overriding theme of the play, but a reader should always remember that Shakespeare is uninterested in portraying a prettied-up, dainty version of the emotion, the kind that bad poets write about, and whose bad poetry Romeo reads while pining for Rosaline. Love in *Romeo and Juliet* is a brutal, powerful emotion that captures individuals and catapults them against their world, and, at times, against themselves.

The powerful nature of love can be seen in the way it is described, or, more accurately, the way descriptions of it so consistently fail to capture its entirety. At times love is described in the terms of religion, as in the fourteen lines when Romeo and Juliet first meet. At others it is described as a sort of magic: "Alike bewitchèd by the charm of looks". Juliet, perhaps, most perfectly describes her love for Romeo by refusing to describe it: "But my true love is grown to such excess / I cannot sum up some of half my wealth". Love, in other words, resists any single metaphor because it is too powerful to be so easily contained or understood. *Romeo and Juliet* does not make a specific moral statement about the relationships between love and society, religion, and family; rather, it portrays the chaos and passion of being in love, combining images of love, violence, death, religion, and family in an impressionistic rush leading to the play's tragic conclusion.

Love as a Cause of Violence

The themes of death and violence permeate *Romeo and Juliet*, and they are always connected to passion, whether that passion is love or hate. The connection between hate, violence, and death seems obvious. But the connection between love and violence requires further investigation. Love, in *Romeo and Juliet*, is a grand passion, and as such it is blinding; it can overwhelm a person as powerfully and completely as hate can. The passionate love between Romeo and Juliet is linked from the moment of its inception with death: Tybalt notices that Romeo has crashed the feast and determines to kill him just as Romeo catches sight of Juliet and falls instantly in love with her. From that point on, love seems to push the lovers closer to love and violence, not farther from it. Romeo and Juliet are plagued with thoughts of suicide, and a willingness to experience it: in Act 3, scene 3, Romeo brandishes a knife in Friar Lawrence's cell and threatens to kill himself after he has been banished from Verona and his love. Juliet also pulls a knife in order to take her own life in Friar Lawrence's presence just three scenes later. After Capulet decides that Juliet will marry Paris, Juliet says, "If all else fail, myself have power to die". Finally, each imagines that the other looks dead the morning after their first, and only, sexual experience ("Methinks I see thee," Juliet says, ". . . as one dead in the bottom of a tomb". This theme continues until its inevitable conclusion: double suicide. This tragic choice is the highest, most potent expression of love that Romeo and Juliet can make. It is only through death that they can preserve their love, and their love is so profound that they are willing to end their lives in its defence. In the play, love emerges as an amoral thing, leading

as much to destruction as to happiness. But in its extreme passion, the love that Romeo and Juliet experience also appears so exquisitely beautiful that few would want, or be able, to resist its power.

The Individual Versus Society

Much of Romeo and Juliet involves the lovers' struggles against public and social institutions that either explicitly or implicitly oppose the existence of their love. Such structures range from the concrete to the abstract: families and the placement of familial power in the father; law and the desire for public order; religion; and the social importance placed on masculine honour. These institutions often come into conflict with each other. The importance of honour, for example, time and again results in brawls that disturb the public peace. Though they do not always work in concert, each of these social institutions in some way present obstacles for Romeo and Juliet. The enmity between their families, coupled with the emphasis placed on loyalty and honour to kin, combine to create a profound conflict for Romeo and Juliet, who must rebel against their heritages. Further, the patriarchal power structure inherent in Renaissance families, wherein the father controls the action of all other family members, particularly women, places Juliet in an extremely vulnerable position. Her heart, in her family's mind, is not hers to give. The law and the emphasis on social civility demands terms of conduct with which the blind passion of love cannot comply. Religion similarly demands priorities that Romeo and Juliet cannot abide by because of the intensity of their love. Though in most situations the lovers uphold the traditions of Christianity (they wait to marry before consummating their love), their love is so powerful that they begin to think of each other in blasphemous terms. For example, Juliet calls Romeo "the god of my idolatry," elevating Romeo to level of God. The couple's final act of suicide is likewise un-Christian. The maintenance of masculine honour forces Romeo to commit actions he would prefer to avoid. But the social emphasis placed on masculine honour is so profound that Romeo cannot simply ignore them. It is possible to see Romeo and Juliet as a battle between the responsibilities and actions demanded by social institutions and those demanded by the private desires of the individual. Romeo and Juliet's appreciation of night, with its darkness and privacy, and their renunciation of their names, with its attendant loss of obligation, make sense in the context of individuals who wish to escape the public world. But the lovers cannot stop the night from becoming day. And Romeo cannot cease being a Montague simply because he wants to; the rest of the world will not let him. The lovers' suicides can be understood as the ultimate night, the ultimate privacy.

The Inevitability of Fate

In its first address to the audience, the Chorus states that Romeo and Juliet are "star-crossed" - that is to say that fate (a power often vested in the movements of the stars) controls them. This sense of fate permeates the play, and not just for the audience. The characters also are quite aware of it: Romeo and Juliet constantly see omens. When Romeo believes that Juliet is dead, he cries out, "Then I defy you, stars," completing the idea that the love between Romeo and Juliet is in opposition to the decrees of destiny. Of course, Romeo's defiance itself plays into the hands of fate, and his determination to spend eternity with Juliet results in their deaths. The mechanism of fate works in all of the events surrounding the lovers: the feud between their families (it is worth noting that this hatred is never explained; rather, the reader must accept it as an undeniable aspect of the world of the play); the horrible series of accidents that ruin Friar Lawrence's seemingly well-intentioned plans at the end of the play; and the tragic timing of Romeo's suicide and Juliet's awakening. These events are not mere coincidences, but rather manifestations of fate that help bring about the unavoidable outcome of the young lovers' deaths.

The concept of fate described above is the most commonly accepted interpretation. There are other possible readings of fate in the play: as a force determined by the powerful social institutions that influence Romeo and Juliet's choices, as well as fate as a force that emerges from Romeo and Juliet's very personalities.

MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

MOTIFS are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes:

Imagery

One of the play's most consistent visual motifs is the contrast between **light and dark**, often in terms of night/day imagery. This contrast is not given a particular metaphoric meaning - light is not always good, and dark is not always evil. On the contrary, light and dark are generally used to provide a sensory contrast and to hint at opposed alternatives. One of the more important instances of this motif is Romeo's lengthy meditation on the sun and the moon during the balcony scene, in which Juliet, metaphorically described as the sun, is seen as banishing the "envious moon" and transforming the night into day. A similar blurring of night and day occurs in the early morning hours after the lovers' only night together. Romeo, forced to leave for exile in the morning, and Juliet, not wanting him to leave her room, both try to pretend that it is still night, and that the light is actually darkness: "More light and light, more dark and dark our woes". See also: But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun' (Act II Scene 2); 'The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars, / As daylight doth a lamp' (Act II Scene 2); 'It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden; / Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be / Ere one can say 'It lightens'' (Act II Scene 3); '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/And pay no worship to the garish sun' (Act III Scene 2); 'For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes / This vault a feasting presence full of light' (Act V Scene 3); 'A glooming peace this morning with it brings. / The sun for sorrow will not show his head' (Act V Scene 3).

There is also **Celestial imagery**, representing the power of fate; also heaven and heavenly as descriptive of the lovers' view of one another. For example: 'A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life' (The Prologue); 'my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars' (Act I Scene 4); 'so smile the heavens upon this holy act, / That after hours with sorrow chide us not!' (Act II Scene 6); 'Can heaven be so envious' (Act III Scene 2); 'The heavens do lour upon you for some ill' (Act IV Scene 5); 'Is it even so? Then I defy you, stars!' (Act V Scene 1); 'See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,/That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love' (Act V Scene 3).

There is also the **Imagery of Nature**, representing beauty, value, youth and potential. For example: 'fresh female buds shall you see this night' (Act I Scene 2); 'Verona's summer hath not such a flower' (Act I Scene 3); 'So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows' (Act I Scene 5); 'This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet' (Act II Scene 2); 'O mickle is the powerful grace that lies / In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities. / For naught so vile that on the earth doth live / But to the earth some special good doth give' (Act II Scene 2); 'An eagle, madam, / Hath not so green, so quick, so far an eye / As Paris hath' (Act III Scene 6); 'sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew' (Act V Scene 3).

Opposite Points of View

Shakespeare includes numerous speeches and scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* that hint at alternative ways to evaluate the play. Shakespeare uses two main devices in this regard: Mercutio and servants. Mercutio consistently skewers the viewpoints of all the other characters in play: he sees Romeo's devotion to love as a sort of blindness that robs Romeo from himself; similarly, he sees Tybalt's devotion to honour as blind and stupid. His punning and the Queen Mab speech can be interpreted as undercutting virtually every passion evident in the play. Mercutio serves as a critic of the delusions of righteousness and grandeur held by the characters around him. Where Mercutio is a nobleman who openly criticizes other nobles, the views offered by servants in the play are less explicit.

There is the Nurse who lost her baby and husband, the servant Peter who cannot read, the musicians who care about their lost wages and their lunches, and the Apothecary who cannot afford to make the moral choice, the lower classes present a second tragic world to counter that of the nobility. The nobles' world is full of grand tragic gestures. The servants' world, in contrast, is characterized by simple needs, and early deaths brought about by disease and poverty rather than duelling and grand passions. Where the nobility almost seem to revel in their capacity for drama, the servants' lives are such that they cannot afford tragedy of the epic kind.

SYMBOLS are objects, characters, figures, and colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts:

Poison

In his first appearance, in Act 2, scene 2, Friar Lawrence remarks that every plant, herb, and stone has its own special properties, and that nothing exists in nature that cannot be put to both good and bad uses. Thus, poison is not intrinsically evil, but is instead a natural substance made lethal by human hands. Friar Lawrence's words prove true over the course of the play. The sleeping potion he gives Juliet is concocted to cause the appearance of death, not death itself, but through circumstances beyond the Friar's control, the potion does bring about a fatal result: Romeo's suicide. As this example shows, human beings tend to cause death even without intending to. Similarly, Romeo suggests that society is to blame for the apothecary's criminal selling of poison, because while there are laws prohibiting the Apothecary from selling poison, there are no laws that would help the apothecary make money. Poison symbolizes human society's tendency to poison good things and make them fatal, just as the pointless Capulet-Montague feud turns Romeo and Juliet's love to poison. After all, unlike many of the other tragedies, this play does not have an evil villain, but rather people whose good qualities are turned to poison by the world in which they live.

Thumb-biting

In Act I, scene 1, the buffoonish Samson begins a brawl between the Montagues and Capulets by flicking his thumbnail from behind his upper teeth, an insulting gesture known as biting the thumb. He engages in this juvenile and vulgar display because he wants to get into a fight with the Montagues but doesn't want to be accused of starting the fight by making an explicit insult. Because of his timidity, he settles for being annoying rather than challenging. The thumb-biting, as an essentially meaningless gesture, represents the foolishness of the entire Capulet/Montague feud and the stupidity of violence in general.

Queen Mab

In Act I, scene 4, Mercutio delivers a dazzling speech about the fairy Queen Mab, who rides through the night on her tiny wagon bringing dreams to sleepers. One of the most noteworthy aspects of Queen Mab's ride is that the dreams she brings generally do not bring out the best sides of the dreamers, but instead serve to confirm them in whatever vices they are addicted to - for example, greed, violence, or lust. Another important aspect of Mercutio's description of Queen Mab is that it is complete nonsense, albeit vivid and highly colourful. Nobody believes in a fairy pulled about by "a small grey-coated gnat" whipped with a cricket's bone. Finally, it is worth noting that the description of Mab and her carriage goes to extravagant lengths to emphasize how tiny and insubstantial she and her accoutrements are. Queen Mab and her carriage do not merely symbolize the dreams of sleepers, they also symbolize the power of waking fantasies, daydreams, and desires. Through the Queen Mab imagery, Mercutio suggests that all desires and fantasies are as nonsensical and fragile as Mab, and that they are basically corrupting. This point of view contrasts starkly with that of Romeo and Juliet, who see their love as real and ennobling.

THE LANGUAGE

We can better appreciate the language used in *Romeo and Juliet* by looking at the techniques Shakespeare uses. Some of these techniques (and names) might seem difficult at first. If that is the case, just think about what the play would sound like if the technique was not used. For instance, when Romeo is leaving Juliet after their exchange of vows, imagine Juliet says: 'Parting is very sad.' Well, yes, it can be sad, but her words do not sound very special or interesting. This is the person she is desperate to marry and dedicate her life to. So instead Juliet says: 'Parting is such sweet sorrow.' 'Sweet' and 'sorrow' seem to be opposites - they do not normally fit together like this. But we can appreciate what Juliet means. This is a very passionate moment for both of them, and something the audience can immediately relate to and remember.

Opposites are used frequently in *Romeo and Juliet*. They highlight the conflicts in the story. So we can find lots of references to light and darkness, or love and hatred. The technical term for this is **antithesis**, when words are deliberately chosen to contrast with one another. For instance, as the day breaks after her marriage, Juliet realises Romeo must leave her and says 'More light and light, more dark and dark our woes!' Just compare that with: 'It's morning, Romeo, and I'm worried about things.' Hopefully you will see that Shakespeare's version has a far stronger effect, even 400 years after he wrote it.

An **Oxymoron** is when words with opposing meanings are put together, like 'sweet sorrow', 'deafening silence', 'alone together' and 'bitter sweet'.

Sometimes it might not be clear what a character means, for instance, when Romeo talks of 'sick health'. However, using a technique like this shows us just how confused Romeo is at this point in the play.

Another technique Shakespeare uses is the **pun**. A lot of jokes are puns - a play on words using words that sound similar but have different meanings. So when Mercutio is dying he says that tomorrow he will be a 'grave man' - 'grave' as in 'serious', but also as in 'dead and buried'. Puns can be used like this to make fun of characters and situations, like the two servants at the start who link everything they do and think about with sex.

As well as words that have several meanings, Shakespeare uses imagery a lot. This is when we might talk about one thing in terms of another. So Paris is described by Lady Capulet as if he is a book - he is a 'volume', delight is 'writ' in his face, and he lacks just a 'cover' (Lady Capulet is probably thinking the 'cover' is a wife, and that her daughter is the ideal candidate).

Many students find this technique odd - why does Shakespeare not keep things straightforward? Well, a straightforward description of Paris is not interesting or special. Shakespeare's approach allows us to use our own reactions and thoughts. Is Paris really like a beautiful book? What does that tell us about Lady Capulet's view of marriage? Is love important, or is it about appearances? Imagery substitutes one thing for another in three main ways: **Similes** - when a direct comparison is made using 'as' or 'like' - so love moves 'as schoolboys from their books'. This comparison allows us our own ideas about being in love. Do schoolboys enjoy studying? Are they grateful when they have finished? Are they quick to stop and put their books down? That should help us to understand just how powerful love can be.

Metaphors - when one thing is described in terms of something else. So Juliet becomes 'the sun', and then 'an angel', for Romeo. Think about the qualities of the Sun: it provides warmth, lightness and life to everything on Earth. Then think about just how important Juliet is to Romeo. Now think about the qualities of an angel - how does this help us to see Juliet through Romeo's eyes? **Personification** - where something is described as if it is human. So 'April' can

be well-dressed and 'tread' on other things, or Death can be ready to marry Juliet.

Another way of looking at the language of Romeo and Juliet is to examine the lines. Many of them are written in blank verse, so they have ten syllables which are organised in five pairs. The first syllable is weak, the second stronger.

If we look at a typical line, we traditionally show the weak or unstressed syllable with an 'x' above it, and the stressed syllable with a '/' above it. In this example, the word 'never' is split in two, because it has two syllables.

x / x / x / x / x /

He jests at scars that nev - er felt a wound

Reading it like this, we can hear an obvious beat. We can also see that the key words tend to be stronger. Just by hearing these, we can still make some sense of the line (jests - scars - nev - felt - wound). If we only have the unstressed syllables, there is very little we can understand (he - at - that - er - a).

Using this technique, you can sometimes see what Shakespeare might be trying to emphasise. It also provides a structure to the play - it holds things together. We can even anticipate where an actor will finish speaking. It also means that when the pattern changes there might be a reason for this. For instance, when Mercutio is dying, he does not use blank verse - does he seem more sincere now, as if he is speaking from the heart?

The play also contains a number of sonnets. These have a fixed structure of 14 lines and use rhyme in a fairly complicated way. For instance, the first four lines rhyme ABAB. The next four lines follow CDCD. Then the next four lines EFEF. But the last two are a rhyming couplet GG.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE BIOGRAPHY

Details about William Shakespeare's life are sketchy, mostly mere surmise based upon court or other clerical records. His parents, John and Mary (Arden), were married about 1557; she was of the landed gentry, he a yeoman - a glover and commodities merchant. By 1568, John had risen through the ranks of town government and held the position of high bailiff, similar to mayor. William, the eldest son, was born in 1564, probably on April 23, several days before his baptism on April 26, 1564. That Shakespeare also died on April 23, 52 years later, may have resulted in the adoption of this birthdate. William no doubt attended the local grammar school in Stratford where his parents lived, and would have studied primarily Latin rhetoric, logic, and literature. At age 18 (1582), William hastily married Anne Hathaway, a local farmer's daughter eight years his senior. Their first daughter (Susanna) was born six months later (1583), and twins Judith and Hamnet were born in 1585.

Shakespeare's life can be divided into three periods: the first 20 years in Stratford, which include his schooling, early marriage, and fatherhood; the next 25 years as an actor and playwright in London; and the last five in retirement back in Stratford where he enjoyed the moderate wealth gained from his theatrical successes. The years linking the first two periods are marked by a lack of information about Shakespeare, and are often referred to as the "dark years"; the transition from active work into retirement was gradual and cannot be precisely dated.

John Shakespeare had suffered financial reverses from the time of William's teen years until well into the height of the playwright's popularity and success. In 1596, John Shakespeare was granted a coat of arms, almost certainly purchased by William, who the next year bought a sizable house in Stratford. By the time of his death, William had substantial properties, both professional and personal, which he bestowed on his theatrical associates and his family.

Shakespeare probably left school at 15, which was the norm, and took some sort of job, especially since this was the period of his father's financial difficulty. Numerous references in his plays suggest that William may have in fact worked for his father, thereby gaining specialized knowledge. At some point during the "dark years," Shakespeare began his career with a London theatrical company - perhaps in 1589 - for he was already an actor and playwright of some note in 1592. Shakespeare apparently wrote and acted for Pembroke's Men, as well as numerous others, in particular Strange's Men, which later became The Chamberlain's Men, with whom he remained for the rest of his career. When, in 1592, the Plague closed the theatres for about two years, Shakespeare turned to writing book-length narrative poetry. Most notable were "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," both of which were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, whom scholars accept as Shakespeare's friend and benefactor despite a lack of documentation to support this. During this same period, Shakespeare was writing his sonnets, which are more likely signs of the time's fashion rather than actual love poems detailing any particular relationship. He returned to play writing when theatres reopened in 1594, and published no more poetry. His sonnets were published without his consent in 1609, shortly before his retirement.

Amid all of his success, Shakespeare suffered the loss of his only son, Hamnet, who died in 1596 at the age of 11. But Shakespeare's career continued unabated, and in London in 1599, he became one of the partners in the new Globe Theatre, built by the Chamberlain's Men. This group was a remarkable assemblage of "excellent actors who were also business partners and close personal friends, including famed actor Richard Burbage, who all worked together as equals.

Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and was succeeded by her cousin King James of Scotland. Two years later King James himself renamed the Chamberlain's Men as The King's Men, and Shakespeare's productivity and popularity continued uninterrupted. He invested in London property and, one year away from retirement, purchased a second theatre, the Blackfriars Gatehouse, in partnership with his fellow actors. His final play was Henry VI II, two years before his death in 1616. Amazingly, in the 23 years between 1590 and 1613 his work, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, two epitaphs on a man named John Combe, one epitaph on Elias James, and several other noted poems. Incredibly, most of Shakespeare's plays had never been published in anything except pamphlet form, and were simply acting scripts stored at the Globe. Only the efforts of two of Shakespeare's company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, preserved his 36 plays (minus Pericles, the thirty-seventh) in the First Folio of his work. Heminges and Condell published the plays, they said, "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare". Theatre scripts were not regarded as literary works of art, but only the basis for the performance.

Present copies of Shakespeare's plays have, in some cases, been reconstructed in part from scripts written down by various members of an acting company who performed particular roles. Shakespeare's plays, like those of many of the actors who also were playwrights, belonged to the acting company. The performance, rather than the script, was what concerned the author, for that was how his play would become popular - and how the company, in which many actors were shareholders, would make money.

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, and was buried two days later in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church where he had been baptized exactly 52 years earlier.

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his own day, but his reputation did not rise to its present heights until the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, and the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence that George Bernard Shaw later called "bardolatry". In the 20th and 21st centuries, his work has been repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare's work has made a lasting impression on later theatre and literature. In particular, he expanded the dramatic potential of characterisation, plot, language, and genre. Until *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, romance had not been viewed as a worthy topic for tragedy. Soliloquies had been used mainly to convey information about characters or events; but Shakespeare used them to explore characters' minds. His work heavily influenced later poetry. In Shakespeare's day, English grammar, spelling and pronunciation were less standardised than they are now, and his use of language and the invention of scores of new words helped shape modern English. Samuel Johnson quoted him more often than any other author in his *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Expressions such as "with bated breath" (*Merchant of Venice*) and "a foregone conclusion" (*Othello*) have found their way into everyday English speech. Without doubt, Shakespeare is one of the greatest influences on the development of the modern English language which, in turn, is England's greatest contribution to the world: sometimes described as the first global language, English is the dominant language, or in some instances even the required international language, of communications, science, information technology, business, seafaring, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy. Shakespeare's influence remains all around us on a daily basis.

OUR PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL

ROMEO AND JULIET is the most famous love story of all time. We see true, romantic young love blossom swiftly then, with tragic inevitability, watch it being destroyed. The events of the play, in real time, happen very quickly, but in the theatre the plot - although employing a bold, sweeping style of writing - is richly detailed and sprawling: a large pot of varied ingredients that usually lasts at least 3 hours in full performance. In our version of the play, which is a condensed overview lasting 1 hour, we have cut the play extensively, deciding to concentrate exclusively on what happens to Romeo and Juliet, and to produce a text which is clear, straightforward and unpretentious, without damaging any of Shakespeare's beautiful poetry. We hope it will allow our audiences to approach the play freshly, with an open mind. To this end we have divided the play into nine basic scenes, and given them titles for easy identification:

	<u>Our Scenes (in order)</u>	<u>Source in the Text</u>
1.	Two Families at War	Prologue
2.	Capulet's Party	Act I, Scene 5
3.	A Surprise Visit	Act II, Scene 2
4.	Nature and Poison	Act II, Scene 3
5.	Marriage Plans	Act II, Scenes 4, 5
6.	Street Fighting	Act III, Scene 1
7.	Difficult Parents	Act III, Scene 5
8.	Wedding Preparations	Act IV, Scenes 2 to 5
9.	Two Families Reconciled?	Act V, Scene 3

Our version is presented by using THREE actors: here is a list of the characters that you will see in our 60-minute abridged version:

CHORUS

ROMEO

JULIET

CAPULET

MONTAGUE

FRIAR LAWRENCE

NURSE

SERVANT

APOTHECARY

TYBALT

MERCUTIO

SCENE-BY-SCENE IN PERFORMANCE - A SYNOPSIS:

1. Two Families at War

In Verona, Italy, two noble families, the Montagues and Capulets, are deadly enemies because of an 'ancient grudge'. Shakespeare never tells us what the cause of this is. A fresh outbreak of this feud has begun, leading Prince Escalus to order all brawls to cease - on pain of death. The chorus explains that only the death of Romeo and Juliet will end their parents' quarrel. He asks for patience during the play's 'two hour' duration, because of the harrowing subject-matter.

2. Capulet's Party

At a masked ball held by the Capulets, Romeo (a Montague) gatecrashes the party and is instantly attracted to Juliet - daughter of the Capulets. Juliet learns of Romeo's identity, and too confesses that she is smitten 'her only love sprung from her only hate'. Meanwhile, the fiery Tybalt (a Capulet who hates Montagues), has also recognised Romeo, but is forbidden by Capulet to harm any of the guests - so Tybalt vows to settle with Romeo later.

3. A Surprise Visit

That night, Romeo lingers in Capulet's garden. Standing in the orchard beneath Juliet's balcony he sees her, and hears her wish aloud that he was not a Montague. He reveals his presence and after an ardent love scene they resolve to be secretly married.

4. Nature and Poison

Romeo tells his friend Friar Lawrence of his intention to marry a Capulet. Though shocked, the Friar agrees to help him and believes that a union between the two families may dissolve the ancient grudge between the Montagues and Capulets.

5. Marriage Plans

It is just before midday. Juliet has confided in her Nurse and sends her to make final wedding arrangements, and the Nurse now seeks out Romeo, joking and flirting with him, and approving of him as a suitable partner for Juliet. Very soon Romeo and Juliet are married in the private call of Friar Lawrence.

6. Street Fighting

Romeo encounters Tybalt in the street but, knowing he is now his kinsman by marriage, refuses to be drawn into a quarrel. But Mercutio, Romeo's best friend, grapples with Tybalt and is killed. Aroused to fury, Romeo now kills Tybalt. The result of this street fight is that Prince Escalus banishes Romeo from Verona.

7. Difficult Parents

That evening Romeo clammers by rope ladder to Juliet's chamber. They bid farewell to each other in the morning, Romeo fleeing to Mantua. Juliet's parents insist that she immediately marries a nobleman, Count Paris, a kinsman of the prince - thus bringing more wealth and prestige to the Capulet family. The Nurse lets Juliet down by saying perhaps this is for the best - but, of course, Juliet has already married. In despair, Juliet goes to Friar Lawrence for help. He gives her a sleeping potion which, for a time, will make it look like she is dead. The plan is that instead of marrying Paris, she will be taken to the family burial vault, and by the time she wakes up Romeo will be able to return and take her away to Mantua.

8. Wedding Preparations

Capulet is full of excitement as he plans for the wedding, but the distraught Nurse discovers Juliet - apparently dead. Capulet's world collapses. Meanwhile, a letter sent by the Friar, explaining the young lovers' escape plan, does not reach Romeo. Romeo visits an apothecary and buys poison, secretly returning to Verona to take his last farewell of his wife and die by her side. He drinks the poison and dies - but Juliet then awakens from her deep sleep, realises Romeo's error, and kills herself with a dagger

9. Two Families Reconciled?

Capulet and Montague are united in grief: Friar Lawrence has told them the unhappy story of the fate that has befallen their son and daughter, the star-crossed lovers. Montague vows to erect a gold statue in their honour. The men shake hands, and peace returns to Verona. But for how long....?

POST-PERFORMANCE WORK SHEET

Find a partner. In pairs, discuss, and make detailed notes, on the following questions. Share your responses with the whole class later on.

1. Were the characters in the performance as you had envisaged them? What was especially good about the portrayals? Would you have played any of the characters differently? Why?
2. What aspects of the performance were most memorable, and why? Have they enhanced or altered your views or understanding of the play in any way? Explain in as much detail as you can with specific reference to the text and performance.
3. Which themes in the play were highlighted in the performance, and the after-show discussion? Which ideas were stressed in particular? (eg. love/hate, fate, roles of women/marriage).
4. Did this production help to bring to life Shakespeare's use of language? In which ways did it add to our understanding and enjoyment of the play?
5. In which ways do you think that this production differed from the original performance in Elizabethan England? (Staging/costumes/actors/audience).
6. Do you think that Romeo and Juliet is still relevant to people today? Why?
7. Character and Motivation. Think about the key characters you have seen in the performance. Why do they behave as they do in the play? (Romeo/Juliet/Capulet/Friar Lawrence/The Nurse).
8. The Director's Choices. Every production of 'Romeo And Juliet' will be different. What choices were made for this performance, and how effective were they? (Delivery of Shakespeare's text/use of the hall, room or space - positioning of the audience/body language and movement/props and costumes). What choices would you make?

WHO SAID THAT...?

ROMEO AND JULIET is filled with great quotes. Here are 25 quotes selected randomly from the play - but who speaks them?

1. See how she leans her cheek upon her hand! O that I were a glove upon that hand, That I might touch that cheek!
2. Heaven is here Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog And little mouse, every unworthy thing, Live here in heaven and may look on her, But Romeo may not.
3. Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art: Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote the unreasonable fury of a beast: Unseemly woman in a seeming man!
4. Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow, That I shall say good night till it be morrow.
5. A fool's paradise.
6. What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other word would smell as sweet.
7. Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature: for this drivelling love is like a great natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole.
8. What say you? Can you love the gentleman?
9. Alive, in triumph! And Mercutio slain! Away to heaven, respective lenity, And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!
10. Piteous predicament! Even so lies she, Blubbering and weeping, weeping and blubbering.
11. But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun
12. This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
13. Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch! I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday, Or never after look me in the face
14. Romeo! O, pale! Who else? What, Paris too? And steep'd in blood? Ah, what an unkind hour I s guilty of this lamentable chance!
15. A plague o' both your houses! They have made worms' meat of me!
16. I fear, too early: for my mind misgives Some consequence yet hanging in the stars Shall bitterly begin his fearful date. With this night's revels and expire the term Of a despised life closed in my breast, By some vile forfeit of untimely death.

17. She hath not seen the change of fourteen years, Let two more summers wither in their pride, Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
18. So smile the heavens upon this holy act, That after hours with sorrow chide us not!
19. She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes In shape no bigger than an agate stone On the forefinger of an alderman,
20. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, Who is already sick and pale with grief That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she. . . .
21. Now, by the stock and honour of my kin, To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin.
22. O happy dagger!
23. Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night
24. Unhappy fortune!
25. Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow

At the end of this quiz, find all these lines from the playtext, and explain what is happening when they are spoken, and what they mean.

WHO SAID THAT...? ANSWERS

Here's the answers to the quotes question on the previous page

1. Romeo - Act II, Scene 2
2. Romeo - Act III, Scene 3
3. Friar Lawrence - Act III, Scene 3
4. Juliet - Act II, Scene 2
5. The Nurse - Act II, Scene 4
6. Juliet - Act II, Scene 2
7. Mercutio - Act II, Scene 4
8. Lady Capulet - Act I, Scene 3
9. Romeo - Act III, Scene 1
10. The Nurse - Act III, Scene 3
11. Romeo - Act II, Scene 2
12. Juliet - Act II, Scene 2
13. Capulet - Act III, Scene 5
14. Friar Lawrence - Act V, Scene 3
15. Mercutio - Act III, Scene 1
16. Romeo - Act I, Scene 4
17. Capulet - Act I, Scene 2
18. Friar Lawrence - Act II, Scene 6
19. Mercutio - Act I, Scene 4
20. Romeo - Act II, Scene 2
21. Tybalt - Act I, Scene 5
22. Juliet - Act V, Scene 3
23. Romeo - Act I, Scene 5
24. Friar Lawrence - Act V, Scene 2
25. Juliet - Act II, Scene 2

MANACTCO is the trading name for MANCHESTER ACTORS COMPANY. We have over **38 years** experience of bringing professional theatre to the north west and neighbouring counties..... Providing an exciting, relevant, non-condescending and unpretentious theatre service in a full range of mostly non-theatre venues. We are well known for our energetic, vigorous, physical theatre performances where close attention is paid to the language, bringing the plays alive as a dynamic, well-spoken display of physical theatre, performed by some of the UK.'s hottest young stage talent.

Almost 100,000 watch our productions annually in school.....

FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES we have presented a series of theatre projects aimed at keystage 3 and keystage 4 students annually for almost twenty years, which in recent years have included: *MACBETH; ROMEO AND JULIET; THE TEMPEST; MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING; OF MICE AND MEN; AN INSPECTOR CALLS; 'FIGHTING FOR WORDS'; 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL'; 'THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE'*; plus a dramatised presentation of the poems included in the 'AQA POWER & CONFLICT POETRY CLUSTER'. All of our schools projects are always very well received by both students and staff as we bring the stories to life with exciting, incisive scripts, tight direction and fantastic performances. All our performances are followed by a thirty-minute interactive discussion where, guided by actors in the company, the audience can expand and examine the texts in greater detail.

FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS we have presented a series of both well-established favourites and new writing projects - aimed directly as a springboard for keystage 1 and keystage 2 classwork - all of which are always very well received by schools and their young audiences. All of our primary school projects are hugely successful and each a total sell-out.

Why not check out our website?

www.manactco.org.uk

It tells you all about MANCHESTER ACTORS COMPANY and is packed full of photos of our productions, and includes details about all productions for 2019.

And why not ask your students to Email us and tell us what they thought of our presentation of 'ROMEO AND JULIET'?

Email all contributions and reviews to:

feedback@manactco.org.uk