

Year 11 – Romeo and Juliet – William Shakespeare

Prologue	The Chorus gives an overview of the key events and themes in the play. We learn of a long-standing hatred between two families in the Italian city of Verona, and this feud affects the whole community.
Act 1	Capulet’s servants, Sampson and Gregory, pick a fight with Montague’s servants. Benvolio tries to stop the fight and encourages Tybalt to do the same, but he refuses and the violence escalates. The Prince arrives and threatens death for the next person to fight in public. Meanwhile, Romeo is broken-hearted over Rosaline so Benvolio encourages him to go to the Capulets’ masked ball. Romeo falls in love with Juliet at first sight and they kiss. Only then do they learn of each other’s identities.
Act 2	Romeo scales the wall of the Capulet orchard and watches Juliet on her balcony. She wishes he was not a Montague. He signals his presence, they talk and declare their love for one another, and make plans to marry. Friar Laurence warns Romeo not to rush but agrees to help because he thinks the marriage will end the feuding.
Act 3	Benvolio and Mercutio cross Tybalt, who is looking to duel Romeo because of his attendance at the Capulet ball. Newly-married Romeo refuses to get involved and Mercutio is drawn into the fight instead and is killed. Romeo, blinded by fury, then kills Tybalt. He hides in the Friar’s cell as Escalus decides to banish him. He is distraught but he and Juliet spend the night together. Meanwhile, Capulet brings the wedding between Juliet and Paris forward and when told, Juliet refuses to obey and Capulet threatens to disown her.
Act 4	Juliet seeks the Friar’s help. He gives her a sleeping potion which will give the impression she is dead, and says he will write to Romeo and let him know. Juliet returns home and makes peace with her parents before taking the potion. When the Nurse cannot wake her the next morning, they fear she is dead and take her to the family tomb.
Act 5	The Friar’s letter does not reach Romeo so when Balthazar, his servant, reports of Juliet’s death, Romeo buys poison. Arriving at the tomb, he fights and kills Paris. He says goodbye to Juliet, drinks the poison and dies. Juliet wakes, realises what Romeo has done and stabs herself with his dagger. Following the Friar’s explanation of events to Escalus, the Capulets and Montagues decide to reconcile.

Context

Society in Elizabethan times was patriarchal: men were dominant, and women were expected to be subservient to their fathers and husbands. Women were seen as the weaker sex.

Elizabethan marriages were usually arranged to suit the family. Husbands would choose who their daughters married and would arrange a dowry for the husband (money that the wife would bring to the marriage). Women were often married very young.

Courtly love was a ‘fashion’ in the Elizabethan Era. It was a non-physical relationship between two unmarried people, with the man worshipping the woman from afar – like Romeo and Rosaline. When Romeo meets Juliet, he claims it is the ‘real thing’, not just a play at love. But is it really that different?

Elizabeth I was on the throne. She supported Shakespeare and his writing. Elizabeth I made Protestantism the official religion of England, which caused a divide between Catholics and Protestants. Could the ‘two families’ in Romeo and Juliet represent this divide?

Culturally, the Renaissance was a time of great change in the Elizabethan period. Literally meaning ‘re-birth’, the English Renaissance was considered a ‘golden era’ of art and culture.

Duelling was a part of Elizabethan culture and family honour was really important. If you were challenged to a duel and you refused, you would be deemed a coward, thus damaging your honour and the status of your family.

Most Elizabethans believed in the concept of fate and destiny. The stars were believed to rule their lives and those who struggled against their destiny would meet tragic ends. Watching the play, the Elizabethans would know there was no hope for Romeo and Juliet, but their determination to be together shows the passion of their love.

CHARACTERS- Find quotes for each!

Romeo Montague	Intense, intelligent, quick witted, and loved by his friends.
Juliet Capulet	Naïve and sheltered at the beginning, develops into a woman with strength. Grounded.
Lord Capulet	Juliet’s father. Powerful, respected, convivial, but ultimately controlling and sometimes tyrannical.
Lady Capulet	Juliet’s mother. A cold and distant mother. Timid and controlled by her husband. Selfish.
Mercutio	Romeo’s close friend. Wild, playful and sarcastic. Unpredictable and chaotic.
Tybalt	Juliet’s cousin. A hothead consumed by issues of family honour. Hates the Montagues.
Benvolio	Romeo’s cousin, less quick witted than Romeo and Mercutio, tries to keep the peace.
Friar Laurence	A Franciscan monk and a friend to both Romeo and Juliet.
Nurse	Juliet’s best friend and confidante, and in many ways is more her mother than Lady Capulet is.
Prince Escalus	Leader of Verona, concerned with keeping order between the warring families.

Tier 2 Vocabulary:

Patriarchy, Subjugation Misogyny, Corruption Power imbalance Hierarchy, Bravado, Tragedy Honour, Courtly Love, Eros, Philia, Agape, Sonnet, Renaissance

Tier 3 Vocabulary:

Oxymoron, Juxtaposition Figurative Language Light and dark imagery Derogatory language Prologue, Iambic Pentameter Punning, Soliloquy Aside, Foreshadowing Blank Verse, Microcosm, Fate, Destiny

Stmarks

Flash Codes:

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Should individuals be ruled by societal expectations?

Here are 15 quotes which you should know off by heart. Do you know where they are from in the play? Can you sort them into our key themes?

"Star-crossed lovers"	"A plague on both your houses"	"I am fortune's fool"	"I defy you stars"	"Oh brawling love, oh loving hate"
"My only love sprung from my only hate"	"Two households both alike in dignity"	"Civil blood makes civil hand unclean"	"Disobedient wretch"	"It is an honour I do not dream of"
"Don't saints and pilgrims have lips too"	"Happy dagger"	"Ay me, sad hours seem long"	"Go girl seek happy nights to happy days"	"These violent delights have violent ends"

Shakespearean Techniques

- **Prologue** – An introduction to the play, performed by the chorus.
- **Iambic pentameter** – this is the rhythm of the verse often used in Shakespeare's plays, which mimics natural speech. You can often tell if a character is noble depending on whether they speak in iambic pentameter or not.
- **Soliloquy** – this is a popular dramatic technique in which a single character talks aloud inner thoughts to him or herself.
- **Aside** – this is when a character addresses the audience 'on the side', offering them valuable information that only the audience is privy to. This makes the audience feel empowered, as they know more about the events on stage than the characters.
- **Punning** – a key source of comedy in Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare plays on similar sounding words and innuendos for comedic effect