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**I. Introduction**

**1.1 General characteristics of the work**

Before making the investigation in our qualification work we should give some notions on its organization structure.

1. Theme of qualification work.

The theme of my qualification work sounds as following: “Romeo and Juliet: the immortal tragedy of William Shakespeare” I have chosen this theme as in my opinion it is this tragedy which is the most famous and of the best educational value among the works of Shakespeare.

2. Actuality of the theme.

Actual character is based on the thesis that "Romeo and Juliet" does not only teach us all the best features of human character but also shows us the worst which we possess. All these, both good and evil, we still have. One more actual character is in linguistic features: more than 500 new English words were introduced by the Avon Bard in this tragedy in their peculiar diverse manner.

3. The tasks and aims of the work.

Before the beginning of writing our qualification work we set the following tasks and aims before ourselves:

1. To investigate the peculiarities of the play and their difference from other works of Shakespeare.

2. To analyze the moral value of the play.

3. To show the ways how the heroes are related to each other by finding out oppositions and correspondences.

4. To analyze some popular scenes in the play.

4. The novelty of the work.

We consider that the novelty of the work is revealed in new materials of the linguists which were published in the Internet. One more novelty is the analysis of modern screen adaptations of the play made by famous directors Franco Zeffirelli and James Cameron.

5. Practical significance of the work.

In our opinion the practical significance of our work is hard to be overvalued. This work reflects modern trends in linguistics and we hope it would serve as a good manual for those who wants to master modern English language by classical language of William Shakespeare.

6. Ways of scientific investigation used within the work.

The main method for compiling our work is the method of comparative analysis, translation method and the method of statistical research.

7. Fields of amplification.

The present work might find a good way of implying in the following spheres:

1. In High Schools and scientific circles of linguistic kind it can be successfully used by teachers and philologists as modern material for writing research works dealing with William Shakespeare

2. It can be used by teachers of schools, lyceums and colleges by teachers of English as a practical manual for teaching english literature.

3. It can be useful for everyone who wants to enlarge his/her knowledge in English.

8. Linguists worked with the theme.

As the base for our qualification work we used the works of a distinguished Russian linguists Dmitry Urnov and modern Russian philologist Ilya Gililov[[1]](#footnote-1).

8. Content of the work.

The present qualification work consists of four parts: introduction, the main part, conclusion and bibliography. It also includes the appendix where some interesting Internet materials, tables, schemes and illustrative thematic materials were gathered. Within the introduction part, which includes two items we gave the brief description of our qualification work (the first item) and gave general notion of the theme and the tragedy. The main part of our qualification work includes several items. There we discussed such problems as subject and themes of the play, analysis some peculiar scenes and relations of the main characters. We also compared the language of tragedy with the corresponding language of Shakespearean comedies having performed such comparison as methodic ellaboration for the lesson plan. In the conclusion to our qualification work we tried to draw some results from the scientific investigations made within the main part of our qualification work. In bibliography part we mentioned more than 20 sources of which were used while compiling the present work. It includes linguistic books and articles dealing with the theme, a number of used dictionaries and encyclopedias and also some internet sources. Appendices to our work include some interesting information on Shakespeare and his works.

**2.1 General characteristics of the plot**

This play starts with a lovely sonnet, an unusual beginning given that sonnets were meant to be from a lover to his beloved. The sonnet is also a very structured form of prose, lending itself to order. Shakespeare cleverly contrasts this orderly sonnet with the immediate disorder of the first scene. The sonnet degenerates into a bunch of quarreling servants who soon provoke a fight between the houses of Montegue and Capulet.

This scene is wrought with sexual overtones, with the various servants speaking of raping the enemies women. The sexual wordplay will continue throughout the play, becoming extremely bawdy and at times offensive, yet also underlying the love affair between Romeo and Juliet.

The disorder within the play is evidenced by inverted circumstances. Servants start the quarrel, but soon draw the noblemen into the brawl. The young men enter the fight, but soon the old men try to deny their age and fight as well. The fact that this whole scene takes place in broad daylight undermines the security that is supposed to exist during the day. Thus the play deals with conflicting images: servants leading noblemen, old age pretending to be youth, day overtaking night.

The Nurse speaks of Juliet falling as a child when she relates a story to Lady Capulet. This story indirectly pertains to the rise and fall ofthe characters. Since this is a tragedy, the influence of wheel's fortune cannot be overlooked. Indeed, Juliet's role in the play does parallel the wheel of fortune, with her rise to the balcony and her fall to the vault.

The Nurse also foreshadows, "An I might live to see thee married once" (1.3.63). Naturally she does not expect this to be realized in so short a time, but indeed she does live to only see Juliet married once.

Romeo compares Juliet to, "a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear" (1.5.43) when he first sees her. This play on the comparison of dark and light shows up frequently in subsequent scenes. It is a central part of their love that important love scenes take place in the dark, away from the disorder of the day. Thus Romeo loves Juliet at night, but kills Tybalt during the day. It especially shows up in the first act in the way Romeo shuts out the daylight while he is pining for Rosaline.

In the fifth scene the lover's share a sonnet which uses imagery of saints and pilgrims. This relates to the fact that Romeo means Pilgrim in Italian. It is also a sacriligeous sonnet, for Juliet becomes a saint to be kissed and Romeo a holy traveler.

The foreshadowing so common in all of Shakespeare's plays comes from Juliet near the end of the first act. She states,

Juliet: If he be married,

My grave is like to be my wedding bed[[2]](#footnote-2).

(1.5.132).

This will be related over and over again, from her Nurse and later even from Lady Capulet.

One of the remarkable aspects of the play is the transformation of both Romeo and Juliet after they fall in love. Juliet first comes across as a young, innocent girl who obeys her parents commands. However, by the last scene she is devious and highly focused. Thus, she asks her nurse about three separate men at the party, saving Romeo for last so as not to arouse suspicion. Romeo will undergo a similar transformation in the second act, resulting in Mercutio commenting that he has become sociable.

There is a strange biblical reference which comes from Benvolio in the very first scene, when he attempts to halt the fight. He remarks,

Benvolio: Put up your swords.

You know not what you do"

(1.1.56).

This is the same phrase used by Jesus when he stops his apostles from fighting the Roman guards during his arrest. It seems to preordain Juliet's demise, namely her three day "death" followed by a resurrection which still ultimately ends in death.

The interaction and conflict of night and day is raised to new levels within the second act. Benvolio in reference to Romeo's passion. states that:

Benvolio: Blind is his love,

and best befits the dark"

(2.1.32)

And when Romeo finally sees Juliet again, he wonders,

Benvolio: But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon"

(2.1.44-46).

Romeo then invokes the darkness as a form of protection from harm,

Romeo: I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes" (2.1.117).

This conflict will not end until the disorder of the day eventually overcomes the passionate nights and destroys the lives of both lovers. It is worthwhile to note the difference between Juliet and Rosaline. Juliet is compared to the sun, and is one of the most giving characters in the play.

Juliet: My bounty is as boundless as the sea,

My love as deep. The more I give thee

The more I have, for both are infinite"

(2.1.175-177).

Rosaline, by contrast, is said to be keeping all her beauty to herself, to die with her. This comparison is made even more evident when Romeo describes Rosaline as a Diana (the goddess of the moon) and says to Juliet,

Romeo: Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon" (2.1.46).

The balcony scene is more than a great lovers' meeting place. It is in fact the same as if Romeo had entered into a private Eden. He has climbed over a large wall to enter the garden, which can be viewed as a sanctuary of virginity. Thus he has invaded the only place which Juliet deems private, seeing as her room is constantly watched by the Nurse or her mother. One of the interesting things which Shakespeare frequently has his characters do is swear to themselves. For instance, when Romeo tries to swear by the moon, Juliet remarks that the moon waxes and wanes, and is too variable. Instead, she says,

Juliet:Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self (2.1.155).

Shakespeare often has characters encouraged to be true to themselves first, as a sign that only then can they be true to others..

Again, note the change in Juliet's behavior. Whereas she used to obey the authority of her nurse, she now disappears twice, and twice defies authority and reappears. This is a sure sign of her emerging independence, and is a crucial factor in understanding her decision to marry Romeo and defy her parents.

There is a strong conflict between the uses of silver and gold throughout the action.

Juliet: How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night" (2.1.210)

…"Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow,

That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops"

(2.1.149-50).

Silver is often invoked as a symbol of love and beauty. Gold, on the other hand, is often used ironically and as a sign of greed or desire. Rosaline is thus described as being immune to showers of gold, which almost seem to be a bribe. When Romeo is banished, he comments that banishment is a "golden axe," meaning that death would have been better and that banishment is merely a euphemism for the same thing. And finally, the erection of the statues of gold at the end is even more a sign of the fact that neither Capulet nor Montegue has really learned anything from the loss of their children. One of the central issues is the difference between youth and old age. Friar Laurence acts as Romeo's confidant, and the Nurse advises for Juliet. However, both have advice that seems strangely out of place given the circumstances of the play. For instance, Friar Laurence says to Romeo, "Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast" (2.2.94). He also advises Romeo to "Therefore love moderately" (2.5.9). The insanity of this plea to love "moderately" is made (5.1.6). The use of dreams is meant to foreshadow, but also heightens the dramatic elements of the tragedy by irrevocably sealing the character's fate.

When Romeo goes to the Apothecary to buy his poison, it is as if he were buying the poison from Death himself. Note the description of the Apothecary,

Romeo: Meagre were his looks.

Sharp misery had worn him to the bones

(5.1.40-1).

He is clearly an image of Death. Romeo pays him in gold, saying, "There is thy gold - worse poison to men's souls" (5.1.79). This description of gold ties into the conflict between gold and silver. It is gold that underlies the family feuding, even after the death of both Romeo and Juliet when Capulet and Montegue try to outbid each other in the size of their golden statues. Thus for Romeo gold really is a form of poison, since it has helped to kill him.

The analysis of the first act pointed out some of the numberous sexual references throughout the play. In the final death scene there is even the full force of the erotic element. Romeo drinks from a chalise, a cup with a shape that is often compared to the torso of a woman. Meanwhile Juliet says,

Juliet: O happy dagger,

This is thy sheath!

There rust, and let me die" (5.3.169).

The dagger is of course Romeo's, and the sexual overtones are starkly clear. In addition to this, there is ambiguity about the use of the word "die." To die actually had two meanings when Shakespeare was writing, meaning either real death or sexual intercourse. Thus, even at the very end of the play, we cannot be sure from the words alone whether Juliet is committing suicide or engaging in sexual relations with Romeo.

A final comment concerns Friar Laurence. His actions at the end of the play are remarkable for a holy man because he attempts to play God. Friar Laurence gets Juliet to drink a potion which puts her to sleep, faking death, and then he tries to resurrect her. In his attempt to play God, Friar Laurence is condemned to fail by the simple arrogance of his act. This tie-in with the death of Christ would not have escaped the Christian audiences watching the play.

**II. The Main Part**

**1.2 Critical overview on the play**

The central pair of lovers are the only characters in "Romeo and Juliet" featured as changing, against all the others who are static. The critical opinion on Romeo and Juliet is practically unanimous. The inseparability of their names reflects the very nature of love: people seeking "their other halves", completeness in a union with the other. So all the critics agree that Romeo and Juliet are the ideal pair of lovers. The tradition of psychological analysis of Shakespeare's characters was founded by S.T.Coleridge in his Shakespearean lectures (1811-1812)[[3]](#footnote-3). In the seventh lecture he described Shakespeare's unparalleled understanding of love: "Shakespeare has described this passion in various states and stages, beginning, as was most natural, with love in the young. Does he open his play making Romeo and Juliet in love at first sight — at the first glimpse, as any ordinary thinker would do? Certainly not: he knew what he was about: he was to develop the whole passion, and he commences with the first elements - that sense of imperfection, that yearning to combine itself with something lovely. Romeo became enamoured of the idea he had formed in his own mind, and then, as it were, christened the first real being of the contrary sex as endowed with the perfections he desired. He appears to be in love with Rosaline; but, in truth, he is in love only with his own idea. He felt that necessity of being beloved which no noble mind can be without. Then our poet, our poet who so well knew human nature, introduces Romeo to Juliet, and makes it not only a violent, but a permanent love. Romeo is first represented in a state most susceptible of love, and then, seeing Juliet, he took and retained the infection." The typical Continental point of view is represented by the words of the most influential Russian critic of the XlXth century V.G.Belinsky. In 15th installment of his "Alexander Pushkin's Works" (1844) he wrote: "The idea of love makes the pathos of "Romeo and Juliet", and the lovers' enthusiastic dialogues are like ocean waves shining in the stars' bright light. Their lyrical monologues are full not only of mutual admiration, but of the proud assertion of Love's divine nature[[4]](#footnote-4)". Dmitrii Urnov considers "Romeo and Juliet”'s place among Shakespeare's early plays, because it ludicrous by the rapid events which follow. In fact, by the end of the play we even see Friar Laurence rejecting his own advice and stumbling to reach Juliet's grave before Romeo can find her. "How oft tonight have my old feet stumbled at graves?" (5.3.123).

Mercutio leads the action in this most dramatic of the five acts. When wounded, he cries out "A plague o' both your houses" (3.1.101), saying it three times to ensure that it becomes a curse. Indeed, it is the plague which causes the final death of both Romeo and Juliet. Friar John says that he was unable to deliver the letter to Romeo because, "the searchers of the town, / Suspecting that we both were in a house / Where the infectious pestilence did reign, / Sealed up the doors, and would not let us forth" (5.2.8-11).

One of the most beautiful soliloquys is that of Juliet when she beckons for nightfall, again representing the contrast to the disorder of the day's events.

Juliet: Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night,

Give me my Romeo, and when he shall die

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"

(3.2.20-25).

The Nurse's arrival in this act with information about Romeo and Tybalt reinforces the fact that this is now a tragedy, not a comedy. This can be seen in the contrast of this scene with the first scene where the Nurse withholds information from Juliet. In the first scene, the Nurse is playfully devious in telling Juliet about where Romeo wants to meet her for their marriage. Now however, the same playfulness is no longer comic, rather it is infuriating. In this sense Shakespeare turns the Nurse from a comic character into a tragic character, one who cannot realize the importance of what she is saying.

Juliet's dedication to Romeo emerges very strongly at this point. At first she derides Romeo for killing Tybalt, but she soon has a change of heart and says, "Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?" (3.2.97). She then states that she would sacrifice ten thousand Tybalts to be with Romeo, and later includes her parents in the list of people she would rather lose than Romeo. This dedication to a husband or lover is something which emerges frequently in Shakespeare, and is a point he tries to emphasize.

Romeo's misery at being banished is clearly shown in his preference for death.

Romeo: Then 'banished'

Is death mistermed. Calling death 'banished'

Thou cutt'st my head off with a golden axe"

(3.3.20-22).

Friar Laurence tries to show him that by being alive he at least still has a chance to see Juliet again. Even the Nurse, entering where Romeo is hiding, says, "Stand up, stand up, stand an you be a man" (3.3.88).

The analysis of the first act introduced the image of the wheel of fortune. This was applied to Juliet, who throughout the previous acts rose from a humble daughter to become a strong woman standing on a balcony, and completely in charge of her situation. However, at this juncture the Nurse informs Romeo that Juliet "down falls again" (3.3.101) as a result of his banishment and her loss of Tybalt. Later, Juliet takes this image even further, saying, "Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low / As one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.55-6).

This of course also is integrated with the foreshadowing so common in Shakespeare's plays. Lady Capulet comments about Juliet's refusal to marry Paris that, "I would the fool were married to her grave" (3.5.140). This phrase will of course come true quite soon, when Juliet dies while still married to Romeo.

The conflict between the older generation and the younger comes to head in the final scene of act three. The Nurse advocates that Juliet forget about Romeo and instead focus on Paris, the virtues of whom she proceeds to extol. Juliet, poisoningly sweet in her sarcasm, sends the Nurse away from her for the first time, remarking, "Ancient damnation!" (3.5.235), both a reference to the Nurse's age and to the problems she must deal with. This leaves Juliet completely alone to face the hostile world Much in the way that the characaters in Richard VI dream about their fates in the final act of that play, Romeo too has a dream which tells of his fate. "I dreamt my lady came and found me dead" does not express "the basically tragic view of life, as the later plays would; it expresses the tragedy of individual destiny under tragic circumstances".

Many tragic love stories have been compared to "Romeo and Juliet"; the most successful modern versions are not in books, but in film. The most popular are: The classical American musical movie "West Side Story" (1961) based on the play by Arthur Laurents, music by Leonard Bernstein, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. The action takes place against the background of New York gangs war and is strictly parallel to Shakespeare's plot. The Jets, white boys' gang, rival the Sharks, Puerto-Rican gang, just as the Montague rival the Capulet; prince Escalus and his guards find counterpart in police officers Krupke and Schrank; Friar Laurence - in Doc; etc. The Polack Tony and the Puerto-Rican Maria follow in the steps of Romeo and Juliet, the major alteration of the plot occuring in the final scene. Tony is shot by Maria's suitor Chino, and the curtain falls with Maria and Chino alive. "West Side Story" reads like a social document and the Hollywood musical was celebrated for its haunting music and dynamic dance (choreographed by Jerome Robbins). In contrast, "Romeo and Juliet" (1968), directed by Franco Zeffirelli, offers a very careful, historically accurate scene: Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey starring as Romeo and Juliet were respectively 17 and 14, which are exactly the characters' ages in Shakespeare. "Romeo+Juliet" (1996), directed by Baz Luhrmann, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes, is the most unconventional adaptation of star-crossed lovers' story. It is set in futuristic urban backdrop of Verona Beach, and the dazzling contrast between classical lines and visual image of modern street violence makes this controversial movie worth special attention. The most recent spellbinding version is "Shakespeare in Love" (1998), awarded by the Academy as the best film of the year (directed by John Madden), starring Joseph Fiennes and Gwyneth Paltrow. The screenplay was written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard. The film combines the story of

Shakespeare writing and directing "Romeo and Juliet" in 1593, and "Romeo and Juliet" as it might be performed by its first cast, thus the show of Elizabethan England incorporates the show of "Romeo and Juliet". It uses the principle of "show within the show". The movie makes a beautiful example of modern cinema, and the Academy Award must be regarded as the confirmation of Shakespeare's triumph through ages.

In Verona, Sampson and Gregory (Capulet servants) complain that they will not put up with insults from the Montague family. Abram and Balthasar (Montague servants) appear and the four start quarreling. Benvolio (Lord Montague's nephew) appears and tries to break up the quarrel, but Tybalt (Lady Capulet's nephew) appears and picks a fight with Benvolio. At length, officers try to break up the fight, even while Lord Capulet and Lord Montague begin to fight one another. The Prince of Verona (Escalus) appears and stops the fighting, proclaiming sentences of death to any that renew the fighting. At Montague's house, he, his wife, and Benvolio discuss how melancholy Romeo (Montague's only son) has been lately. Benvolio vows to find out why. Speaking with Romeo, Benvolio finds Romeo is in love with a woman who has sworn to stay chaste (Rosaline). Benvolio suggests pursuing other women, but Romeo refuses. Separately, Paris (a kinsman of the Prince of Verona) talks to Lord Capulet about wooing his daughter Juliet for marriage. Capulet responds that she is too young (nearly 14 years old) and must wait two years to marry, and then only to the man whom she chooses. Still, Capulet invites Paris to a party in the evening. Capulet's servant is sent to invite guests, but he can't read the list so he entreats Romeo to do so. Upon hearing of the party, Benvolio convinces Romeo to attend and compare his unattainable love Rosaline to more beautiful women to get his mind off Rosaline. At Capulet's house, Lady Capulet speaks to Juliet about her feelings for marrying Paris while Juliet's Nurse listens on, telling stories of Juliet's childhood. Juliet, although hesitant, promises to be courteous. Masked, Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio head to the Capulet patty. Romeo is still depressed, saying he dreamt a fearful dream of an untimely death that will result because of the evening's events, but Benvolio just makes fun of him. At Capulet's house, the Montagues attend the party (in masks), Romeo spies Juliet, and he falls in love with her. Tybalt sees Romeo and takes up arms, but Lord Capulet attempts to calm him, though Tybalt vows to revenge Romeo's intrusion the next day. Juliet, too, falls for Romeo, but falls into despair when her Nurse informs her Romeo is a Montague, as does Romeo when he learns Juliet is a Capulet.

While leaving the party, Romeo hides in the orchard while Mercutio and Benvolio call for him to come out of hiding and go home with them; yet he will not. After they leave, Romeo appears and speaks to Juliet under her window, saying "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" By and by they swear their love to one another. Juliet tells Romeo she'll send a messenger to him the next day to learn the details of their wedding. Having stayed up all night, Romeo visits Friar Lawrence's cell and tells him of this new love for Juliet. Although Lawrence is critical at first, Romeo eventually convinces him to marry them. In the street, Benvolio tells Mercutio that Romeo did not come home that night, and that Tybalt has sent the Montagues a letter challenging Romeo to a duel. Romeo appears and they tease him for hiding from them. Juliet's nurse and servant Peter appear and Romeo tells her to tell Juliet to go to the Friar's cell that afternoon to be married. The Nurse returns to Juliet and, though she skirts around the message, she finally tells Juliet the wonderful news. Soon, at the Friar's cell, he marries Romeo and Juliet, and Romeo plans to visit Juliet's bedroom that evening.

At the street, Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt and Petruchio, leading to Tybalt and Mercutio fighting since Tybalt tries to pick a fight with Romeo, but he refuses. Romeo tries to break up the fight, but Tybalt slays Mercutio under Romeo's arm, then Tybalt flees. As Mercutio dies, he declares "A plague on both your houses," since he is only a friend of Romeo's and not his kinsmen. When Benvolio informs Romeo that Mercutio is dead, Romeo seeks out, fights, and slays Tybalt in revenge. Benvolio convinces Romeo to flee. The prince appears and Benvolio explains all to him, at which the Prince exiles Romeo for slaying Tybalt. At the Capulet's orchard, Juliet waits for Romeo when her Nurse appears and informs her of Mercutio and Tybalt's deaths, and Romeo's banishment. Juliet falls into despair, realizing she would rather Tybalt dead than Romeo, but also that a banished Romeo is virtually dead. At the Friar's cell, he informs Romeo of the Prince's edict of banishment, putting him into despair. Romeo states he would rather be dead than banished. The Nurse arrives and tells Romeo that Juliet is sad too, but forgives Romeo. Still, Romeo pulls a dagger and tries to kill himself, but the Friar stops him and tells him to stay the night with Juliet, then flee to Mantua. At Capulet's house, he and Paris set the wedding date for Paris and Juliet to be three days hence. In Juliet's bedroom, Romeo says a tearful goodbye to Juliet. After he leaves, Lady Capulet appears and, while discussing Tybalt's death, states she will send a henchman to mantua to kill Romeo (though she never does). She then informs Juliet of her impending marriage to Paris. Juliet tells her parents she will not marry, but Lord Capulet commands it will be so. The Nurse, too, tells Juliet she should marry Paris. In private, Juliet decides to no longer trust the nurse and vows to kill herself if the Friar cannot find a way to save her from marrying Paris.

At Friar Lawrence's cell, Paris informs the Friar of his upcoming wedding to Juliet. When Juliet arrives to see the Friar, Paris politely leaves. The Friar, hearing Juliet threaten suicide, tells her of a "distilled liquor" she can take to fake death. He explains the drug will keep her asleep and seemingly dead for 42 hours, during which she can be placed in the Capulet tomb. Then, when she wakes, Romeo can be there waiting for her to take her to Mantua. Friar Lawrence send Friar John to Mantua with an explanatory letter for Romeo. Juliet returns to her father and apologizes for refusing to marry, causing her dad to move the wedding up to the next morning (two days early). In her bedroom, Juliet sends her mother and nurse away, then, after much worrying over the future, she drinks the vial of medicine and sleeps. Later in the early morning, all feverishly prepare for the wedding and Capulet sends the Nurse to wake Juliet. The Nurse wails upon finding Juliet "dead", summoning the others to find her and mourn. The Friar instructs all to prepare Juliet for her funeral.

In Mantua, Romeo's servant Balthasar arrives and tells Romeo that Juliet is dead. Romeo vows to see Juliet in her tomb and poison himself there, buying the poison from a poor Apothecary who illegally sells it to Romeo only because he (the Apothecary) needs the money. At Lawrence's cell, Friar John reports he could not deliver the letter to Romeo since he (John) got stuck in a quarantined house while searching for Romeo. Friar Lawrence heads to the cemetery with a crowbar. At the tomb, Paris and his page arrive and Paris mourns Juliet's death. Paris hides when he hears Romeo and Balthasar approach. Romeo orders Balthasar to leave him alone, no matter what he hears. When Romeo opens the tomb, Paris steps out and tries to stop him by provoking him to fight. Romeo entreats Paris to simply walk away and not fight, but Paris forces Romeo to fight him, resulting in Romeo slaying Paris. In sorrow, Romeo lays Paris in the tomb, while Paris' page secretly leaves to call the watch. Romeo finds Juliet and mourns her death, then drinks his poison and dies. Outside the tomb, Friar Lawrence arrives and meets Balthasar who tells the Friar that Romeo has been in the tomb for one half hour. Lawrence enters the tomb and finds Romeo and Paris dead. Juliet then awakes and spots Romeo. The Friar, upon hearing noises outside flees, leaving Juliet with Romeo. Juliet tries to kill herself with Romeo's poison, but can find none, either in the vial or on Romeo's lips. In desperation, she stabs herself with Romeo's dagger. The watch arrives, having found Balthasar and the Friar. The Prince and Lord and Lady Capulet arrive and learn Paris, Romeo, and Juliet are dead (amazingly to them, Juliet seems to have been alive, and then newly dead again). Lord Montague arrives and reports that his wife has died from grief over Romeo's exile, then learns himself of Romeo's death. Capulet and Montague make peace and swear to never fight again. They vow to build solid gold statues of Romeo and Juliet and place them side by side so all can remember their plight.

Between tragedy and comedy the transition is often but slightly marked. Thus Romeo and Juliet differs but little from most of Shakespeare's comedies in its ingredients and treatment-it is simply the direction of the whole that gives it the stamp of tragedy. Romeo and Juliet is a picture of love and its pitiable fate in a world whose atmosphere is too sharp for this, the tenderest blossom of human life. Two beings created for each other feel mutual love at the first glance; every consideration disappears before the irresistable impulse to live for one another; under circumstances hostile in the highest degree to their union, they unite themselves by a secret marriage, relying simply on the protection of an invisible power. Untoward incidents following in rapid succession, their heroic constancy is within a few days put to the proof, till, forcibly separated from each other, by a voluntary death they are united in the grave to meet again in another world.

All this is to be found in the beautiful story which was told long before Shakespeare's day, and which, however simply told, will always excite a tender sympathy; but it was reserved for Shakespeare to join in one ideal picture purity of heart with warmth of imagination; sweetness and dignity of manners with passionate intensity of feeling. Under his handling, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses into soul, while at the same time it is a melancholy elegy on its inherent and imparted frailty; it is at once the apotheosis and the obsequies of love. It appears here a heavenly spark that, as it descends to earth, is converted into the lightning flash, which almost in the same moment sets on fire and consumes the mortal being on whom it lights. All that is most intoxicating in the odor of a southern spring, all that is languishing in the song of the nightingale or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, all alike breathe forth from this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay does it, from the first timidly bold declaration and modest return of love, hurry on to unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; and then hasten, amid alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the fate of the two lovers, who yet appear enviable in their hard lot, for their love survives them, and by their death they have obtained an endless triumph over every separating power. The sweetest and the bitterest love and hatred, festive rejoicings and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchral horrors, the fullness of life and self-annihilation, are here all brought close to each other; and yet these contrasts are so blended into a unity of impression, that the echo which the whole leaves in the mind resembles a single but endless sigh. The first scenes of nearly every play of Shakespeare are remarkable for the skill with which they prepare the mind for all the after scenes. We do not see the succession of scenes; the catastrophe unrevealed; but we look into a dim and distant prospect, and by what is in the foreground we can form a general notion of the landscape that will be presented to us, as the clouds roll away and the sun lights up its wild mountains or its fertile valleys. When Sampson and Gregory enter "armed with swords and bucklers"-when we hear "a dog of the house of Montague moves me"~ we know that these are not common servants, and live not in common times; with them the excitement of party spirit does not rise into strong passion—it presents its ludicrous side. They quarrel like angry curs, who snarl, yet are afraid to bite. But the "furious Tybalt" in a moment shows us that these hasty quarrels cannot have peaceful endings. The strong arm of authority suspends the affray, but the spirit of enmity is not put down. The movement of this scene is as rapid as the quarrel itself. Tt produces the effect upon the mind of something which startles; but the calm immediately succeeds. Benvolio's speech-­Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun

Peer'd forth the golden window of the east...

-at once shows us that we are entering the region of high poetry. Coleridge remarks that the succeeding speech of old Montague exhibits the poetical aspect of the play even more strikingly:

Many a morning hath he here been seen,

With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew.

It is remarkable that the speech thus commencing, which contains twenty lines as highly wrought as anything in Shakespeare, is not in the first copy of this play. The experience of the artist taught him where to lay on the poetical coloring brighter and brighter. How beautifully these lines prepare us for the appearance of Romeo—the now musing, abstracted Romeo—the Romeo, who, like the lover of Chaucer, Solitary was ever alone,

And walking all the night, making moan.

The love of Romeo was unrequited love. It was a sentiment rather than a passion—a love that solaced itself in antithetical conceits upon its own misery, and would draw consolation from melancholy associations. It was love without the "true Promethean fire," but it was a fir preparation for what was to follow. The dialogue between Capulet and Paris prepares us for Juliet-the "hopeful lady of his earth," who Hath not seen the change of fourteen years.

The old man does not think her "ripe to be a bride;" but we are immediately reminded of the precocity of nature under a southern sun, by another magical touch of poetry, which tells us of youth and freshness-of summer in "Aprir'-of "fresh female buds" breathing the fragrance of opening flowers. Juliet at length comes. We see the submissive and gentle girl; but the garrulity of the nurse carries us back even to the Prettiest babe that e'er I nursed.

Neither Juliet nor Romeo had rightly read their own hearts. He was sighing for a shadow-she fancied that she could subject her feelings to the will of others: But no more deep will I endart mine eye, Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

The preparation for their first interview goes forward; Benvolio has persuaded Romeo to go to the Capulet's feast. There is a slight pause in the action, but how gracefully it is filled up! Mercutio comes upon the scene, and is placed by the side of Romeo, to contrast with him, but also to harmonize. The poetry of Mercutio is that of fancy; the poetry of Romeo is that of imagination. The wit of Mercutio is the overflow of animal spirits, occasionally polluted, like a spring pure from the well-head, by the soil over which it passes; the wit of Romeo is somewhat artificial, and scarcely self-sustained--it is the unaccustomed play of the intellect when the passions "have come to the clenching point," but it is under control, it has no exuberance which, like the wit of Mercutio, admits the coloring of the sensual and the sarcastic. The very first words of Romeo show the change that has come o'er him. He went into that "hall of Capulet's house" fearing Some consequence yet hanging in the stars.

He had "a soul of lead"--he would be "a candle-holder and look on." But he has seen Juliet; and with what gorgeous images has that sight filled his imagination!

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

We have now the poetry of passion bursting upon us in its purple light. The lovers show the intensity of their abandonment to an overmastering will. "They see only themselves in the universe." That is the true moral of their fate. But, even under the direst calamity, they catch at the one joy which is left—the short meeting before the parting. And what a parting it is! Here again comes the triumph of the beautiful over the merely tragic. They are once more calm. There love again breathes of all the sweet sights and sounds in a world of beauty. They are parting, but the almost happy Juliet says:

It is not yet near day-Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

Romeo, who sees the danger of delay, is not deceived: It was the lark, the herald of the morn.

Then what a burst of poetry follows!--

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day

Stands tiptoe on the misty mountains' tops.

Note the exquisite display of womanly tenderness in Juliet, which hurries from the forgetfulness of joy in her husband's presence to apprehension for his safety. After this scene we are almost content to think, as Romeo fancied he thought:

Come what sorrow can,

It cannot countervail the exchange of joy.

The sorrow does come upon poor Juliet with redoubled force. The absolute father, the unyielding mother, the treacherous nurse—all hurrying her into a loathed marriage—might drive one less resolved to the verge of madness. But from this moment her love has become heroism. She sees

No pity sitting in the clouds-- She rejects her nurse—she resolves to deceive her parents. This scene brings out her character in its strongest and most beautiful relief.

The final catastrophe comes. They have paid the penalty of the fierce hatreds that were engendered around them, and of their own precipitancy; but their misfortunes and their loves have healed the enmities of which they were the victims.

Montagues and Capulets

At the very beginning of Romeo and Juliet, the Chorus chants that the blood feud between the Montagues and Capulets has been going on for a long time.

The audience never learns the source of the quarrel, but certainly the "ancient grudge" has recently grown stronger. According to the Prince, brawls that "have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets" (1.1.91).

Audiences may wonder why the Montagues and Capulets can't move forward and forgive. Blood is spilling in the streets and their children wind up in an awful situation. What's the matter with these people? Are they terribly uncaring[[5]](#footnote-5)?

The audience learns that these are respectable people — "two households, both alike in dignity," (Prologue. 1) from the outset of the play. The Montagues and the Capulets are venerable families of Verona, and as such they command respect. Even Prince Escalus shows them respect though their longstanding enmity angers him. The lenient sentence of Romeo's banishment (rather than the punishment of death) demonstrates the Prince's willingness to cut the families a break. He would not likely extend the same courtesy to a family of lesser stature

But the respect commanded by a noble family does not give very much insight into the nature of these parents and their relationships with their children. Shakespeare leaves those clues in the text.

In only two scenes in the entire play are all four parents are present. The first is the street fight involving Benvolio, a Montague, and Tybalt, a Capulet. The elder generation arrives when the battle is already underway. Old Montague and Capulet immediately want to enter the fray, particularly when each sees the other ready to fight.

This brief exchange among the four parents provides a lot of insight into the dynamic of the relationships. First, Capulet demands his weapon. Why does he want it? Not because he has any idea what started the fight or because he wishes to aid his nephew, Tybalt, but because Old Montague is drawing his own weapon. Capulet is angered because Montague is not afraid of him. Capulet's response is awfully immature.

And Montague appears no better. He immediately renews the old, unexplained quarrel. He calls Capulet a "villain," though Capulet has not yet done anything villainous. Montague also insists that he not be held back from having his way with Capulet.

Imagine the foolishness of this scene. Two old men in nightgowns are brandishing weapons at one another and name-calling while blood is being spilled around them. Is this noble? Only their wives demonstrate restraint and prevent them from fighting. Look how each woman addresses her husband. Though both women are saying the same thing --"Calm down. You can't fight." — each uses a very different tone.

Lady Capulet is bitter and sarcastic. One word, in particular, underscores her cynicism. Lady Capulet tells her husband, "Who are you kidding. You are way too old to fight. You need a crutch, not a sword."

Lady Montague, too, seems to have a pretty tight reign on her hubby. She says, "Though shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe" (1.1.80). She might as well draw a line in the dirt with her foot and say "Don't you dare cross this line looking for a fight, buddy. If you do, you deal with me." Though the women don't speak to one another or get involved in the fighting, it seems clear that each is tired of the situation.

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These are the last words Lady Montague speaks in the play. But, some important aspects of her character have been established. She didn't want her husband involved in a brawl, and she is worried about her son. She doesn't seem like such a bad wife and mother.

Taking his wife's cue, Montague inquires of Benvolio the reason for Romeo's distant and aloof melancholy.

These parents are worried about their son. They want to know what is up with him, and they would like to be able to help.

2. 2. Peculiar features of significant scenes (subject and themes)

In Act I Scene 5 Romeo and Juliet meet. Note that in spite of its title, this play has very few scenes in which both lovers are present. The others are the balcony scene (2.2), the short wedding scene (2.6) and the opening of Act 3, Scene 5. The lovers are both on stage in Act 5, Scene 3 - but Romeo kills himself before Juliet wakes.

Shakespeare prepares for this scene by showing Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline (a very strong “crush” on her). On the guest list for the party, Rosaline is described as Capulet's “fair niece”, but she never appears in the play. Benvolio (in 1.2) has promised to show Romeo a more attractive woman, but doesn't really have anyone special in mind, as far as we know. Similarly, we know that Juliet is there because Capulet wants to give Paris a chance to meet her - this is why he throws the party[[6]](#footnote-6).

Capulet's speech to Paris (in 1.2) suggests that Juliet has not been out of her house much (only, perhaps, to go to worship and confession at Friar Lawrence's cell). Maybe this is why Paris (a family friend) has noticed her, but Romeo has no idea who she is. Immediately before this scene, Romeo has spoken of his fear that some terrible “consequence [result] yet hanging in the stars” shall begin at “this night's revels” (Capulet's party). Does this fear come true? Tybalt's behaviour has also been prepared for by the brawl in the play's first scene.

In the scene, several things happen. Servants do their job, Capulet chats to a friend, Tybalt sees Romeo, wants to fight him and is told off by Capulet for his behaviour. Romeo and Juliet meet, and each finds out who the other is. But the most important things in the scene are:

1. the way Romeo falls in love with Juliet at first sight
2. and the way this contrasts with Tybalt's anger and hatred.

Romeo never knows that it is his presence at the party that causes Tybalt later to challenge him to a duel. These things lead to the events of Act 3, Scene 1, where Mercutio and Tybalt die.

The structure of the scene

In the opening the servants speak informally (in prose, not verse), about all the work they have to do. This prepares for the grand entrance when the Capulets come on stage, in procession, wearing their expensive clothing and speaking verse. Romeo's comments about Juliet alternate with Tybalt's attempt to attack Romeo - who does not know that he's been noticed. At the end of the scene, the Nurse tells each lover who the other one is.

Within this general outline, Shakespeare shows the most important episode is that where Romeo and Juliet speak for the first time. This has the form of a sonnet (a rhyming fourteen line poem) - which many in the 16th Century audience would notice, as they heard the pattern of rhymes.

In Act 2 Scene 1 this scene occurs immediately after Romeo has married Juliet - which explains his friendliness to Tybalt. The general contrast of love and hate in the play is explicit (very clear) in this scene.

Another theme of the play that is strong in this scene is the idea that we are not in control of our lives (the Friar will say to Juliet later: “A greater power than we can contradict/Hath thwarted our intents”). Here when Romeo has killed Tybalt he cries out: “I am fortune's fool”. What does this mean?

Yet another theme that appears is that of the feud and how innocent lives are harmed by it. Here it is Mercutio who curses the feuding families: “A plague on both your houses!” What does this mean? Later Paris, too, will die because of the feud, as well as the young lovers who belong to the feuding families but have wanted not to be part of the quarrel.

Act III Scene 5 opens with Juliet saying goodbye to Romeo, who must leave for Mantua. In the previous scene the audience has heard Capulet offer Juliet's hand in marriage to Paris. We understand why he does this, but we know many things he does not know.

We can foresee that Juliet will not be happy about her father's decision. Once Romeo has gone, Lady Capulet tells Juliet she must marry. Juliet refuses, and her father angrily insists that she marry Paris or be turned out of the house. Alone with the Nurse, Juliet asks for advice. She replies that Juliet should marry Paris. Juliet is astounded and pretends to agree to this advice, while deciding that the only person who can help her is Friar Lawrence. Now she feels most alone in the world.

Modern audiences may wonder what the problem is - why does Juliet not pretend to go through with the marriage? But Shakespeare's audience knows that it is a mortal sin to attempt marriage when you are already married. If you do this, you will certainly be damned (go to Hell). And there is no way that the Friar would conduct such a marriage ceremony, which is one of the sacraments (holy ceremonies or mysteries) of the church. The Nurse must know this, too, but it seems that she does not really believe in, or care about, heaven and hell.

The key to this scene is what various people know:

Capulet thinks he knows what has upset his daughter (Tybalt's death) but he is quite wrong.

Lady Capulet knows as little as her husband.

Juliet knows about her marriage to Romeo, but cannot explain to her parents.

Juliet doesn't know, until they tell her, about their plans for her to marry Paris.

The Nurse, at this point, knows about Juliet's secrets.

Only the audience has the full picture. In the scene Juliet repeatedly speaks ambiguously - with one meaning for the person to whom she speaks, and another for herself and the audience. For example, the audience knows that Juliet knows that the Nurse knows that Juliet's parents don't know about her marriage to Romeo! (Think about it.) Later we know that the Nurse does not know that Juliet is deceiving her. Throughout the whole scene, Shakespeare makes dramatic use of what people do or don't know.

The structure of the scene is a very simple sequence - the one common element being Juliet, who is present throughout. After the episode where she bids farewell to Romeo (not set for the Key Stage test), Juliet learns from her mother of the intended marriage to Paris. When Juliet defies her mother, Capulet argues with her. He even shouts at the Nurse, when she tries to defend Juliet. Finally, Juliet asks the Nurse for help. When the Nurse lets her down, Juliet is left alone on stage to explain (to the audience) what she is going to do.

**3.2 “Romeo and Juliet” and their main characters**

Romeo

Romeo may appear at first glance a changeable, inconsistent character. Perhaps the playwright's own idea of Romeo is not at first clear, or it may be that his youth the strange and disconcerting circumstances in which he finds himself explain the apparent changes in Romeo's attitudes and behaviour.

Though the action of the play occurs over a period of a few days only, Shakespeare gives the impression of the passage of a longer time, and in the course of the drama Romeo appears to be aged by his experiences. So while Tybalt, in Act 3; scene 1, addresses Romeo as "boy", in the play's final scene Romeo calls Paris "good gentle youth".

The Romeo of the early part of the play is definitely boyish but his serious, pensive and fatalistic traits mark him off from his less reflective companions - especially from Mercutio, who, with his blunt speech, his dislike of pretence, his cynical philosophy and his reduction of all love to brutal lust, serves as an excellent foil for Romeo.

Romeo's unrequited love for Rosaline may be evidence of his pessimistic and perverse character. It seems that Rosaline is attractive not for any easily identified perfections, so much as for the fact of her being out of reach (as a Capulet, and sworn to chastity), almost as if Romeo wishes to be rejected, so that he can make a show of his despair. It is a pose that invites criticism or even outright ridicule from Romeo's fellows, and Romeo appears to relish the argument, which is provoked by these comments, and by his defence of his infatuation.

Though Romeo exaggerates his gravity and dejection into a pose, yet these bespeak a real fatalism of outlook, so that he views the future with apprehension, as when his mind "misgives...some consequence, yet hanging in the stars". While Romeo's frequent references to fate are often seen as evidence of the playwright's drawing the audience's-attention to the workings of fortune, it may not be so much fate (in the sense of some adverse force, external to the lovers) which is at work, as Romeo's belief in it. There are cruel accidents of circumstance that befall the lovers, but in each case these are compounded by their own deliberate actions. There is certainly a self-destructive impulse at work in their passion for one another.

By frequent reference to Romeo's youth (as in Capulet's words to Tybalt, at the feast) and by Romeo's own account of Rosaline's sworn chastity Shakespeare suggests that Romeo, like Juliet, is a novice in matters of the heart, and so, like her, pure. This is supported by the fact that - (as only an inexperienced lover would) he seeks advice from the celibate priest, Friar Laurence, and confirmed by the nature of his first conversation with Juliet. This is in the form of a sonnet - a strikingly formal device in such a situation - in which the etiquette of courtship is metaphorically represented as an act of religious devotion; the exchange of words here is almost sacramental in quality.

Romeo is ruled by passion rather than reason: thus, when he discovers Juliet's identity, he at once recognises the obstacle which confronts his love, but is not at all deterred from it by considerations of prudence, practicality or danger. "My life is my foe's debt," he admits, without further ado.

The exuberance of youth - at its most conspicuous in unrestrained, spontaneous, innocent passion - characterises Romeo's conversations with Juliet after he spies her on her balcony. The lovers say little of direct importance, but the rapturous exchange of passionate sentiment shows us how wrong Mercutio's bawdy jests are in their dismissal of love as a mere animal appetite demanding carnal gratification. (Shakespeare hints that this is an error, by letting us see another error in Mercutio's prior assumption that Romeo is not to be found because he is still pining for Rosaline.) Though Romeo's behaviour immediately after meeting Juliet may appear more boyish (because less melancholy) than his earlier gravity, the real difference is between youthful dejection (producing an exaggerated affectation of adult disillusionment) and youthful rapture.

With the compliance of the Nurse and Friar Laurence the lovers are swiftly married. In a way it is this that precipitates the unlucky series of events, which leads to Romeo's banishment. Tybalt's slaying of Mercutio and Romeo's realisation of his part in his friend's death call forth a new quality in Romeo, which also springs from his awareness of his adult (because married) status. In his avenging of Mercutio's death, Romeo displays a grim determination and manliness not hitherto seen, a lack of thought or fear for the consequences of his action - he follows the prompting of passion rather than of reason, just as in his clandestine marriage to Juliet he has rejected politic calculation, and obeyed his heart.

From this point Romeo's actions are more and more dictated by passion, and less and less by reason. He panics, and flies to Laurence's cell. Here he discovers that he is to be banished, and becomes almost hysterical at the prospect of separation from Juliet. Drawing a hasty conclusion from the first words of the Nurse (to whom he has not properly attended) he believes he has forfeited Juliet's love in killing Tybalt, and attempts to stab himself, being prevented by the Nurse's intervention and Laurence's plain-speaking. The manliness of Act 3, Scene 1 has for the moment deserted the boy, Romeo.

Like the earlier balcony-scene, the bed-chamber scene serves to show the unrestrained, imprudent character of the youthful lovers: at any moment Lady Capulet may enter (she should, if she had obeyed her husband's instructions, already have done so) and Romeo's life is forfeit if he be found in Verona. Yet first Juliet, then Romeo (as their roles in the argument are switched) pleads the case for his delaying his departure. Juliet's parting words to Romeo ("Methinks I see thee...As one dead in the bottom of a tomb") are not calculated to allay his fears. His fatalistic outlook and impetuous haste bring about the completion of the tragedy, every bit as much as accidents of circumstance, or decisions made by other characters. (These include the decision of Capulet to bring forward Juliet's wedding-day from Thursday to Wednesday; the nature of Laurence's desperate scheme to prevent Juliet's "marrying" Paris; Friar John's failure to bring Laurence's message to Romeo.)

On hearing Balthasar's news that Juliet has died, Romeo acts with extreme haste, and the servant's disregarded advice ("I do beseech you ... have patience") draws attention to this. Romeo's immediate thought is of suicide. This might (for a heart-broken lover) make sense, if he were sure of his bride's death. But Romeo, surprisingly, seems unconcerned to learn the circumstances and cause of Juliet's death (it might, after all, as Mercutio's has done, require avenging). If Romeo were to learn of the intended marriage to Paris and to note the timing of Juliet's death, he might discern something of Laurence s intention. But Romeo does not question Balthasar further (how much more he knows or believes is thus an academic question), nor does he, on returning to Verona, consult the friar.

He may have some reason for this: he believes Balthasar has told him the truth (and he will verify in the Capulet tomb what he has been told). And the friar, were Romeo to visit him, would perhaps try to dissuade him from suicide. However, it is Romeo's failure to enquire into the cause of Juliet's supposed death, which guarantees the play's fatal outcome - though Shakespeare, at the last, taunts the audience by an unforeseen interruption (Paris's appearance, improbably coinciding with Romeo's arrival, at the tomb). This delays Romeo's otherwise hasty actions in this scene - but by just too little to save him. Though Romeo acts precipitately in his suicidal return to Verona, there is a necessary checking of his haste as he contemplates the scene before him in the tomb. He has time to recognise the fact that he is not the only victim of fortune, and he generously carries out the dying wish of Paris, to be buried in the same tomb as Juliet, laying in the Capulet vault the body of 'lone writ" with him "in sour misfortune's book". He delays taking the poison long enough to make sympathetic speeches to the bodies of both Paris and Tybalt. And he delays further as he remarks that Juliet, though dead (as he believes her) still has lively colour in her lips and cheeks. (The audience knows why, but the hasty Romeo fails to discern the cause of this symptom.) Yet it is the haste that has gone before that has shaped the course of events.

Strikingly, though much has been made of the operation of fate in determining Romeo's and Juliet's fortunes, Romeo, at the last, defies its influence, and claims he will: "shake the yoke of unauspicious stars From this world-wearied flesh".

Convinced fatalists will argue that Romeo, ironically, is fulfilling the decrees of fate, even as he claims to be free of its influence, because he is fated to die at this point. Romeo himself, speaking to no-one who is able to hear him, believes that in taking the poison, he makes himself free of the "unauspicious stars", under the yoke of which he has suffered so much. The deeper irony is that the news that can, even now, save him will come too late not because of the operation of inexorable fortune, but because of his own excessive haste in his reaction to Balthasar's news.

Eyes, look your last.

Arms, take your last embrace.

And, lips, O you the doors of breath,

Seal "with a righteous kiss

A dateless bargain to engrossing death

Romeo thanks the apothecary for his skill and drinks the poison.

The effects of the sleeping potion wear off, and Juliet awakens calling for Romeo. Finding him next to her, dead, with a cup in his hand, she guesses what has transpired. She tries to kiss the poison from his lips, but failing that, unsheathes his dagger and plunges it into her breast.

Friar Lawrence learns that Romeo has not received his letter and rushes to Juliet's tomb to rescue her. He discovers the tomb already open and finds the sad contents within. Soon the Friar is joined by the Night Watchman, who had been alerted to the disturbance. Then the families gather around the star-crossed lovers. The Friar's mournful account of their death shames the two families into ending their feud forever.

Romeo is initially presented as a Petrarchan lover, a man whose feelings of love aren't reciprocated by the lady he admires and who uses the poetic language of sonnets to express his emotions about his situation. Romeo's exaggerated language in his early speeches characterizes him as a young and inexperienced lover who is more in love with the concept of being in love than with the woman herself.

The play's emphasis on characters' eyes and the act of looking accords with Romeo's role as a blind lover who doesn't believe that there could be another lady more fair than his Rosaline.

Romeo denies that he could be deluded by love, the "religion" of his eye. This zeal, combined with his rejection of Benvolio's advice to find another love to replace Rosaline, highlights Romeo's immaturity as a lover. Similar imagery creates a comic effect when Romeo falls in love at first sight with Juliet at the Capulet feast. When Romeo sees Juliet, he realizes the artificiality of his love for Rosaline: "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! / For 1 ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (1.5.52-53).

As the play progresses, Romeo's increasing maturity as a lover is marked by the change in his language. He begins to speak in blank verse as well as rhyme, which allows his language to sound less artificial and more like everyday language.

The fated destinies of Romeo and Juliet are foreshadowed throughout the play. Romeo's sense of foreboding as he makes his way to the Capulet feast anticipates his first meeting with Juliet: my mind misgives Some consequence yet hanging in the stars Shall bitterly begin his fearful date (1.4.106-107)

Romeo's role first as a melancholy lover in the opening scenes of the play and then as a Juliet's secret love is significant. Romeo belongs in a world defined by love rather than a world fractured by feud. Tybalt's death in Act III, Scene 1, brings about the clash between the private world of the lovers and the public world of the feud. Romeo is reluctant to fight Tybalt because they are now related through Romeo's marriage to Juliet.

When Tybalt kills Mercutio, however, Romeo (out of loyalty to his friend and anger at Tybalt's arrogance) kills Tybalt, thus avenging his friend's death. In one ill-fated moment, he placed his love of Juliet over his concern for Mercutio, and Mercutio was killed. Romeo then compounds the problem by placing his own feelings of anger over any concerns for Juliet by killing Tybalt.

Romeo's immaturity is again manifest later when he learns of his banishment. He lies on the floor of the Friar's cell, wailing and crying over his fate. When the nurse arrives, he clumsily attempts suicide. The Friar reminds him to consider Juliet and chides him for not thinking through the consequences of his actions for his wife.

The Friar then offers a course of action to follow, and Romeo becomes calm. Later, when Romeo receives the news of Juliet's death, he exhibits maturity and composure as he resolves to die. His only desire is to be with Juliet: "Well Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight" (V.I.36). His resolution is reflected in the violent image he uses to order Balthasar, his servant, to keep out of the tomb:

The time and my intents are savage-wild,

More fierce and more inexorable far .

Than empty tigers or the roaring sea.

(V.3.37)

After killing Paris, Romeo remorsefully takes pity on him and fulfills Paris' dying wish to be laid next to Juliet. Romeo notes that both he and Paris are victims of fate and describes Paris as: "One writ with me in sour misfortune's book" (V.3.83) since Paris experienced an unreciprocated love from Juliet similar to Romeo's unrequited love for Rosaline. Romeo is also filled with compassion because he knows that Paris has died without understanding the true love that he and Juliet shared.

Romeo's final speech recalls the Prologue in which the "star-cross'd" lives of the lovers are sacrificed to end the feud:

Ohere.

Will I set up my everlasting rest

And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars

From this world wearied flesh.

The Nurse

When we first meet the Nurse, we see her as a coarse and talkative, but well-intentioned woman, without affectation, and having Juliet's best interests at heart. Finally we discover, as Juliet does (passing judgement for us) that the Nurse does not really understand Juliet's love for Romeo and her faithfulness. The Nurse is shown to be essentially lewd and promiscuous.

The first thing that strikes us about the Nurse is her manner of speaking.

She is extremely garrulous, prone to trivial and irrelevant or inappropriate reminiscences, Thus, when Lady Capulet broaches the subject of Juliet's marriage, her reference to her daughter's age provokes from the Nurse a stream of recollections of Juliet's infancy and childhood. This shows the Nurse to be both long-winded and insensitive to the importance Lady Capulet accords to the subject of her daughter's future.

In her speeches the Nurse is rarely logical: thus, her evidence for determining Juliet's age is derived by estimating her birth to have occurred three years before a celebrated earthquake (three years being an approximation of the time taken for Juliet's weaning); in her advising Juliet to take Paris as husband in place of Romeo, the Nurse again produces confused reasoning, changing her ground several times.

The Nurse's conversation is marked by frequent and un-self-conscious use of coarse and earthy expressions: she is not able (or does not realise that she ought) to refrain from such coarseness even when speaking to Lady Capulet - happily referring to her late husband's improper prediction concerning Juliet, and comparing the bump on Juliet's forehead to "a young cockerel's stone".

Lady Capulet's changing of her mind, to allow the Nurse to be privy to her suggesting to Juliet that she consider Paris as a suitor tells us several things: Lady Capulet's initial uncertainty doubtless stems from her fear that the Nurse may (as she does) interrupt her own words to Juliet; it also tells us, however, that the Nurse is in the confidence of her mistress who, despite her faults, values her opinion.

The Nurse is evidently a much closer confidante of Juliet, her charge, than of her employers, as she happily assists Juliet in her secret marriage to Romeo. At the time of these events, we assume that the Nurse is motivated by affection for Juliet, and an appreciation of the noble character of her love for Romeo.

Whether Mercutio knows the Nurse rather better than Juliet (which seems improbable) or whether (which seems more likely) his remarks are merely intended to provoke a rather coarse old woman, his calling the Nurse (in Act 2; scene 4): "A bawd, a bawd, a bawd!" is wholly just. Ironically enough, on this occasion she is trying to appear genteel (hence her instruction to her servant: "My fan, Peter") and she takes offence at Mercutio's "ropery". Yet her protestations against Mercutio's remarks seem to confirm her vulgarity, as she uses very common language, referring to "flirt gills" and "skains mates".

That the Nurse is a bawd becomes apparent (in 3; 5) in her advice to Juliet to marry Paris, on the grounds that Romeo is effectively lost to her. It is clear that the Nurse thinks Juliet should have a man in her bed, and is not troubled by the nicety of marriage - bigamy, for her, is no sin (so long as no-one finds it out, and she won't tell). She has no inkling that Juliet will take offence at this, and fails to perceive the bitter irony of Juliet's "Amen". Knowing this, we now understand the relish with which the Nurse has earlier told of her husband's prediction that Juliet would one day fall backward (before a man's embraces). Her assistance of the young lovers in their secret marriage has been principally motivated by the prospect of seeing Juliet bedded.

The audience watches and listens with revulsion as the Nurse later attempts to rouse the drugged Juliet on the morning set for her wedding to Paris, by coarse remarks about the count's designs on her. She last appears in the play greatly distraught by her discovery that Juliet is (apparently) dead, yet not giving a second thought to the far-worse fate to which she would happily have delivered her. Juliet's reproach and judgement of her have been well-merited.

The Nurse's key function within the play is to act as a go-between for Romeo and Juliet, and is the only other character besides Friar Laurence to know of their wedding. The Nurse, despite being a servant in the Capulet household, has a role equivalent to that of Juliet's mother and regards Juliet as her own daughter.

The Nurse's relationship with Juliet focuses attention on Juliet's age. In Juliet's first scene, the Nurse repeatedly asserts that Juliet has not yet had her 14th birthday. In contrast to Juliet's youth, the Nurse is old and enjoys complaining about her aches and pains. Juliet's frustration at having to rely upon the Nurse as her messenger is used to comic effect in Act II, Scene 5, when Juliet is forced to listen to the Nurse's ailments while trying to coax from her the news of her wedding plans:

The Nurse, like Mercutio, loves to talk at length. She often repeats herself, and her bawdy references to the sexual aspect of love set the idealistic love of Romeo and Juliet apart from the love described by other characters in the play. The Nurse doesn't share Juliet's idea of love; for her, love is a temporary and physical relationship, so she can't understand the intense and spiritual love Romeo and Juliet share. When the Nurse brings Juliet news of Romeo's wedding arrangements, she focuses on the pleasures of Juliet's wedding night,

Nurse: I am the drudge, and toil in your delight,

But you shall bear the burden soon at night" (II.5.75-76).

This clash in outlook manifests itself when she advises Juliet to forget the banished Romeo and marry Paris, betraying Juliet's trust by advocating a false marriage:

I think it best you married with the County.

O, he's a lovely gentleman.

Romeo's a dishclout to him.

(III.5.218-220)

Juliet can't believe that the Nurse offers such a course of action after she praised Romeo and helped bring the couple together. The Nurse is ultimately subject to the whims of society. Her social position places her in the serving class—she is not empowered to create change around her. Her maternal instinct toward Juliet buoys her to aid Juliet in marrying Romeo; however, when Capulet becomes enraged, the Nurse retreats quickly into submission and urges Juliet to forget Romeo.

Mercutio

Mercutio, the witty skeptic, is a foil for Romeo, the young Petrarchan lover. Mercutio mocks Romeo's vision of love and the poetic devices he uses to express his emotions: Romeo, Humors! Madman! Passion! Lover!

Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh,

Speak but one rhyme and I am satisfied.

(0.1.7-9)

Mercutio is an anti-romantic character who, like Juliet's Nurse, regards love as an exclusively physical pursuit. He advocates an adversarial concept of love that contrasts sharply with Romeo's idealized notion of romantic union. In Act I, Scene 4, when Romeo describes his love for Rosaline using the image of love as a rose with thorns, Mercutio mocks this conventional device by punning bawdily;

If love be rough with you, be rough with love;

Prick love for pricking and you beat love down.

(1.4.27-28)

The Queen Mab speech in Act I, Scene 4, displays Mercutio's eloquence and vivid imagination, while illustrating his cynical side. Mercutio, unlike Romeo, doesn't believe that dreams can act as portents. Fairies predominate in the dream world Mercutio presents, and dreams are merely the result of the anxieties and desires of those who sleep.

Mercutio's speech, while building tension for Romeo's first meeting with Juliet at the Capulet ball, indicates that although Mercutio is Romeo's friend, he can never be his confidant. As the play progresses, Mercutio remains unaware of Romeo's love and subsequent marriage to Juliet.

When Mercutio hears of Tybalt's challenge to Romeo, he is amused because he regards Romeo as a lover whose experience of conflict is limited to the world of love. So he scornfully asks:

"And is he such a man to encounter Tybalt?" (II.3.16-17). Mercutio seems to exist outside the two dominant spheres of Verona because he takes neither the world of love nor the feud seriously. However, Mercutio, like Tybalt, is quick-tempered and they are both ready to draw their swords at the slightest provocation.

Mercutio is antagonistic toward Tybalt by suggesting that Tybalt is a follower of the new trends in swordsmanship, which he regards as effeminate. Like Tybalt, Mercutio has a strong sense of honor and can't understand Romeo's refusal to fight Tybalt, calling it, "0 calm, dishonorable, vile submission" (III. 1.72). Mercutio demonstrates his loyalty and courage when he takes up Tybalt's challenge to defend his friend's name.

The humor with which Mercutio describes his fatal wound confirms his appeal as a comic character; "No 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve" (III. 1.94—95). Mercutio's death creates sympathy for Romeo's enraged, emotional reaction in avenging his friend's death. His death marks a distinct turning point in the play as tragedy begins to overwhelm comedy, and the fates of the protagonists darken.

Friar

Friar Laurence is presented as a holy man who is trusted and respected by the other characters.

The Friar's role as the friend and advisor to Romeo and Juliet highlights the conflict between parents and their children within the play. The centrality of the Friar's role suggests a notable failure of parental love. Romeo and Juliet can't tell their parents of their love because of the quarrel between the two families.

In their isolation, Romeo and Juliet turn to the Friar who can offer neutral advice. At first, the Friar can't believe how quickly Romeo has abandoned Rosaline and fallen in love with Juliet, so he reminds Romeo of the suddenness of his decisions. The Friar uses the formal language of rhyme and proverbs to stress the need for caution to Romeo. However, he agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet in the hope that their marriage will heal the rift between the Montagues and the Capulets. His decision to marry the lovers is well-meaning but indicates that he has been naive in his assessment of the feud and hasn't reflected on the implications of Romeo and Juliet's clandestine marriage.

The conflict between youth and old age also manifests itself in the Friar's relationship with Romeo and Juliet. When Friar Laurence tries to soothe Romeo's grief at the news of his banishment with rational argument, Romeo quickly responds that if the Friar were'young and in love, he wouldn't accept such advice any better.

The Friar's knowledge of plants—especially their dual qualities to heal and hurt—play an important role in the action that follows. His attempts to heal the feud by reversing nature— causing Juliet's "death" in order to bring about acceptance of her life with Romeo is notably unnatural. The Friar must extricate Juliet from the tomb in order to save her life—another reversal of nature. This use of nature for unnatural purposes precipitates many of the consequences leading to the tragic conclusion of the play. Ultimately, the Friar acts distinctly human—he flees the tomb and abandons Juliet.

**4.2 Character relationships of Romeo and Juliet with Mercutio and Nurse**

Shakespeare uses Mercutio and the Nurse to explore the relationship between comedy and tragedy in Romeo and Juliet. These characters, in their comic roles, serve as foils for Romeo and Juliet by highlighting the couple's youth and innocence as well as the pure and vulnerable quality of their love.

Mercutio, Romeo's quick-tempered, witty friend, links the comic and violent action of the play.

He is initially presented as a playful rogue who possesses both a brilliant comic capacity and an opportunistic, galvanized approach to love. Later, Mercutio's death functions as a turning point for the action of the play. In death, he becomes a tragic figure, shifting the play's direction from comedy to tragedy.

Mercutio's first appearance in Act I, Scene 4, shows Romeo and his friend to be of quite opposite characters. Mercutio mocks Romeo as a helpless victim of an overzealous, undersatisfied love. Romeo describes his love for Rosaline using the cliched image of the rose with thorns to stress the pain of his unrequited love.

Mercutio ridicules Romeo as a fashionable, Petrarchan lover for his use of conventional poetic imagery. He puns lewdly, "If love be rough with you, be rough with love; / Prick love for pricking and you beat love down." Whereas the naTve Romeo is in love with the idea of being in love and devoted to the distant Rosaline, Mercutio is a predatory lover, hunting for objectified, female prey. His bawdy wit thus sets up Romeo to take the role of the innocent tragic hero.

When Mercutio delivers his Queen Mab speech (also in Act I, Scene 4), he again characterizes Romeo as a clueless romantic for believing that dreams portend future events. Dismissing Romeo's Petrarchan outlook, Mercutio presents his vision of a fantasy world in which dreams are the products of people's fleshly desires. The speech reflects both Mercutio's eloquent wit and his aggressive disposition. In his speech, the comic activities of the mischievous fairies are juxtaposed with the violent images of a soldier's dream:

Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck

And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,

Of breaches, ambuscados, Spanish blades ....

(1.4.82-84)

After falling in love with Juliet, Romeo cannot confide in his anti-romantic friend, so Mercutio never discovers Romeo's love for Juliet. Mercutio's ignorance of Romeo's new love, although potentially comical, propels him to the fatal fight with Tybalt in Act III, Scene 1. Mercutio's death enables Shakespeare to develop him as a tragic figure and alter the trajectory of the play from a comic to a tragic course.

Mercutio's final speech employs dark comedy to illustrate the tragic significance of the latest violence. After being stabbed by Tybalt, he admits his wound is fatal. Mercutio puns, "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man." Mercutio dies frustrated and angry—shocked and in disbelief that his fate is upon him. Until and even in the midst of that moment, his ignorance of the underlying forces that brought him to such an untimely end provides much of the ironic humor for the play.

In Act II, Scene 1, Mercutio and Benvolio's search for Romeo after the feast provides a comic interlude between Romeo and Juliet's first meeting and the famous balcony scene in Act II, Scene 2, juxtaposing two very different and conflicting attitudes to love. Mercutio and Benvolio call to Romeo, who has climbed into Capulet's orchard in the hope of seeing Juliet again. Mercutio's teasing is ironic because he is unaware that Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet and mistakenly invokes images of Rosaline to call him: I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes, By her high forehead and her scarlet lip, By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh, And the demesnes that there adjacent lie. (11.1.17-21)

Mercutio's coarse physical imagery and sexual jokes contrast sharply with Romeo's religious imagery for love. Romeo describes Juliet as "bright angel" and "dear saint." Shakespeare uses Mercutio's cynical attitude to distinguish Romeo and Juliet's love as innocent, spiritual, and intense. Because the audience is aware that Mercutio's speech falls on deaf ears, Mercutio's speech illustrates that the Romeo, the lovestruck youth, has begun to mature in his outlook on life and love. :

Like Mercutio, Juliet's Nurse views love as a purely sexual and temporary relationship, as opposed to Homeo and Juliet's love which is presented as fragile and eternal. The Nurse's bawdy humor is less sophisticated than Mercutio's. Her comedy comes from the Nurse's misunderstanding of language and her habit of repeating herself, rather than clever wordplay. For example, in Act 1, Scene 3, the Nurse exasperates Lady Capulet, who has come to talk to Juliet of the proposed marriage to Paris, with her repeated and unrelated assertions that Juliet is only 13 years old.

Likewise, when the Nurse laughingly recounts the lewd joke her husband made when Juliet fell over learning to walk—"Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit"—her earthy humor contrasts with Juliet's adolescent innocence, while simultaneously pointing to Juliet's sexual development from a girl to a woman. Reflecting on the sensual pleasures that await Juliet on her wedding night, the Nurse puns about the likely consequence of pregnancy for her young charge: "I am the drudge, and toil in your delight, / But you shall bear the burden soon at night." The Nurse's preoccupation with sexual love prevents her from understanding the nature of Juliet's love for Romeo. Even though she fully understands that Juliet is being bartered like livestock, she cannot see that any other social fate could exist for women. So, in Act III, Scene 5, the Nurse advises Juliet to forget Romeo and marry Paris when Capulet demands it. This development of her character further isolates the couple and fuels the tragic consequences of their elevated love. Thus, while the Nurse drives some of the most comedic scenes in the play, within her comic commentaries are woven the subtler threads of tragedy created by enslavement to social conventions.

Shakespeare uses the comic roles of Mercutio and the Nurse to develop the roles of Romeo and Juliet as young tragic lovers. Prior to Tybalt and Mercutio's deaths, the Nurse had served primarily as comic relief. After Mercutio dies, the Nurse's comic role changes to a less sympathetic one—helping to shift the focus to the tragic plight of Romeo and Juliet. Both comic characters' rejection of the ideal of love shared by Romeo and Juliet emphasizes the vulnerable quality of that love and its inability to survive in the world of the play.

Juliet

In Act 1 Scene 5 Romeo and Juliet meet. Note that in spite of its title, this play has very few scenes in which both lovers are present. The others are the balcony scene (2.2), the short wedding scene (2.6) and the opening of Act 3, Scene 5. The lovers are both on stage in Act 5, Scene 3 - but Romeo kills himself before Juliet wakes.

Shakespeare prepares for this scene by showing Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline (a very strong “crush” on her). On the guest list for the party, Rosaline is described as Capulet's “fair niece”, but she never appears in the play. Benvolio (in 1.2) has promised to show Romeo a more attractive woman, but doesn't really have anyone special in mind, as far as we know. Similarly, we know that Juliet is there because Capulet wants to give Paris a chance to meet her - this is why he throws the party.

Capulet's speech to Paris (in 1.2) suggests that Juliet has not been out of her house much (only, perhaps, to go to worship and confession at Friar Lawrence's cell). Maybe this is why Paris (a family friend) has noticed her, but Romeo has no idea who she is. Immediately before this scene, Romeo has spoken of his fear that some terrible “consequence [result] yet hanging in the stars” shall begin at “this night's revels” (Capulet's party). Does this fear come true? Tybalt's behaviour has also been prepared for by the brawl in the play's first scene.

In the scene, several things happen. Servants do their job, Capulet chats to a friend, Tybalt sees Romeo, wants to fight him and is told off by Capulet for his behaviour. Romeo and Juliet meet, and each finds out who the other is. But the most important things in the scene are:

1. the way Romeo falls in love with Juliet at first sight
2. and the way this contrasts with Tybalt's anger and hatred.

Romeo never knows that it is his presence at the party that causes Tybalt later to challenge him to a duel. These things lead to the events of Act 3, Scene 1, where Mercutio and Tybalt die.

The structure of the scene

In the opening the servants speak informally (in prose, not verse), about all the work they have to do. This prepares for the grand entrance when the Capulets come on stage, in procession, wearing their expensive clothing and speaking verse. Romeo's comments about Juliet alternate with Tybalt's attempt to attack Romeo - who does not know that he's been noticed. At the end of the scene, the Nurse tells each lover who the other one is.

Within this general outline, Shakespeare shows the most important episode is that where Romeo and Juliet speak for the first time. This has the form of a sonnet (a rhyming fourteen line poem) - which many in the 16th Century audience would notice, as they heard the pattern of rhymes.

In Act 3, Scene 5 we find out quite a lot about all of the characters here. Juliet, only moments after being together with Romeo, is in a difficult situation. At first she tries simple defiance, like many a teenager. At the same time she uses irony - saying things that have a different real meaning from what appears on the surface. But she is also resourceful and ultimately very brave. Lady Capulet at first seems concerned for her daughter, but when Juliet defies her, she passes the problem on to her husband.

Capulet cares about Juliet, but he has given his word to Paris, and now he is angry and bullying. But it must seem to him that Juliet is being proud and ungrateful. Modern audiences should remember that arranged marriages are normal for people of Juliet's class, and that Paris, a wealthy relation of the Prince, is a very good prospective husband for her. She is beyond the usual age for marriage, and it is her father who in the past did not wish to marry her off. So now he feels he has spoiled her, and made her “proud”.

This scene makes the audience completely rethink our opinion of the Nurse. She has always seemed to care for Juliet and understand what matters to her. Now it becomes clear that the Nurse has never really understood her. We are made to think again about coarse remarks the Nurse makes in Act 1, scene 3, and Mercutios's even coarser insults in Act 2, Scene 4. In this scene he calls her a “bawd” and suggests that she is “an old hare hoar” (“a hairy old whore”), as well as speaking obscenely about “the bawdy hand of the dial” being on “the prick of noon”. Perhaps Mercutio knows, or can see, what she is really like.

At the end of Act 3, scene 5 Juliet, now alone, says that from now on she will not trust the Nurse. She only speaks to her one more time in the play, very briefly in Act 4, Scene 3, and here too Juliet misleads her. It is shocking to think that the Nurse cares more about Juliet marrying, and perhaps having babies, than about her eternal soul or about her real love for Romeo, her husband.

**5.2 The language of the play**

The interesting features of the play’s language can be obviously seen in the first act (scene 5). When Romeo sees Juliet he speaks about her, using metaphor: “She doth teach the torches to burn bright”. This tells us that Juliet's beauty is much brighter than that of the torches - so she is very beautiful. She is so much brighter that she teaches the torches how to shine - a poetic exaggeration, since torches can't really be taught. It is important for Romeo to say this, as the audience cannot see Juliet's beauty directly - in Shakespeare's theatre a boy, perhaps seen at some distance, plays Juliet. But the metaphor also tells us that it is night, as Romeo can see the torches he compares her to. The audience must imagine this, as the play is performed by daylight, and no lighted torch would be safe in the theatre (the real Globe theatre was eventually destroyed by fire). At a private performance, at night in a rich person's house, there might be real torches on the walls, of course[[7]](#footnote-7).

There are other interesting comparisons. In 1.2 Benvolio has said that he will show Romeo women who will make his “swan” (Rosaline) look like a “crow” (supposedly a common and ugly bird). Now Romeo, in a very similar comparison, says that Juliet (whose name he does not yet know) is like a “snowy dove” among “crows” (the other women). She stands out in a dark room as a bright jewel (which would catch the torchlight) in the ear of a dark-skinned person. The contrast of light and darkness in these comparisons suggests that Juliet is fair-skinned and perhaps fair-haired while most of the other women are dark. Although other people are on stage as Romeo says these things, he really speaks his thoughts or thinks aloud - so these speeches are soliloquies (solo speaking).

When Romeo speaks to Juliet he compares her hand to a holy place (“shrine”) which he may defile (“profane”) with his hand. He compares his lips to pilgrims that can “smooth” away the “rough touch” of the hand with a kiss.

“Gentle sin” is what we call an oxymoron - a contradiction. Why? Because “gentle” means noble or virtuous (in the 16th Century) while a “sin” is usually the opposite of noble. Juliet explains that handholding is the right kind of kiss for pilgrims, while lips are for praying. Romeo's witty response is to ask for permission to let his lips do what his hands are allowed to, and Juliet agrees to “grant” this for the sake of his prayers. When Romeo kisses her, Juliet says she has received the sin he has “purged” from himself. Romeo insists at once that he must take it back - and kisses her again!

Note how, throughout this scene (apart from the servants who use informal thou/thee/thy pronoun forms) the characters (even Romeo and Juliet) often address each other with the formal and respectful pronoun you. When Capulet is being pleasant to Tybalt he uses thou/thee/thy but when he becomes angry he switches to you. The same thing happens when he becomes angry with Juliet in Act 3, scene 5.

Verse and prose

There is too much interesting language in the scene to cover in this short guide, which will give a selection of interesting features of language in act II (scene 1) We should notice here that often in this play Mercutio speaks in prose. This is a mark of informality, but not of low social class - Hamlet, Theseus and Prince Hal (in three other plays) as well as Mercutio are all from royal families yet all sometimes speak in prose. Speaking in prose shows their attitude to the situation they are in or the person they are addressing.

In this scene various characters speak in prose, but after Mercutio's death the more serious mood is shown as characters all speak in blank (unrhymed) verse. This is kept up until the end of the scene, where Benvolio, Lady Capulet, Montague and the Prince all speak in rhyming verse (Benvolio drops the rhyme in the middle of his long narrative). Comment on the effect this has on the audience.

Language use for dramatic effect

Look at how the enemies try to win the verbal battle. Explain how Mercutio tries to upset Tybalt in various ways. First, he plays on his name (“ratcatcher…King of cats...nine lives”). He ridicules (he has also done this in an earlier scene) Tybalt's supposed skill in fencing (“Alla stoccata…Come, sir, your passado”).

Look at attitudes to social class. Why does Tybalt call Romeo a “villain” and why does Romeo deny this? He also refers to Romeo as “my man”, and Mercutio challenges this. Why? Comment on the word “gentlemen” which appears several times, and “sir”. Explain why Tybalt calls Romeo “boy” more than once in this scene. Look at the form of the second person pronoun. See whether people call each other “you” (formal) or “thou/thee” (also “thy” = your) which is informal (less respectful). Tybalt usually calls Mercutio “you” but changes to “thou” when he accuses him of “consorting” with Romeo. Why?

If you are puzzled by this, be aware that language use has changed since Shakespeare's time. A villain in earlier times was a common person - so the name, applied to a nobleman like Romeo, would be an insult. In calling him my man Tybalt speaks of him as if he were a servant - which is why Mercutio says he won't “wear” Tybalt's “livery” the uniform of his servant). The 16th century audience would understand this as they heard it - today it needs spelling out.

What is the effect of Mercutio's response to Tybalt's request for a “word” - “Couple it with something; make it a word and a blow”? Note also Mercutio's last words: “A plague” is a powerful curse in Verona (the plague is in the city) and Shakespeare's audience would find it effective.

Language use for poetic and figurative effect

This very active scene is not the best place to look for good poetry (we find this in the scene where the lovers meet, or the balcony scene or even in Mercutio's description of “Queen Mab”).

For figurative language we need only look at Mercutio's “fiddlestick” - what is a real fiddlestick and what has he instead? A more powerful poetic image is found in Romeo's challenge to Tybalt:

“...for Mercutio's soul

Is but a little way above our heads,

Staying for thine to keep him company

Either thou, or I, or both must go with him.”

Explain this image and its effect on the audience.

Perhaps the most powerful (and famous) poetic image is in Romeo's last words in the scene, where he says he is "fortune's fool". What does he mean by this? What is its effect on the audience?

Benvolio gives a convincing account of the fighting, contrasting Tybalt's and Mercutio's aggression with Romeo's attempts at peace. We see why Lady Capulet disbelieves him, but he tells the truth. Comment on the audience's response here:

we know Benvolio is truthful

we know why Lady Capulet disputes his account

we know why what she says might seem plausible (believable)

we know that the Prince knows Tybalt's character, as reported by Benvolio

Patterns and details of words and images

This scene (like this whole play) has lots of patterns and wordplay. Much of it is from Mercutio. See for example his claim that Benvolio (a very peaceful person) would quarrel with a man for “cracking nuts” as he (Benvolio) has “hazel eyes”.

A more developed series of jokes is in his response to Tybalt's claim that he “consortest” with Romeo. This is the cue for a series of puns about music (“minstrels” and “dance” leading to “fiddlestick”).

Another series of jokes comes when Mercutio is wounded: first he is sarcastic (his wound is not as “deep as a well” or “wide as a church door” but quite enough to kill him) then he makes a bad pun (“grave man”). Finally, he lists animals to insult his killer: “A dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death”.

A more elaborate pattern is found in Tybalt's challenge to Romeo and Romeo's replies. Earlier in the play we have heard Romeo take up others' words (Benvolio's or Mercutio's) and answer them with a slightly changed version. When Tybalt sarcastically says “the love I bear thee” (no love at all) Romeo responds with “the reason that I have to love thee”, while “Thou art a villain” becomes “villain am I none”. “Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries...” is met with “I do protest I never injur'd thee”. Finally the direct challenge: “Therefore turn and draw” is countered with “And so…be satisfied”.

In explaining the effect of this scene on the audience, you are encouraged to refer to any versions of the play in performance that you have seen. How particular directors or actors interpret it may be helpful. Make sure you present this work in an appropriate written or spoken format.

One more peculiar features of Shakespeare’s language can be observed in act III (scene 5). The most important feature of Juliet's speech in this scene is ambiguity or double meanings. When Lady Capulet says that Romeo (by killing Tybalt) has caused Juliet's grief, she agrees that Romeo has made her sad, and that she would like to get her hands on him. By placing one word - “dead” - between two sentences, Juliet makes her mother think she wants Romeo dead, while really saying that her heart is dead because of him.

When she swears “by Saint Peter's Church and Peter too”, her mother thinks she is just using a strong oath - but the audience knows that Saint Peter decides who goes to heaven or hell: so she is swearing by the saint who would disallow a bigamous marriage. Later, Juliet speaks sarcastically to the Nurse, who thinks she is sincere, when she says that the Nurse has comforted her “marvellous much”, with her suggestion of “marrying” Paris.

Juliet's last speech in this scene, as she is alone on stage, is, of course, a soliloquy - it shows what she is thinking.

Both parents use interesting comparisons for Juliet's tears. Lady Capulet suggests that Juliet is trying to wash Tybalt from his grave, because she is crying so much - she tells her daughter that she is crying too much, and makes a play on the words much and some - “Some grief shows much of love”, but “much grief shows some want [absence] of wit” [common sense or sense of proportion]. Lady Capulet means that Juliet is overdoing her show of grief. This kind of contrast, where similar words are rearranged in two halves of a sentence to show opposite meanings, is called antithesis.

Capulet also notices Juliet's tears but uses an extended metaphor. He compares the light rain [drizzle] of a real sunset with the heavy downpour of Juliet's tears for the metaphorical sunset [death] of his brother's son [Tybalt]. He develops this into the idea of a ship in a storm at sea - Juliet's eyes are the sea, her body is the bark [ship] and her sighs are the winds.

Another feature of the language is Capulet's range of insults. He claims that Juliet is proud: she insists that she is not, and Capulet repeats the word as evidence of her “chopt-logic” or splitting hairs. These insults may seem mild or funny today, but were far more forceful in the 16th Century: “green-sickness carrion”, “tallow-face”, “baggage...wretch” and “hilding”.

Capulet contrasts Paris's merits as a husband with Juliet's immature objections. He says that Paris is “Of fair demesnes, youthful and nobly ligned” and “stuffed...with honourable parts”. He calls his daughter a “wretched puling fool” and a “whining mammet”, before sarcastically mimicking her objections to the match: “I cannot love...I am too young”. The audience knows of course that she can and does love (it is Rosaline who cannot), and that she is obviously not “too young” to marry. See if you can find out what these insults mean. Try to remember them, and act out the scene, making them as forceful as you can.

Also, when Capulet becomes angry, he uses language inventively - so the adjective [describing word] proud becomes both verb and noun: “proud me no prouds”. And finally, he reminds us of his power over Juliet by speaking of her as if she were a thoroughbred horse, which he can sell at will - “fettle your fine joints”, he says, meaning that she must prepare herself for marriage.

**6.2 Peculiarities of stagecraft[[8]](#footnote-8)**

Most adequately stagecraft can be analyzed through act I, Scene 5: when Romeo sees Juliet he speaks about her, using metaphor: “She doth teach the torches to burn bright”. This tells us that Juliet's beauty is much brighter than that of the torches - so she is very beautiful. She is so much brighter that she teaches the torches how to shine - a poetic exaggeration, since torches can't really be taught. It is important for Romeo to say this, as the audience cannot see Juliet's beauty directly - in Shakespeare's theatre a boy, perhaps seen at some distance, plays Juliet. But the metaphor also tells us that it is night, as Romeo can see the torches he compares her to. The audience must imagine this, as the play is performed by daylight, and no lighted torch would be safe in the theatre (the real Globe theatre was eventually destroyed by fire). At a private performance, at night in a rich person's house, there might be real torches on the walls, of course.

There are other interesting comparisons. In 1.2 Benvolio has said that he will show Romeo women who will make his “swan” (Rosaline) look like a “crow” (supposedly a common and ugly bird). Now Romeo, in a very similar comparison, says that Juliet (whose name he does not yet know) is like a “snowy dove” among “crows” (the other women). She stands out in a dark room as a bright jewel (which would catch the torchlight) in the ear of a dark-skinned person. The contrast of light and darkness in these comparisons suggests that Juliet is fair-skinned and perhaps fair-haired while most of the other women are dark. Although other people are on stage as Romeo says these things, he really speaks his thoughts or thinks aloud - so these speeches are soliloquies (solo speaking).

When Romeo speaks to Juliet he compares her hand to a holy place (“shrine”) which he may defile (“profane”) with his hand. He compares his lips to pilgrims that can “smooth” away the “rough touch” of the hand with a kiss.

“Gentle sin” is what we call an oxymoron - a contradiction. Why? Because “gentle” means noble or virtuous (in the 16th Century) while a “sin” is usually the opposite of noble. Juliet explains that handholding is the right kind of kiss for pilgrims, while lips are for praying. Romeo's witty response is to ask for permission to let his lips do what his hands are allowed to, and Juliet agrees to “grant” this for the sake of his prayers. When Romeo kisses her, Juliet says she has received the sin he has “purged” from himself. Romeo insists at once that he must take it back - and kisses her again!

Note how, throughout this scene (apart from the servants who use informal thou/thee/thy pronoun forms) the characters (even Romeo and Juliet) often address each other with the formal and respectful pronoun you. When Capulet is being pleasant to Tybalt he uses thou/thee/thy but when he becomes angry he switches to you. The same thing happens when he becomes angry with Juliet in Act 3, scene 5.

When analyzing act II, scene 1 we should refer to different performances of the play that you have seen. You must comment on the action, use of properties and the structure of the scene.

To take the last first, the scene is really in a number of episodes:

1. first, Mercutio and Benvolio wait for the Capulets to arrive, and Mercutio trades insults with Tybalt when they do;
2. then Romeo is challenged by Tybalt and refuses;
3. Mercutio fights Tybalt and is fatally wounded when Romeo intervenes;
4. Romeo pursues Tybalt and kills him;
5. finally Benvolio gives an account of events to the Prince, who banishes Romeo.

Use of props

In this scene, the most obvious stage props are the swords used in the fighting (in Baz Luhrmann's 1997 feature film there are guns [“Sword” is the manufacturer] and other weapons). Explain how swords would be used in Shakespeare's theatre, and how they are used in performances of the play that you have seen. Are any other props used in this scene?

Action

There are two passages of fighting. The stage directions merely tell us who fights and who dies. Shakespeare's own company would have known without any written directions how to perform the fights - such scenes were like stunts in films today: the actors would impress the audience by their virtuosity (evident skill) with the swords.

How long would this take on stage? How long does it take in productions you have seen? Are both fights similar? (They are very different from each other in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film version.) Critical to the outcome of the first fight is Romeo's intervention - explain how this proves fatal for his friend, and how it is shown in performances you have seen. Is there any other action of interest?

Costume

How is costume important in this play, especially in versions you have seen? Look at how costume distinguishes Capulet from Montague (shows who is who). How does Zeffirelli use costume effectively to show the change in mood in this scene?

Act III, scene 5 takes place in Juliet's bedchamber. We may see a bed (or something to represent a bed), but no other furniture is needed. Juliet's costume may show that she has been in bed - though her parents do not suspect that she has had Romeo's company. Otherwise, the scene relies mostly on speech. There are not many clues about action or use of props.

Both her parents speak about Juliet's weeping, and at one point Juliet kneels to beg her father for pity. Capulet's outbursts against Juliet and the Nurse may be opportunities for some physical action as well as verbal aggression to show his anger. What might he do to show how angry he is?

**7.2 Contrasting the film and the play[[9]](#footnote-9)**

To assess Baz Luhrmann's use of setting in his film, Romeo + Juliet, we can begin by contrasting the film with the play as it was originally performed in the 16th-century theatre. The key difference between the manner in which the film and the play deal with location is that the film is primarily an image-intensive medium that can visually show the audience the locale. Shakespearean drama, on the other hand, was written to be heard as an auditory experience. Shakespeare's audience referred to going to hear a play rather than see it, emphasizing that the Elizabethan theater was an aural rather than visual experience. On stage, the characters described the setting in their speeches. The actor's words had to convey all necessary information about plot, characters, and setting because the action took place on a bare, open-air stage, with only a few props and limited costumes. The plays were performed in the afternoon, and the playhouses did not have the advantages of lighting or special effects. For example, the scenes which take place at night make repeated references to objects associated with darkness, such as the moon, stars, and artificial sources of light, such as lamps and torches, to help create a sense of atmosphere and setting. The Prologue sets the scene in both the play and the film. In Romeo + Juliet, Luhrmann presents the Prologue as a news bulletin that gives the events a feeling of immediacy - the urgency of an on-the-spot news report. The news broadcaster has replaced the Shakespearean Chorus for a modern audience while retaining the Chorus's function of providing commentary on events before they happen.

Luhrmann emphasizes the setting as the Prologue ends. The camera zooms forward to scenes of Verona, with the words "in fair Verona" flashing on the screen. Luhrmann presents Verona as a modern city, dominated by scenes of chaotic urban violence. Aerial shots pan across the cityscape as police cars and helicopters dart about, and human casualties are strewn across the ground. Watching impassively is an enormous statue of Jesus. These opening shots of a city divided by violence sets the scene for the subsequent action of the film.

These vivid location shots perform the same function as the Prologue for Shakespeare's first audience. A 16th-century playgoer would have associated the hot climate, fiery, passionate nature of the people, and strong sense of family honor with the Italian locale. By comparison, the film puts the viewer in the midst of the strife-torn city infected with crime and decay. The film uses these graphic images of violence to communicate the setting to the audience. In the film, the first six lines of the Prologue are repeated as a voice-over to accompany more news footage covering the latest outbreak of violence caused by the feud. Media coverage of the civil unrest stresses how the feud affects the entire city. As the voice reads, "Two houses both alike in dignity," the camera pulls back to reveal the photographs of both families on the front page of the city's newspaper. The next two lines of the Prologue are displayed as newspaper headlines and juxtaposed with clips of riot police attempting to restore order on the streets. The media's presentation of the feud illustrates the impact of the "ancient grudge" on the city while importing the play's introductory content in a format familiar to a modern audience. Both the Prologue and the opening scene of the film use setting to establish the opposing parties. In the film version, we see how the two opposed families dominate Verona Beach from the way skyscrapers bearing the names Montague and Capulet overshadow the city's horizon. Luhrmann follows this image with photographs of the two families on the front of the newspaper separated by a photograph of the statue of Jesus. The repeated focus on the Jesus statue and other religious icons comments on how religion, like the law, is no longer an effective means of maintaining peace and harmony in modern society. Shakespeare's disregard of religion as a force in maintaining social order may not have been so blatant as Luhrmann's treatment in the film. Shakespeare presents the Friar as a well-intentioned character despite the Friar's impotence to affect the tragic outcome of the action.

In the opening scene, the city of Verona is renamed Verona Beach, evoking America's famous city on the beach, Miami. The film draws on pop-culture images such as those from Miami Vice, which depicted both urban glamour and crime. Luhrmann clearly distinguishes the downtown area from the beach. He associates the city with the violence of the feud and the idyllic beach with love and peace.

The film illustrates these opposing forces through the use of a fire and water motif. In both the news footage and an encounter between the Montagues and Capulets at a gas station, flames repeatedly engulf the surroundings. "Fiery" Tybalt in particular seems to have a distinctly combustible effect on his surroundings. Romeo and Juliet, in contrast, are connected with water throughout the film. We first see Romeo on the beach looking to the ocean. Later, Romeo and Juliet see each other for the first time through a fish tank, and the famous balcony scene takes place in a swimming pool.

The beach, through its connection with the sea, becomes a place for change as opposed to the concrete, unchanging nature of the city. Luhrmann uses the beach as the place where the worlds of love and conflict clash when peaceable Romeo encounters "fiery" Tybalt. Moments later, Mercutio is killed there, symbolizing a loss of innocence, a violation of purity, and a defamation of a natural order.

Luhrmann places a huge Elizabethan stage on the beach to acknowledge the film's awareness of its Shakespearean heritage. The stage also provides several characters an alternative vehicle for expressing their emotional development, or lack thereof. Luhrmann presents a youthful, immature Romeo seated on stage, delivering his Rosaline-inspired "O brawling love" speech as a voice-over. The speech sounds stilted, stiff, and staged as though Romeo were a young, incompetent actor who merely recites his lines mechanically without understanding their meaning.

Luhrmann chooses a modern city as the setting for his film adaptation of Romeo and Juliet to present a chaotic urban world familiar to a 20th-century cinema audience. The media coverage of the feud makes the play's events familiar to a modern audience as they watch violent video of the chaos on the streets of Verona Beach and are drawn into the feud-ravaged world of the film.

The updated and renamed Verona Beach is a clever mechanism by which peaceful and violent worlds collide.

**8.2 Comparing A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet (Lesson Plan)**

Key questions:

1. The course of true love
2. Friar Laurence and the Nurse
3. Almost fairy time: Verona and Athens
4. Tragedy and comedy: the problem of fathers and daughters
5. Contrast of order and disorder
6. Pyramus and Thisbe and the plays in performance
7. Conclusion

For the best understanding of the play “Romeo and Juliet”we are required to study one or more of Shakespeare's plays for makink the comparative analysis.. This task will allow us to discuss two plays. We could write at great length but this is not necessary, or even sensible. We will not try to retell the plot of either play as a narrative (story). We shall only look at how the play works on stage: use of props, costume and physical actions - either as suggested in the text, or as these appeared in any versions we have seen in performance. We should consider effects of language and imagery, in context. Below are some ideas, which could form the outline of a response to the plays. We may find these helpful; ignore those that aren't.

When you (speak or) write about the play, you must refer to evidence: either quote dialogue, or explain what is happening in terms of action. Ideally, you should give Act and Scene (Roman [e.g. III, ii] or Arabic [e.g. 3.2] numbers) and line numbers (not page numbers - do you know why?). Always comment on, or explain the point of, what you quote. Do not write the verb quote at any point in your work, unless it is to explain that one character in the play quotes another! In formal written English, quote is a verb and quotation is the corresponding noun. Quote as a noun is fine in speech, especially when referring to an estimate for work to be done (builder's quote).

The two plays were first performed at around the same time in the 1590s. They have obvious similarities of plot and theme, but clearly different structure and outcome. Briefly (no more than half a page) summarise these similarities and differences.

"The course of true love never did run smooth"

How far are Lysander's words proved true by the (total) events in either play? Are they a more suitable motto for one than the other? Why?

Puck and Oberon versus Friar Laurence and the Nurse

In A Midsummer Night's Dream Puck and Oberon watch over the young lovers (and Bottom) and save them from coming to any harm. Explain how they are able to do this, through their magical powers. In Romeo and Juliet the Friar and the Nurse try to help the tragic lovers but fail to save them. Compare their efforts to help Romeo and Juliet with the efforts of Puck and Oberon. How and why are the fairies successful where human helpers fail? Compare the Friar's use of magical or seeming magical herbs with Oberon's use of magical plants (Cupid's flower and Dian's bud).

"'Tis almost fairy time"

In both plays characters refer to fairies. Romeo and Juliet's longest speech (spoken by Mercutio) is a description of Queen Mab, the "fairies' midwife", but he admits to making it up. In A Midsummer Night's Dream Theseus refers jokingly to “fairy time”, but may well not believe in fairies any more than Romeo and Mercutio. What difference do the fairies make to the comic world of A Midsummer Night's Dream compared to the harsher view of the world that we see in Romeo and Juliet?

Verona and Athens

In both plays, the place where the action occurs is important. Comment on the various settings within each play, and explain what it has to do with what happens. (In A Midsummer Night's Dream look at Athens and the Palace Wood outside the city; in Romeo and Juliet look at the city square in Verona, Capulet's house and garden, the Friar's cell, Mantua, and the Capulet tomb.)

Tragedy and comedy

Try to explain what these terms mean, as descriptions of types of play, when we apply them to A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet. Try to refer to their structure, theme and mood.

Fathers and daughters

In both plays we find heroines (Juliet and Hermia) who are subject to the authority of their fathers. In one play we see a father begin by giving his daughter a lot of freedom, and end by removing it from her; in the other, we see a father try to control his daughter's life for most of the play, but who is reconciled to her near its end. Comment on these relationships, as you see them in the two plays. (Pyramus and Thisbe also supposedly have tyrannical parents).

Contrast

Both plays exploit obvious contrasts for theatrical effect. Among these are light and dark (or day and night), love and hate and the upper and lower ends of the social scale. Explain how any of these work to make the drama more effective.

Order and disorder

This is a contrast of theme you will find in almost any of Shakespeare's plays. In both A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet we see rulers (Theseus/Oberon and Prince Escalus) try to restore or maintain order, in the face of disruptive or anarchic behaviour. Show how this appears in each play, and how important it is to the play's central themes. In each play there are figures who represent disorder (Bottom and Puck; Mercutio and Tybalt). Explain how these challenge the rulers' attempts to preserve order in their domains (territory).

Pyramus and Thisbe

In A Midsummer Night's DreamThe workmen's Lamentable Comedy can be seen as a parody (silly copy) of Romeo and Juliet. There are obvious similarities in the plot (can you say what these are?) but not in the theatrical qualities of the two pieces. In Pyramus and Thisbe we see how not to do things which are done much better elsewhere in A Midsummer Night's Dream,in Romeo and Juliet or in other plays by Shakespeare. (These include depicting wild animals, a wall, moonlight and killing on stage). Comment on how these things are done both in Pyramus and Thisbe and in the plays proper. Comment on how hard or easy it is for actors to speak the dialogue in Shakespeare's plays generally, and to speak the verse we meet in Pyramus and Thisbe (look at the end of the Prologue, and the dying speeches of the two lovers). Explain how the workmen's play is a good commentary on young lovers who take themselves too seriously.

The plays in performance

Comment on how the plays were presented in the versions you have seen. Was it a cinema, TV or stage performance? Comment on such things as costume, props and action; you may also refer to lighting, music, SFX, and anything else which caught your interest. If you were to direct (in a given medium - stage, TV, cinema) how would you approach these things?

Conclusion

Explain what you like about either play or both. Say how well they work in performance, and what kind of response they provoke in the audience.

Remember to present your work attractively, with illustrations (for eaxmple, to show costume or props) and any diagrams (ideas for staging) to clarify your ideas.

**III. Conclusion**

**1.3 Studying Romeo and Juliet - criteria for assessment**

The headings below show how details of the play relate to the broad headings for assessment of work on Shakespeare.

1. Nature of play/implications/moral or philosophical significance

This refers to the ideas or themes in the play - what it is about but not its story. In Romeo and Juliet this means at least the following:

Love - the difference between Romeo's pretended love (affectation) for Rosaline and real love.

Fortune: "a greater power than we can contradict" - how we are not always or fully in control of our own lives

Authority - of parents · of the law; · of the Prince.

Tragedy - what does this mean? Does the play show general or universal truths about tragic love?The causes of tragedy.

1. Stagecraft/appeal to audience

Characterization - this is not description of characters but how they are presented.

The structure of the play.

Important props (swords, the Friar's drugs, the poison, Romeo's dagger).

Contrast - light and dark · fate and free will · love and hate · death and life · appearance and reality · public and private lives.

Oppositions of time - youth and age · past and present · fast and slow · real time and dream time

1. Language

Important figures of speech (metaphor/simile).

Descriptive language for things we can't see - Romeo's description of Juliet's beauty (essential in a theatre where Juliet is played by a boy Mercutio's Queen Mab speech.

Forms of verse and prose for dialogue: blank verse; · occasional rhymed verse (often at the end of a scene); · sonnet forms - the Prologue, the lovers' meeting

Stichomythia (alternating one-liners) and other patterned language in the characters' speeches.

Puns and other verbal humour

Language showing attitudes to class - villain, My man, second-person pronoun form: you/your (polite/formal) or thou/thee/thy (derogatory or informal).

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