Love: Looks Or Words? Essay, Research Paper

“O, speak again bright angel, for thou are as glorious to this night being over my head, as a winged messenger of heaven.” These are the words of Romeo as he stands outside of his beloved Juliet’s bedroom. Having fallen in love at first sight, Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet set the stage for the greatest love story in history. Romeo and Juliet are the children of affluent, well known residents of Verona. Unfortunately, the Capulets and the Montagues are passionate enemies. In The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare, these two main characters become the victims of Cupid’s arrows, when they meet by chance at a masquerade ball in the Capulet household. Instantly, Romeo and Juliet are attracted to each other; she by Romeo’s words, and he by Juliet’s beauty. It has been said that boys fall in love with their eyes and girls primarily with their ears. This romantic, but tragic story points out in many ways that this idea is realistic and holds true to this day.

Handsome, gallant, flirtatious Romeo has always been a ladies’-man. His closest friends, Mercutio and Benvolio, frequently tease him, calling him “Humors! Madman! Passion! Lover!” Towards the beginning of this intricate drama, Romeo had already received a reputation for enjoying only beautiful women. Romeo expresses that to him beauty is a greater quality than knowledge or personality. When Romeo speaks of another woman, he says, “For beauty, starved with her severity/ cuts beauty off from all posterity.” This means that by denying herself love and marriage she is wasting her beauty. Romeo obviously doesn’t care about anything but looks. If he did, he would have said, “For knowledge, starved with severity/ cuts knowledge off from all posterity.”=20

When Romeo first sees Juliet, he is completely astounded by her beauty. Without even knowing the name of this lovely stranger, Romeo’s eyes take complete control of his heart and mind, and set him in a helpless state of love. He speaks of Juliet as though she is an angel; “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!/ It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night/ Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear/ beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear/ So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows/ As yonder lady o’er her fellows shows./ The measure done, I’ll watch her place of stand/ And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand./ Did my heart love till now? For swear it sight!/ For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.” Romeo is saying that Juliet is like a jewel whose beauty is too rich to be used, and is almost unearthly. He questions whether he has loved before, and realizes that his previous loves have never been genuine, and he had never seen true beauty until he encountered Juliet. When he says, “I’ll watch her place of stand,” it means that he will not take his eyes off of her precious face all night. All of these statements prove that he loves only through his eyes. He has not even spoken to Juliet, nor does he know her name. He is in love with her physical features and nothing else is not important to him at that moment.

Juliet Capulet is a quiet and beautiful young lady who has never been romantically involved. Being the daughter of very protective parents, Juliet’s life has essentially been planned out for her. Always with a chaperone, Juliet has never been allowed to experience anything on her own. She is told what to wear, what she can do, and whom she must marry; regardless of her feelings. When Romeo and Juliet first meet, Romeo says, “If I profane with my unworthiest hand/ this holy shrine, the gentle sin in this:/ My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.” Romeo’s words have a profound effect on Juliet. She feels very special and complimented. Romeo is extremely forward in his actions; he speaks to her in a very sweet and romantic manner, and kisses her upon their first encounter. She is definitely taken by his words and actions. Juliet, having deep feelings for this stranger, calls her nurse and anxiously says, “Go ask his name=97if he is married my grave is like to be my wedding bed.” This means that Juliet’s feelings are so strong that she thinks he is the only man for her. When her nurse tells her that he is “Romeo…the son of [her] great enemy” she does not stop herself from having these feelings, she simply says, “My love, sprung from my only hate!/ Too early seen unknown, and known too late!/ Prodigious birth of love it is to me/ that I must love a loathed enemy.” She claims that it is too late for her to change her feelings; that if she would have known who he was before they spoke, she could have resisted his amorous overtures. When they first exchanged words at the ball, he was wearing a mask, therefore she could not have fallen in love with his handsome face.=20

The theme of Romeo’s falling in love with Juliet’s beauty is carried throughout the entire story. Even at the sorrowful end, when Romeo is mourning Juliet’s “death”, as she lays in the Capulet monument he declares, “For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes/ this vault a feasting presence full of light.” Romeo thinks that Juliet is dead, yet he still speaks of her beauty. Her physical appearance is the first thing that Romeo fell in love with, and it is that beauty that he will miss the most. From the beginning of time, people have fallen in love for the same reasons as Romeo and Juliet did. Looks and words per se are an oversimplification of what love really is. Generally, first impressions are extremely important. Words are very powerful, more so than beauty. Beauty is temporary, while words can last forever. They convey secret messages which can influence the listener to believe anything that is said. Romeo may have spoken a certain way to lure the beautiful Juliet into his arms; he was very passionate…she was very vulnerable; he was experienced…she was naive. Was Romeo and Juliet’s love based on looks or words? The answer is in the eye of the beholder.