

Act	PLOT		THEMES
1 <b>Fights and a Party</b>	<p><b>Prologue: Family feud &amp; fatal consequences for 2 young lovers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a fight between two rival families (Montagues and Capulets) which is stopped by the Prince.</li> <li>Romeo is unhappy because Rosaline doesn't love him.</li> <li>Paris asks Capulet for Juliet's hand in marriage, but Capulet tells him she's not ready. Capulet throws a ball.</li> <li>Mercutio is invited to the ball, but Benvolio and Romeo crash it. This enrages Tybalt.</li> <li>Romeo and Juliet meet, talk, fall in love at first sight and kiss.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare</b></p> <p>Year 8</p>	<p><b>LOVE:</b> R &amp; J fall in true love at first sight. Their young love is genuine but impulsive and destructive. Romeo's 'love' for Rosaline is an passing infatuation and Romeo learns what true love is. There are numerous puns and jokes about sex, and R&amp;J's relationship reflects physical desire too.</p>
2 <b>A Secret Marriage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the Capulets' garden, Romeo overhears Juliet thinking aloud about how much she likes Romeo but is the son of her family's enemy. Romeo talks to her and they decide to get married.</li> <li>Romeo asks Friar Lawrence for help – he agrees to marry them.</li> <li>Romeo meets Mercutio and Benvolio, and they tease the Nurse who gives a message to Romeo from Juliet.</li> <li>After the Nurse tells Juliet the plan to marry that afternoon, they get married in secret.</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONTEXT</b></p> <p><b>Verona:</b> R &amp; J set in Verona in the fourteenth century. Verona was a rich, lively, cultured city but had been afflicted by violence for centuries. Political leaders clashed with religious leaders for power, status and wealth and many people were obliged to take sides.</p>	<p><b>CONFLICT &amp; HONOUR:</b> Personal and family reputation was crucial in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Honour is important to all the characters – they can't ignore insults and have to defend the honour of their family. Characters like Benvolio and the Prince show how difficult it is to avoid the violence of the family feud. The violence gets worse in the second half of the play and the feud only stops because of the deaths of R &amp; J.</p>
3 <b>Deaths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tybalt kills Mercutio in a fight; in revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince exiles Romeo from Verona as punishment.</li> <li>R &amp; J spend the night together before R leaves the city.</li> <li>Juliet's parents tell her that she must marry Paris in two days but she tells them she can't. during an intense argument.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Women:</b> Society in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was patriarchal: men were dominant and women were inferior and expected to marry as young as 12. Noblewomen like Juliet would have received some education but there was little freedom in most areas of life for women. Lower class women received no education and would have worked as some sort of servant.</p>	<p><b>GENDER:</b> Women in the play are able to exert little influence. Capulet sees Juliet as his property and feels that she should be grateful for the match with Paris he has arranged. Juliet very aware that virtue and chastity were more important and valuable to women than men as they had to be chaste to secure a good marriage.</p>
4 <b>Plans and Potions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Juliet asks the friar to help, whose plan involves faking her death.</li> <li>Using Friar Lawrence's potion, Juliet fakes her own death. Friar Lawrence sends Romeo a letter telling him about the plan and to rescue her from her family tomb.</li> <li>Juliet's family think she's dead so bury her in the family tomb.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Queen Elizabeth I:</b> Provided a powerful example of a strong female in a male-dominated society, living by rules established by men. She was not representative of women in wider English society and was celebrated as an exceptional woman. Admired by Shakespeare and led England to great wealth, prosperity and national confidence.</p>	<p><b>FAMILY &amp; MARRIAGE:</b> Wealthy people often married not for love but for money, power and status; arranged marriages were common; Capulet tries to use Juliet as a 'bargaining chip'. The family was society in microcosm with the father as 'governor'. Juliet is torn between duty to her family and desire for personal happiness. R &amp; J willing to give up their families for marriage. The young were expected to obey the old and Shakespeare celebrates the passion and independence of R &amp; J.</p>
5 <b>Unhappy Ending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R doesn't get the Friar's letter. He believes J to be dead and goes to her tomb to kill himself after buying some poison.</li> <li>Paris sees Romeo going to the tomb, they fight and R kills Paris.</li> <li>R places P's body in the tomb, lies next to Juliet and drinks the poison.</li> <li>Friar Lawrence finds out that R didn't get the letter so goes to the tomb.</li> <li>As Friar Lawrence arrives, Juliet wakes up. Juliet refuses to go with him and he doesn't want to get into trouble for Romeo's death, so the Friar leaves.</li> <li>When Juliet realises that Romeo is dead, she kills herself.</li> <li>Everyone comes to the tomb, where the friar has to explain what has happened.</li> <li>Grieving, Montague and Capulet realise that their feud has caused the suicides of their children so agree to make peace.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tragic Hero:</b> Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy and the characters of Romeo and Juliet can be seen as <i>tragic heroes</i> (main character whose downfall brought about by own actions or <i>tragic flaw</i>). Both are guilty of loving too much and too quickly and acting too rashly.</p>	<p><b>FATE:</b> The prologue establishes the idea that fate, not just the characters' actions, is to blame for the catastrophes. Many instances of luck impact on the characters such as the servant inviting Romeo to the ball, Friar John and his message being detained, Paris being at the Capulet tomb when Romeo arrives</p>
		<p><b>The Plague:</b> Elizabethan England and Renaissance Verona were badly affected by outbreaks of the painful, deadly and contagious 'black death'. Many parents (including Shakespeare) lost children to the plague and it provides a metaphor for Mercutio's final curse as the Montagues and Capulets all lose children. Romeo doesn't get Friar Lawrence's letter because Friar John is detained for fear he may have the plague.</p>	<p><b>RELIGION:</b> A powerful influence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and it provided a set of moral rules to live by. Represented by Friar Lawrence who is trusted by all. R &amp; J had to marry in order to be together. Religious imagery and references often used by characters.</p>

## VOCABULARY

<b>Belligerent:</b> Aggressive and hostile	<b>Dutiful:</b> Acts obediently	<b>Impulsive:</b> Acts without thinking	<b>Despair:</b> total loss of hope
<b>Idolatry:</b> Extreme admiration or love	<b>Conflict:</b> A struggle between opposites	<b>Melancholy:</b> Feeling of thoughtful sadness	<b>Infatuation:</b> Obsession
<b>Banishment:</b> Exile	<b>Tyrannical:</b> treats people cruelly	<b>Tormented:</b> experience great suffering	<b>Confidant:</b> A trusted person

## ROMEO

Well-respected Montague. Falls in love with the daughter of his family's enemy and marries her in secret – kills her cousin in a rage and commits suicide wrongly believing Juliet to be dead.

**Initially knows more about love from books than experience:** “thy love did read by rote” (Friar Lawrence)/ “Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs...a fire...a sea...a madness” / “young waverer” (Friar Lawrence) / “you kiss by th’ book” (Juliet)  
**Emotional, passionate and has to deal with rejection by Rosaline:** “Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,. Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.”  
**Fears fate & future:** “O! I am Fortune’s fool!”  
**Falls overwhelmingly in love with Juliet at first sight:** “what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun.” / “speak again bright angel” / “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright” / “Did my heart love till now?”/“faithful vow”  
**Challenges barriers to Juliet:** “with love’s light wings did I o’erperch these walls”  
**Tries to avoid fighting but worries that he’s less manly:** “good Capulet, which name I tender / As dearly as my own, be satisfied” / “O sweet Juliet, Thy beauty hath made me effeminate And in my temper softened valor’s steel!”  
**Hot-headed, enraged by the killing of Mercutio:** “fire-ey’d fury be my conduct now!”  
**Devastated by exile to Mantua:** “Ha, banishment! Be merciful, say ‘death’...Heaven is here, Where Juliet lives”  
**Horrified by news of Juliet’s death and decides to commit suicide:** “I defy you stars...Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight.”  
**Gives violent warning to Balthazar not to interfere with his suicide:** “I will tear thee joint by joint And strew this hungry churchyard with thy limbs.”  
**Urges Paris not to challenge him outside the Capulet tomb:** “I beseech thee, youth, Put not another sin upon my head By urging me to fury.”  
**Sees Juliet is still beautiful in ‘death’:** “Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty. Thou art not conquered.”  
**Dies as he began the play, by expressing love:** “Thus with a kiss I die.”

**MERCUTIO** Romeo’s friend, playful, witty but aggressive – gets caught in the middle of the feud

**Tells Romeo to get over Rosaline:** “If love be rough with you, be rough with love.”  
**Appalled by Romeo’s refusal to fight Tybalt:** “O calm, dishonorable, vile submission”  
**Dies cursing both families:** “A plague o’ both your houses”

## FRIAR LAWRENCE

Like a father to Romeo – wise, trusted, tries to help but actions lead to R & J deaths

**Sees opportunity to resolve feud:** “For this alliance may so happy prove, To turn your households’ rancour to pure love.”  
**Worries about consequences of R&J’s love:** “These violent delights have violent ends”  
**Criticises Romeo’s reaction to exile:** “Art thou a man? ... Thy tears are womanish.” / “Unseemly woman in a seeming man” / “A pack of blessings light upon thy back”

**BENVOLIO** Romeo’s loyal cousin, peacemaker and opposite to Tybalt

**Cares for Romeo:** “What sadness lengthens Romeo’s hours?”  
**Protects Romeo after slaying of Tybalt:** “Be gone, away! ... The Prince will doom thee death”  
**Contrasts with Tybalt’s hostility:** “I do but keep the peace, put up thy sword.”

## JULIET

13-year-old Capulet. Defies family and gender expectations to marry the son of her family’s enemy – overcome by grief at Romeo’s death and commits suicide

**Young and innocent:** “My child is yet a stranger in the world. She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.”  
**Idolised by her father:** “She’s the hopeful lady of my earth.” / “My will to her consent is but a part”  
**Falls in love with Romeo at first sight:** “Then have my lips the sin that they have took.” / “If he be married, My grave is like to be my wedding bed.”  
**Cautious about her love for Romeo:** “It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, Too like the lightning,”  
**Conflicted between family loyalty and love for Romeo:** “O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?” / “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose, By any other word would smell as sweet.” / “My only love sprung from my only hate!”  
**Prepared to defy her family and the feud:** “Deny thy father and refuse thy name..be but sworn my love, And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.”  
**Commits herself to Romeo:** “my true love is grown to such excess I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth.”  
**Impatient to be with Romeo after wedding:** “Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night” / “O, I have bought the mansion of a love, But not possessed it, and though I am sold, Not yet  
**Conflicted about Romeo after he kills Tybalt:** “O serpent heart hid with a flowering face!” / “Beautiful tyrant! Fiend angelical!”  
**Refuses father’s order to marry Paris:** “Delay this marriage for a month, a week. Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed In that dim monument where Tybalt lies.”  
**Angry at Nurse for her advice to marry Paris:** “Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend”  
**Brave - prepared to risk Friar Lawrence’s plan:** “Give me, give me! O, tell not me of fear!”  
**Brave – does not fear death:** “O happy dagger, This is thy sheath: there rust, and let me die.”

## CAPULET

Feuding with Capulet. Begins as doting father but becomes aggressive & controlling

**Initially calm and easy-going:** “Content thee, gentle coz. Let him alone.”  
**Angered by Juliet’s defiance:** “Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch!”  
**Verbally attacks Nurse for defending J:** “Peace, you mumbling fool!”  
**Juliet’s death changes him:** “O brother Montague, give me thy hand.”

**NURSE** Devoted nanny to Juliet – talkative, silly well-meaning but irresponsible

**Thinks the world of Juliet:** “Thou wast the prettiest babe that e’er I nurs’d” / “lamb” / “ladybird”  
**Makes vulgar jokes about sex:** “You shall bear the burden soon at night”  
**Wishes J to be emotionally and physically content with R:** “happy days to happy nights”  
**Appears more devastated than J’s family when J ‘dies’:** “O woeful, woeful, woeful day...Never was seen so black a day as this.”

**TYBALT** Juliet’s cousin – aggressive and consumed with hatred for the Montagues

**Hateful, angry:** “peace? I hate the word, As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.” / “...a Montague. Fetch me my rapier, boy.” / “To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.”  
**Obsessed with family honour:** “Now by the stock and honour of my kin”  
**Determined to kill Romeo:** “Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries That thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw.”