Romeo and Juliet

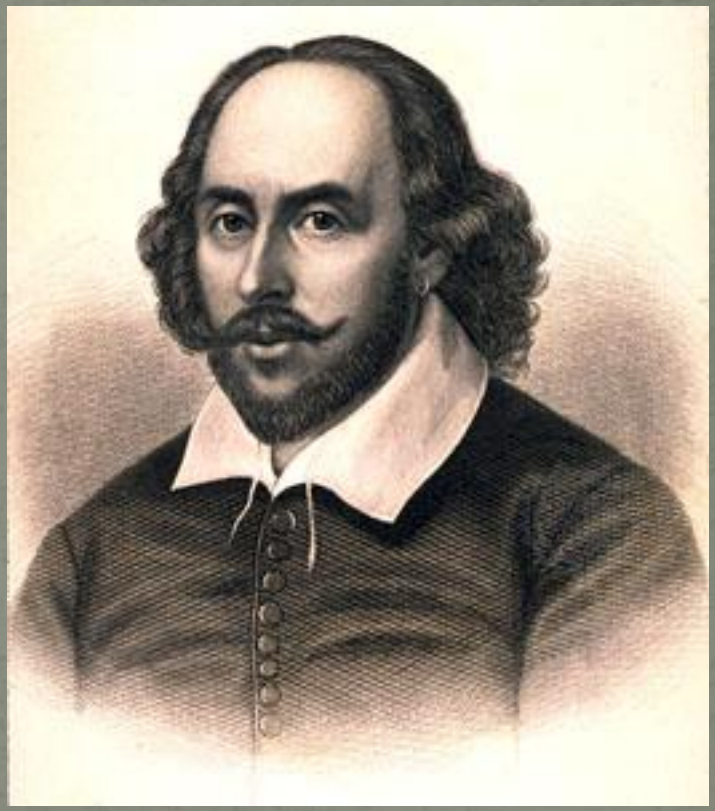
By

William Shakespeare

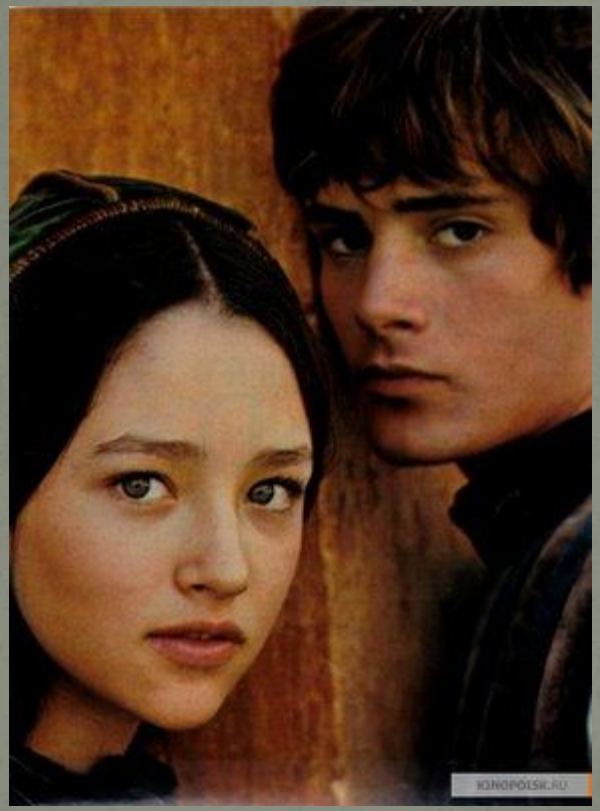


Romeo and Juliet

- Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy written early in the career of playwright William Shakespeare about two teenage "star-cross'd lovers“ whose untimely deaths ultimately unite their feuding families.



Romeo and Juliet



- It was among Shakespeare's most popular plays during his lifetime and, is one of his most frequently performed plays. Today, the title characters are regarded as archetypal young lovers.

Romeo and Juliet

- Romeo and Juliet belongs to a tradition of tragic romances stretching back to antiquity. Its plot is based on an Italian tale, translated into verse as *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke in 1562, and retold in prose by William Painter in 1582.



Romeo and Juliet



- Shakespeare borrowed heavily from both, but developed supporting characters, particularly Mercutio and Paris, in order to expand the plot.





Romeo and Juliet

The play begins with a street brawl between Montagues a nd Capulets.
The Prince of Verona intervenes and declares that further breach of the peace will be punishable by death.





Romeo and Juliet





Later, **Count Paris** talks to **Lord Capulet** about marrying his daughter, but Capulet is wary of the request because **Juliet** is only thirteen. Capulet asks Paris to wait another two years and invites him to attend a planned Capulet ball. Lady Capulet and Juliet's nurse try to persuade Juliet to accept Paris' courtship.

Romeo and Juliet

- Meanwhile, **Benvolio** talks with his cousin **Romeo**, Lord Montague's son, about Romeo's recent depression. Benvolio discovers that it stems from unrequited love for a girl named Rosaline, one of Lord Capulet's nieces.





Romeo comes to the ball at Capulet's





- Persuaded by Benvolio and **Mercutio**, Romeo attends the ball at the Capulet house in hopes of meeting Rosaline. However, Romeo instead meets and falls in love with Juliet.

Romeo and Juliet meet at the ball









Romeo and Juliet both fall in love

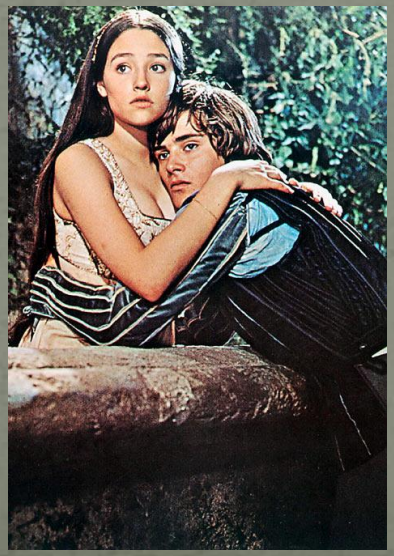




After the ball

- After the ball, in what is now called the "balcony scene", Romeo sneaks into the Capulet courtyard and overhears Juliet on her balcony vowing her love to him in spite of her family's hatred of the Montagues. Romeo makes himself known to her and they agree to be married.







After the ball





- Juliet's cousin **Tybalt**, incensed that Romeo had sneaked into the Capulet ball, challenges him to a duel. Romeo, now considering Tybalt his kinsman, refuses to fight.

The fight with Tybalt

- Mercutio is offended by Tybalt's insolence, as well as Romeo's "vile submission", and accepts the duel on Romeo's behalf. Mercutio is fatally wounded when Romeo attempts to break up the fight. Grief-stricken and racked with guilt, Romeo confronts and slays Tybalt.





Aftermath of the fight



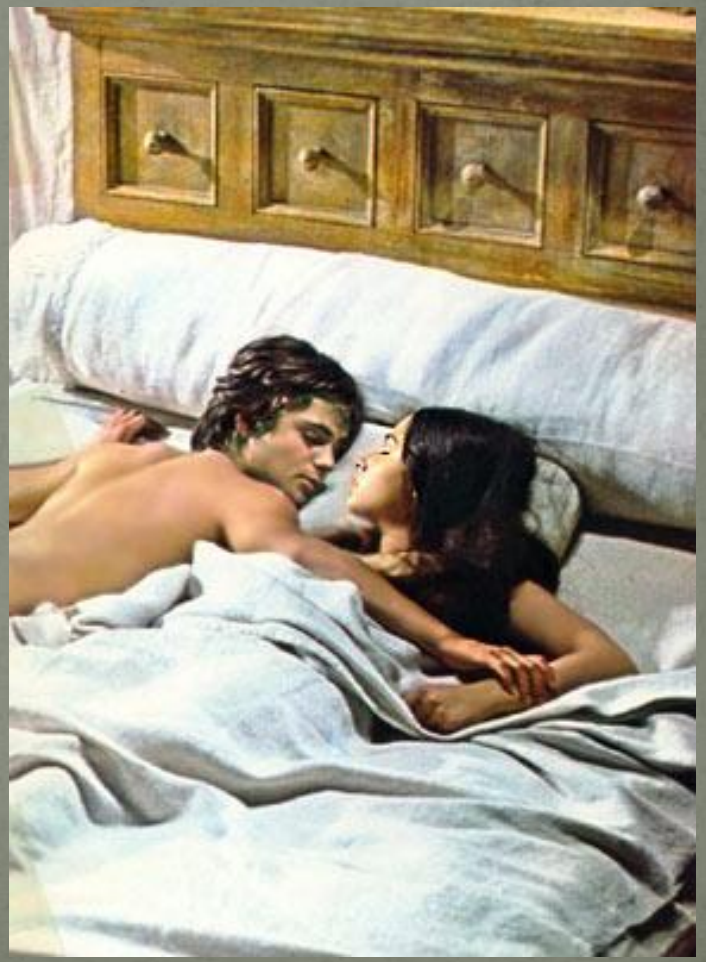


- Montague argues that Romeo has justly executed Tybalt for the murder of Mercutio. The Prince, now having lost a kinsman in the warring families' feud, exiles Romeo from Verona and declares that if Romeo returns, "that hour is his last".

The first night

- Romeo secretly spends the night in Juliet's chamber, where they consummate their marriage.





Consequences of the choice





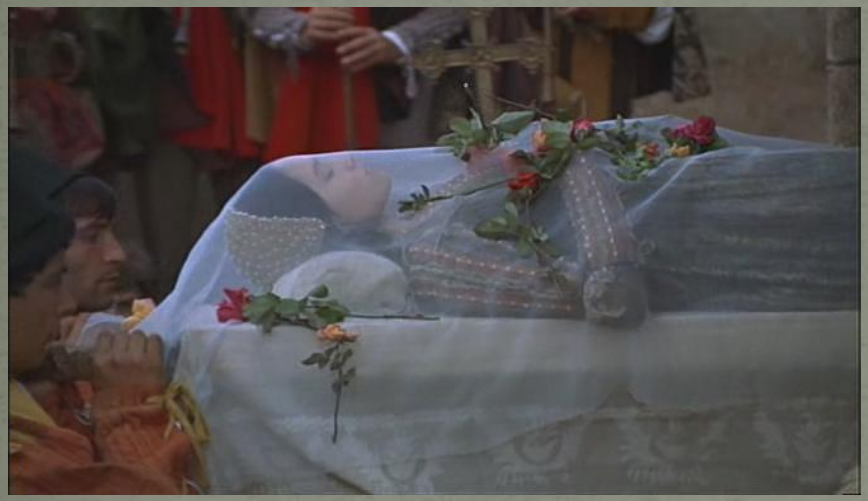
- Lord Capulet, misinterpreting Juliet's grief, agrees to marry her to Count Paris and threatens to disown her when she refuses. When she then pleads for the marriage to be delayed, her mother rejects her.

Consequences of the choice

- Juliet visits Friar Laurence for help, and he offers her a drug that will put her into a death-like coma for "two and forty hours". The Friar promises to send a messenger to inform Romeo of the plan, so that he can rejoin her when she awakens.



Consequences of the choice



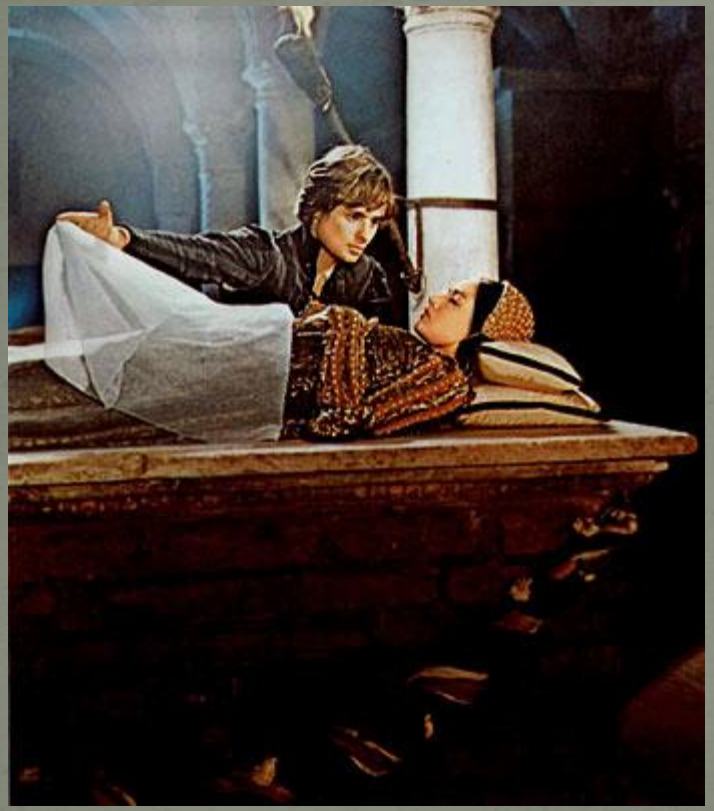
- On the night before the wedding, she takes the drug and, when discovered apparently dead, she is laid in the family crypt.
- The messenger, however, does not reach Romeo and, instead, he learns of Juliet's apparent death from his servant Balthasar.

At the crypt

- Heartbroken, Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and goes to the Capulet crypt. He encounters Paris who has come to mourn Juliet privately. Believing Romeo to be a vandal, Paris confronts him and, in the ensuing battle, Romeo kills Paris.



At the crypt



- Still believing Juliet to be dead, he drinks the poison. Juliet then awakens and, finding Romeo dead, stabs herself with his dagger.



At the crypt

- The feuding families and the Prince meet at the tomb to find all three dead. Friar Laurence recounts the story of the two "star-cross'd lovers". The families are reconciled by their children's deaths and agree to end their violent feud.



The End



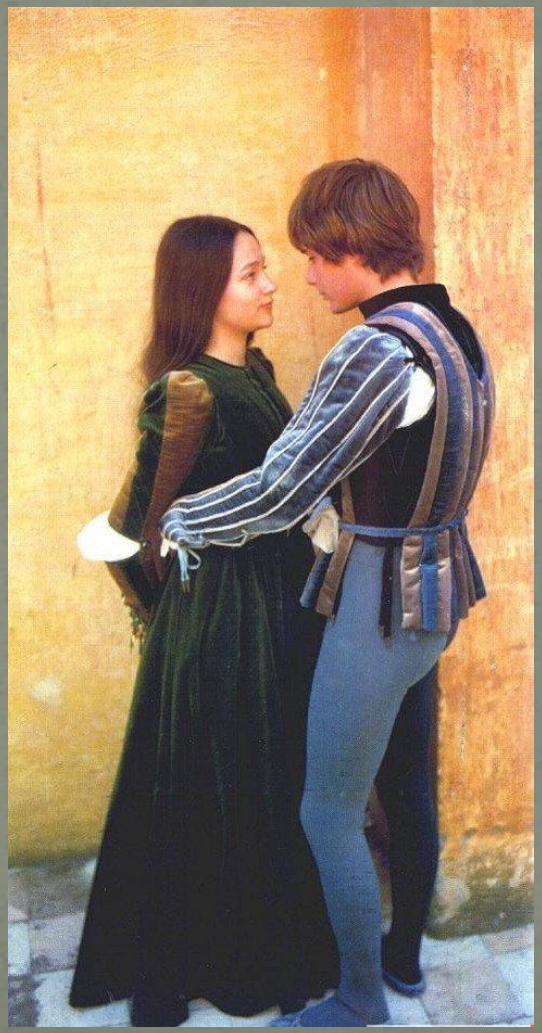
- The play ends with the Prince's elegy for the lovers: "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo."

Themes of the play

- Scholars have found it extremely difficult to assign one specific, over-arching theme to the play.
- However, even if an overall theme cannot be found it is clear that the play is full of several small, thematic elements which intertwine in complex ways. Several of those which are most often debated by scholars are discussed below.
- *Romeo and Juliet* is sometimes considered to have no unifying theme, save that of young love. Romeo and Juliet have become emblematic of young lovers and doomed love. Since it is such an obvious subject of the play, several scholars have explored the language and historical context behind the romance of the play.

Time

- Time plays an important role in the language and plot of the play. Both Romeo and Juliet struggle to maintain an imaginary world void of time in the face of the harsh realities that surround them.



Tragedy



- *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy. This is a form of drama in which the chief character, the tragic hero, undergoes a series of misfortunes which eventually lead to his downfall. The hero passes from a state of happiness to a state of despair because of some weakness - tragic flaw - in himself.

Tragedy

- The tragic hero is an important man of high social standing. He is not evil - he is a mixture of good and bad. The audience understands his weakness but feels pity for him because his misfortunes are greater than he deserves.



Tragedy



- He is usually doomed from the beginning and there are often premonitions of his downfall in what he says. It is often fate or supernatural elements that control his destiny, and death is generally the only escape he can find from pain and suffering.

Tragedy

- Romeo is a good example of a tragic hero. He belongs to an important family. A series of unfortunate events lead to his downfall: he falls in love with Juliet - daughter of his enemies the Capulets -, he kills Tybalt in a street fight, he does not receive Friar Lawrence's message ...





Tragic hero



- Romeo's tragic flaw is his impulsiveness and his passionate nature. He becomes totally engrossed in his love for Juliet and he does not consider the consequences of what he is doing.
- Romeo's tragic flaw is his impulsiveness.

Comprehension

- In the opening lines (1-4) Juliet suggests how she and Romeo can solve their problem. Explain her proposals in your own words.
- In line 18 Romeo speaks to Juliet. What gives him the confidence to reveal himself?
- What does Romeo want Juliet to call him? How does Juliet recognise Romeo?
- Why does Juliet describe the orchard as 'death' for Romeo? (Line 34)
- What helped Romeo climb the walls of the orchard and overcome his fear of death? (Lines 36-39)

Analysis

- Romeo's love for Juliet is almost religious in its intensity. Find two religious terms which Romeo uses when speaking to Juliet.
- Focus on the language that Romeo uses. What adjective would you choose to describe it?
  - Bold
  - Passionate
  - Confident
  - Cautious
  - Other:.....

Analysis

- Underline sentences in which Romeo says that his love for Juliet has made him brave in the face of death. How would you describe Romeo's personality?
- Which of the two characters seems more aware and fearful of the dangers they are running? Quote from the text.
- It has been suggested that Romeo and Juliet suffer a tragic fate because they are too impulsive. Find evidence of Romeo's impulsiveness in the text.

Dramatic tension

- **Dramatic irony** One of the greatest tasks facing a playwright is capturing and maintaining the audience's attention. This is often done through **dramatic tension** or **suspense**. Suspense or tension is created when the audience is uncertain about what is going to happen. In the case of the scene you have read there are two sources of suspense:
- At the beginning of the scene Juliet does not know that Romeo is in the orchard listen-ing to what she is saying. The audience is, however, aware of Romeo's presence.

Dramatic tension

This is an example of dramatic irony. The audience knows something that one or more of the characters on stage do not know.

- Dramatic irony is often used to add humour or sus-pense to a scene. In this case, as Juliet speaks there is a danger that she may say some-thing which Romeo will misinterpret. Overheard conversations are often the source of misunderstandings in drama. The audience is kept in suspense until Romeo reveals himself in line 18.

Dramatic tension

- The fact that Romeo may be discovered by Juliet's family also creates suspense. The tender atmosphere which the lovers create may at any moment be violated by the hatred and violence of Juliet's family. The presence of danger heightens the tension and makes the scene even more romantic.
- Explain how Romeo's aside in line 5 heightens the tension in the opening part of the scene.
- Underline the sentences that remind the audience that Romeo is braving death in order to declare his love for Juliet. How do these sentences contribute to creating suspense?