TEACHER'S GUIDE

ROMEO & JULIET
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Signet Classics

SHAKESPEARE

Romeo and Juliet

NEWLY REVISED EDITION
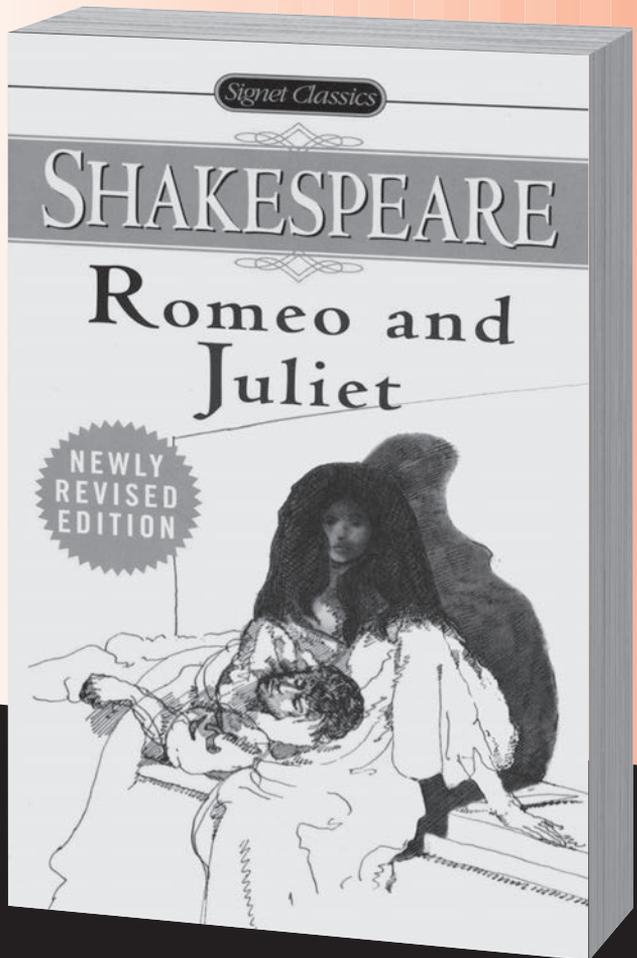
BY ALLEN KROMER

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INTRODUCTION

Romeo and Juliet is an ideal play to introduce high school students to Shakespeare's works. Like many current films that students queue up to see every weekend, this play presents themes of romance, violence, suspense, and vengeance. Once students become more familiar with Shakespeare's diction and verse, they will find that his ability to depict believable emotions and create likeable characters who struggle with the uncertainties and desires of young love makes reading the play a memorable and rewarding experience.

The content and activities in this guide provide resources for teaching the play. Some content will inspire closer inspection of meaningful passages; other activities and resources will supplement the primary text. The Pre-reading activities set the foundation for approaching the play by establishing an awareness of the historical and cultural underpinnings of Shakespeare and his times, the literary techniques he employs, and some of the thematic content that empowers his tale. The During-reading activities help students focus on specific elements and events as they read the text. The Post-reading activities promote a holistic review of the play, an analysis of its parts, and the opportunity to establish and debate meanings. The activities in this guide address curricular requirements, reinforce preferred learning styles, and promote academic success for students. Teachers can choose the activities that meet the needs and ability levels of a broad range of learners.

LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

The Signet Classics edition contains a roster of *Dramatis Personae* (p. 2), and the number of characters may be daunting to some readers. Focusing on the main characters, outlining their relationships, and providing a brief identification may aid students' reading of the play.

Escalus, Prince of Verona	Authority figure who wishes to end the hostilities between the Montagues and Capulets
Paris	Handsome young man related to the prince, desirous of Juliet's hand in marriage
Montague	Patriarch of one of the feuding families
Romeo	Montague's son
Mercutio	Witty friend of Romeo, related to the Prince
Benvolio	Montague's nephew and Romeo's cousin, typically a peacemaker
Capulet	Patriarch of the other feuding family, relishes tradition in many ways
Juliet	Capulet's daughter, wooed by Romeo
Tybalt	Capulet's nephew and Juliet's cousin, a hothead and skilled fighter
Friar Lawrence	Franciscan priest who advises Romeo and Juliet
Nurse	Maid and confidant to Juliet

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT I

As the play begins, servants from rival families are fighting. Benvolio attempts to end the hostilities; however, hotheaded Tybalt engages the peacemaker in combat. When the authorities arrive, Prince Escalus vows that the next person who violates the city's peace will forfeit his life. Benvolio and the Montagues discuss Romeo's reclusiveness and moroseness and, later, Benvolio learns that his friend suffers from unrequited love.

Paris asks for Juliet's hand in marriage, but Capulet considers her too young to marry. Romeo and Benvolio learn of a Capulet party and scheme to attend as uninvited guests so Romeo can see his love, Rosaline. Lady Capulet and Juliet discuss the prospect of marriage and Lady Capulet asks Juliet to observe the handsome Paris as a prospective husband at the night's festivities.

At the party, Romeo sees Juliet and marvels at her beauty. Unknown to Romeo, Tybalt recognizes him and wants to fight. When Capulet orders him to refrain, Tybalt vows to confront Romeo in the future. Romeo approaches Juliet, woos her, and kisses her. He then learns from the nurse that Juliet is a Capulet. At scene's end, Juliet learns that Romeo is the only son of Montague.

ACT II

Romeo hides near the Capulets' orchard to stay close to Juliet. When Juliet appears at a window overlooking the orchard, Romeo is enraptured by her beauty. She expresses aloud her yearning for him, and both acknowledge the risk their relationship poses due to the ongoing feud between their families. Later, they profess their love and devotion. Having arranged a meeting the next day, Romeo goes to Friar Lawrence's cell to request the priest's assistance in marrying Juliet, and Lawrence, sensing an opportunity to ease tension between the two clans, agrees.

ACT III

Tempers flare when Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt and other Capulet allies. Romeo attempts to defuse the situation, but Tybalt kills Mercutio and Romeo, in turn, slays Tybalt. After hearing Benvolio's account, Prince Escalus banishes Romeo from Verona.

While eagerly waiting for Romeo's arrival, Juliet learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt. She sends her nurse to summon Romeo who is bemoaning his fate to Friar Lawrence. Romeo and Juliet spend time together before he has to leave, and she describes a frightening, prophetic vision of Romeo's demise. Meanwhile, Capulet has pledged that Juliet will marry Paris in three days' time. When Juliet protests vehemently, Capulet threatens to disown her.

ACT IV

Friar Lawrence tells Juliet of a plan. She will drink a potion to seem dead, and, later, Romeo will retrieve her from the Capulet family vault and take her to Mantua. At his house, Capulet supervises preparations for the wedding and is happy when Juliet seeks forgiveness for her disobedience. Suffering from doubts and fears, Juliet drinks the potion to feign her death. When the Nurse attempts to awaken Juliet, she finds her unresponsive and declares her dead.

ACT V

In Mantua, Romeo learns from Balthasar that Juliet is dead. He purchases poison and leaves for Juliet's grave to commit suicide. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence learns that Romeo has not received the letter detailing the truth behind Juliet's death and sets out for Juliet's grave.

Paris arrives at the cemetery to place flowers on Juliet's grave. When Romeo approaches, they fight and Paris is killed. Romeo enters the tomb, drinks the poison, and dies. Friar Lawrence arrives and discovers the corpses of Romeo and Paris. Juliet awakens, and Lawrence offers to arrange her admission into a nunnery. Overwrought, he flees the tomb. Juliet then takes Romeo's dagger and commits suicide. The Prince, Montague, Capulet, and townspeople arrive. Friar Lawrence describes the tragedy in its entirety, and Montague and Capulet reconcile. The Prince concludes the narrative, calling the events a cautionary tale.

I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

1. Elizabethan audiences represented a broad range of socioeconomic groups, professions, and differing positions of power. Ask students to explore sources that give an overview of a typical audience at one of Shakespeare's plays. Some useful resources include:

   • "Audiences," published by Shakespeare's Globe, provides an accessible, comprehensive description of audiences in Shakespeare's time. The style, details, and tone combine to make this a good starting point for research. The Shakespeare Globe Trust, 2013. *Shakespeare's Globe,* **www.shakespearesglobe.com/uploads/files/2014/01/audiences.pdf**.

   • "Shakespeare's Language," the first chapter of Sean McEvoy's *Shakespeare: The Basics,* contains a sidebar that summarizes the makeup and conduct of a typical theater audience in Elizabethan times. McEvoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: The Basics.* Oxford, England: Taylor & Francis, 2000. See Box 1.1 just under "Shakespeare's Language" in the digital excerpts located at **https://books.google.com/books?id=7M6d9DlbTVwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false**.

   • The Lost Colony's site details Elizabethan social classes in an accessible fashion and also touches on the role of family and gender expectations, two elements that feature prominently in the play. "Elizabethan Era." *The Lost Colony,* Roanoke Island Historical Association, 2016, **thelostcolony.org/bringing-history-to-life/elizabethan-era/**.

   As students explore, ask them to consider the following questions for short written responses and class discussion:

   • Who attended Shakespeare's plays? How large were the audiences? How did audiences behave? Who could afford to attend?

   • In Shakespeare's England, were audiences at public theaters representative of all social and professional classes? What groups avoided the public theaters?

   • At performances, did different groups typically watch from different places? Who occupied what parts of the theater?

2. Through computer-generated special effects, modern filmmakers are afforded the luxury of having virtually anything occur on screen—tidal waves demolish cities, nomads visit Elven communities, and eyesores are deleted from the background. Similarly, movie actors can redo a take if a fight scene, for example, does not appear convincing. One challenge to teaching *Romeo and Juliet* is getting students to understand the difficulties of staging live theater in limited facilities.

   A good starting point for learning about the typical theaters of the day is Sylvan Barnet's description in "Shakespeare: An Overview" (p. xxx). Barnet differentiates between public and private theaters in London and uses examples from the Bard's plays to illustrate how plot

elements might have been staged given the logistical issues the theaters posed. Ask students to read Barnet's description of the public theater and record a list of features that he mentions in his description. Then, project an image of the theater (or provide a handout) and ask students to identify different features from Barnet's description. Students might consider:

- How might a character simply disappear from the stage?

- Where might the wealthiest patrons sit, and why?

- What scenery, special effects, and props were commonly used?

After students have thought critically about the Globe and its features, lead them on a virtual tour of the Globe using the following sources:

- Exploded Illustration with Labels, Hodge's Conjectural Reconstruction: Hodges, C. Walter. *Hodge's Conjectural Globe Reconstruction. Wikimedia Commons, Wikimedia Foundation,* **upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/80/Hodge%27s_conjectural_ Globe_reconstruction.jpg**.

- Exterior of Globe Reconstruction: Inbar, Ester. *File:TheGlobe1 ST 02.jpg.* Sept. 2002. *Wikimedia Commons,* Wikimedia Foundation, **upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/ commons/d/d6/TheGlobe01_ST_02.jpg**.

- Inner Theater: Tohma. *File:Globe Theatre Inneraum.jpg.* 18 Aug. 2007. *Wikimedia Commons,* Wikimedia Foundation, **upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ a7/Globe_Theatre_Innenraum.jpg**.

- Virtual Globe Tour, depicting the Globe Theater from different angles: **http://www. shakespearesglobe.com/about-us/virtual-tour**

3. At the start of the Signet Classics edition of the play, Sylvan Barnet provides a biographical sketch of Shakespeare. Students can generate a chronological account of the events of Shakespeare's life using this source. Other more concise resources are available in print and online. For instance, "Shakespeare's Life" hosted online by the Folger Shakespeare Library at **http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life**.

   Students might use the following chart as an example of how to organize their information.

1596	Shakespeare's son Hamnet dies at age 11	One of Shakespeare's most sorrowful times—the loss of a child causes great stress and grief in parents

   Ask students to answer the following questions:

   - When did Shakespeare first become a public figure?

   - At what point was Shakespeare most famous?

   - Which three events do you consider to be the happiest events/eras of Shakespeare's life?

   - Which three events do you think comprise Shakespeare's points of greatest sorrow?

   - *Romeo and Juliet* was published around 1595. How old was Shakespeare? At this point in his career, do you think he had mastered his craft as a playwright? Provide evidence for your viewpoint.

II. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF LITERARY ELEMENTS

1. One remarkable feature of *Romeo and Juliet* is that much of the play consists of blank verse, unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter. In "Shakespeare: An Overview," Sylvan Barnet defines blank verse and analyzes Shakespeare's meter (pp. xl-xliii). The following activities feature increasing complexity: composing lines of ten syllables, counting syllables in lines of blank verse, and analyzing modern sonnets.

    •   Ask students to write a sentence or line that has ten syllables. Then, ask them to write a line of iambic pentameter on a general topic like a season of the year, a favorite animal, a special place, or an emotion. Remind students that they are practicing, that they can revise, and that they should try to include mostly iambs in their lines. Ask peers to evaluate and nominate good lines of iambic pentameter.

    •   Provide a printed copy of the two most frequently encountered lines from the play: Romeo's exclamation upon seeing Juliet from the garden as she gazes out a window:

        "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" After students read the lines silently, read the lines aloud or play a recorded version two or three more times so the students can both hear and see the words. Next, have students count the number of syllables in each of the lines and annotate next to each of them. Then, teach students to scan the meter in each line by writing an apostrophe over stressed syllables and a shallow "u" over each unstressed syllable. A quick image search online for "scanning Shakespeare iambic pentameter" will provide results to assist students with the process. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers a brief but useful introduction to meter and scansion: **owl.english.purdue.edu/ owl/resource/570/02/**.

    •   Dr. Herbert Tucker's "For Better for Verse" site allows students to practice marking scansion on a variety of poems by clicking above each syllable to assign a mark. Participants can then check their efforts against the proper meter. Work through a poem or two as a class before asking students to work independently. Two choices appropriate for this play include Shakespeare's "Sonnet 73" and "Juliet's Soliloquy." Preview the instructions and navigate to poems using the list of poems at "For Better for Verse": *Scholars' Lab,* University of Virginia Library, **prosody.lib.virginia.edu**.

    •   After students are comfortable with ten syllable lines and iambic pentameter, consider increasing the challenge using an activity like "Sonnet Fill-in-the-Blanks" at **http:// tinyurl.com/sonnetfitb**.

2. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being,* Milan Kundera writes, "Metaphors are dangerous. Love begins with a metaphor." The Bard would agree, in *Romeo and Juliet,* although love begins with a look, much of the experience is shared through figurative language. In the limited sphere of Elizabethan stagecraft, Shakespeare uses figurative language to help his audience see more fully and appreciate more deeply the events transpiring on the stage. Present some examples from the play that exemplify this strategy; the end of Act I and beginning of Act II prove fertile ground. Then, ask students to analyze why the comparisons are appropriate, particularly for the associations inspired by the figurative language. Using a graphic organizer will help students record their thinking, and they can continue the log as they read the play.

To Romeo, Juliet is...	
Comparison	**Ways the Comparison Works/Associations Readers Make**
"a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear."	A jewel is valuable; something from Africa was probably exotic at the time
"a snowy dove trooping with crows…"	Shows Juliet as being different from other women; white might be associated with purity or innocence
"[his] heart…"	Figuratively gives Romeo life, vital to existence; she seems to comprise the very essence of him
"the sun!"	Provides life-giving warmth and light; other celestial bodies orbit around the sun (Juliet exerts a pull on Romeo)

III. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

One of the play's strengths is its complexity and development of themes that resonate with most readers. Some of the play's central thematic topics include: the power of love, relationships between parents and children, the impulsiveness of youth, and group identity. The following activities use prose, poetry, and excerpts from fiction and nonfiction to introduce *Romeo and Juliet.*

THE POWER OF LOVE

Comedian and television host David Letterman once quipped, "Love: You can't start it like a car; you can't stop it with a gun." While intended for comic effect, the quote is surprisingly insightful, and it reflects, in part, the love between Romeo and Juliet—their love is instantaneous, and continues until their tragic deaths. Shakespeare's presentation of love is complex, for at times it evokes elation and inspiration and at other times creates anger and despondency.

1. To broaden students' understanding of the concept of love, ask them to find literary quotes that deliver insights about love. While it is possible to generate a roster of quotes exclusively from Shakespeare's canon, bringing in other writers may ease the transition into *Romeo and Juliet*. Write each quotation on a separate sheet of paper. Ask students to read all the quotations by passing the papers around or by circulating around the class. Once students have read the love quotations, ask individuals or groups to organize the quotations from least favorable to most positive. Different attempts will create different arrangements, but in most cases, points of consensus will begin to surface. Once the class agrees on an acceptable arrangement, ask students to select the quotation they feel best corresponds with their attitude towards love and write a brief explanation of their choice.

    The following quotations could serve as a foundation for the activity:

    •   "If it is right, it happens—the main thing is not to hurry. Nothing good gets away." *John Steinbeck*

    •   "In love there are two things—bodies and words." *Joyce Carol Oates*

    •   "I was about half in love with her by the time we sat down. That's the thing about girls. Every time they do something pretty…you fall half in love with them, and then you never know where the hell you are." *J. D. Salinger*

- "The one thing we can never get enough of is love. And the one thing we never give enough is love." *Henry Miller*

- "Love is a smoke and is made with the fume of sighs." *William Shakespeare*

- "The heart was made to be broken." *Oscar Wilde*

- "I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be." *Charles Dickens*

- "I fell in love the way you fall asleep: slowly and then all at once." *John Green*

- "You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams." *Dr. Seuss*

- "There is never a time or place for true love. It happens accidentally, in a heartbeat, in a single flashing, throbbing moment." *Sarah Dessen*

- "Love never dies a natural death. It dies because we don't know how to replenish its source. It dies of blindness and errors and betrayals. It dies of illness and wounds; it dies of weariness, of witherings, of tarnishings." *Anais Nin*

- "A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment." *Jane Austen*

- "I could not unlove him now, merely because I found that he had ceased to notice me." *Charlotte Brontë*

2. After students have reflected on the range of ideas about love, consider several of Shakespeare's sonnets about love, such as: Sonnet 18 "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day,"

Sonnet 116 "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments," or Sonnet 130 "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." In "How to Explicate a Shakespearean Sonnet," (**www.wheaton.edu/Academics/Faculty/D/Jeffry-Davis/guidance/How-to-Explicate-a-Shakespearean-Sonnet**) Jeffrey Davis provides a useful framework for analyzing specific elements of a poem. Teachers might work through the entire series of steps with a class or assign specific steps for a particular focus.

In another resource, Louisa Newlin and Gigi Bradford ("Close Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Folger Shakespeare Library,* edited by Greta Brasgalla, **www.folger.edu/close-reading-shakespeares-sonnets**) provide a strategy for exploring three of Shakespeare's love sonnets line by line. Then, have students practice the same skills with their peers to synthesize their understanding.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Our perception of Capulet changes as the play progresses. Early on, he is a doting and dutiful father, denying Paris's request for Juliet's hand. Later, he seems petty and tyrannical, determined to marry his daughter off despite her protests. As viewers of the play, we find ourselves questioning his relationship with Juliet, asking how she perceives him and his attempts to control her actions.

To introduce the theme of parent-child relationships, ask students to read several selected poems that look at how children perceive their parents. For example, in Geffrey Davis's "What I Mean When I Say Truck Driver," the speaker details his father's faults—infidelity, substance abuse, absenteeism—but ultimately expresses his love for this deeply flawed individual.

Read the selected poem aloud and then ask students to reread it silently. Ask students to analyze

the poem to learn about the following aspects:

- How does the speaker view his relationship with his parent?

- What emotions does the speaker express?

- In what ways do parents affect children's thinking about themselves, society, and how they act?

As students work, have them identify textual evidence they can use to support their conclusions. Students can compose brief responses for this activity or annotate copies of the poems. After students have read one or more poems, discuss: Even though a poem may describe a flawed parent, is the overall tone negative or loving? Why? What is the message of the poet?

Teachers can select contemporary works or favorite poems, such as the following:

Roethke, Theodore. "My Papa's Waltz." 1942. *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke,* Anchor Press, 1961. *Poetry Foundation,* **www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43330**.

Carson, Teresa. "To My Mother Waiting on 10/01/54." *Elegy for the Floater,* Cavankerry Press, 2008. *Poets.org,* **www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/my-mother-waiting-100154**.

Davis, Geffrey. "What I Mean When I Say Truck Driver." *Poets.org,* Academy of American Poets, **www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/what-i-mean-when-i-say-truck-driver**.

THE IMPULSIVENESS OF YOUTH

Many of the events in *Romeo and Juliet*—street fights, falling instantly in love, secret marriage—are the direct result of decisions that, unfortunately, lead to sorrow and tragedy. Although Shakespeare dramatizes relationships and situations in the play for emotional impact, the fact that the characters are so young increases the believability of the plot. Contemporary research indicates that the adolescent brain functions differently from an adult brain, and teens tend to engage in risky behavior or substance abuse in part because of their brain chemistry. A brief examination of research on adolescent brain development may help students understand the actions of the young characters in *Romeo and Juliet.*

Provide students with copies of articles that focus on adolescent brain development. Ask them to read and annotate two types of information:

- How are teenage brains and development different from adult brains and maturity?

- What effects do these differences have on teen attitudes and behavior?

The whole class can read the same article, or small groups can read different articles and summarize their findings in brief presentations.

Edmonds, Molly. "Are Teenage Brains Really Different from Adult Brains?" *How Stuff Works Science,* 26 Aug. 2008, **science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/teenage-brain.htm**.

McMahon, Tamsin. "Inside Your Teenager's Scary Brain." *MacLean's,* 12 Jan. 2015, pp. 48-53. **http://www.macleans.ca/society/life/inside-your-teenagers-scary-brain/**.

"The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction." *National Institute of Mental Health,* U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011, **http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-still-under-construction/index.shtml**.

IDENTIFYING WITH THE GROUP

In *Romeo and Juliet,* the Montague and Capulet factions repeatedly disturb the quiet of Verona. Youth gangs or street gangs represent a contemporary parallel to the Verona clans, and research into the motivation of modern-day gangs might enable students to understand the seemingly one-dimensional characterization of Tybalt or why Romeo erupts in violence upon seeing Mercutio slain. The social climate among youth in the play and in contemporary gang society is characterized by unwavering loyalty to one's group, the drive to avenge offenses, a generational legacy of violence between groups, and the desire to be a member of a social group.

The texts listed below are possible sources for teaching about youth gang mindset. Share excerpts from texts with the class, asking students to focus on the following questions, jotting down their main ideas:

*   What might motivate an individual to join a gang?

*   What benefits does belonging to a gang provide?

*   What drawbacks does membership hold?

*   In what ways does belonging to a gang change an individual's attitudes?

If students work from different texts, ask them to provide summaries of their sources.

Note: Preview sources on gangs or gang members, as they may contain profanity or allude to violence.

Hinton, S. E. "Chapter 9." *The Outsiders.* New York, Speak, 1995. 131-149. Print.

Lohman, Raychelle Cassada, MC, LPC. "Teen Gangstas: How Can You Protect Your Teen From Gangs?" *Psychology Today,* Sussex Publishers, 11 Oct. 2010, **www.psychologytoday.com/blog/teen-angst/201010/teen-gangstas**.

Myers, Walter Dean. "Damien and Sledge." *Street Love.* New York, Amistad, 2006. 4-6. Print. Excerpt available at **http://goo.gl/jwcd7w**

"Why People Join Gangs." *Gangfree.org,* Gang Alternatives Program, 2008, **www.gangfree.org/gangs_why.html**.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

I. WHOLE TEXT ACTIVITIES

1. Students can deepen comprehension by formulating questions about the text, relating text events to personal experiences, or making connections between events in the play and the broader culture. Have students write sticky notes at points in the play where a question arises or where they see a connection to culture or their own experiences. Partners can work through challenging parts. Notes can also serve as a foundation for class discussion.

2. Two challenges *Romeo and Juliet* presents to today's readers are its archaic diction and elusive allusions. For example, how might most modern middle and high school students interpret Mercutio's analysis of Romeo's readiness for a fight: "...run through the ear with a love song; the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft; and is he a man to encounter Tybalt?" (II.4.14-17)? Teachers can use a variety of strategies to compile lists of words that cause collective confusion; preteaching such words can ease the challenge of reading for students.

In the Signet Classics edition, editor Sylvan Barnet provides a glossary of terms that Shakespeare uses frequently (pp. xxi-xxiii), and that set of words can function well as a brief introduction for students. While some of the words and definitions will be familiar to many, emphasizing archaic or unusual definitions will provide practice for students. Choose a selection of words with definitions that are atypical in modern usage: "imp" means child, "silly" means innocent, "tonight" means last night, and so on. Then, create a matching activity, such as using two columns of words and definitions or cards to match word and definition, and let students work individually or in groups to review the definitions.

Vocabulary Organizers: Teachers can preview a passage or section and provide organizers that have vocabulary words listed in order of appearance. For example, in Romeo's reflection on the confusing nature of love (I.1.179-186), selecting the catalog of oxymorons that he recites ("O brawling love, O loving hate...") will help students review the literary device and arrive at an understanding of Romeo's confused and frustrated state.

Quotation Walls: Reserve a section of bulletin board or whiteboard to use as the Quotation Wall for *Romeo and Juliet.* As students read, have them write down lines they do not understand on their own paper, in a section of reading journals, or on tickets that can double as bookmarks. As the class completes a section, have students add one of their lines to the Quotation Wall; if a line already appears, ask students to add a different line. As students add lines, discuss the meanings as a class.

3. Characters in *Romeo and Juliet* experience a broad range of emotions. At the outset of the play, lovelorn Romeo pines for Rosaline and seems unwavering in his devotion; however, by play's end, Romeo sacrifices his life because he believes that Juliet, his true love, is dead. Have students keep a reading journal or annotate their copies of the play to track changes that characters undergo. Appearances and descriptions should be noted initially; Then, readers should look for new relationships between characters; changes in a character's attitudes, beliefs, or goals; and central events for each character. Ask students to not only include explicit details from the play but to also record ideas they have inferred from the text. Students can use journals or hand-drawn graphic organizers, but they may appreciate the opportunity to use Web 2.0 tools to record their inferences. Digital tools offer features that allow users to amend and add to their organizers. Some easy to use, free online apps are available at the following links: **https://padlet.com**, **https://www.text2mindmap.com**, and **http://www.popplet.com**.

4. Use popular social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to analyze the mindset of a character or the impact of plot events in *Romeo and Juliet.* Early on, ask students to share their understanding of the play by using a counterfeit Facebook account or by using the 140 characters allowed by the social network Twitter. Then students can track the development of Romeo or Juliet and add content when subsequent changes occur in the play. For example, Romeo's initial posts or tweets would reflect his unrequited love for Rosaline. Later, when he sees Juliet for the first time, his demeanor and "online presence" would surely change.

Sample Facebook templates can be found at: "3 Awesome Facebook Templates for Your Class." *Educational Technology and Mobile Learning,* 2 Mar. 2015, **www.educatorstechnology.com/2013/03/3-awesome-facebook-templates-for-your.html**.

Two resources that describe using Twitter in the classroom are:

- Wynter, Amanda. "Bringing Twitter to the Classroom." *The Atlantic,* 14 Sept. 2014, **www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/09/the-case-for-having-class-discussions-on-twitter/379777/**.

- Miller, Samantha. "50 Ways to Use Twitter in the Classroom." *Teachhub.com,* K-12 Teachers Alliance, 2016, **www.teachhub.com/50-ways-use-twitter-classroom**.

5. Ask students to annotate passages from the play to deepen their analysis, using one or more of these approaches.

   Focusing Annotations by Topic: Ask students to focus on specific parts of the play for analysis. For instance, teachers could ask students to focus only on times when Romeo and Juliet are present together (examples: Capulet party, balcony scene, with Friar Lawrence, in the tomb), or scenes that feature physical action (examples: street brawls, Romeo fighting Paris in the tomb).

   Focusing Annotations on Literary Elements: Ask students to comment on specific elements of the play, such as characterization, plot, setting, diction, or figurative language. For example, ask students to contrast the diction and imagery of Romeo and Juliet's first encounter with the tomb imagery just prior to their deaths. Or ask students to analyze the Prologue (p. 3) as a sonnet and the tone set by its diction ("fatal," "misadventured piteous overthrows," "death," "death-marked love").

   Collective Annotation: Ask students to share their reactions to the play with small groups or the whole class. This practice is especially effective when students have computer access. For instance, pasting excerpts of the play into a Google doc and then granting editing privileges to participants will allow them to work outside the classroom, comment in the margins, and create a document that can then be shared with the class. Teachers can also set up wikis or other online content if students are able to edit and add annotations to a central copy of the text.

6. Another way for students to explore the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* is to compose diary entries using the voices, ideas, and philosophies of a character to convey thoughts, fears, regrets, hopes, or emotional reactions to pivotal events in the play. In the entries, students can elaborate on how plot events or character interactions affect the character.

   Possible diary entries might include:

   - Romeo's emotions when he is still smitten with Rosaline, his frustration at her failure to return his affections; his hopes for peace between the Montagues and Capulets so he and Juliet can announce their marriage; his guilt over Mercutio's death

   - Juliet's feelings towards Paris's unwelcome advances or towards the institution of marriage in general; her reaction to her clandestine meeting with Romeo the night of the party; her mental state between Friar Lawrence's broaching the plan of feigning death and the execution of the plan

   - Tybalt's indignation at Romeo showing up at the Capulet party; his devotion to the Capulets or his feelings about Juliet; his anticipation of fights with rivals

   - Mercutio's feelings of skepticism about Romeo's love of Rosaline or Juliet; his mockery of the prophetic nature of dreams; his derision of the older generation, especially the Nurse

   - The Nurse's recollections of Juliet as a young child; her hopes for Juliet's bright future; her guilt at having to keep the relationship between Romeo and Juliet a secret.

   - Friar Lawrence's ideas about Romeo's seemingly fickle nature; his hopes or reservations for the scheme to fake Juliet's death; his guilt at the scheme having gone awry and the resulting deaths

II. DRAMA ACTIVITIES DURING READING

1. Readers' Theater can emphasize central events or scenes and enable students to imagine the play as a dramatic performance. Selections can range in length from a few lines to an entire scene and can involve two students or larger groups. Readers' Theater requires few, if any, props or costumes and gives students an opportunity to learn performance skills. Linda Cornwell provides an overview of Readers' Theater and advice for successful implementation: "What is Readers Theater?" *Scholastic,* 2016, **www.scholastic.com/librarians/programs/whatisrt.htm**.

2. With preparation and practice, nearly every student can act out scenes from Shakespeare's script with flair. Select scenes that meet instructional goals. For instance, to delve into Romeo's character, students might explore Romeo's lovelorn state for Rosaline in Act I by presenting the conversation between Benvolio and Romeo (I.1.163-241) or examine his blissful, wooing conversation with Juliet during the Capulets' party (I.5.95-112). Assign roles for selected scene(s), and provide adequate time for participants to read and review their parts. During the preparation stage, model expressive reading, assist with pronunciation or interpretation issues, and work to promote confidence in all participants. During the performance, evaluate students on vocal projection, accurate recreation of the passage's tone, evidence of practice and preparation, and poise in front of the group.

3. Students can present scenes from the play using contemporary language to paraphrase the script or they can adapt a scene from the play by setting it in a contemporary time and place. Students might also adapt passages from the play into specific styles (rap adaptations, rustic or country versions, or other recognizable dialects or speech styles). Remind students to preserve the tone of the original content and avoid offensive stereotypes.

4. Students can compare their presentations or perceptions of scenes in the play to other students' interpretations. Before viewing other adaptations, ask students to record their ideas about the scene, including descriptions of the setting, costumes, and emotions expressed by the characters. Then, share one or two versions of the same scene from other adaptations and ask students to compare their ideas to these interpretations. As a class, discuss:

   • How similar are the two versions?

   • In what ways did the adaptation succeed? In what ways did it fall short of the student's original interpretation?

   Many different interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet* can be found online on YouTube or other video sources. The two provided here depict the Balcony Scene, Act II, scene 2:

   "Romeo and Juliet - Balcony Scene." *YouTube,* uploaded by Camden County High School Theatre, 7 Oct. 2009, **www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ4t4n0L7aI**.

   "Kaneland High School - Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Prologue, Scene 1 & 2 - Fall 2015." *YouTube,* uploaded by Kanelander, 29 Nov. 2015, **www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyOztsJs7Ws**.

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Discussion questions help students deepen their understandings of the play and its literary elements. Students can answer questions individually. They can also work as groups to answer a series of questions, or one student can work exclusively on a single question to become the class expert who then shares his/her expertise with peers.

The Focus Questions introduce key ideas or content prior to reading each act. Students might address some of these questions in brief journal writing assignments or small group discussions.

ACT I

Focus Questions

1. Can an individual's pride interfere with polite or civil behavior? Why? What happens? (scene 1 fight between Montague and Capulet supporters)

2. Should parents influence a child's decision about whom they will marry? (Capulet, scene 2)

3. If a parent pressures his or her child into doing something that the child does not want to do, is this always a bad thing? (Lady Capulet, scene 3)

4. Do you think dreams are a good way to predict future events? Why or why not? (Romeo and Mercutio's debate, scene 4)

5. Have people around you ever discouraged you from acting on your emotions? What was the result? (Capulet and Tybalt, scene 5)

Discussion Questions

1. After the opening brawl, Prince Escalus states, "If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace" (I.1.99-100). In his speech, what reasons does he give to justify his decision? As the prince, he has the right to make such a decree, but does the punishment fit the crime? Why or why not?

2. At the beginning of scene 2, Paris approaches Capulet in an effort to win Juliet's hand in marriage (1-37). What is Capulet's response? Do you think Capulet's reluctance is justified? (remember, marriage at an early age occurred frequently in previous eras.) What attitudes do you think Capulet has towards his daughter at the beginning of the play?

3. In scene 3, Lady Capulet encourages Juliet to consider Paris as a spouse. What are Lady Capulet's justifications for the marriage?

4. In scene 4, Romeo and Mercutio debate the validity of prophetic dreams (49-113). Mercutio maintains that dreams are "the children of an idle brain" (97). How does his elaborate description of Queen Mab support his belief? Romeo frets, for he believes that dreams can be prophetic, and he shares his vision of an "untimely death" (111). What effect does his description have on the tone of the scene? What can you conclude about Romeo's mindset when he disregards his uneasy feelings and continues on to the party with his friends?

5. By the end of Act I, Shakespeare has presented several different kinds of relationships: romantic love between a man and woman, love of a parent for a child, love between husband and wife, and love of a noble for his kinsman. Review the act to identify different types of love that appear. Then, based on the characters' attitudes and actions, decide which type of relationship Shakespeare presents most effectively. Identify lines in the play that support your conclusion.

6. When he overhears Romeo praising Juliet at the Capulets' party, Tybalt recognizes him and wishes to confront him (46-61). In what ways does the contrast between Romeo's and Tybalt's speeches increase tension in this section? How do the images and diction differ in the two speeches? What can you infer about the two characters?

ACT II

Focus Questions

1. Do you believe marriage is a decision that should wait until both partners are 21 or older? (scene 2)

2. Sometimes adults are skeptical of teenagers' feelings or ideas. When might the adults' ideas be justified? (Friar Lawrence, scene 3)

3. How often do you think a person's reputation—outsiders' perceptions or opinions of that person's abilities or attitudes—is accurate? (Tybalt's reputation, scene 4)

4. Have you ever become frustrated at how long it takes someone to do things that you can do much more quickly? If so, why do you think you became frustrated? (Nurse, scene 5)

Discussion Questions

1. In the opening of Act 2 Benvolio has little to say. In what ways does Benvolio's dialogue reinforce the role of peacemaker that he performed in Act I? What does Mercutio's dialogue reveal about his character?

2. When Romeo sees Juliet at a window, what types of imagery does he use to describe his newfound love (1-32)?

3. In Act I, Juliet expressed reluctance at the prospect of marriage. However, by the end of scene 2, she broaches the topic with Romeo (143-148). What aspects of Romeo's dialogue function most effectively in winning Juliet's heart?

4. Friar Lawrence is skeptical of Romeo's feelings towards Juliet, saying that Romeo does not recognize the difference between doting and loving. How does the relationship between Romeo and Juliet differ from Romeo's relationship with Rosaline?

5. Benvolio and Mercutio discuss Tybalt's abilities as a duelist at the start of scene 4, and Benvolio concludes that Romeo will answer Tybalt's challenge to a duel. At this point in the play, do you think a duel between the two characters is likely? Why or why not?

6. In the last scene, Juliet is eager to learn of news from Romeo about their upcoming marriage. However, the Nurse seems reluctant to share the news. Why? What effect does her reluctance and talkativeness have on the audience?

7. As Act II ends, Romeo, Juliet, and Friar Lawrence exit to perform a secret wedding. What are their reasons for keeping the marriage secret? Is this a good decision? Why or why not?

ACT III

Focus Questions

1. How does being a part of a group affect your thinking and behavior? (brawling groups, scene 1)

2. Sometimes political leaders are criticized for changing their stance on a particular issue. Do you think that there are times when such a change is reasonable, or should authority figures be held to a different standard than ordinary citizens? (Prince Escalus, scene 1)

3. Have you ever attended an event or place with fairly clear expectations (anticipation or dread) and ended up having a completely different experience? (Juliet's shift from joy to loss, scene 2)

4. Do you know a person who can calm you down better than others when you're upset? (Friar Lawrence, scene 4)

5. What opinions or beliefs do you have that are different from those of your parents or guardians? How do they feel about your ideas? (Capulet's outrage, scene 5)

Discussion Questions

1. After members of the feuding households meet on the streets of Verona in scene 1, numerous fights erupt. Review the scene and analyze the actions of each of the three main combatants: Mercutio, Tybalt, and Romeo. Which of the three characters deserves most of the blame for the bloody events? Use textual examples to support your conclusion.

2. After hearing of the fights and deaths, the Prince reneges on his word and rather than having Romeo executed, banishes him instead. In this instance, does the punishment fit the crime? What can you infer about the Prince's character based on his change of heart?

3. Juliet's initial soliloquy in scene 2 functions as dramatic irony: audience members have knowledge and understanding about events in the play that characters do not. Here, Juliet is profoundly in love and awaits her marriage, events that typically create a positive mood. How does dramatic irony transform the mood of this scene? Does Juliet's innocence cast her in an unfavorable light?

4. Before the Nurse clarifies her account of Tybalt's death (ii.69-70), Juliet believes that Romeo is dead. Why do you think it takes so long for the Nurse to correct Juliet's misperceptions? Does the exchange between the two characters make the play more realistic? Why or why not?

5. Much of the act is spent in tumult as both Romeo and Juliet are distraught, but in scene 4, Friar Lawrence seeks to calm Romeo. Which of his actions and attitudes do you feel best characterize the Friar as a mature voice of reason? Do you think his attitudes and strategies are logical? Why or why not?

6. In scene 4, Capulet agrees to the marriage of Paris and Juliet. Given that the household and city are in turmoil, what inferences can you draw about Capulet as a character? What reasons might explain or justify his actions?

7. How do Juliet's actions in scene 5 affect Capulet's behavior? Do Capulet's actions in Act III change your attitudes towards him?

ACT IV

Focus Questions

1. Has anyone who you were not interested in ever been attracted to you? If that happens, what is the best way to handle the situation? (Paris and Juliet, scene 1)

2. Have you ever made a mistake because you were trying to avoid responsibilities? Have you ever made a mistake because you did not think things through? (Juliet drinking potion, 3)

3. Is it acceptable for authority figures to lie sometimes? (Friar Lawrence, scene 5)

4. Have you ever been so emotional that you could not communicate clearly? (the household, scene 5)

Discussion Questions

1. When Paris approaches Friar Lawrence to arrange the marriage, the priest has an opportunity to disclose Juliet's marriage to Romeo and prevent subsequent events in the play from happening. Why do you think he is reluctant to disclose the marriage? How does his silence contrast with his earlier characterization as wise and mature?

2. After Juliet returns from Friar Lawrence's cell in scene 2, she acts agreeable and accepting of marriage to a man she does not love. Why does she maintain her silence about her marriage to Romeo? Are her parents characterized here as being overly gullible, or do their

conclusions seem believable within the context of the play?

3. In scene 3, Juliet consumes poison that allows her to feign death. What images does Shakespeare use in this scene? What tone do they create?

4. The Capulet household prepares for the wedding festivities in scene 4, joking and bustling about. How does this scene contrast with scene 3? How does this dramatic irony impact the audience?

5. In scene 5, the wedding goers learn of Juliet's apparent death and are overcome with emotion. Review lines 49-64. What images and words does Shakespeare use to convey the emotional states of the Nurse, Paris, and Capulet?

ACT V

Focus Questions

1. Have you ever had a friend or family member make a terrible decision? Could the decision have been different if the person had been more patient or thoughtful? (Romeo, scene 1)

2. Which of your friends or family members handles pressure best? What traits or abilities help him or her succeed when things get tough? (Friar Lawrence, 2)

3. Have you ever been frightened by things you imagined? (Friar Lawrence, scene 3)

4. Have you ever been involved in a heated argument or disagreement that you later realized was based on insignificant things? (Montague and Capulet, scene 3)

Discussion Questions

1. Upon hearing of Juliet's "death," Romeo immediately procures deadly poison so he can commit suicide. From some readers' perspectives, his actions seem rash and poorly thought out. However, considering the context of the play and your understanding of Romeo as a character, are his actions believable? Why or why not?

2. In scene 2, Friar Lawrence learns that Friar John failed to deliver the letter explaining Juliet's faked death to Romeo. Compared to other reactions to stress, danger, and death in the play, Friar Lawrence seems composed. Using your understanding of his character and the content of this scene, explain his demeanor in the face of danger. Do you think his attitude is appropriate?

3. When Paris confronts Romeo at the Capulet tomb, they fight and Paris dies. Although he is Romeo's rival, do you think Paris is a sympathetic character at this point in the play? What details from the play affect your thinking?

4. After Romeo poisons himself, Juliet awakens and Friar Lawrence, hearing a noise, abandons the tomb, leaving Juliet behind. What explains his action?

5. Why does Juliet commit suicide? Explain her state of mind, making inferences from the text.

6. At the end of play, Montague and Capulet reconcile their differences with kind words and a handshake. To what extent do they realize their roles in the death of the two young lovers? And, in the context of the play, is peace in Verona suitable compensation for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet? Do you have a sense that justice has been served at the end of the play? Why or why not?

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

These activities provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of the text. They can be adapted for completion by individual students or small groups of students.

I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND ESSAYS

1. In "A Note on the Source of *Romeo and Juliet*" (pp. 127-130), the editor speculates that Shakespeare's version of the story is an adaptation of several other popular tales of the day from England, France, and Italy. Even today, hundreds of years after the publication of Shakespeare's tragedy, frequent productions of the play, allusions in popular culture, and movie adaptations attest to the play's popularity. How can a centuries-old play retain relevance? Analyze the play to identify elements (plot, characters, themes, or other literary devices) that you feel contribute the most to the play's popularity. Using evidence from the text, describe what aspects of the play, based on your reactions, continue to attract contemporary audiences.

2. Early in the play when he is fawning over Rosaline, Romeo wonders, "Is love a tender thing? It is too rough, / Too rude, too boist'rous, and it pricks like thorn" (I.4.25-26). However, by the end of the play, both Romeo and Juliet are willing to commit suicide rather than live without the one they love. Review the play to identify actions, attitudes, and figurative language that Shakespeare uses to describe love. After analyzing your choices as a whole, identify the overarching message that you think Shakespeare hopes to convey about love in *Romeo and Juliet.* Use the textual evidence you've gathered to support your conclusion.

3. In Act I, scene 5, Tybalt chafes at the fact that Romeo is attending the party and cites his honor as justification for killing the unwelcome guest: "Now, by the stock and honor of my kin, / To strike him dead I hold it not a sin" (60-61). Trace Tybalt's words and actions throughout the play to interpret his motivation. To what extent is he motivated by the family feud or by personal inclination? Support your interpretation with specific evidence from the play.

4. Some events and characters in *Romeo and Juliet* underscore a theme of generational conflict, but the conflict between Capulet and his daughter Juliet seems the most contentious. Considering the play as a whole, analyze the relationship between father and daughter. What are the central causes of their strife? If Capulet and Juliet had resolved their differences early on, how might the play have ended differently?

5. When Romeo retreats to Friar Lawrence's cell after killing Tybalt, the priest criticizes his behavior as unmanly: "Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art; / Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a beast. / Unseemly woman in a seeming man!" (III.3.109-112). What are manly or masculine qualities according to the Friar? In the play, many of the male characters are far from admirable. Why? What is Shakespeare saying about the qualities expected of a man?

6. In *Romeo and Juliet,* some characters like Mercutio lament their pending deaths, while Romeo and Juliet willingly end their lives. Before he drinks the poison, Romeo exclaims, "How oft when men are at the point of death / Have they been merry!" (V.3.88-89). Which of the characters who die in the play exhibits your idea of a realistic attitude towards death? Is this character's reaction to death consistent with his or her character throughout the play? What central theme do you think Shakespeare hopes to convey about death in the play?

7. Shakespeare varies the structure of his text to convey plot, character, and theme. Focus on these three elements in the text:

    a) the use of prose by different characters or groups of characters

b)   the use of dashes, exclamation points, and the exclamation "O!" to convey characters' emotional states

c)   the interlocking sonnet spoken between Romeo and Juliet in Act I, scene 5, lines 95-108

Compare the three techniques and decide which is employed most successfully in the play. Discuss some of the ways that the technique functions to generate characterization, lend realism to the play, elicit tone, or convey theme.

II. GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

1.   In "Star-Crossed Something-or-Others," teacher Eric Lemay recounts his students' skepticism that Romeo and Juliet are in love. In the context of the play and from a contemporary perspective, this skepticism might be well-founded: Romeo falls in love without ever having spoken to Juliet, nor does the couple invest the work necessary to sustain or create a loving relationship.

Ask students to read Eric Lemay's essay (Lemay, Eric. "Star-Crossed Something-or-Others." *Harvard Review,* no. 33, 2007, pp. 17-29. Digital version of the article available at: **http://poems.com/special_features/prose/essay_lemay.php**) and then react to the following ideas from the article.

Premise 1: "'Work' is the word they keep using. When you're in love, you work" (paragraph 9). Lemay's students consistently posit that Romeo and Juliet do not work at their relationship—it progresses fully formed and all-consuming until the couple's tragic deaths. Ask students to align themselves on either side of this concept: Do Romeo and Juliet work at their relationship? What textual evidence might students cite as support for their positions?

Premise 2: "I think Romeo and Juliet show us—in a way no Hallmark card or expert can—what it feels like to be in love" (paragraph 11). Skeptics will argue that Shakespeare does not show how it feels to be in love while proponents will maintain that Shakespeare's depiction of love is accurate. Again, as students prepare to argue an opinion, ask them to identify textual evidence that supports their perspectives.

Premise 3: The second half of Lemay's article features his contrast of *Romeo and Juliet* to Arthur Brooke's T*he Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet,* a work that communicates the same basic narrative but lacks the artistic merits of Shakespeare's version. Ask students to analyze the excerpts that Lemay provides in the article.

•   In what ways are the versions similar?

•   In what notable ways does the content differ?

•   Which of the versions depicts a more credible vision of a young couple in love?

•   Which literary elements of Shakespeare's version do students find most effective, and why?

2.   In 1975, the rock band Nazareth sang, "Love hurts / Love scars / Love wounds and marks/ Any heart not tough enough or strong enough/to take a lot of pain…" In 1985, Huey Lewis and the News philosophized, "The power of love is a curious thing/Make a one man weep, make another man sing…" In 2011, pop star Rihanna opined, "Baby, I love you, I need you here/With me all the time/Baby we meant to be/You got me, smiling all the time." Love evokes an astounding range of emotions, and pop singers have performed songs that touch on nearly every one.

Ask students to review *Romeo and Juliet* to select passages that depict expressions of love between Romeo and Juliet and to characterize the tone of each passage. Then, ask students

to find classroom-appropriate excerpts from popular music that evoke a similar expression of love and tone to those they have identified in the play. Depending on available technological resources, students can present individual or group work in a digital presentation featuring audio clips, or, if they are tech savvy, as audio compilations that feature songs they've chosen. Students can use a free audio editor like Audacity (**www.audacityteam.org**.) or other apps to edit their songs. If students already have the songs they want to use saved on their phones, they can gather them on a single computer via email. For copyright purposes and to keep presentation times manageable, ask students to limit their excerpts to no more than thirty seconds per song.

3. A second option involving popular music centers on a song based on the *Romeo and Juliet* narrative, Dire Straits' "Romeo and Juliet." Provide copies of the lyrics and ask students to analyze how the lyrics match their understanding of Shakespeare's play. They can share their findings in a written response or during a class discussion. Ask students:

   • What are significant similarities and differences between the song and the play?

   • What are the merits of the medium of a song over a play?

   • What strengths does the play format possess?

   Dire Straits' "Romeo and Juliet" lyrics by Hamilton, Bob, and Freddie Gorman are at: *Google Play Music,* http://goo.gl/pv9Alb.

   Dire Straits' performance of "Romeo and Juliet" can be found at: **www.youtube.com/ watch?v=8GWzEnQcspQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CRu2SWDtRA**

4. Assign characters to individuals or groups. Characters include Romeo, Juliet, Capulet, Montague, the Friar, Prince Escalus, Tybalt, and Mercutio. Then, ask students to assign blame for Romeo and Juliet's deaths to every character except the one they've been assigned. For their assigned character, ask students to conceive a defense that exonerates the character. Then, in a discussion or debate format, ask the class to level accusations at a character. For instance, the first character examined might be Prince Escalus, and possible accusations might include his failure to address the civil violence in Verona early on (the fight at the start of the play is the third in a series, Act I.1.92) or the fact that he waffles in his decision and merely banishes Romeo for murdering Tybalt. Students might then defend the Prince by arguing that not executing Romeo stemmed from the extenuating circumstance of Mercutio's death and that the Prince is consistently noble and reasonable. After accusations, allow the individual or group to briefly confer and present their defense of the Prince.

   After all assigned characters have been critiqued and defended, ask students to vote on the character that least deserves blame for Romeo and Juliet's deaths. Tell students that they cannot vote for the character that they were assigned to defend. After a character is voted least blameworthy, remove his or her name from the roster. Continue the votes until the class has designated the most blameworthy character. The series of votes will require students to rethink their conclusions about the characters.

5. Ask students to consider if *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy with a tragic hero or heroine. Begin by having students create a working definition of tragedy. What are key elements of a tragedy? Once students have generated a class list, ask them to compare Aristotle's definition of tragedy from the *Poetics* to their list and make additions or changes as needed.

   An excerpt from *Poetics* is available at **https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Aristotle_Tragedy.pdf** and a longer list of the characteristics of tragedy is available at **http://www.ohio.edu/people/hartleyg/ref/aristotletragedy.html**

Then ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups:

- Who is the principle character or hero of the play?

- Does this person have status in the community?

- Tragic heroes traditionally have a tragic flaw. Who is flawed in the play?

- Do the deaths of Romeo and Juliet create a feeling of pity and fear?

- Is the death of one character more tragic than the death of the other? Why?

Once students have completed their discussion, assign sides for a debate on the question of *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy. Require groups of three or four to compose a half page opening statement asserting their stance and outlining the central tenets of their argument. Have the sides present their opening statements alternately. Then, open the floor to discussion. Finally, have groups on the two sides compose closing statements that consist of their best evidence and arguments. If possible, invite a fellow teacher, administrator, or staff member to choose which side has argued most successfully.

ANALYZING FILM ADAPTATIONS OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*

Asking students to contrast elements of the play and film enables them to think critically about both media and reflect on choices directors make in staging or filming. While there have been many different film adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet,* two popular versions are the 1968 Franco Zeffirelli adaptation and the Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes.

> *Romeo + Juliet.* Directed by Baz Luhrmann, performance by Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes, Twentieth Century Fox, 1996.

> *Romeo and Juliet.* Directed by Franco Zeffirelli, performance by Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, BHE Films, 1968.

Focus either on characters or key plot events by identifying scenes that are central to the play. Two options that give a good sense of the play's romance and conflict are the balcony scene (Act II, scene 2) and the fights between Mercutio, Tybalt, and Romeo (III, 1). Students can compare the original script with the film adaptation to determine which version is most compelling and draft an argument to convince classmates of their viewpoint.

If you choose to play an entire film version, students can identify elements that are similar in the play and the film and note elements that are different. For example, the film adaptations take liberties with plot or edit dialogue. Ask students to consider the following questions as they watch the film:

- What does an audience lose when filmmakers edit dialogue for the sake of keeping the film a manageable length?

- What elements from the play transfer most successfully to the big screen?

- Which character in the film adaptation corresponds most accurately with the character as he or she appears in the play?

- Which dialogue or element from the play do you wish had appeared in the film adaptation?

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