Edexcel GCSE English Literature

Your notes

Romeo & Juliet

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Romeo & Juliet: Plot Summary


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Plot Summary

Examiners always praise students who clearly know the plot of the texts they are studying, as having this base of knowledge leads to the best exam responses. Below you will find:

- **a storyboard of the plot**
- **a general overview of the whole play**
- **detailed summaries by act**

Plot Storyboard

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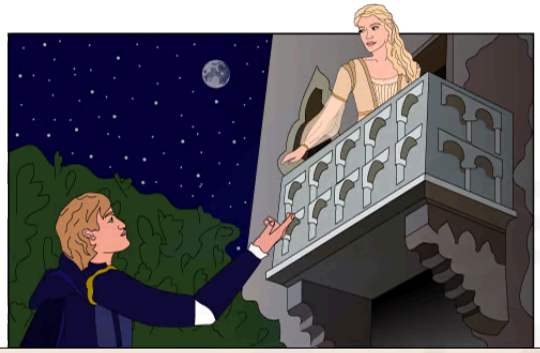
ROMEO & JULIET
PLOT STORYBOARD



A street fight breaks out between the Montagues and Capulets: Tybalt Capulet threatens Benvolio Montague



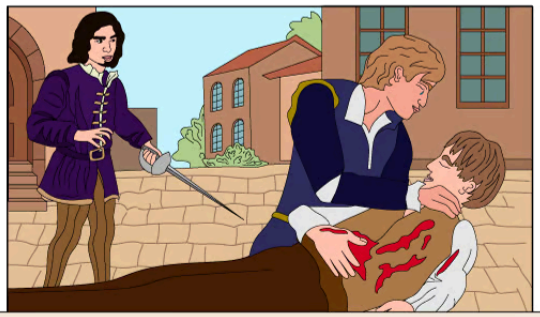
Romeo and Juliet fall in love and find out they are from enemy families



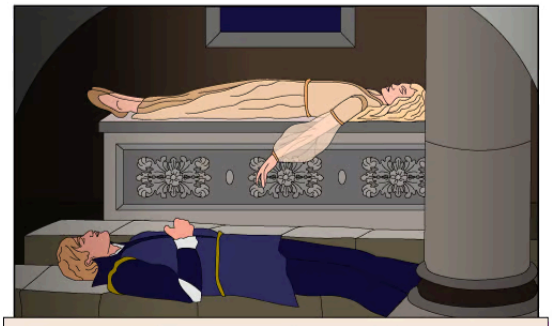
Romeo hears Juliet talking on a balcony. They make plans to defy their families and marry



Romeo and Juliet are married by Friar Laurence in secret



Tybalt kills Mercutio by mistake. Romeo seeks revenge and murders Tybalt



Romeo, thinking Juliet is dead, poisons himself. Juliet, waking and finding him dead, stabs herself

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Overview of Romeo and Juliet

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Romeo and Juliet is a five-act **tragedy** written by William Shakespeare in 1597. Set in **Renaissance** Italy, it takes place in a city called Verona and its **eponymous protagonist ,** Romeo and Juliet, are two teenagers who belong to two rival families.

The play begins with a street fight between the servants of the two feuding families, the Capulets and the Montagues. Romeo Montague, absent at the fight, is introduced as a loner, a young heartbroken boy uninterested in the family **feud** . His friends encourage him to forget about love and party at the Capulet Ball. Here, his fateful journey begins, as he meets Juliet, his enemy, and they embark on a forbidden love affair. Finding themselves at odds with their families and friends, they marry in secret in a bid to avoid Juliet Capulet's arranged marriage to Paris. Tybalt Capulet insists on fighting Romeo to avenge his family's honour. This leads to Tybalt's death and Romeo's **exile**.

The lovers, isolated and desperate, take their lives into their own hands. Juliet asks a local religious man, Friar Laurence, to help her and he instructs Juliet to take a potion which will make her family think she is dead. Once in the tomb, however, she will awaken, meet Romeo and flee the town. By a twist of fate, Romeo does not receive the friar's message and believes, like her family and friends, that she is dead. Acting in defiance of the stars, Romeo decides to return to Verona despite the danger. His fatal flaw, his impulsiveness, leads to his rash suicide. Juliet wakes, sees Romeo dead beside her and takes her own life as well. Shakespeare's **tragedy** ends with a gloomy peace between the two families as they grieve over their children.

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Because you will not have access to the text of Romeo and Juliet during your exam, there is no expectation that you learn dozens of quotations by heart. Although examiners do reward the use of memorised quotations in your essay, you will also be rewarded for your ability to mention plot points from various points of the play. These are called "textual references", and do not have to include direct quotations, but, for the highest marks, must be "precise". A good example of a precise textual reference would be: "In Act I, Scene I, Romeo is shown as opposed to the feud, preferring to ponder the complexities of love."

In order to make these precise textual references, therefore, it is vital that you know the plot of Romeo and Juliet inside-out.

Act-By-Act Plot Summary

Act I

- An old **feud** between the Capulets and the Montagues breaks out on the streets of Verona between the servants of the families

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- Benvolio Montague tries to stop the fight but Tybalt Capulet is keen to fight for his family name
- Both sides are warned by Prince Escalus that they must not disturb the peace again on pain of death
- Paris asks Lord Capulet for Juliet's hand in marriage and Capulet tells him to **woo** her at the party
- Juliet is not as happy as her mother about the prospect of marriage and tells her mother, Lady Capulet, she will see what she thinks of Paris at the ball
- Lord and Lady Montague ask Benvolio where Romeo is, showing concern about his mental state
- Benvolio, on behalf of Lord and Lady Montague, seeks out a troubled Romeo
- Bevolio finds Romeo alone, opposed to the **feud**, burdened by his **Unrequited Love** for Rosaline
- Benvolio tells Romeo to attend the Capulet Ball and find someone new
- Mercutio's light-hearted attempts to encourage Romeo to be less serious about love lead Romeo into the danger of the Capulet house
- Romeo and Juliet meet and learn they are from enemy families

Act II

- Romeo hides from his friends instead of joining them after the party
- Romeo sees Juliet on the balcony and overhears her concerns over their family names
- When Romeo interrupts and declares his love, Juliet asks him to be less sudden with his vows
- Juliet asks him to meet her nurse the next day if he is serious about marriage
- Romeo visits Friar Laurence and asks him to marry them
- The friar accepts in a bid to end the grudge between the families
- Romeo and Mercutio tease each other about love and Mercutio forgives Romeo
- Romeo leaves his friends again. First, to speak to Juliet's nurse, and then, to the church for his secret wedding
- The friar, in attendance with the nurse, marries Romeo and Juliet, although audiences do not see the wedding

Your notes

Examiner Tips and Tricks

In your exam, you could receive an extract from any part of the play. Again, for the highest marks, examiners want to see that you can contextualise the extract: to know what part of the play it comes from. If you know what comes before and after the extract, you can better explain its wider

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significance, and what important developments have happened, or will happen. Therefore, alongside knowing the plot accurately, it is just as important to revise what order things happen in, especially for Romeo and Juliet, in which multiple impactful events take place over just a few days.

It is crucial to analyse structure, in order to see how Shakespeare contrasts scenes and creates tension across the plot.


Your notes

Act III

- A **Pivotal** moment in the play, Benviolio and Mercutio gather on a hot day in the streets
- Benvolio, aware of the Prince's warning about further public fights, warns of a potential fight with the Capulets
- Tybalt arrives looking for Romeo. In Romeo's absence, he and Mercutio begin to quarrel
- When Romeo arrives back from his secret wedding, his friends are confused about his refusal to fight Tybalt, who is now his cousin
- Mercutio is angry with Romeo and turns to fight Tybalt himself
- Romeo stops Mercutio and Tybalt stabs Mercutio instead of Romeo
- As he is dying, Mercutio places a curse on both families
- In a violent rage, Romeo rushes after Tybalt and kills him in revenge
- Juliet awaits Romeo's return, unaware of the violence
- Romeo seeks help from the friar when he learns the Prince has exiled him to Mantua
- Friar Laurence is angry at Romeo's impulsiveness, his **hamartia** , when Romeo wishes himself dead rather than accept **exile**
- After a forbidden night together, Romeo leaves Juliet at dawn to escape death
- Lady Capulet tells Juliet she is to be married to Paris in two days
- Juliet refuses and her parents disown her after an aggressive argument

Act IV

- Juliet tells her nurse she is going to **confession** but, instead, asks the friar to help her avoid the wedding to Paris
- Friar Laurence offers a solution in the form of a poison which will mimic death
- Juliet is told by her father that the wedding day has been moved forward and would take place the next day
- That night, and after some hesitation, Juliet takes the potion

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- The next morning, the nurse finds Juliet 'dead' and the family grieves
- Friar Laurence says the wedding will now become a funeral

Act V

- Romeo, in Mantua, receives a message from his friend, Balthasar, that Juliet is dead
- Romeo asks if there is a word from the friar but Balthasar says there is not
- In defiance of his punishment, Romeo decides to return to Verona to be with Juliet, whom he believes is dead
- Aware he will be killed if he is found, Romeo convinces an **apothecary** to sell him poison so he can die alongside Juliet
- Friar Laurence learns that his message was not delivered due to a **plague** preventing people from leaving the city, bringing Mercutio's curse to fruition
- Paris meets Romeo at Juliet's tomb, aware only that they are from enemy families
- Paris challenges Romeo and, again, Romeo tries to avoid a fight
- Paris, like Tybalt, rejects his peaceful greeting, they fight, and Paris is killed
- Romeo, believing Juliet to be dead, drinks the poison, kisses Juliet and dies
- Friar Laurence enters the tomb but hearing some noise he leaves
- Juliet awakes and finds Romeo next to her, dead
- Juliet attempts to drink some of the poison from the vial and from Romeo's lips
- Unable to find any, she stabs herself with his dagger
- Upon finding the pair dead, Friar Laurence tells the tragic story to the Prince and the families
- Audiences learn that Lady Montague has died from a broken heart at Romeo's **exile**
- The grieving families make an uneasy and gloomy peace


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Romeo & Juliet: Themes

Your notes

Themes

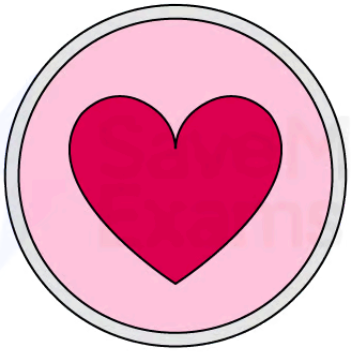
Having a thorough grasp of the following themes, and crucially, how and why Shakespeare explores these themes will enable you to produce a "conceptualised response" in your exam. Linking carefully to the structure of the plot and what we know about the attitudes of the time period will give you access to the very highest marks on the mark scheme.

- **Love**
- **Conflict**
- **Honour**
- **Fate**

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Examiners want to see students connecting themes to the plot structure: how the theme is presented in the beginning, how it develops and how it is shown at the end. This will ensure you are analysing structure as well as theme. By considering the plot as a story arc driving home the messages within the themes, your analysis should explore how the characters and themes develop, and, especially, why Shakespeare chose to end the play as a **tragedy**. Using structural terms, such as **foreshadowing** and **juxtaposition**, will strengthen your analysis of the way the themes develop.

Love


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In the play, Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare presents the challenges faced by two young people in love due to societal attitudes and family pressures. Shakespeare's play shows how closely related love is to hate and how this throws obstacles in love's path.


Your notes

Romeo and Juliet as a tragedy

Knowledge and evidence:

- The play is in the form of a **Tragedy**:
  - In this play, Shakespeare shows the deaths of both Romeo and Juliet as a **tragedy** for their families
- According to conventions of Ancient Greek tragedy, the tragic hero is punished by the gods for actions resulting from their **hamartia** :
  - The protagonist's death often ends a **tragedy**
  - The characters of both Romeo and Juliet are the play's tragic heroes
  - Their **tragic flaw** is confusion and impulsiveness in familial and romantic love
- A **sonnet** is shared by Romeo and Juliet when they meet:
  - Sharing the lines connotes equality in their love
  - Religious **imagery** within the **sonnet** suggests purity
- Friar Laurence marries the pair in secret in a bid to bring peace to the families
  - Friar Laurence **foreshadows** the **tragedy**: "these violent delights have violent ends"
- The play ends in a double **tragedy** as the "star-cross'd" lovers die together to seal their love

Patriarchal structures in Renaissance England

Knowledge and evidence:

- The **patriarchal** system in Renaissance families meant the father controlled all other family members:
  - Juliet is obligated to marry the man chosen by her father, Lord Capulet
  - Lord Capulet disowns Juliet when she refuses to marry a man she does not love
- Societal values for males within this structure prioritised family love over romantic love:
  - Romeo's friends and family sway him away from thoughts about love and force him into the family **feud**
  - Romeo attempts to avoid conflict. He tells Tybalt, "The reason I have to love thee does much excuse the appertaining rage with which you greet me"

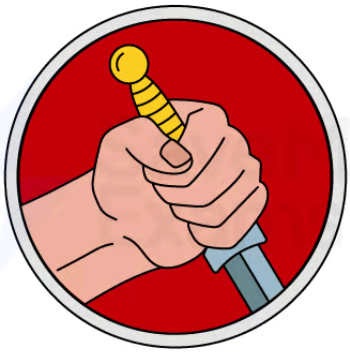
What is Shakespeare's intention?

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- Shakespeare challenges societal norms in Renaissance culture that prioritise marriage for social advancement over love
- Shakespeare shows how discrimination and hatred in the name of family love leads to violence and tragedy
- Shakespeare presents ideas about expectations of gender roles by presenting the external pressures placed upon Romeo and Juliet when they fall in love
- By closely aligning love and hate in the play, he shows them as opposites which are inextricably linked
- Shakespeare challenges patriarchal expectations regarding masculinity which encourage conflict rather than love

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Conflict


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As much as the play is about love, it is equally about conflict. Conflicts are shown between friends, within families and between families. Shakespeare's characters are unaware of the reason behind the **feud**, suggesting it is emotional rather than logical.

Parental conflict

Knowledge and evidence:

- Juliet's conflict with her parents lies in her refusal to marry Paris:
- Disowned and isolated, she is driven to extreme measures: "O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris, From off the battlements of any tower"
- Juliet seeks advice and comfort from her nurse
- Romeo's conflict is shown by his inability to communicate with his parents:
- Lord Montague knows his son is struggling with confusing feelings, but directs Romeo's friend, Benvolio, to comfort him

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- Lady Montague shows concern about Romeo brawling in the streets but knows little of her son's whereabouts
- Romeo seeks a paternal figure in Friar Laurence

What is Shakespeare's intention?

- Shakespeare questions the role of indiscriminate hatred by showing two families at war with no idea why
- Shakespeare presents the possible outcomes of family conflict by showing Juliet's despair at being disowned
- Shakespeare challenges conflict and violence brought about by peer pressure between friends
- Shakespeare shows how conflicts between friends, families and feuding factions bring about even more conflict, violence and, ultimately, tragedy

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Honour


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The conflict between the house of Montagues and the house of Capulets is presented as a **feud** based upon family honour. The characters in the play believe very strongly in upholding their family honour; part of that meant hating the enemy family.

Knowledge and evidence:

- The first scene shows the families willing to start a petty fight over an "ancient grudge":
  - The servants from each house bite thumbs at each other in insult
- Tybalt Capulet presents family honour explicitly in the play:
  - He tells Benvolio that he hates peace, hell and all Montagues
  - When Romeo is identified at the Capulet party he states, "By the stock and honour of my kin, to strike him dead I hold it not a sin"

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- Romeo attempts to avoid the **feud** and does not abide by family honour:
  - He tells Tybalt that he holds the Capulet name as dearly as his own
  - Shakespeare employs **dramatic irony** so that only the audience, Romeo, Juliet, the nurse and the friar know about the secret marriage
  - Romeo's friend, Mercutio, believes his refusal to fight Tybalt is, a "vile, dishonourable submission"
  - Romeo's murder of Tybalt as revenge for Mercutio's death leads to his exile
- Juliet asks Romeo to deny his father and refuse his name so they can be together:
  - In a **soliloquy ,** she asks, "What's in a name?" questioning the family **feud** over honour

What is Shakespeare's intention?

- Shakespeare challenges ideas about family duty and honour by presenting them as potentially damaging forces
- Shakespeare points out how the Capulets and Montagues prioritise their desires for social status and how their love of their family name leads them to abandon their children's desires and concerns
- Shakespeare shows how peer pressure related to honour can lead to violence
- Shakespeare presents two young people who are confused by the way their families hate indiscriminately in the name of family honour

Fate


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Romeo and Juliet are doomed from the start, we learn from the **prologue .** But throughout the play, Shakespeare presents Romeo and Juliet trying to master their free will and overcome powers of destiny which are tied up in external pressures around them.

Knowledge and evidence:

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- In the absence of scientific knowledge, most Elizabethans believed in the ideas of fate and astrology and would consult or blame the stars for their luck and misfortune:
  - Many people would submit free will and look to the stars, believing the gods had 'predestined' their fortunes
- Shakespeare's **tragedy** begins with the **chorus** telling the audience that the two lovers are "star-cross'd" and their destiny is set
- The **Prologue** shows Shakespeare's clear choice to let audiences watch events unfold:
  - Romeo and Juliet battle with their own free will within turbulent relationships
  - Audiences witness how external events affected their future
- By using **juxtaposition** to show contrasting scenes next to each other, Shakespeare shows the "passage of their death-mark'd love" with dramatic tension
- Romeo represents the most fateful character in the play:
  - He begins by accepting fate, asking it to "Direct my sails". This leads him to his fated encounter with Juliet
  - Shakespeare **foreshadows** this with Romeo's premonition just before the Capulet ball where he sees his "untimely death" ahead of him
  - By the climax of the play, Romeo reluctantly accepts he is "fortune's fool!" having been exiled to Mantua for murdering Tybalt
  - In a twist of fate Romeo receives the wrong message and learns that Juliet is dead
  - In a defiant act of free will, Romeo goes back to Verona: "I defy you, Stars!"
- Juliet believes fate to be fickle and unpredictable:
  - She senses impending doom when she meets Romeo and likens her marriage bed to a grave
  - In a premonition she sees Romeo as one "dead at the bottom of a tomb"
- The play ends with a morbid twist of fate, as Romeo and Juliet's fateful timing leads to their deaths, thus confirming the **chorus** predictions in the **Prologue**

What is Shakespeare's intention?

- Shakespeare challenges ideas about **autonomy** over our lives
- Shakespeare asks audiences to question whether coincidence or destiny is at work in the story
- Shakespeare presents the possibilities that fate can be connected closely to the environment by showing how conflicts and pressures impact choices

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- Shakespeare challenges an Elizabethan audience who believed that the stars and planets impacted their fortunes


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Romeo & Juliet Key Theme: Love

Your notes

Love mind map

The theme of love in each act of Romeo and Juliet:

Act	Quote	Summary
1	"Did my heart love till now?" – Romeo	Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet at the Capulet ball, which Shakespeare juxtaposes with his earlier infatuation with Rosaline
2	"My only love sprung from my only hate!" – Juliet	During the balcony scene, Juliet laments her discovery that Romeo is a Montague, which demonstrates the conflict between romantic love and familial love
3	"Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee / Doth much excuse the appertaining rage" – Romeo	As Romeo has secretly wed Juliet, he refuses to fight Tybalt and expresses his love for him due to his new connection with the Capulet family
4	"Love give me strength, and strength shall help afford" – Juliet	Juliet seeks courage through her love for Romeo as she prepares to take the sleeping potion
5	"Here's to my love!" – Romeo	Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo drinks the poison and dies at Juliet's side, thinking he will join her in death

What are the elements of love in Romeo and Juliet?

Shakespeare portrays different types of love: romantic, familial and friendship. The elements of love in the play include:

- **Romantic love:** Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight and their love is presented as courtly and spiritual, reflecting Elizabethan conventions of romantic love, as well as passionate and sensual:
  - "Thus from my lips, by yours my sin is purged"
- **Familial love:** Shakespeare initially presents the relationship between Juliet and her father as loving:
  - As the play progresses, Lord Capulet's actions in forcing his daughter to marry Paris ultimately contribute to his daughter's tragic demise

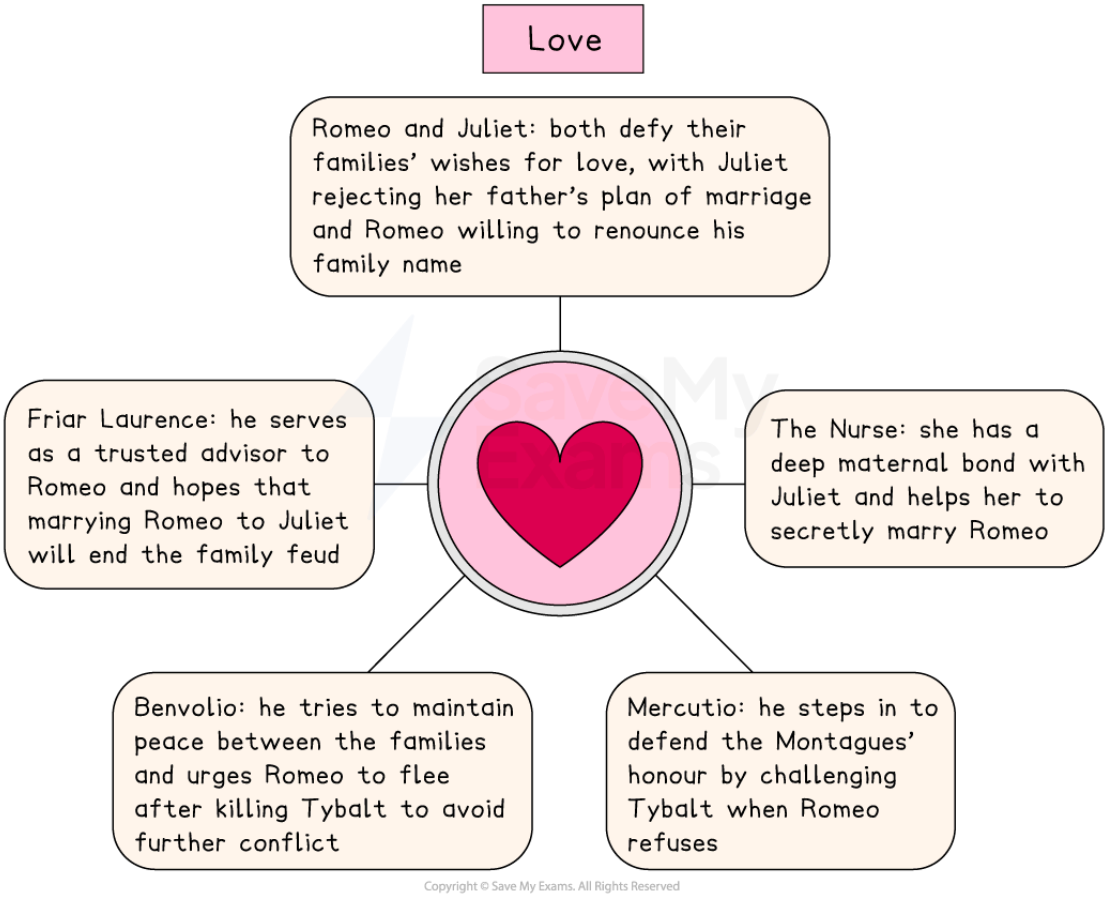
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- **Friendship:** Benvolio, Mercutio and Friar Lawrence are loyal friends to Romeo and offer support in different ways:
  - Benvolio attempts to keep the peace, Mercutio defends Romeo's honour and Friar Laurence devises a plan to help him

Your notes

The impact of love on characters

The theme of love is a powerful force in the play. It strongly motivates both Romeo and Juliet after they meet and fall in love at first sight and drives them to suicide as they would rather die than live apart.



Love in Romeo and Juliet

Character	Impact
Romeo and Juliet	▪ Romeo and Juliet risk the wrath of their parents to be together:

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	▪ Juliet goes against the wishes of her father, when he insists she should marry Paris and Romeo is prepared to break away from his family in order to be with Juliet: "Henceforth I will never be Romeo"
The Nurse	▪ The Nurse has a strong maternal relationship with Juliet, describing her as the "prettiest babe": ▪ The Nurse wants Juliet to be happy and will do anything for her happiness, even collaborating in her marriage to Romeo: "There stays a husband to make you a wife"
Mercutio	▪ When Romeo refuses to fight Tybalt, Mercutio takes up the challenge instead, as he does not want to see the Montagues' honour jeopardised: "pluck your sword": ▪ Following Mercutio's death, Romeo shows his grief by challenging Tybalt
Benvolio	▪ Benvolio tries to stop the conflict between the Montagues and Capulets and to prevent Romeo from avenging Mercutio's death: ▪ After Romeo has killed Tybalt, Benvolio encourages Romeo to flee: "Romeo, away, be gone!"
Friar Laurence	▪ Friar Laurence acts as a confidante to Romeo, advising him on his relationships with Rosaline and Juliet and how his actions should be: "wisely and slow": ▪ He hopes that by marrying the young lovers, the feuding families will make peace: "To turn your households' rancor to pure love"

Your notes

Why does Shakespeare use the theme of love in his play?

1. Setting and atmosphere

- Shakespeare establishes love as the central theme of the tragedy and its driving force from the very beginning
- Creates an element of urgency and secrecy as Romeo and Juliet's love must be hidden

2. Plot driver

- Drives the tragic sequence of events as the love between Romeo and Juliet is a catalyst to the dramatic action

3. Audience appeal

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- Appeals to Shakespeare's audience as romantic love was considered heroic at the time the play is set
- Reflects a universal theme of love which would resonate with both contemporary and modern audiences

4. Dramatic device

- Heightens the dramatic tension by contrasting love with violence


Your notes

Exam-style questions on the theme of love

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of love:

- How does Shakespeare portray the intensity of young love in the play? (You could start with Act 2, Scene 2.)
- "Romeo is never really in love in the play". How far do you agree with this statement? (You could start with Act 1, Scene 1.)

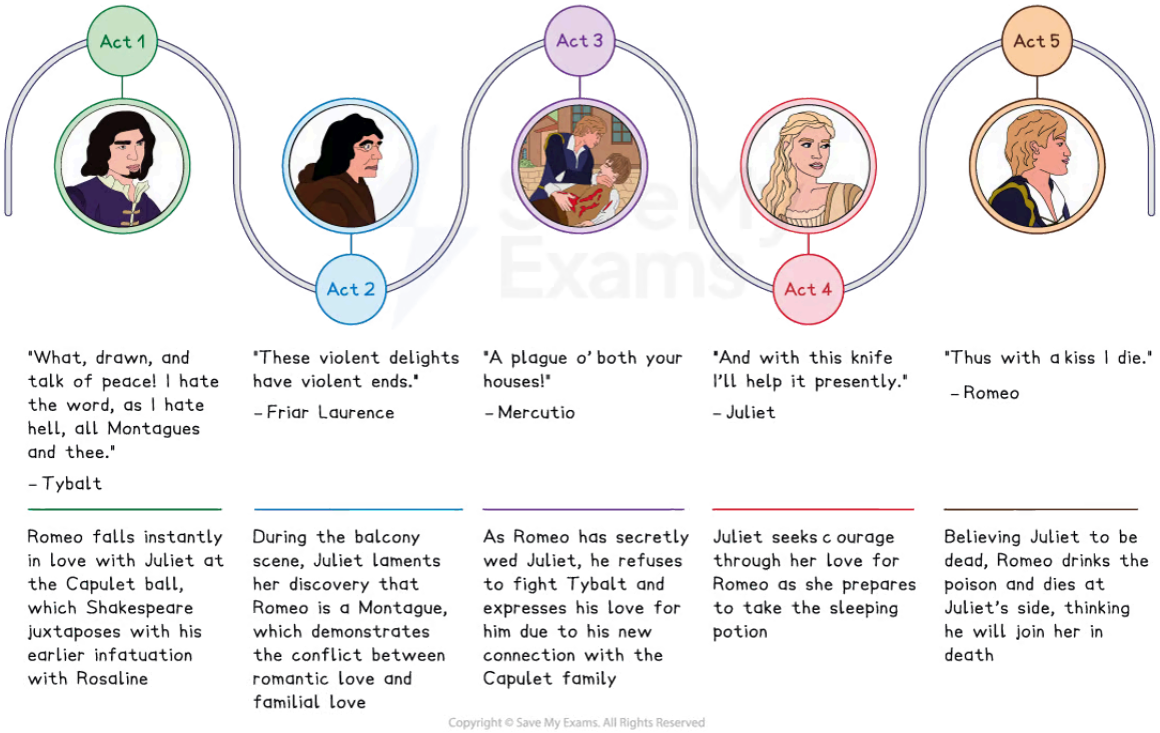
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Romeo & Juliet Key Theme: Conflict

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Conflict timeline

The theme of conflict in each act of Romeo and Juliet:



Romeo and Juliet conflict timeline

What are the elements of conflict in Romeo and Juliet?

The elements of conflict in the play include:

- **The feud between the Montagues and Capulets:** The Chorus introduces the central theme of conflict to the audience: "Two households, both alike in dignity… from ancient grudge":
  - At the end of the play, both families agree to put an end to the feud and Capulet offers his hand to Montague
- **Tybalt's aggression:** Juliet's cousin is presented as ruthless and vengeful, especially when he learns of Romeo's presence at the Capulet ball:
  - "I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall, / Now seeming sweet, convert to bitt'rest gall"

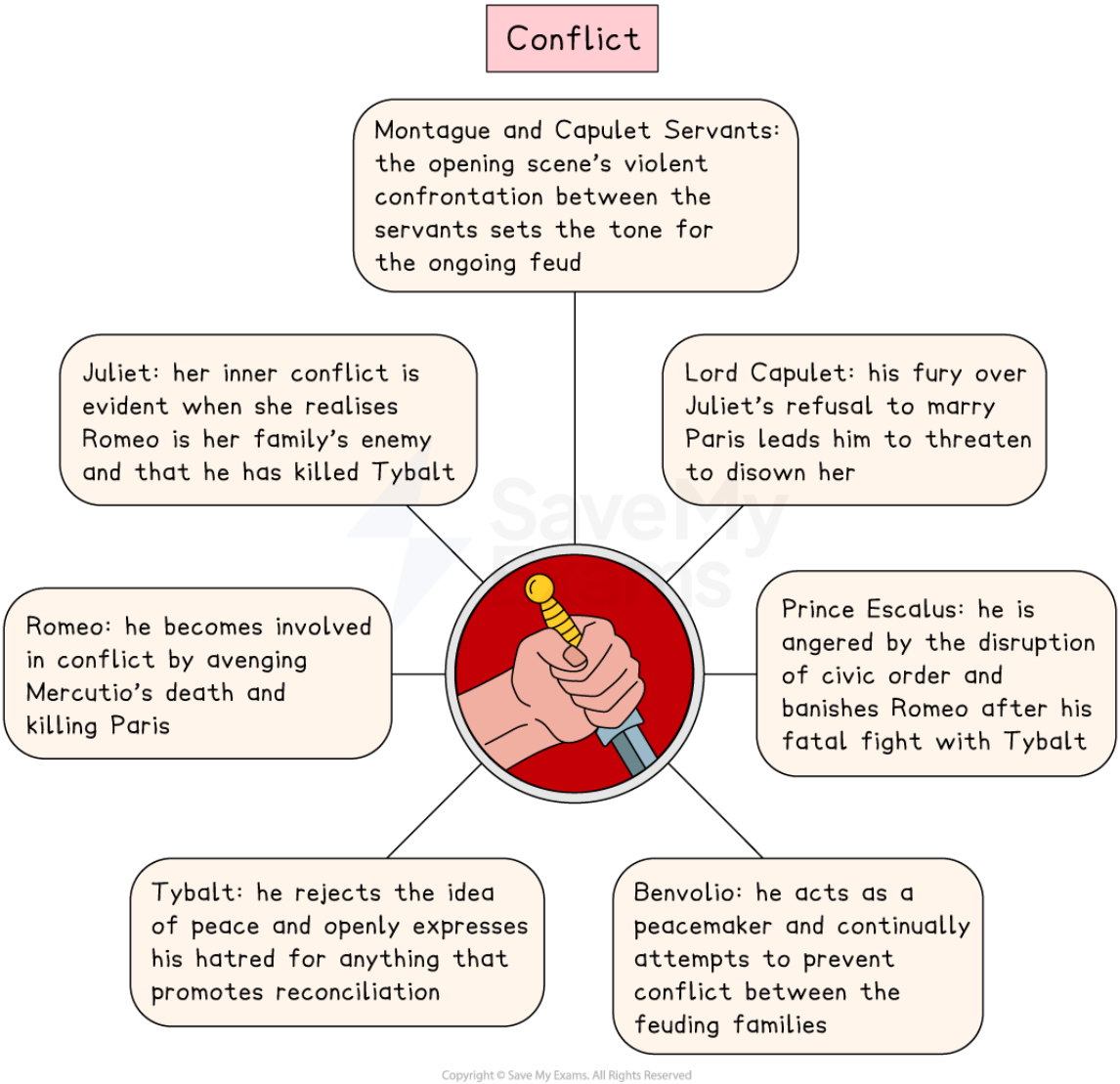
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- **The deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt:** Tybalt's killing of Mercutio acts as a catalyst for Romeo's anger; he turns from peace because of Tybalt's actions:
  - Mercutio's final line in the play lays the blame for his death on the conflict between the families: "A plague o' both your houses!"
- **The deaths of Paris, Romeo and Juliet:** Their deaths are a direct consequence of the conflict between the families

Your notes

The impact of conflict on characters

The theme of conflict and violence is prevalent throughout the play and has an impact on all of the characters, founded on the long-running feud between the Capulets and the Montagues.



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Conflict in Romeo and Juliet


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Character	Impact
Montague and Capulet servants	The opening scene is an angry, violent confrontation between the servants of the two households, clearly establishing the tone for the rest of the play.
Prince Escalus	Prince Escalus is enraged by the violation of the civic order as a result of the feud between the families; he banishes Romeo after his fight with Tybalt.
Benvolio	Benvolio is depicted as a peacemaker as he tries to prevent the violent conflict between the characters.
Tybalt	Tybalt declares he "hates the word" peace and detests the actions which bring about peace between the two families.
Romeo	Despite the Prince imposing the death penalty on anyone caught fighting, Romeo is prepared to risk his own life to avenge Mercutio's death: ▪ Romeo is also responsible for the death of Paris
Juliet	Juliet's inner conflict is shown when she discovers Romeo's true identity: "That I must love a loathèd enemy": ▪ Her conflict is also evident when Romeo kills her cousin Tybalt
Lord Capulet	Juliet's refusal to marry Paris results in conflict between Juliet and her father: ▪ He threatens to disown her: "Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch"

Why does Shakespeare use the theme of conflict in his play?

1. Setting and atmosphere

- Establishes violence as a backdrop to the play from the very beginning
- Creates tension and hostility and highlights the danger surrounding Romeo and Juliet's love

2. Plot driver

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- Drives the tragic sequence of events as the feud between the Montagues and Capulets escalates, leading to tragic consequences

3. Audience appeal

- Shakespeare's audience would have associated Italy with violence and conflict and a place where family honour often led to acts of revenge
- Reflects the fear of civil disobedience and warring families which were seen as a serious threat to the stability of society during the late Elizabethan era

4. Dramatic device

- Heightens dramatic tension as violence erupts as a natural and inevitable consequence of the ongoing conflict


Your notes

Exam-style questions on the theme of conflict

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of fate:

- Explore the significance of conflict in Romeo and Juliet. (You could start with Act 1 and the ancient feud between the Capulets and the Montagues.)
- How does Shakespeare present the impact of conflict on relationships in the play? (You could start with Act 1, Scene 5.)

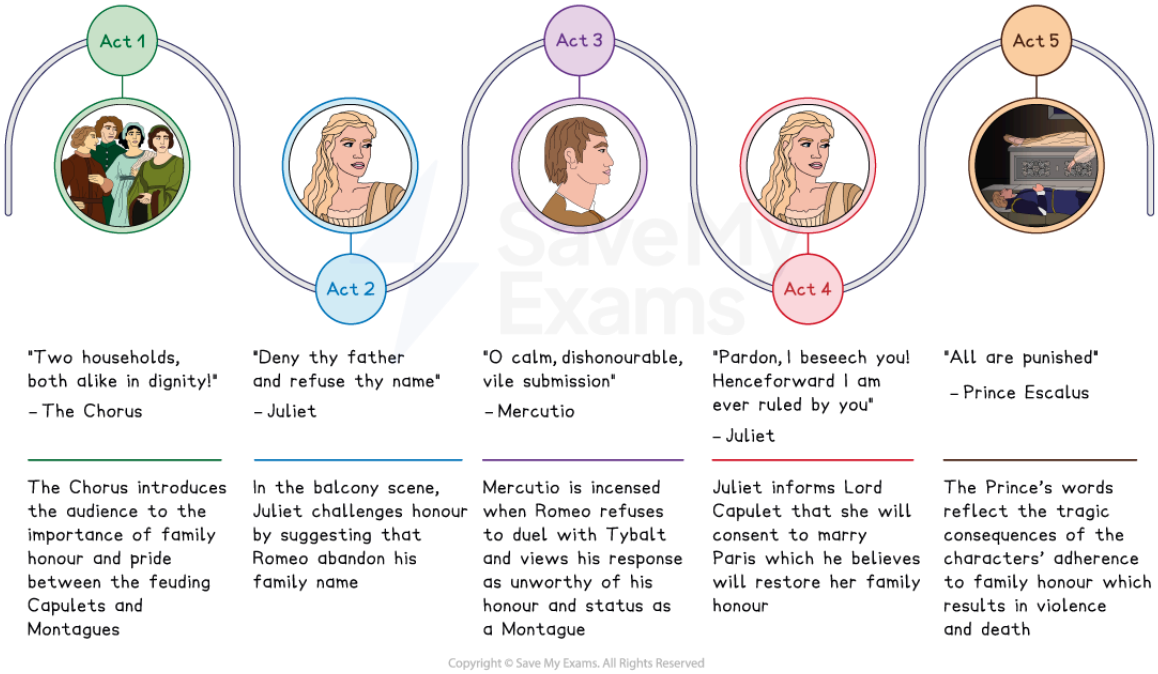
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Romeo & Juliet Key Theme: Honour

Your notes

Honour timeline

The theme of honour in each act of Romeo and Juliet:



Romeo and Juliet honour timeline

What are the elements of honour in Romeo and Juliet?

- **The Montague and Capulet feud:** The Capulets and Montagues both consider family honour an important part of life, as the regular brawls that disturb the public peace reflect
- **Tybalt's obsession:** Tybalt does not recognise the act of murder as a crime if it is in defence of his family honour:
  - "Now, by the stock and honour of my kin, / To strike him dead I hold it not a sin"
- **Juliet's defiance:** Lord Capulet arranges the marriage of Juliet to Paris, "this noble earl", emphasising the importance of family reputation and honour as marriage to Paris would promote the family's status in Verona:
  - Lord Capulet is infuriated by Juliet's apparent lack of honour: "And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets"

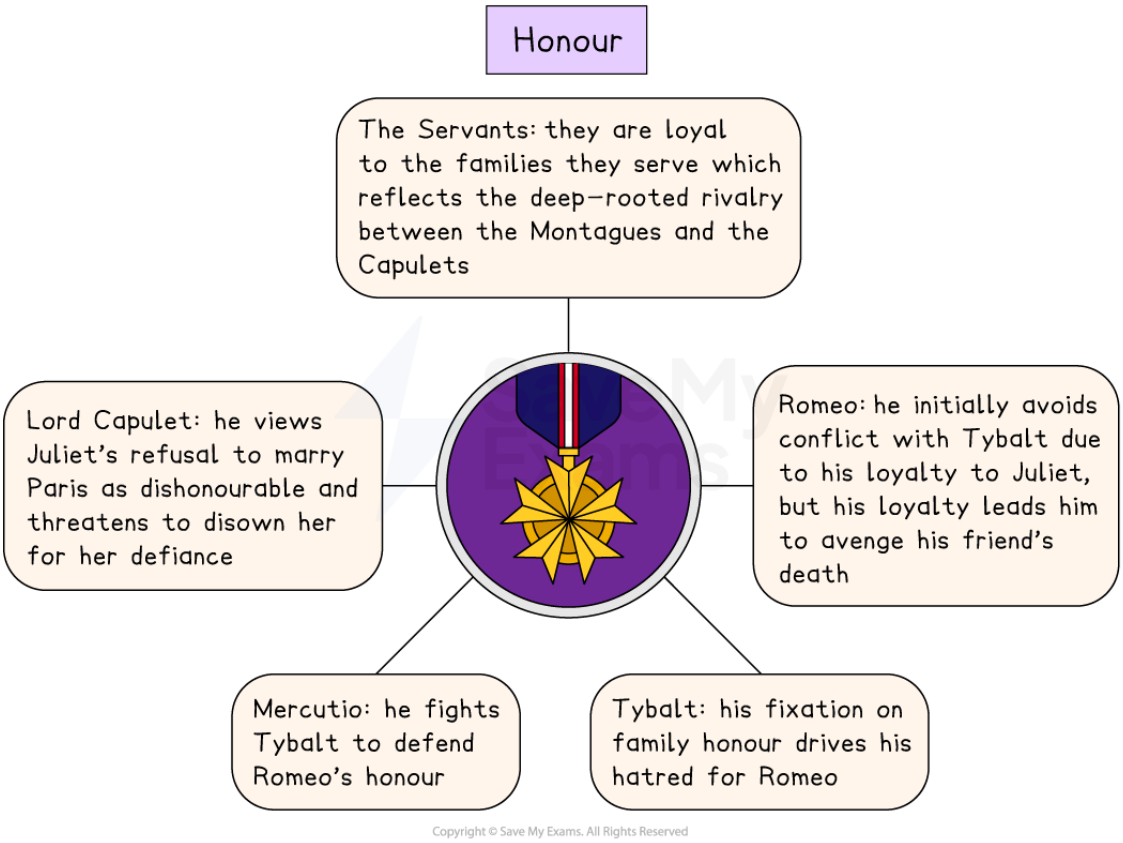
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- **Romeo's rejection:** Shakespeare highlights the importance of love over family honour as Romeo is willing to give up his name for Juliet in order to be with her:
  - "I never will be Romeo"

Your notes

The impact of honour on characters

Honour is a central theme in the play and the long-standing feud between the warring households strengthens their family loyalty and justifies much of the violence throughout the play. The emphasis on loyalty and honour to kin also creates a conflict for Romeo and Juliet, who rebel against their families.



Honour in Romeo and Juliet

Character	Impact
Servants	The servants are loyal and dedicated to the honour of the families they serve: ▪ At the beginning of the play, the Capulets' servants insult the Montagues' servants: "A dog of the house of the Montague moves me"

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Juliet	To prove his commitment to her, Juliet demands Romeo prove his "bent of love be honourable" and that "thy purpose marriage": ▪ Juliet's loyalty to Romeo is stronger than the loyalty she feels to her family
Romeo	Romeo does not engage in a duel with Tybalt at first because of his loyalty to Juliet, but his loyalty to Mercutio eventually drives him to kill Tybalt: ▪ The deaths of Romeo and Juliet at the end of the play are acts of loyalty to the love they hold for each other
Tybalt	Tybalt's obsession with family honour and his desire to kill Romeo for attending the Capulet ball highlight the hatred between the Capulets and Montagues.
Mercutio	Duelling was an established way of restoring honour between two parties in disagreement and Mercutio steps in to fight Tybalt, when Romeo refuses, to protect Romeo's honour: ▪ "pluck your sword"
Lord Capulet	Juliet's refusal to marry Paris results in Lord Capulet's threat to disown her as he perceives her act of defiance as a sign of dishonour: ▪ "Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch"


Your notes

Why does Shakespeare use the theme of honour in his play?

1. Setting and atmosphere

- Shakespeare establishes honour as a central value which governs many characters' lives
- Creates tension and violence as honour is tied to family pride and revenge

2. Plot driver

- Drives the conflict between the characters as the desire to defend family honour results in the death of Mercutio and Tybalt
- Influences the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet as their rejection of family honour leads to their demise

3. Audience appeal

- Appeals to Shakespeare's audience as they would have associated Italy with powerful families and the obsession with status: a place where a strong sense of family honour could often lead to feuding and

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acts of revenge

4. Dramatic device

- Heightens the dramatic tension as honour is a constant source of friction between the Montagues and the Capulets


Your notes

Exam-style questions on the theme of honour

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of honour:

- How does Shakespeare portray the conflict between honour and love in the play? (You could start with Act 3, Scene 1.)
- To what extent does honour dictate the action of the characters in the play? (You could start with Act 1, Scene 1.)

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Romeo & Juliet Key Theme: Fate

Your notes

Fate mind map

The theme of fate in each act of Romeo and Juliet:

Act	Quote	Summary
1	"A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life" - The Chorus	The Prologue informs the audience of Romeo and Juliet's fate in the play
2	"But He that hath the steerage of my course, direct my sail" - Romeo	Romeo entrusts his life to fate, suggesting that he is powerless to control events
3	"O, I am Fortune's Fool!" - Romeo	Romeo addresses fate after the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, implying he has little autonomy over his life
4	"Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again" - Juliet	As Juliet prepares to drink the potion, she says goodbye to her mother, foreshadowing the separation fate will bring
5	"I defy you, Stars!" - Romeo	Upon learning of Juliet's death, Romeo curses fate and resolves to kill himself beside Juliet

What are the elements of fate in Romeo and Juliet?

Shakespeare uses the theme of fate to reinforce the idea that the characters are powerless against the larger forces of destiny. The elements of fate in the play include:

- **The Prologue:** Shakespeare introduces the ill-fated relationship between Romeo and Juliet:
  - They are described as "a pair of star-crossed lovers" whose love is "death-marked"
  - The playwright ensures the audience is aware from the very beginning that their tragic end is inevitable and unavoidable
- **Romeo's encounter with a Capulet servant:** As a consequence, Romeo attends the Capulet ball and meets Juliet:
  - Romeo claims it is his "fortune" to have read the invitation
- **Friar Laurence's warning:** Romeo is advised that people's impulsive actions often have very negative and destructive consequences:

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- It suggests Romeo's fate is already predetermined: “These violent delights have violent ends”

- **Premonitions and warnings:** Romeo and Juliet repeatedly see omens suggesting that the love between them is in opposition to their destiny:
  - “Methinks I see… / As one dead in the bottom of a tomb”
- **Mercutio’s death:** After being stabbed, Mercutio states “a plague o’ both your houses”:
  - His curse acts as a reminder that the tragedy is fated by other characters’ actions
- **The plague:** Fate intervenes as a plague prevents Friar John from delivering Friar Laurence’s letter to Romeo and as a result, Romeo buys the poison to kill himself:
  - Fate contributes to the tragic timing of Romeo’s suicide and Juliet’s awakening


Your notes

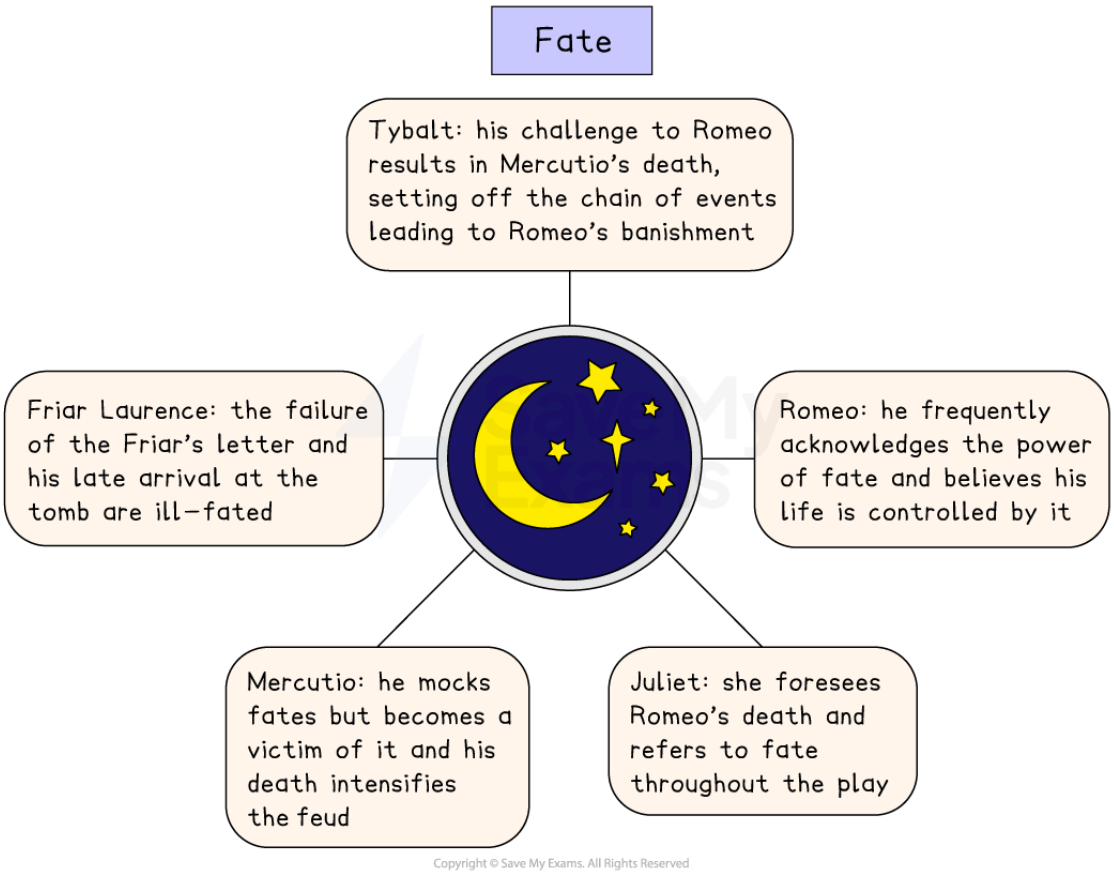
The impact of fate on characters

Fate is a powerful force in the play and its significance is evident from the Prologue’s opening words when the tragic outcome of the play’s events is established. There are many references to the universe and stars in the play and many characters are impacted by fate.

Fate contributes to the dramatic tension and the tragic tone of the play.

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Your notes



Fate in Romeo and Juliet

Character	Impact
Romeo	Romeo repeatedly refers to fate throughout the play and is aware of the power fate holds over his life, saying he feels something is "hanging in the stars": ▪ After killing Tybalt, Romeo acknowledges that fate has led him to disastrous consequences: "O, I am Fortune's Fool!"
Juliet	Juliet also repeatedly refers to fate and foreshadows Romeo's death: "... and, when he shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars": ▪ Juliet is forced to turn to Friar Lawrence leading to the fateful plan
Mercutio	Mercutio mocks the idea of fate but becomes a victim of it, with his death escalating the feud even further:

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	▪ As Mercutio dies, he bitterly acknowledges his fate: "They have made worms' meat of me"
Tybalt	Tybalt's challenge of a duel with Romeo leads to Mercutio's death which sets off a chain of events leading to Romeo's banishment: ▪ "This day's black fate on more days doth depend"
Friar Laurence	It is ill-fated that the Friar's letter fails to get to Romeo and that the Friar fails to reach the tomb before the mistake is made and Romeo kills himself: ▪ "neglecting it [the letter] / May do much danger"


Your notes

Why does Shakespeare use the theme of fate in his play?

1. Setting and atmosphere

- Creates an element of inevitability
- Establishes a tragic tone

2. Plot driver

- Creates a cyclical structure from the opening scene to the final act
- Influences crucial plot points such as Romeo and Juliet's initial meeting and eventual deaths

3. Audience appeal

- Reflects the Elizabethan's fascination with astrology and predestination
- Appeals to both Elizabethan and modern audiences through the universal theme of fate and love

4. Dramatic device

- Creates dramatic irony which means the audience is fully aware of the tragic ending
- Adds tension and suspense as the characters attempt to defy fate

Exam-style questions on the theme of fate

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of fate:

- How does Shakespeare use the deaths of Romeo and Juliet to reinforce the inevitability of fate? (You could start with the Prologue.)

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- Explore how fate manipulates time and events, leading to the tragic ending of the play. (You could start with Act 3, Scene 1.)


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Romeo & Juliet: Characters

Your notes

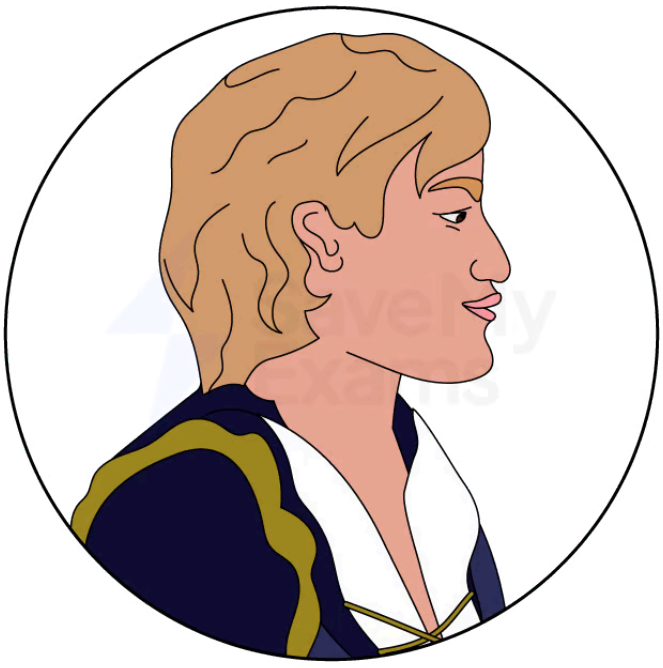
Characters

It is useful to consider each character as representing a function in the play. Understanding Shakespeare's purpose for each character will help produce a sophisticated analysis. Interpreting the play's ideas by considering how each character may represent an idea, and how characters oppose each other or react to each other, is crucial.

Below you will find character profiles of:

- **Romeo**
- **Juliet**
- **Tybalt**
- **Benvolio**
- **Mercutio**
- **Friar Laurence**

Romeo Montague



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- The **eponymous protagonist** , an **heir** to the Montagues, is the **tragic hero**. This means:
  - He displays heroic characteristics
  - He has a fatal character flaw (**hamartia**): his impulsiveness
  - Despite his **hamartia**, the audience does feel sympathy for him
  - He is doomed to die at the end of the play
- At the beginning of the play, Romeo is presented as:
  - **Introvert**: he is alone and uninterested in the family battles
  - **Brooding** : Romeo considers the links between love and hate
  - Sensitive: Romeo ponders the complex feelings unrequited love brings
  - Obsessive: Shakespeare shows his obsession with a superficial **courtly love**
- For Romeo, there is tension between the heroic and tragic aspects of his character. He lurches from love to obsessive love and from one reckless action to another
- In the **Rising action** of the play, Romeo's **fatal flaw** is exposed at the Capulet ball
  - Romeo is fateful and **impulsive**, telling **fate** to, "Direct my sails"
  - He is shown to be reckless about danger: "Stony limits cannot hold love out"
  - Romeo is admonished for being **impulsive** and **obsessive**: swearing his undying love to Juliet so "rash, so sudden"
- Despite his **hamartia**, the audience feels sympathy for him:
  - He shares a romantic, religious **sonnet** with Juliet, suggesting purity in their love
  - He prefers peace to violence, endearing him to a war-weary **Elizabethan** audience
  - He is presented as **autonomous** in his relationships with friends and family
- By the climax, Romeo acknowledges his **fatalistic** {Error #829843: Missing popover abc123} attitude: "I am fortune's fool!"
  - He is forced to fight for family honour, despite his protests about loving the Capulets
  - His **impulsive** actions, murdering Tybalt in revenge, lead to his downfall
- At the end of the play, Romeo takes his **fate** into his own hands and defies the stars
  - Romeo is shown as desperate, implying his isolation due to his **impulsive** actions
  - Romeo is presented as obsessed with love, even in death: "Thus with a kiss, I die"

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- His **fatal flaw** results in Juliet's death as well as his own

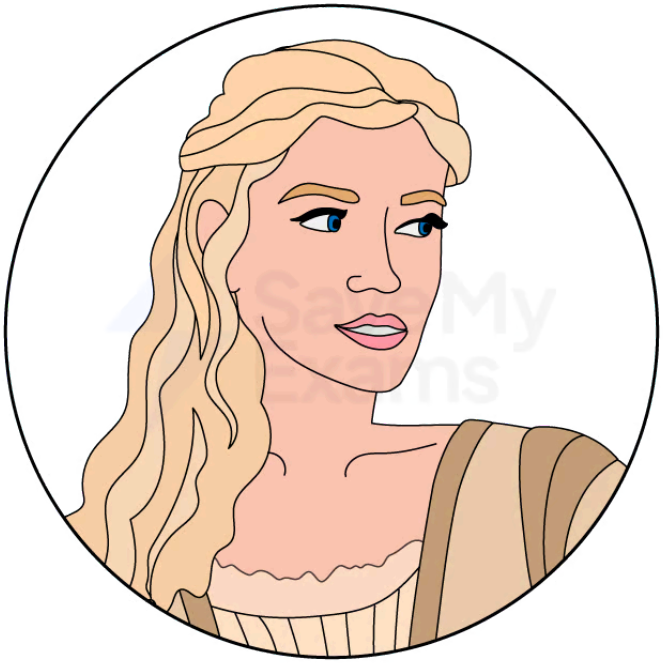
Your notes

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Your exam paper will contain an extract that will hold some significance to the play as a whole. Examiners will always award the highest marks to those students who refer to the plot and character beyond just the extract. Think of the extract as a springboard to the rest of the play, and take a whole-text approach to writing your essay.

In practice, this means it is very successful to reference other parts of the play that relate to the extract, and even better if they contrast with the ideas or characterisation that Shakespeare is presenting in the chosen extract. So think: does Shakespeare present this character differently in other parts of the play? Do we see any character development? What ideas is he exploring when showing this contrast? You don't always need to use quotations to show these changes, with the exam board suggesting that "looking at contrasts and parallels in characters and situations at different points in the text" is just as successful.

Juliet Capulet


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- The **eponymous** character, daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet could be seen as a second **tragic hero**

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- One of Juliet's fatal character flaws (**hamartia**) is her defiance of family duty
- Her tragic death, however, is presented as an act of desperation and powerlessness, challenging audience perceptions of gender roles and traditions

- Juliet is presented as **autonomous** , willing to defy her family duties
  - She tells her mother marriage is an honour she "dreams not of"
  - She tells Romeo she will no longer be a Capulet if he swears his love for her
- Juliet is presented as sensible and cautious about the dangers of the **feud**
  - Juliet advises Romeo to be more constant and less rash
  - She warns him of the dangers associated with their love
  - She understands her love for Romeo is a love "sprung from hate"
- By the climax of the play, Juliet is presented as desperate and powerless due to **societal norms**
  - Her nurse forsakes her and she is isolated from her family, showing the impact of family conflict
  - Juliet's anguish and will to avoid marriage to Paris is made clear: "if all else fail, myself have power to die", suggesting her need for **autonomy**
  - She welcomes her fated, tragic suicide ("Happy dagger") as her best choice
- Shakespeare presents her as a character who **subverts** the typical attributes of women of that time:
  - She is not dutiful: she does not do what her father tells her and is not loyal to her family
  - She is not **submissive**: she asks Romeo to be sure of his promises
  - She is strong: she refuses to resist the mounting pressures
  - She is **autonomous**: she chooses her own **fate**


Your notes

Tybalt Capulet

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- Tybalt acts as a contrast to the character of Romeo. In literature, this is known as being a **foil**:
  - A **foil** (Tybalt) is used to contrast with the characteristics of a **protagonist** (Romeo)
  - A **foil, therefore,** highlights character traits that are very particular to the protagonist, that an author wants to explore
- Tybalt is shown as having typical masculine traits
  - His attitudes contrast Romeo's
  - He is a passionate fighter for his family's honour, unlike Romeo
  - In the first scene, he is eager to kill Benvolio and all Montagues, while Romeo is absent
  - Unlike Romeo, Tybalt is often the instigator of battles, seeking it out repeatedly
  - Unlike Romeo, he is not interested in love, preferring the company of males
- Tybalt represents **societal norms**, challenging audience perceptions of masculinity
  - Tybalt's hatred of Romeo is presented as meaningless, and based on a desire for aggression
  - He does not understand Romeo's **submissive** nature
  - He tells audiences Romeo creates the "bitterest gall" in him

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Your notes

- His desire for revenge is shown as obsessive and violent
- His death is a **catalyst** for Romeo's downfall and Mercutio's curse
- Shakespeare punishes his hatred when Romeo murders him in revenge

- Shakespeare shows through Tybalt the violence and hatred inherent in the family **feud**
- Shakespeare uses his character, Tybalt, to address the conflicts in the **Elizabethan** religious war

Benvolio Montague


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- In the play, Benvolio acts as Romeo's confidante and ally, representing male friendship and support
  - He is Romeo's friend and cousin
  - Lord Capulet relies on him to console Romeo
  - He represents, through his name, goodness and **benevolence**
  - He advises Romeo away from his **unrequited love**
  - He hurries Romeo into the Capulet ball and away from deep thought
- Shakespeare's function for Benvolio is to act as a contrast to the more aggressive male characters
  - He highlights contrasts between aggression and peace

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- In the first scene, he is a peaceful character, the **foil** to Tybalt: “I do but keep the peace”
- Instead of revenge, Benvolio prefers forgiveness: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do"

- Benvolio is presented as a level-headed and sensible young man, questioning the **feud**
  - He identifies that the quarrel is “between our masters”, presenting the young males as innocent victims
  - He warns Mercutio of the “mad blood stirring” before the fight leading to Mercutio’s death

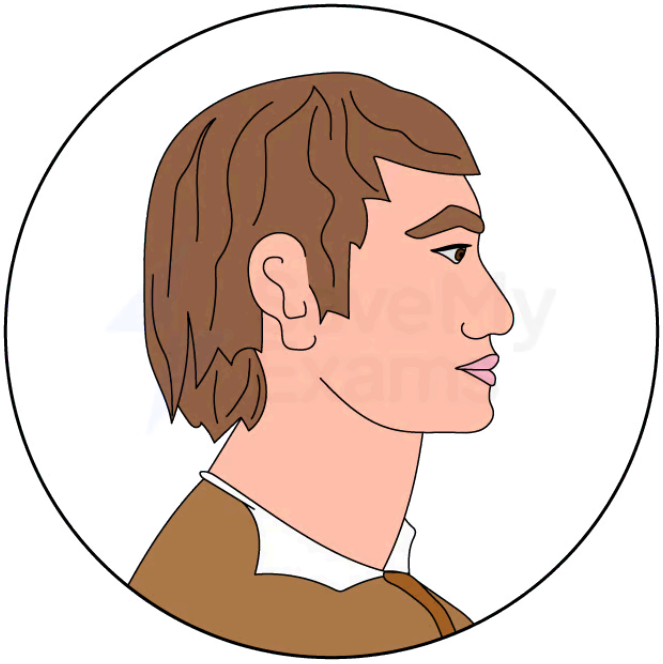
Your notes

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Consider the character as serving independent functions which drive the themes of the plot. Shakespeare uses characters to highlight different elements of society, and, particularly in Romeo and Juliet, the characters have a huge influence on each other’s progression throughout the play.

Other characters

Mercutio


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- Mercutio functions to provide comedic relief against the intense characters of Romeo and Tybalt
  - Mercutio's dialogue is dramatic and humorous, mocking seriousness
  - He lures Tybalt into a witty, playful argument
  - His name represents mercury or 'quicksilver', known for its unpredictability
  - His actions change from playful to serious very quickly
  - Mercury is also the name of the Winged Messenger in Greek mythology
  - Mercutio's final lines curse the houses of Capulet and Montague
  - His final curse presents a darker side to his **flippant** nature
- Mercutio's views on love are **cynical ,** representing attitudes often present in **courtly love**
  - He suggests he is heart-broken, telling Romeo that love is not a tender thing
  - He sarcastically advises Romeo to soar above love
  - He delivers a **soliloquy** about a troublesome love fairy, Queen Mab
- Mercutio represents the typically likable masculine character traits of **Elizabethan** England
  - He is reckless and aggressive, quick to seek out conflict
  - He believes in fighting for family honour
  - He believes murder for family or revenge is holy and justified
  - He believes Romeo's desire for peace is **submissive** and dishonourable
  - He casually picks a fight with Tybalt Capulet despite his friend's warning and the Prince's law against public brawls
  - This scene mirrors the first scene of the play, suggesting the cycle of violence in **Elizabethan** England

Friar Laurence


Your notes

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Your notes


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- Friar Laurence, a father figure to Romeo and aid to Juliet, represents the importance of religion in **Elizabethan** society
  - He advises Romeo to "go wisely and slowly" with his love affairs
  - Friar Laurence helps Juliet be with Romeo, linking true love with religious values
- Friar Laurence symbolises peace brought about by religion
  - He marries the lovers in secret in a bid to turn "rancour into pure love"
  - The friar's character promotes an end to fighting and hatred
- The friar is presented as opposed to the **Great Chain of Being**
  - He allies himself with the children of the two noble families
  - He opposes the natural **Hierarchy** : parents are placed above children
  - He opposes the **patriarchy** by defying Lord Capulet
- The friar **subverts Elizabethan** attitudes about religion and witchcraft
  - He refers to the good and evil inherent in all things as the natural state
  - He contrasts virtue with vice, flowers with poison, delights with violence, graves and wombs

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- He concocts potions and poisons from herbs and plants, traditionally linked to witchcraft
- His potion is ultimately the reason for the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet
- Shakespeare presents **ambiguity** with the friar's character
- He is often considered to blame for the **tragedy**, suggesting Shakespeare's reference to religion as dangerous


Your notes

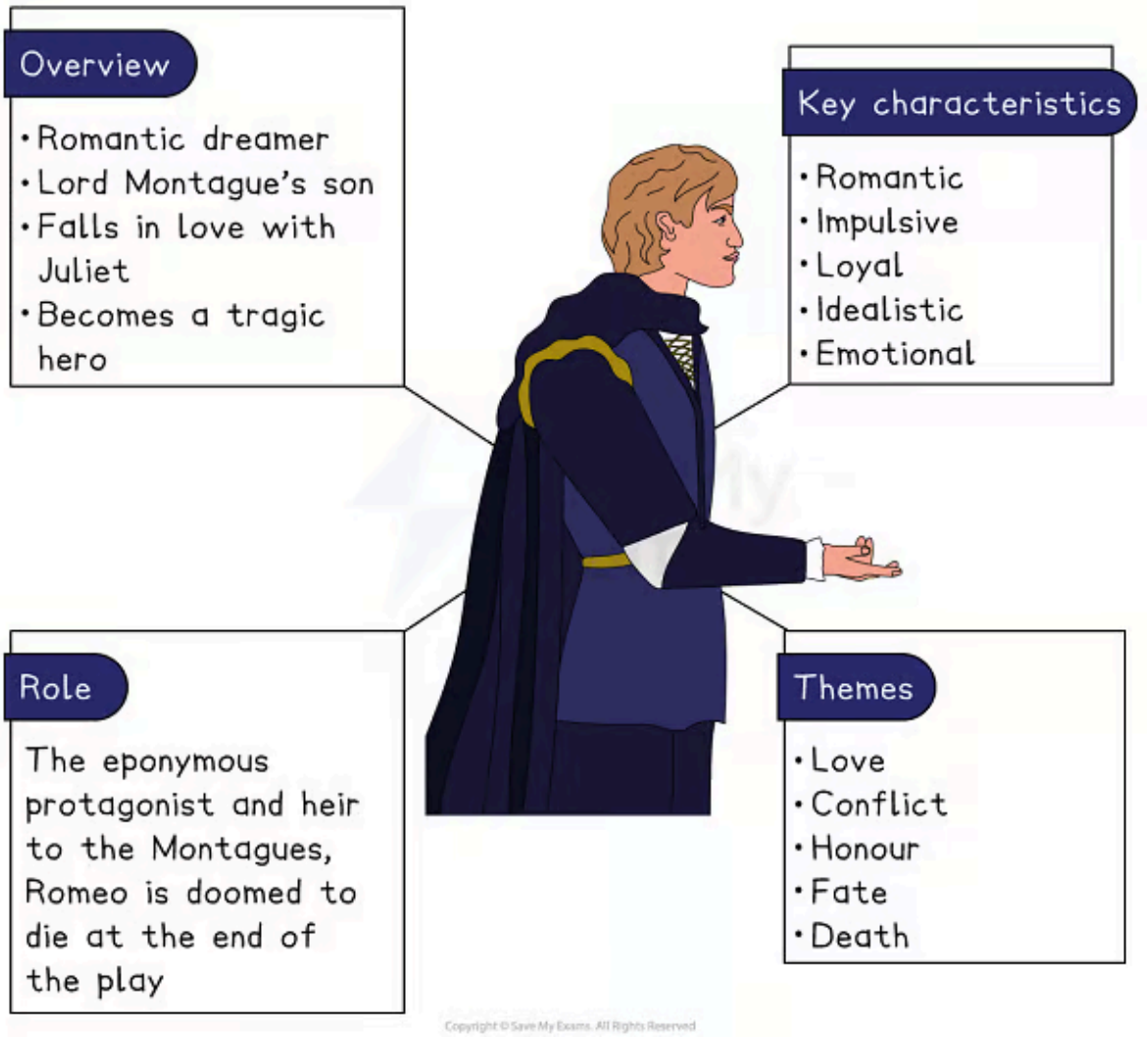
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Romeo Character Analysis

Your notes

Romeo is a passionate, impulsive and idealistic young man whose intense love for Juliet drives him to make reckless decisions, ultimately leading to his tragic downfall.

Romeo character summary



Romeo character summary

Why is Romeo important?

At the beginning of the play and Romeo is depicted as:

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Your notes

- **Romantic** and **idealistic**: Romeo is introduced as a character deeply in love with the idea of love. Before meeting Juliet he is infatuated with Rosaline, describing his feelings with poetic language and exaggerated emotion. Benvolio describes him as foolishly wallowing in self-pity in a sycamore grove for his "love", Rosaline: "She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow / Do I live dead, that live to tell it now". He becomes infatuated with Juliet at first sight too, although his love for her is more intense and genuine. Romeo's idealistic perspective is evident through his instant willingness to marry her, even though they belong to feuding families.
- **Impulsive**: Romeo's impulsive nature is evident from his first appearance where he falls in love with Juliet. He is immediately captivated: "O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright". His impulsive decision to marry Juliet without considering the long-term consequences demonstrates his tendency to act on emotions rather than logic.

As the play unfolds, Romeo becomes increasingly involved in tragic circumstances and is portrayed as:

- **Reckless** and **emotional**: Romeo's reckless behaviour intensifies as his love for Juliet deepens. His decision to kill Tybalt out of revenge is driven by emotion and marks his turning point in the play. His inability to temper his emotions (both love and anger) leads to his exile and downfall.
- **Tragic hero**: Romeo's idealistic view of love, impulsive choices and unwavering devotion to Juliet define him as a tragic hero. Romeo's death by his own hand is both dramatic and romantic. He takes the apothecary's poison and dies at Juliet's side, believing that he is joining her in death.

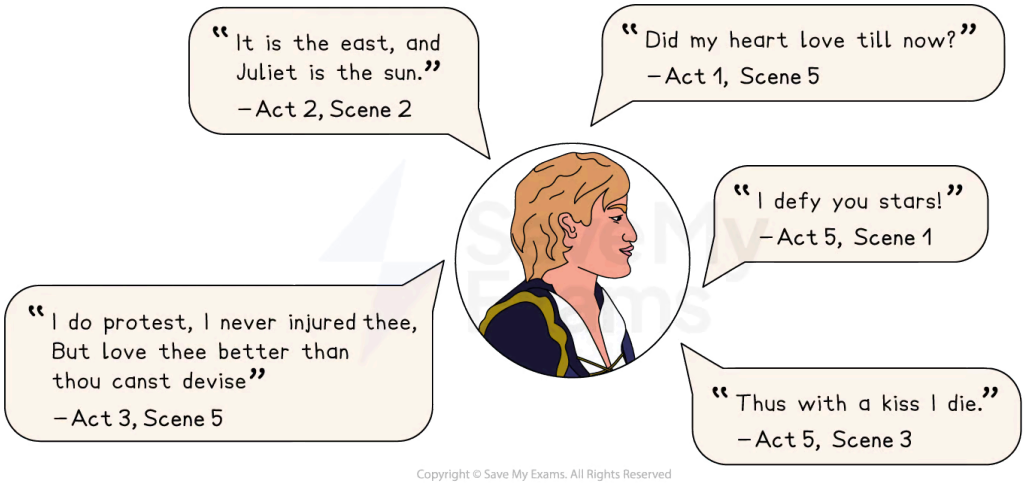
Romeo's use of language

The language Shakespeare uses for Romeo, from elevated iambic pentameter to rhyming verse and hyperbolic statements, reflect his impulsive and romantic nature.

- **Iambic pentameter** and **rhymed verse**: Romeo frequently speaks in iambic pentameter giving his words a rhythmic and elevated quality that aligns with his role as a romantic, noble character. This formal style also conveys his youthful idealism and deep emotions, especially when expressing his love for Juliet.
- **Hyperbole**: Romeo frequently uses hyperbole to express the overwhelming nature of his love for Juliet. By exaggerating his feelings, he conveys a love which is all consuming. For instance he declares "Call me but love and an' I'll be new baptis'd; / Henceforth I never will be Romeo", suggesting that his identity, family ties and even his name are insignificant compared to his love for Juliet. His use of hyperbole also demonstrates his youthful impulsiveness.
- **Emotive:** as the play progresses, Romeo's language becomes increasingly emotional and shifts towards more monosyllabic expressions, reflecting his growing sense of desperation. For example, Romeo's initial reaction to Balthasar's shocking news about Juliet's death is one of disbelief, shown through his questioning "Is it e'en so?" His mood quickly shifts to anger as he exclaims "I defy you and stars!" and his behaviour and language becomes increasingly erratic and emotional.

Romeo key quotes:

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Romeo key quotes

Your notes

Romeo character development

Act 1, Scene 1	Act 2, Scene 2	Act 3, Scene 1	Act 5, Scene 3
Romeo's melancholy: In his first appearance, Romeo laments his unrequited love for Rosaline. This scene introduces the audience to Romeo's sensitive and passionate nature foreshadowing the powerful emotions that will later define his relationship with Juliet.	**The balcony scene:** Romeo delivers a soliloquy in which he remarks on Juliet's beauty and declares his love for her. This is a pivotal moment, revealing Romeo's impulsive and idealised view of love.	**Romeo's rage:** After Mercutio's death, Romeo is overcome with rage and grief leading him to seek revenge and kill Tybalt. This moment marks a turning point for Romeo and his actions in this scene foreshadow the play's tragic events.	**Romeo's final soliloquy**: Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo delivers a final soliloquy filled with despair as he prepares to take his own life. This scene demonstrates Romeo's tragic flaw (his impulsive and emotionally driven decisions) which ultimately leads to his death.

Romeo character interpretation

Love in Elizabethan Verona

At the time the play was first performed, Verona was reputedly famous for its ill-fated lovers. It was said to be the setting of a tale by Luigi da Porto which featured the young lovers Romeo Montecchi and Giulietta

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Cappelletti, which is believed to have inspired the story of Romeo and Juliet. This underscores the authenticity of the love between the two characters.


Your notes

Suicide and religion

During Shakespeare's era, suicide was considered a grave sin by his predominantly Christian audience who believed it would result in eternal damnation. The audience were perhaps unlikely to have felt sympathy for Romeo's and Juliet's sinful acts, although society may have been more accepting of an honourable suicide. Alternatively, Romeo and Juliet's final act could be viewed as a powerful testament to the depth of their love and their thoughts of suicide are used to illustrate the desperation they feel in their separation.

Astrology and fate

Romeo is aware of the power fate holds over his life: "O, I am fortune's fool!" Astrology captivated Elizabethan audiences who widely believed that the stars and planets influenced emotions and destiny. During this period, people sought ways to understand and explain how much control they had over their own lives. Some of these ideas were rooted in the philosophy of the 6th-century Roman thinker Boethius who suggested that life is governed by both God and fortune.

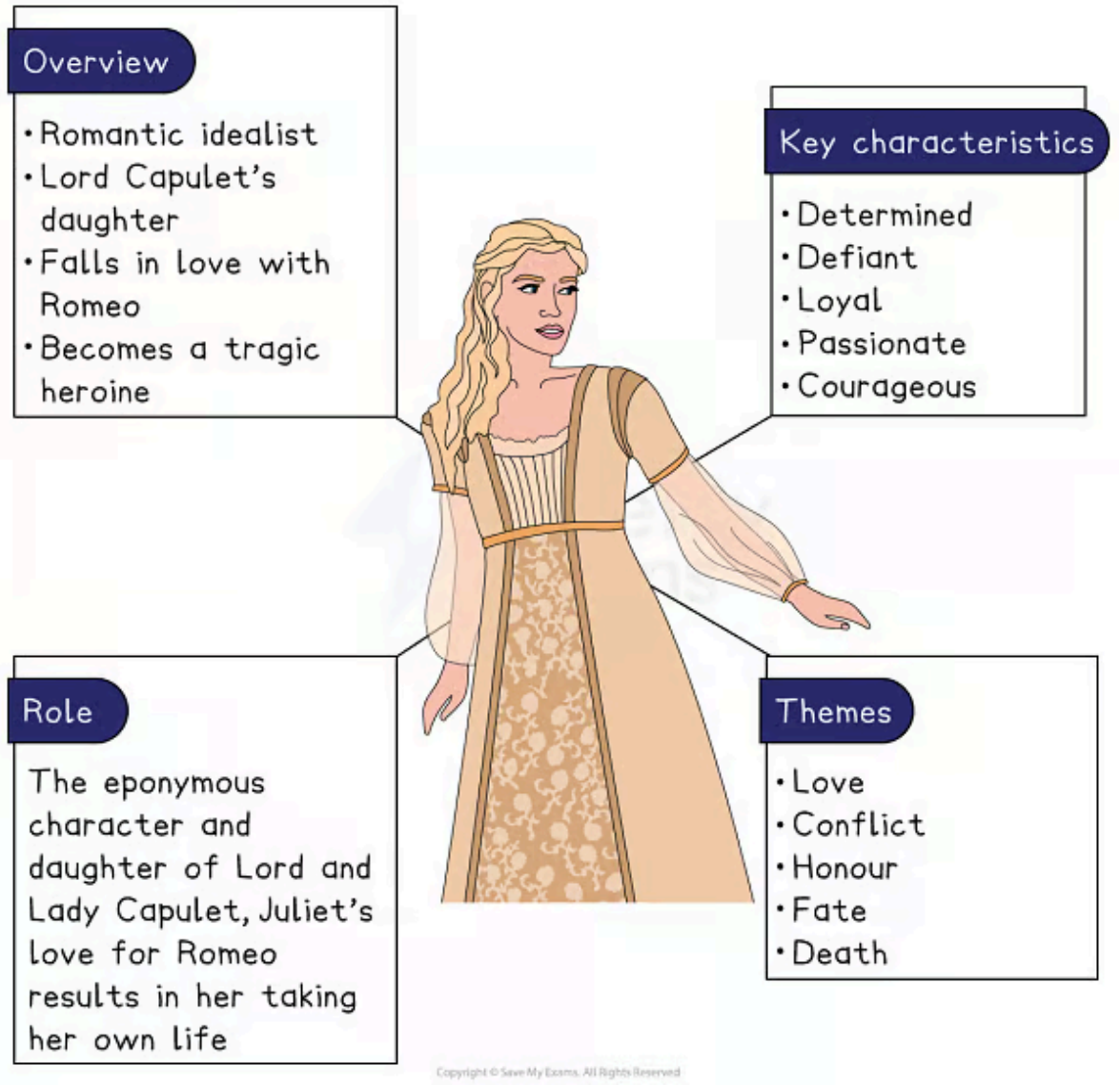
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Juliet Character Analysis

Your notes

Juliet is a determined, cautious and defiant character whose deep love for Romeo makes her defy her family and societal expectations, which results in her tragic end.

Juliet character summary



Juliet character summary

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Why is Juliet important?


Your notes

At different parts of the play, Juliet is depicted as:

- **Innocent** and **obedient**: at the outset of the play, Juliet is presented as a young girl who dutifully follows her parents' wishes. She initially has little interest in love or marriage and responds to her mother's suggestion of marrying Paris with politeness: "It is an honour that I dream not of."
- **Romantic** and **idealistic:** after meeting Romeo, Juliet transforms into a more romantic and idealistic character. Her love for Romeo is portrayed as sincere and intense, quickly overtaking her duty to her family.
- **Impulsive** and **disobedient**: like Romeo, Juliet's impulsive nature begins to emerge as her love for him deepens. On the balcony she urges Romeo to "Deny thy father and refuse thy name". She becomes impetuous and decisive when she marries Romeo in secret without her parents' permission and this disobedience marks a change in her character. Her impulsive decisions, such as drinking the sleeping potion to avoid marrying Paris, stem from her desperation to be with Romeo even at great personal cost.

Juliet's use of language

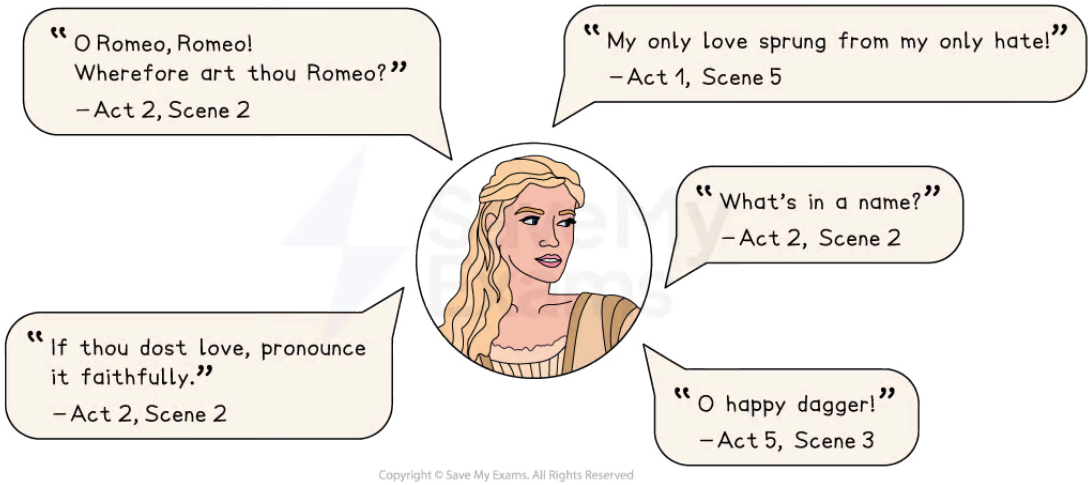
The language Shakespeare uses for Juliet — elevated iambic pentameter, rhyming verse and her use of celestial imagery — reflects her passionate and romantic nature.

- **Iambic pentameter** and **rhymed verse**: Juliet often speaks in iambic pentameter which gives her dialogue a rhythmic and elevated tone. This formal style aligns with her status as a noble and romantic heroine. Juliet's early language reflects her innocence and childish ways. Upon finding out about her possible betrothal, she is non-committal: "But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it fly". Her use of rhymed verse in scenes like the balcony scene convey her youthfulness and idealism, as well as her intense love for Romeo.
- **Celestial imagery**: Juliet's language is often filled with romantic, celestial imagery which reflects the transformation she undergoes after falling in love with Romeo. Initially innocent and obedient, she later adopts a more passionate nature. For example, when she states: "When he shall die / Take him and cut him out in little stars" she is suggesting that his appearance and love is so radiant that it deserves to be immortalised in the heavens. Her use of celestial imagery reflects the intensity of her love and her idealisation of Romeo.
- **Emotive**: as the play progresses, Juliet's language, like Romeo's, becomes more emotional and urgent, reflecting her growing desperation. Her soliloquies, particularly the one before she takes the sleeping potion, reveal her deep fear: "I have a faint cold fear that thrills through my veins".

  Popover: belonging or relating to heaven

Juliet key quotes

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Juliet key quotes

Your notes

Juliet character development

Act 1, Scene 3	Act 2, Scene 2	Act 3, Scene 2	Act 4, Scene 3
Juliet's innocence: In her first appearance, Juliet is introduced as an obedient girl unfamiliar with love and uninterested in marriage. This scene conveys Juliet's innocence and her conformity to both family and societal expectations.	**The balcony scene:** Juliet reveals her love for Romeo but struggles between her love for him and her loyalty to her family. Her soliloquy, "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" questions the significance of a name and conveys her idealistic beliefs about love. This scene signifies her growing independence.	**Juliet's desperation:** Upon hearing of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment, Juliet becomes grief-stricken and increasingly desperate. This scene marks a turning point in Juliet's character.	**Juliet's fear:** Juliet delivers a soliloquy just before taking the sleeping potion. Her language becomes increasingly emotional and fragmented as she considers the horrific possibilities of the potion killing her or waking up in the tomb and going mad.

Juliet character interpretation

Juliet and the patriarchy

During Shakespeare's era, society was predominantly patriarchal with women's futures typically controlled by their fathers. Juliet is only 13 years old, but marriage at such a young age was not uncommon during the period in which the play is set. Marriage was considered a sacred union ordained by God and viewed as the foundation of society, with its breakdown seen as a danger to social order. Arranged marriages were

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common, especially among wealthy families where parents selected spouses for their children to secure social and economic advantages. Daughters like Juliet were often used as a means to elevate family status and wives were expected to obey their husbands. Juliet's refusal to marry Paris and her defiance of her father highlight the patriarchal structure of the Capulet family and the societal expectations of the time. Juliet's defiance in refusing to marry Paris would have likely shocked a contemporary audience as her behaviour would have been seen as rebellious and disrespectful.


Your notes

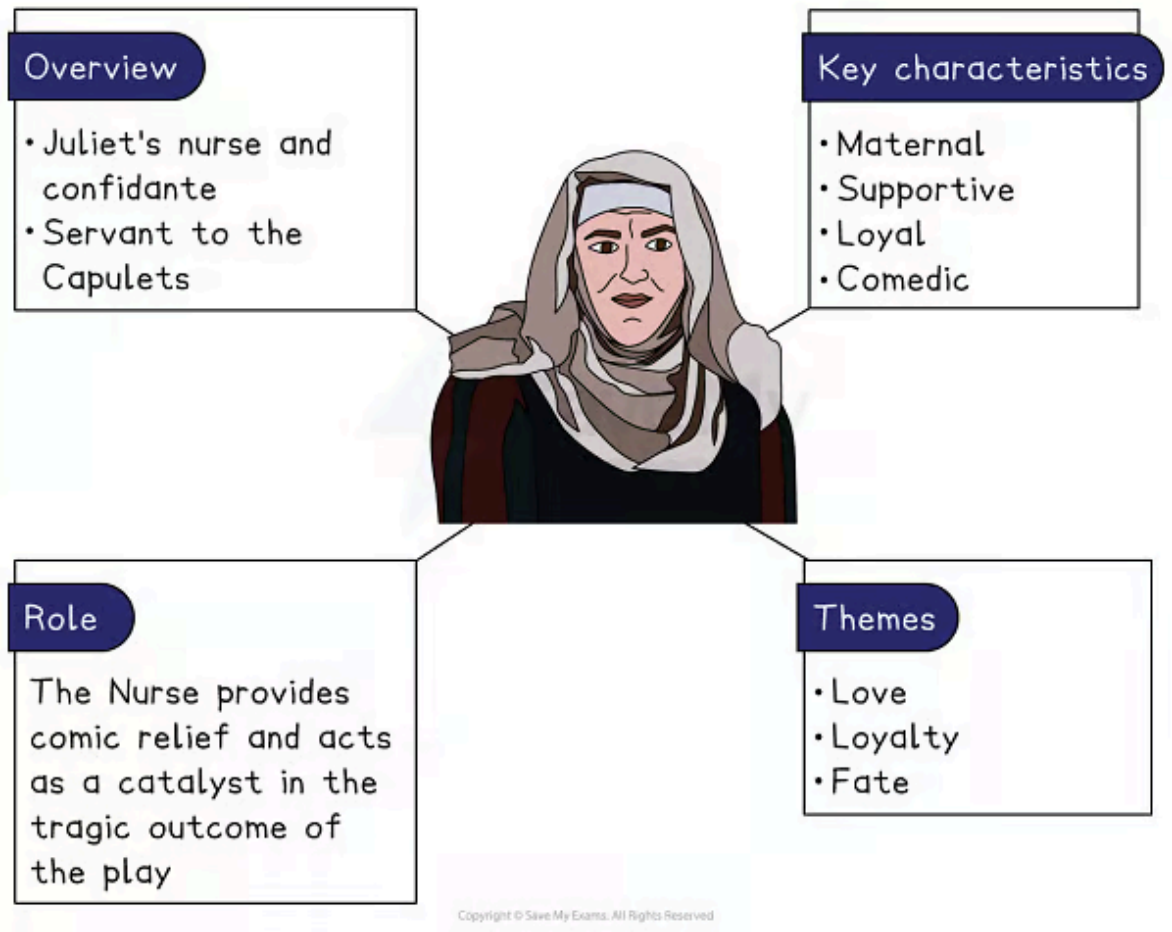
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The Nurse Character Analysis

Your notes

The Nurse is a loyal, maternal character and is Juliet's closest companion and confidante.

The Nurse character summary



The Nurse character summary

Why is the Nurse important?

The Nurse is depicted as:

- **Maternal**: the Nurse has cared for Juliet her entire life ("Faith, I can tell her age unto an hour") and therefore has a strong maternal relationship with Juliet. Their relationship is one based on love and trust. She is presented as being closer to Juliet than Juliet's own mother, as Lady Capulet is unable to speak with her daughter without the Nurse's presence: "Nurse, come back again".

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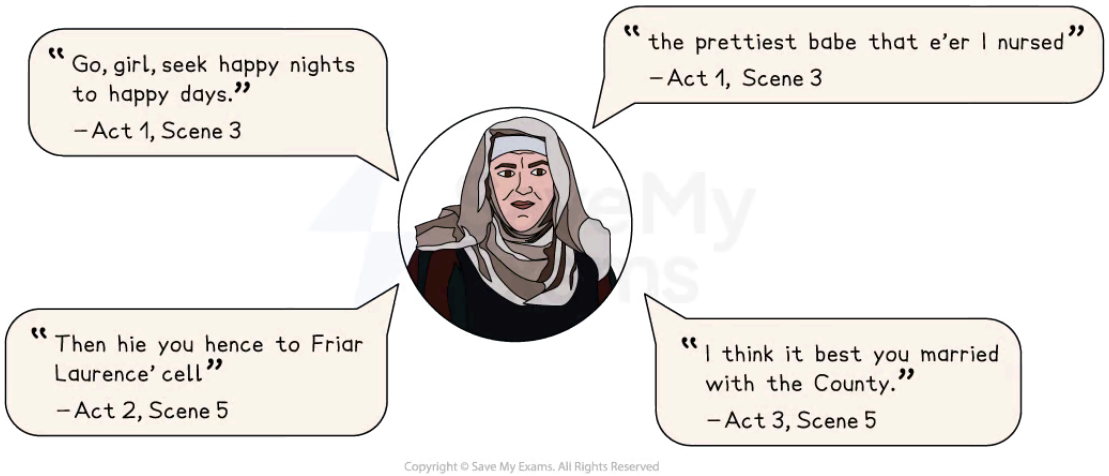
- **Supportive** and **pragmatic**: the Nurse wants Juliet to be happy and collaborates with Romeo regarding their marriage, stating "there stays a husband to make you a wife". Her attitude could be viewed as pragmatic when she suggests that Juliet commit bigamy by marrying Paris: "I think you are happier in this second match."
- **Loyal**: the Nurse shows initial loyalty to Juliet, even over her master, Lord Capulet. When Lord Capulet threatens to disown Juliet, the Nurse directly apportions blame for the situation on Lord Capulet: "You are to blame, my lord, to rate her so". However, she could also be interpreted as showing respect for the honour of the Capulet household when she later advises Juliet to marry Paris.
- **Comedic**: the Nurse is a source of comedy in a number of different ways. Her teasing of Juliet and use of sexual innuendo lighten the tone of the play. Her **garrulous** character is also in direct contrast to that of Lady Capulet. She provides humour when she withholds information for as long as she can to tease Juliet: "Fie, how my bones ache!"

The Nurse's use of language

Shakespeare has the Nurse use exclamatory statements and sexual humour to both reflect her relatively low social status, but also to reflect her lively nature and closeness to Juliet.

- **Humour** and **bawdy language**: the Nurse engages in sexual and bawdy humour, using innuendo in her references to Juliet's wedding night, such as "Seek happy nights to happy days", implying that Juliet will need to rest in time for her wedding night. This is juxtaposed with the more serious and poetic language used by the other characters. This provides comic relief from the tragic elements of the play and also reflects her lower status.
- **Superlatives** and **exclamatory language**: the Nurse regularly uses superlatives and exclamatory language to convey her emotions and reflect her lively personality. She initially describes Juliet as the "prettiest babe".

The Nurse key quotes



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The Nurse key quotes

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The Nurse character development


Your notes

Act 1, Scene 3	Act 2, Scene 5	Act 3, Scene 2	Act 3, Scene 5
The Nurse's introduction: This scene introduces the Nurse as a maternal figure and establishes her supportive role in Juliet's life. Juliet's close relationship with the Nurse contrasts with the distant relationship she has with her mother.	**The Nurse as Juliet's messenger:** The Nurse acts as a go-between for Juliet and Romeo and facilitates their secret marriage. This scene also establishes the Nurse as comic relief as she teases Juliet.	**The Nurse's news of Tybalt's death:** When the Nurse finds out about Romeo's killing of Tybalt, she panics and becomes motivated by fear. The Nurse is depicted as supportive but she also begins to show a more practical and realistic view of Juliet's situation.	**The Nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris:** This scene marks a change in the relationship between the Nurse and Juliet as Juliet feels abandoned by the Nurse when she advises her to marry Paris. This leads her to seek counsel with Friar Laurence instead.

The Nurse character interpretation

Motherhood

At the time the play was written, it was common for families of a high social class to employ a wet nurse who would raise their children from birth. The wet nurses' own babies had often suffered or died. Both the Nurse and Lord Capulet speak of the loss of children early in the play: Capulet is left with only one child before Juliet's death and the Nurse speaks of her own daughter, Susan, as "with God. She was too good for me". Consequently, a wet nurse might often form a stronger bond with the child than its own parents. This can certainly be said of the Nurse and Juliet.

Expectations of class

Elizabethans would have expected children to obey their parents and not court the views of servants such as a nurse. Servants would have been viewed as belonging to a lower class and therefore unfit to offer guidance on important familial matters such as marriage. The Nurse's role in assisting and advising Juliet would have therefore been uncommon.

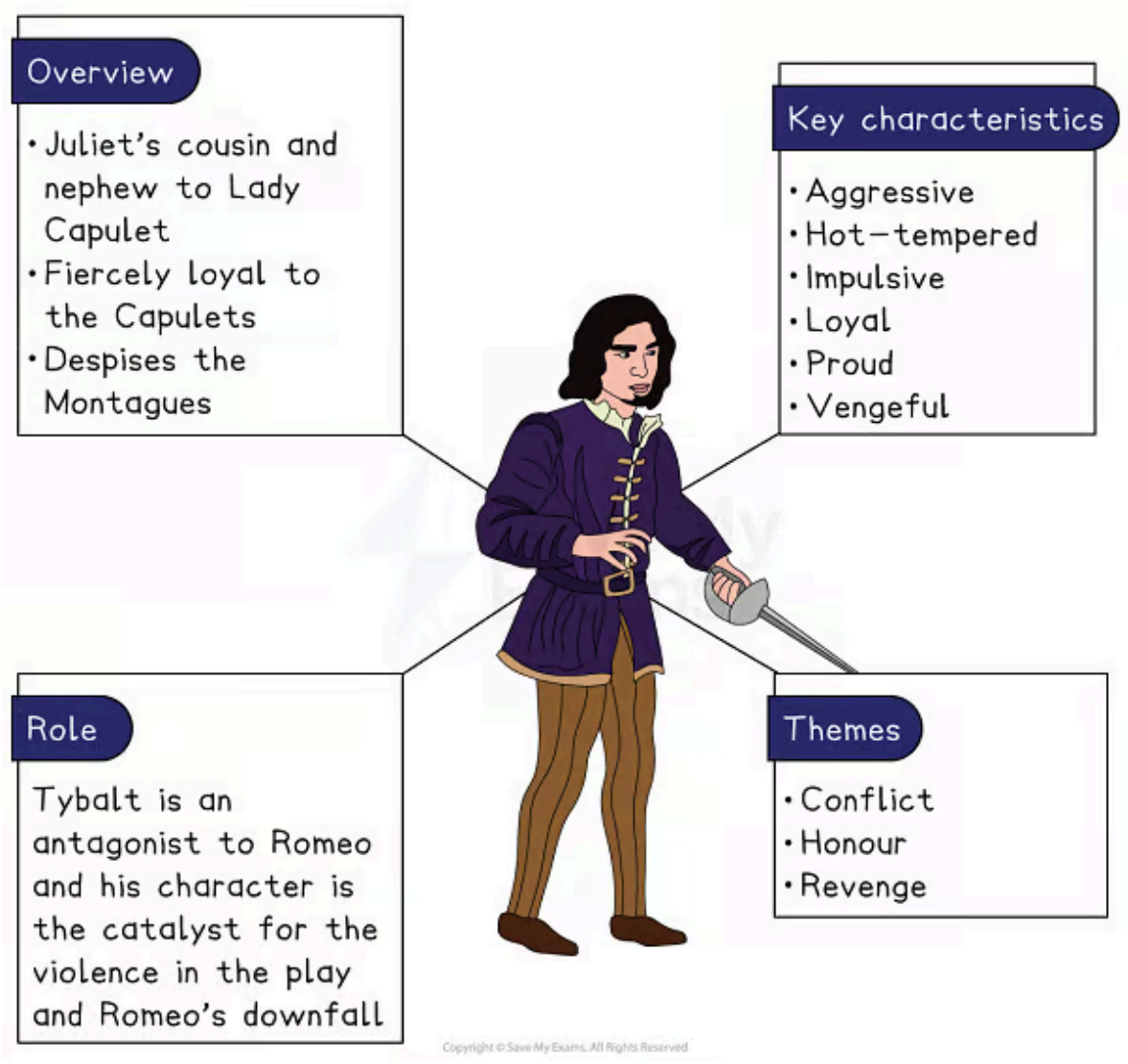
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Tybalt Character Analysis

Your notes

Tybalt is an aggressive, hot-tempered character whose desire for revenge leads to his downfall.

Tybalt character summary



Tybalt character summary

Why is Tybalt important?

Tybalt is depicted as:

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Your notes

- **Hot-tempered** and **impulsive**: although Tybalt initially shows respect to the Capulets through the use of titles "Gentlemen" and "sir", he quickly becomes aggressive. He states pointedly that "you shall find me apt enough" when Mercutio confronts him:
  - This demonstrates his hot temper and extremely impulsive nature. Tybalt is largely driven by hate, and he derides peace: "I hate the word as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee"
- **Loyal** and **proud**: Tybalt's loyalty to his family is one of the reasons for his anger and when he learns of Romeo's presence at the Capulets' party, Lord Capulet tells him to leave Romeo alone:
  - Tybalt is initially loyal to Lord Capulet and obeys his orders, in honour of his position as head of the household, though later he attempts to avenge this perceived dishonour
- **Vengeful**: Tybalt is presented as ruthless and vengeful and as a Capulet he holds a deep hatred for the Montagues:
  - Mercutio's death and Romeo's shame in not responding to Tybalt's insults escalate the violence and lead to Tybalt's death
  - His violent confrontation with Romeo begins with insults: "Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries / That thou hast done me. Therefore turn, and draw"

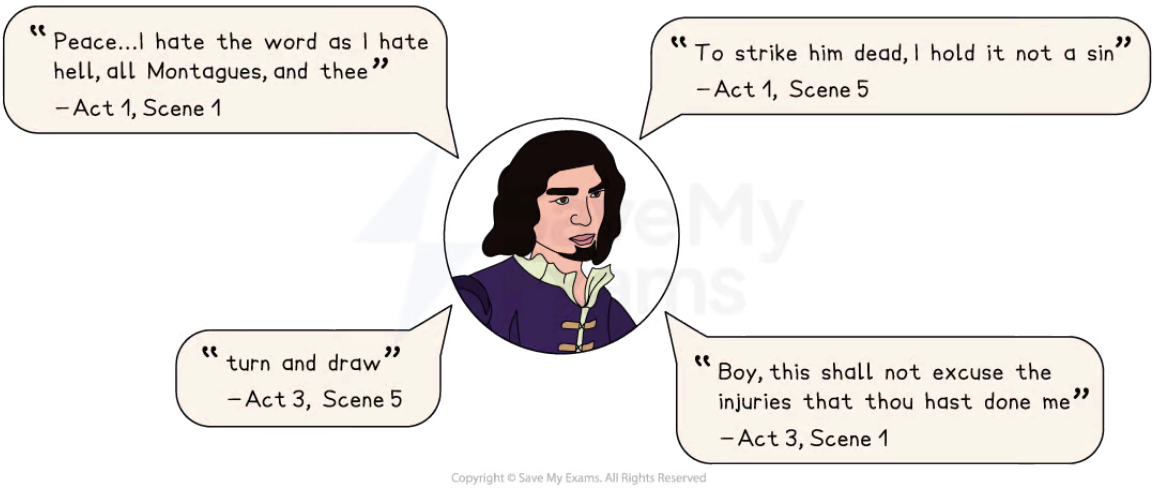
Tybalt's use of language

The language Shakespeare uses for Tybalt is characterised by menacing and violent vocabulary, as well as exclamatory language, to reflect his impulsive and aggressive nature.

- **Aggressive** and **violent diction:** Tybalt appears as the enemy to peace in the play, as evident through his encounter with the Montagues on the streets of Verona. At the Capulet ball, Tybalt's anger and desire to fight with Romeo are quashed by Lord Capulet, but he states "I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall, / Now seeming sweet, convert to bitt'rest gall". Speaking in rhyming couplets, Tybalt's language is menacing and threatening while his metaphor about sweetness becoming bitterness is foreboding.
- **Hyperbole** and **exclamatory language:** Tybalt's language is frequently exaggerated which is used to convey his intense feelings of hatred and pride. For example, in his opening remarks of the play his fierce exclamation and repetition of the word "peace" indicate his loathing of it. His extreme statements reflect his tendency to resort to violent actions.

Tybalt key quotes

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Tybalt key quotes

Your notes

Tybalt character development

Act 1, Scene 1	Act 1, Scene 5	Act 3, Scene 1
The street brawl: In the first scene of the play, Tybalt is conveyed as an aggressive and hot-tempered character when he confronts the Capulets on the streets of Verona. This immediately links his character to the themes of violence and revenge, which foreshadows the tragic events later in the play.	**The Capulet ball:** When Romeo attends the Capulet ball, Tybalt believes that Romeo has dishonoured his family, despite Lord Capulet's more conciliatory approach. This scene reveals his conviction that he does not recognise the act of murder as a crime if it is in defence of his family honour: "To strike him dead I hold it not a sin".	**Tybalt's death:** Tybalt's violent death at Romeo's hands could be viewed as inevitable after Mercutio has been slain: "Either thou or I, or both, must go with him". His death could be viewed as the event that brings about Juliet's greatest change. She becomes desperate and courageous as she considers suicide rather than marrying Paris.

Tybalt character interpretation

Societal instability

Medieval Italy was well known for its vendettas and deadly feuds, providing an appropriate setting for the long-running feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. The negative impact of warring families and civil disobedience was a serious threat to the stability of society during the late Elizabethan era. The biting of the thumb was seen as an insult and a way of showing dishonour to others. "I will bite my thumb at them,

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which is a disgrace to them if they bear it" is spoken by Sampson in Act 1 and leads to the street brawl between the Capulets and the Montagues.


Your notes

Honour and violence

Tybalt's name itself is related to violence, as he is called "King of Cats". At the time the play was first staged, animals were renowned for their fighting and aggression, thereby accurately reflecting Tybalt's true nature. During the Elizabethan period, duelling was a common means of resolving disputes, especially concerning honour, and many gentlemen carried swords around with them in readiness. Although duelling was considered an honourable means of dealing with disputes, it was illegal. Tybalt is unforgiving in his fury at Romeo and demands that he duel with him: "Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries that thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw". Romeo refuses as he has just secretly married Juliet, leading to Mercutio drawing his sword to challenge Tybalt. In Tybalt's confrontation with Mercutio, he is frustrated as his original intent was to recover his wounded honour in a duel with Romeo.

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Romeo & Juliet: Context


Your notes

Context

Understanding the influences of Renaissance culture and the values inherent in 16th Century Elizabethan life will allow insightful interpretation of Shakespeare's ideas. A perceptive and conceptualised response considers how Elizabethan audiences are challenged while noting the popularity of the play, and how this may suggest themes which are timeless.

Each of the below topics links directly to Shakespeare's ideas in Romeo and Juliet:

- **Love and marriage**
- **Gender roles**
- **Religion and the Great Chain of Being**
- **Elizabethan life**

Love and marriage

- **Courtly love** (romance occurring in the **Elizabethan** court) was intense, melodramatic and often fleeting
  - Romeo's obsessive, impulsive attitude to love is presented as his **fatal flaw**", suggesting Shakespeare's criticism of fickle love
  - Within the culture of **courtly love** and arranged marriages, **Unrequited Love** was common
  - Romeo's melodramatic grief over his **unrequited love** for Rosaline would be familiar and entertaining for **Elizabethan** audiences
  - Shakespeare shows **courtly love** as superficial and fleeting when Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet on the same day
  - Within the culture of **courtly love**, secret and forbidden affairs were common
  - It is said that **Queen Elizabeth I** had a secret affair with the Earl of Leicester
  - Romeo and Juliet is a play predominantly about a forbidden and secret love
  - As the play was written for **Queen Elizabeth I**, Shakespeare could be mirroring her own challenges within forbidden relationships
- The marriage occurred at a much younger age in the **Elizabethan** era
  - The average age of death was 40 years old and marriage would occur at around 13

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Your notes

- Wealthy fathers would arrange marriage once a daughter was able to bear children
- Lord Capulet tells Paris to wait two more summers, until Juliet is "ripe to be a bride", suggesting her duty to become a mother and bear fruit (have children)
- A daughter like Juliet would function to provide an **heir** for the family, a crucial part of progressing bloodlines
- Shakespeare shows Lord Capulet referring to the importance of Juliet's marriage when he calls her the "hopeful lady of my earth"

- **Renaissance** marriages were arranged by the father to improve the family's **Social mobility**
  - For many daughters like Juliet, marriage would be a duty, a diplomatic exchange
  - Shakespeare shows a daughter, Juliet, disobeying these wishes with tragic consequences
  - When Juliet is disowned for defying the **social norms**, Shakespeare shows the impact of family conflict in **Renaissance** culture
  - The final scene instructs audiences to consider the role societal pressures played in the **tragedy**
- **Renaissance** aristocrats believed it foolish to marry for love
  - Romeo and Juliet challenge this idea, defying their families and duties for love
  - Juliet tells audiences she would rather die than be forced to marry Paris, presenting the strength of her emotions to marry on her own terms
  - Shakespeare's work often advocates for pure and lasting love
  - His use of **religious imagery** in the shared **sonnet** between Romeo and Juliet suggests a purity in their love which challenges **social norms**
  - This tragic ending, the pair choosing to die together, symbolises everlasting love
  - The play has been very popular, since its production in 1597, for its themes of pure and infinite love

Gender Roles

- In the **patriarchal** system of **Elizabethan** England, women's status and security depended on the status of their fathers or husbands
  - Women had no right to own property or wealth, even in marriage
  - Single women and relationships outside of marriage were harshly judged
  - **Elizabethan** audiences would understand the sacrifice Juliet makes when she denies a secure and honourable future with Paris
  - Shakespeare presents her decision to defy her father as fatal for her

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Your notes

- Shakespeare criticises the **patriarchal** system, showing audiences Juliet's limited **autonomy** when she claims death is her only choice
- Within marriage, **Elizabethan** women were expected to obey their husbands
  - Shakespeare depicts the obedience of Lady Capulet to her husband as negatively impacting Juliet
  - Shakespeare presents a daughter, Juliet, who defies her father
  - Shakespeare shows how Juliet's isolation leads to drastic reactions and, ultimately, her death
  - His play criticises traditional gender roles in **Elizabethan** families
- Conventional **Elizabethan** males were expected to be strong, aggressive and loyal to their family
  - The first scene presents Lord Montague and Lord Capulet, heads of the feuding families, eager to fight
  - Shakespeare suggests the **feud** is encouraged by those in power
  - Benvolio raises this issue when he says the battle is between "our masters"
  - In the first scene, male servants of the two families begin a petty fight for sheer amusement, suggesting the prevalence of male conflict in **Elizabethan** life
  - Shakespeare symbolises masculine aggression through Tybalt Capulet, who is violent and passionately loyal to his family
  - Shakespeare punishes Tybalt for his traditional attitudes: he is killed by Romeo
- Shakespeare's **tragic hero**, Romeo, does not conform to male stereotypes
  - Mercutio criticises Romeo's peaceful behaviour as dishonourable and **submissive**
  - Romeo recognises his love for Juliet as making him "effeminate" and weak
  - Romeo's later reckless and vengeful violence leads to his downfall and death, as well as Juliet's
  - Shakespeare's tragedy challenges traditional gender roles and societal pressures
  - Mercutio acknowledges the meaningless violence of the **feud** upon his death
  - Shakespeare depicts society's expectations of **Elizabethan** males as dangerous
  - Shakespeare shows the tragic consequences of young men caught up in the **feud** to challenge **social norms**
- **Elizabethan** society was **patriarchal**; it expected women to be obedient and **submissive**
  - Women were viewed as emotionally and mentally **frail** and their opinions were invalid

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- The servants discuss women as "weaker vessels" in the first scene, alluding to their low status in **Elizabethan** society
- Juliet's strength of will and **autonomous** actions oppose traditional gender norms
- Juliet is dominant, not **submissive**: she proposes to Romeo, insisting he take the marriage seriously
- Juliet is rational and sensible: she questions the **discrimination** inherent in the **feud**
- Juliet defies **patriarchal** attitudes: she refuses to do her duty as a daughter
- Shakespeare's presentation of Juliet suggests her tragic death is the result of **societal norms** and gender expectations which limit **autonomy**



Examiner Tips and Tricks

It is important to remember that the idea is not to add isolated biographical or historical detail to your essays but to use contextual knowledge to enrich your interpretation of the play. To produce a more conceptual answer it will be necessary to connect how Shakespeare challenges the traditions and values of the time through his structural and language choices.

Religion and the Great Chain of Being

Religion

- Religion was a dominant part of **Elizabethan** life
  - The vast majority of Elizabethans would have been Christian, and the Church played a central role in a family's life
  - For Shakespeare's young **protagonist ,** religion plays an important role
  - Friar Laurence is Romeo's father figure and comfort, presenting the dominance of religion in **Elizabethan** life
  - Romeo and Juliet's love is supported by the friar, prioritising love over hate
  - The friar sees the alliance as a way to end the **feud**, suggesting links between religion and peace
  - Shakespeare could be criticising conflict based on religious differences, and instead promoting peace
- In the absence of scientific knowledge, many Elizabethans believed in astrology and **fate**
  - A predominant belief was that human lives were predetermined and affected by decisions made by the gods, stars and planets



Your notes

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- The **Prologue** dooms the "star-cross'd lovers", asking audiences to watch events unfold and question the role of **fate** in the **tragedy**
- Romeo and Juliet rely on **fate** at first, but by the end, the pair choose death on their own terms
- Shakespeare's plays often question audiences about attitudes to **fate** and whether people determine their own futures by their actions


Your notes

The Great Chain of Being

- The **Great Chain of Being** was a **Hierarchical** system in the 16th Century which organised society into a fixed order of worth and power
  - This system placed God at the top, followed by angels, noble-men, men, women and then animals and plants
- Shakespeare **subverts** this system with his characterisation of Friar Laurence
  - He presents the religious friar's character as connected closely to nature, possessing deep respect for plants and herbs
  - The friar's dialogue refers to nature as opposing forces present in all things: good and evil, light and dark, love and hate, religion and magic, old and young
  - This suggests the **hierarchical** system is flawed
- The **hierarchical** system is challenged further as the children, Romeo and Juliet, defy their parents and authorities
  - The play's tragic ending could suggest the children are punished for disrupting the **Great Chain of Being**
  - In the final scene, the Prince declares that all of the towns is punished: "See what a scourge is laid upon your hate"
  - Lord Capulet mourns the young deaths as a sacrifice for their feud
  - Shakespeare challenges the **hierarchical** system presenting the older generation as acknowledging their mistakes

Elizabethan life

- **Queen Elizabeth I** was the monarch at the time Romeo and Juliet was written in 1597
  - She reigned during a bloody religious war, which divided the country
  - The **feud** brought violent conflict between Catholics and Protestants for many years
  - In the **Prologue**, the **chorus** describes a **feud**, where "civil blood makes civil hands unclean", connoting the impurity of violence

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Your notes

- Romeo and Juliet would have been performed for **Queen Elizabeth I** during the wars between the Catholic and Protestant religions
- Shakespeare's presentation of a petty **feud** could be controversial and dangerous
- The controversial ideas are veiled carefully in a tragic tale of young love
- Shakespeare sets his play in Verona, Italy, perhaps to create **Ambiguity** and distance between the parallels of the Capulet and Montague **feud** and the one raging in England between Catholics and Protestants
- Shakespeare challenges his audience to consider the impact of violence in the name of love and honour

- Wealthy **Elizabethans** often employed nurses who would raise the family's children until the age of marriage
  - A **Wet nurse** would often be employed to breastfeed babies, forming close bonds between the nurse and child, closer even than the mother
  - The nurse serves as comedic relief in the play as a **bawdy** and unsophisticated character, representing the class divisions of the time
  - Lady Capulet is shown as alienated from her daughter in her traditional role as a mother
  - Juliet's nurse represents this bond as she is Juliet's first source of advice and comfort rather than her mother
  - Shakespeare presents the isolation Juliet faces due to **Renaissance** family traditions

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Your notes

Writer's Methods and Techniques

The best responses at GCSE don't limit their analysis to individual words and phrases. Examiners are really looking for analysis of Shakespeare's overall aims, so try to take a "whole-text" approach to the writer's methods and techniques. Each of the below topics does just that:

- **Form**
- **Structure**
- **Language**

Form

Romeo and Juliet is a Shakespearean tragedy. It is important that the examiner knows from your essays that you understand the conventions of tragedy. This produces a more conceptualised answer that takes into account the methods and purpose of Shakespeare as a playwright.

Shakespearean tragedies usually consist of:

- **A tragic hero:** a sympathetic heroic figure (in this case Romeo) who is destined to die because of his **fatal flaw**
- **Fatal flaw (hamartia):** a character trait that leads to the tragic hero's downfall. For Romeo, it is his fatalistic impulsiveness
- **A foil:** a character who stands in contrast to the **tragic hero**, who conforms to the typical societal expectations of the era. Here it is Tybalt as he is aggressive and, unlike Romeo, keen to fight for his family's honour
- **Fate**: all tragic heroes cannot escape their **fate** or destiny. In Romeo and Juliet, this idea is shown as questionable, asking audiences whether fortunes are determined by our own actions, social pressures or written in the stars
- **Catharsis**: a moment of shared expression for the audience. In Romeo and Juliet, it is the tragic deaths of the lovers at the play's end, foretold by the **Prologue**. This is sometimes known as a technique called the **tragic waste**
- **Conflict:** in Romeo and Juliet there is external conflict (the family feud and the vengeful violence it brings, as well as the arranged marriage which Juliet defies) and internal (the mental decline of Romeo and Juliet)
- **Final restoration of the status quo:** this means, essentially, that things go back to normal after the death of the tragic hero. Here, the two families reach an uneasy peace after the deaths of their two children

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Examiner Tips and Tricks

An **Elizabethan** audience member would have been well acquainted with **tragedy**, and Shakespearean tragedy in particular. This means a contemporary audience member would be expecting these plays to conform to the **conventions of tragedy**, as listed above.

When the audience knows something that a character in a play doesn't, it's called **dramatic irony**. We see moments where Shakespeare uses the **chorus** or a **soliloquy** as a method of creating dramatic irony, but this technique applies to tragedy as a form of theatre as a whole. Because audience members knew tragic conventions well, they would, for example, understand that the tragic hero is destined to die from the very start of the play.

Try to show the examiner that you understand that the audience would sometimes feel satisfied, amused, judgmental, or pity for characters as each scene is shown, and that drives home the messages Shakespeare wishes to convey. And make sure you highlight that Shakespeare uses this dynamic for dramatic effect too.

Structure

The structure of a tragedy

Many of Shakespeare's tragedies follow the same five-part structure:

1. **Exposition:** this is the introduction to the play for the audience, and an introduction to the themes and atmosphere. In Romeo and Juliet, it is very significant that we are introduced to the tragic ending of the play in the **Prologue**. This creates **dramatic irony** and **tension** as audiences are instructed to watch events unfold and question the role of **fate** in the tragedy. Audiences are also shown a battle erupting between the servants of the two families, which **foreshadows** further conflict. Shakespeare emphasises this effect by having the Prince decree that further fighting will be punished with death. **Foreshadowing** often occurs in the **exposition**
2. **Rising Action:** here is when the tragic hero's **fatal flaw** is exposed and an inevitable chain of events begins the downfall of the **protagonist**. In the play, it could be said that Romeo's premonition about his untimely death prior to his reckless decision to attend the Capulet Ball represents this stage
3. **Climax:** this is the turning point in the play where the tragic hero comes face to face with their problems. In the language of tragedy, this is called **peripeteia**. In Romeo and Juliet, it is the moment a fight inevitably breaks out between Tybalt and Romeo. Mercutio is killed in error, which results in Romeo's impulsive vengeful murder of Tybalt
4. **Falling Action:** The tragic hero acknowledges his flaws and his potential defeat. Romeo realises he is "Fortune's Fool" and decides to act upon his own free will. This moment of realisation is called the **anagnorisis.**

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5. **Denouement:** normality and the natural order is restored. Romeo and Juliet take their own lives, fulfilling the **Prologue**'s fateful message. The feud between the families ends because of the sacrifices made


Your notes



Examiner Tips and Tricks

It is always good to refer to other parts of the play in your answer to gain the highest marks. Even better than just a reference or a quotation is to refer to the section of the play from the perspective of a tragedy: 'in the exposition of the tragedy in Act I Scene I, Shakespeare has the servants of both families break into a petty fight…'

It is good to trace the development of themes and messages through the methods used at each point of the play. Analysing the way dramatic methods or techniques represent Shakespeare's messages adds marks for analysis of the writer's craft because you are referring to Shakespeare's use of conventions of tragedy to present his ideas.

Language

It is of course important to analyse Shakespeare's use of language in any essay on Romeo and Juliet. However, try to see 'language' in a broader sense than just the words that Shakespeare uses: it also includes the form and patterns of his language. Moreover, try to take a whole-text approach and consider why Shakespeare presents - through his use of language - the ideas he wants to explore in the play. Below you will find revision materials on:

- Poetry and Prose
- Symbolism

Poetry and Prose

- Shakespeare used three forms of poetic language when he wrote his plays:
  - Blank verse
  - Rhymed verse
  - Prose
- Each of the three forms is used throughout Romeo and Juliet
- Shakespeare used these different forms of language for dramatic purposes; they performed different functions:
  - To distinguish characters from one another
  - To reveal the psychology of characters

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- To show character development

Blank verse

- The blank verse consists of unrhymed lines of ten syllables, although it does not always exactly fit that pattern
- Typically in Shakespeare's plays, the blank verse represents human feelings in intimate speeches and soliloquies and the more serious themes. It represents the character's true feelings. It is the form used the most by Shakespeare
- In Romeo and Juliet, blank verse is used by characters trapped by fate or social rules
- Often used to signify a character with high statuses, such as in the dialogue between Tybalt and Benvolio


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Romeo & Juliet: Key Quotations

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Key Quotations

The best way to revise quotations is to group them by character, or theme. Below you will find definitions and analysis of the best quotations, arranged by the following themes:

- **Love**
- **Conflict**
- **Honour**
- **Fate**

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Examiners reward answers which link ideas and themes in the given extract to the rest of the play. A convincing way to do this is to include short quotations or references from elsewhere in Romeo and Juliet which show a connection, contrast, or illustrate thematic or character development. The trick is to show how Shakespeare develops these themes and how they are shown by the end.

It is equally valuable to include "paired quotations": two quotations that might not feature in the extract but show these connections, or changes. These paired quotations are marked below and are great when analysed together.

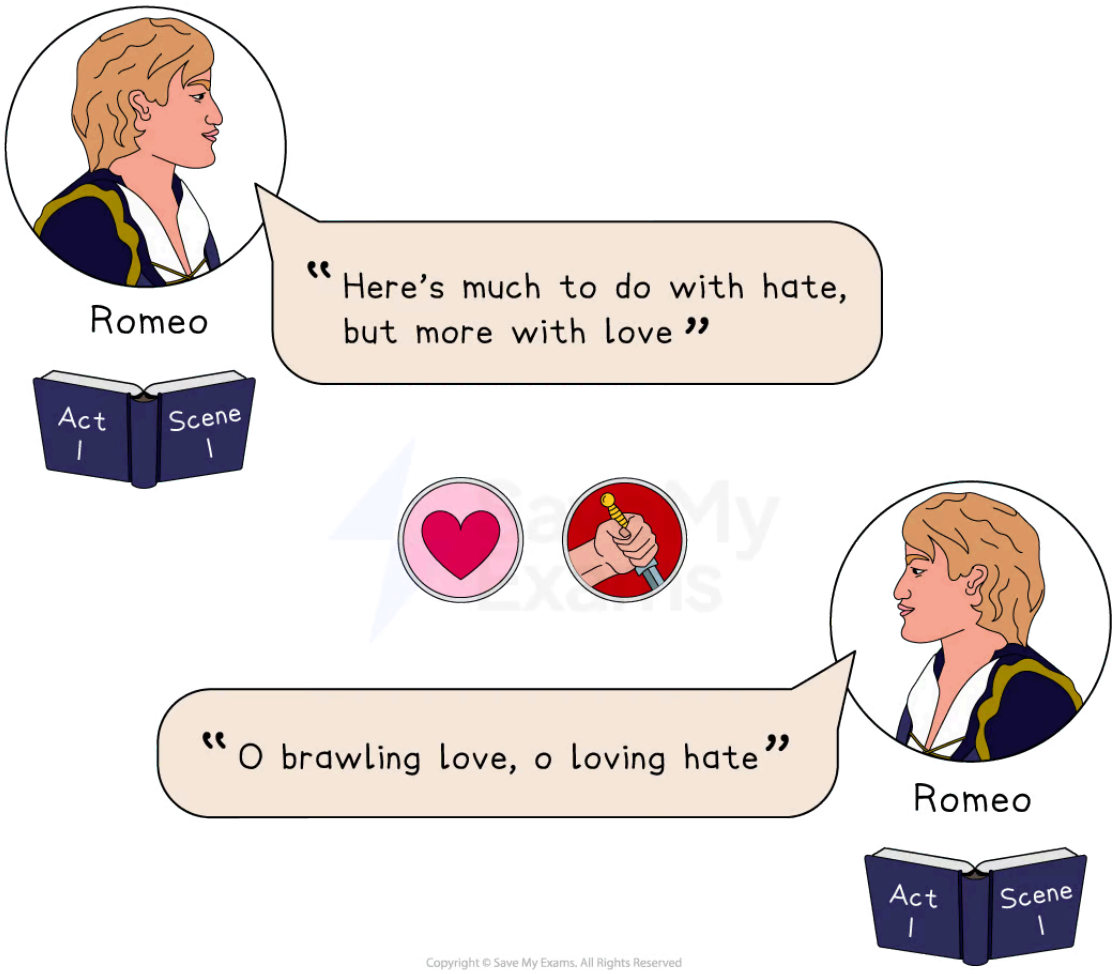
Love

Romeo and Juliet are known for its theme of love. However, as the play's ending suggests, it is a tragic tale of woe and conflict, a tale about a love that was forbidden because of a family grudge.

Paired quotations:

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"Here's much to do with hate, but more with love" Romeo Montague, Act I, Scene I

"O brawling love, o loving hate" *Romeo Montague, Act I, Scene I*

Meaning and context

- In the first scene when Benvolio informs Romeo there has been a fight, Romeo tells Benvolio he believes the **feud** is fueled by hatred stemming from love
- Shortly after discussing the **feud** , Romeo confides in Benvolio about his deep thoughts that love is painful and difficult

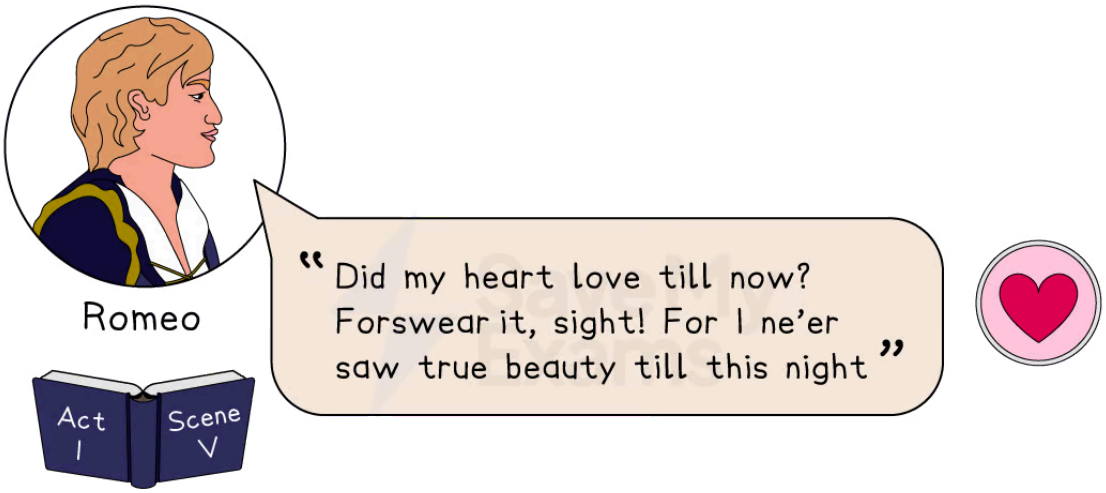
Analysis

- Audiences are introduced to Romeo as a character who understands the connections between love and hate

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- This scene, focusing on Romeo's heartbreak, juxtaposes the preceding fight scene, showing love and hate side by side
- Romeo uses an **oxymoron** ("loving hate") to show the contrasting feelings love and hate to bring
- The parallels drawn by Romeo at the start of the play **foreshadow** the violence of the love between Romeo and Juliet



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"Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" Romeo Montague, Act I, Scene V

Meaning and context

- When Romeo sees Juliet at the masked Capulet ball he believes her to be the most beautiful girl he has seen
- He suggests any previous love, such as his love for Rosaline which the audience has just seen him troubled over, was not true love

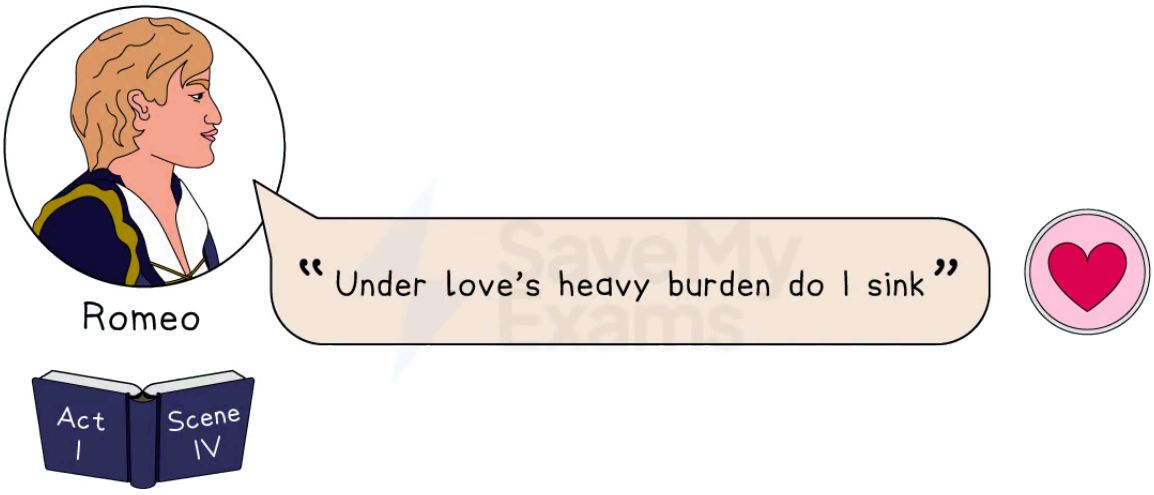
Analysis

- Here, Shakespeare shows Romeo as a character obsessed with **courtly love**
- Audiences have just seen Romeo profess a broken heart over Rosaline's **unrequited Love** and will judge him for his change of heart
- Shakespeare presents Romeo's **fatal flaw ,** his fickle impulsiveness
- Friar Laurence and Juliet both criticise Romeo for his inconstant and rash actions which lead to his (and Juliet's) downfall
- Shakespeare suggests that **courtly love** was superficial and fleeting

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- Shakespeare comments here, and in much of his writing, on pure love being constant love

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"Under love's heavy burden do I sink" *Romeo Montague, Act I, Scene IV*

Meaning and context

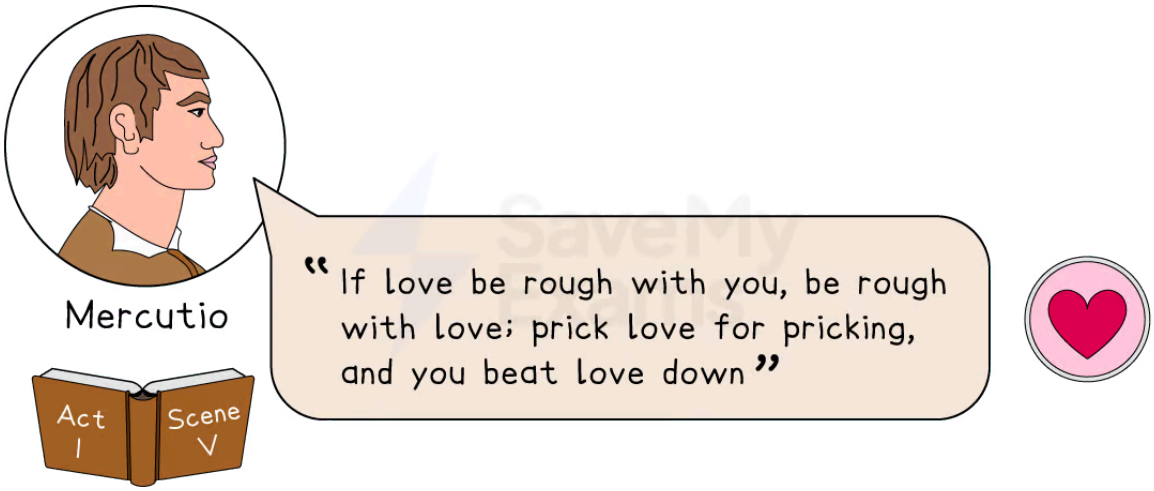
- Romeo tells Mercutio he is unable to go to the Capulet Ball as he is heartbroken
- As seen earlier in the scene, Romeo believes love to be a heavy burden to carry

Analysis

- Romeo alludes to the dark moods the audience has seen he is prone to in Act I, Scene I
- Romeo uses **metaphor** to show the pain associated with love: he likens his heartbreak to a pressure weighing him down
- Shakespeare shows Romeo as sensitive and prone to depression, subverting gender stereotypes and commenting on pressures for young men

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"If love be rough with you, be rough with love; prick love for pricking, and you beat love down"
Mercutio, Act I, Scene V

Meaning and context

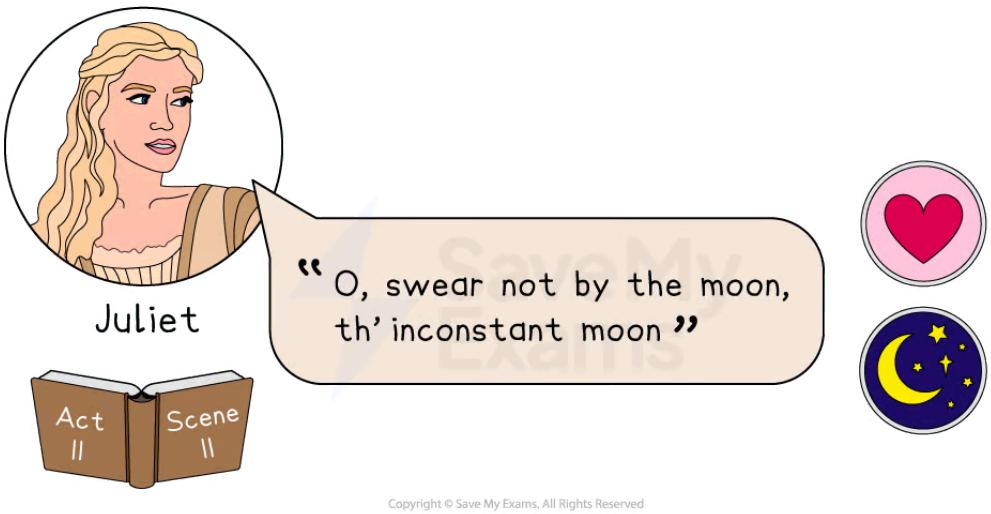
- Here, Mercutio is trying to lighten Romeo's mood before the Capulet ball
- He advises Romeo to beat love's pain by being casual with it, by fighting back

Analysis

- Here, Mercutio advises Romeo to be less sensitive about love, using the **metaphor** of a thorny rose
- Shakespeare uses Mercutio's dialogue to provide comedic and light relief from the intensity of other scenes
- Mercutio often uses **puns** in his bawdy, humorous dialogue to play on the double meanings of words
- Here, Mercutio uses the double meaning of the word 'prick' to connote thorns and sex, suggesting Romeo uses sex to overcome painful love
- Later, Mercutio delivers a **soliloquy** about Queen Mab; the speech suggests daydreams and fantasies about love are a waste of time
- Mercutio advises Romeo repeatedly to avoid dreams of idealised love
- Audiences see characters' contrasting attitudes to love in this conversation between the love-sick Romeo and the flippant Mercutio

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"O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon" Juliet Capulet, Act II, Scene II

Meaning and context

- Juliet replies to Romeo's sudden declarations of love in the Capulet garden, asking Romeo to be constant and committed to his love
- Juliet is connecting Romeo's sudden promises to the changing moon

Analysis

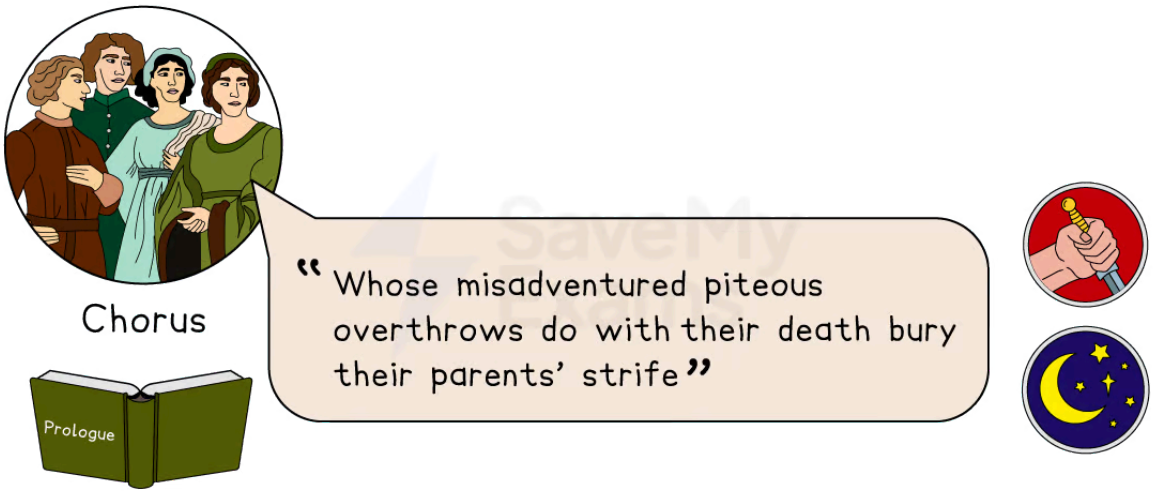
- Juliet uses **Celestial imagery** here and throughout the play when she refers to Romeo
- Her request that Romeo swears his love by something more constant connotes the changing nature of the stars and planets
- Juliet is shown as rational and sensible, not leaving her **fate** to the stars and planets
- This **Imagery** challenges **Elizabethan** audiences who regularly made decisions based on the stars and planets

Conflict

The conflict within the play originates from an ancient grudge which neither family can remember. Shakespeare presents the discrimination the families show toward each other, hating without reason, as violent and tragic, punishing the town at the end of the play. It could be argued that Shakespeare mirrors this in the play, Romeo and Juliet. Written for Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant, Shakespeare, a Catholic, veils messages about conflict in a dramatic love story.

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"Whose misadventured piteous overthrows do with their death bury their parent's strife" *The chorus, The Prologue*

Meaning and context

- The **Chorus** delivers this line in the **Prologue** before the play begins
- The **chorus** tells audiences that Romeo and Juliet will rebel attempting to overthrow the authority and that their deaths will end their parents' "strife" or war

Analysis

- The **chorus** is a device used in Greek **tragedy** , often to narrate key ideas to audiences
- A **Prologue** provides the audience with information about the play's themes, here the themes are rebellion, death and war
- Here, the **chorus** tells the audience the outcome of events to build **dramatic irony** and create tension
- **Dramatic irony** allows audiences to watch events unfold with the ending in mind
- This line, taken from the **Prologue**, warns audiences that the young lovers will defy the **status quo**
- The **Adjective** describing this rebellion ("misadventured piteous") suggest it will fail and the audience will feel pity for the young lovers
- It also lets the audience know, immediately, that their sacrifice will bury their parent's **feud.** The use of the word "bury" **foreshadows** the deaths of Romeo and Juliet
- Shakespeare's **Prologue** challenges audiences to consider the violence that comes from civil war and the sacrifices children may have to make for it

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“My only love sprung from my only hate” *Juliet Capulet, Act I, Scene V*

Meaning and context

- Juliet speaks this line at the Capulet ball when she is told by her nurse that Romeo is a Montague and therefore her enemy
- She realises that she is bound by her family to hate the only person she loves

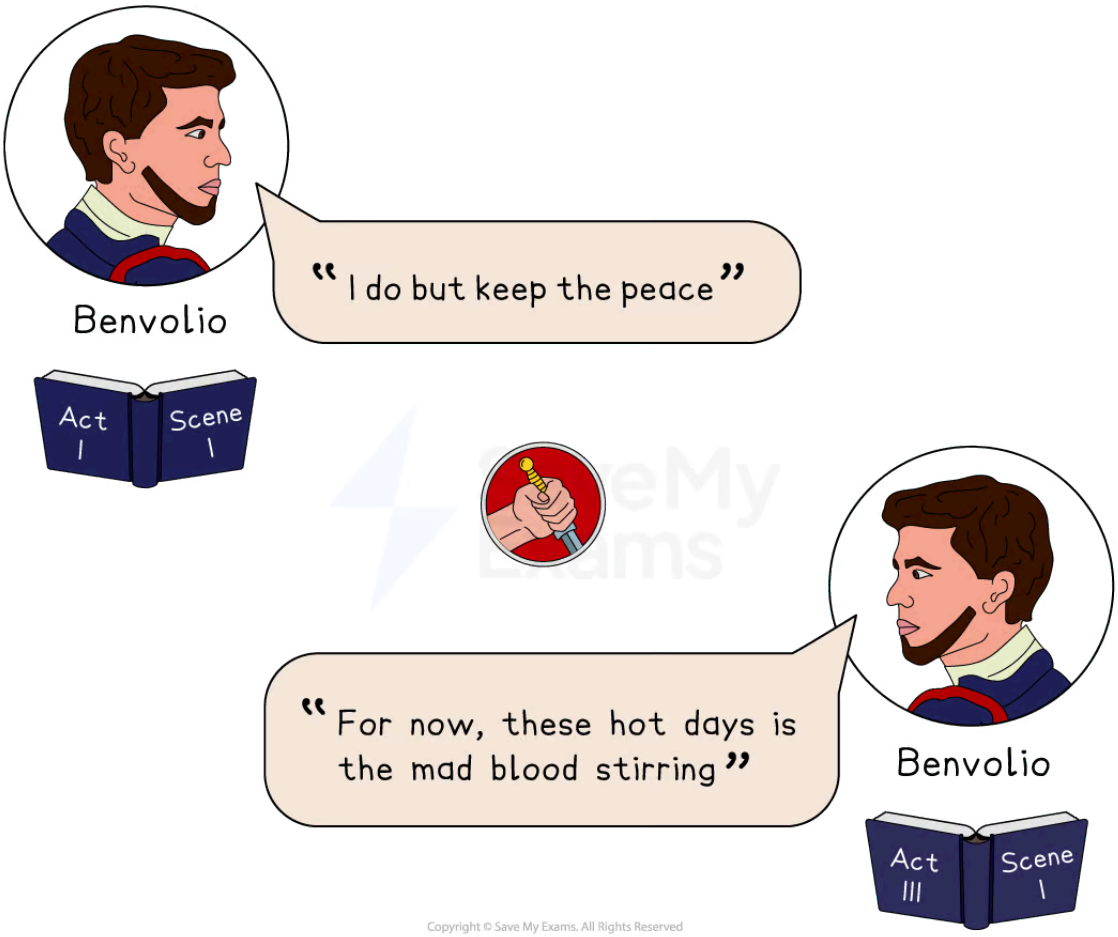
Analysis

- Juliet’s **oxymoron**, reflected in other lines that liken her marriage to a grave, suggests an awareness of the danger of loving her enemy
- Juliet’s dialogue presents the close relationship between love and hate, **foreshadowing** the impact the **feud** will have on their future
- Audiences, aware of the **tragedy** to come, are challenged to watch how conflict affects love
- The **verb** “sprung” suggests her love originates from hate springing from family conflict
- The **repetition** of “only” emphasises the huge significance the **feud** has in her life
- In the midst of religious civil war in **Elizabethan** England, this line reflects the impact of division on innocent citizens, in particular, young people

Paired quotations:

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"I do but keep the peace" *Benvolio Montague, Act I, Scene I*

"For now, these hot days is the mad blood stirring" *Benvolio Montague, Act III, Scene I*

Meaning and context

- In Act I, Scene I, when a fight erupts between the Capulets and Montagues, Benvolio tells Tybalt he wants to keep the peace instead of fighting
- Benvolio again tries to keep the peace in Act III, Scene I when he and Mercutio meet in a public place, warning Mercutio that if the Capulets see them there will be a fight

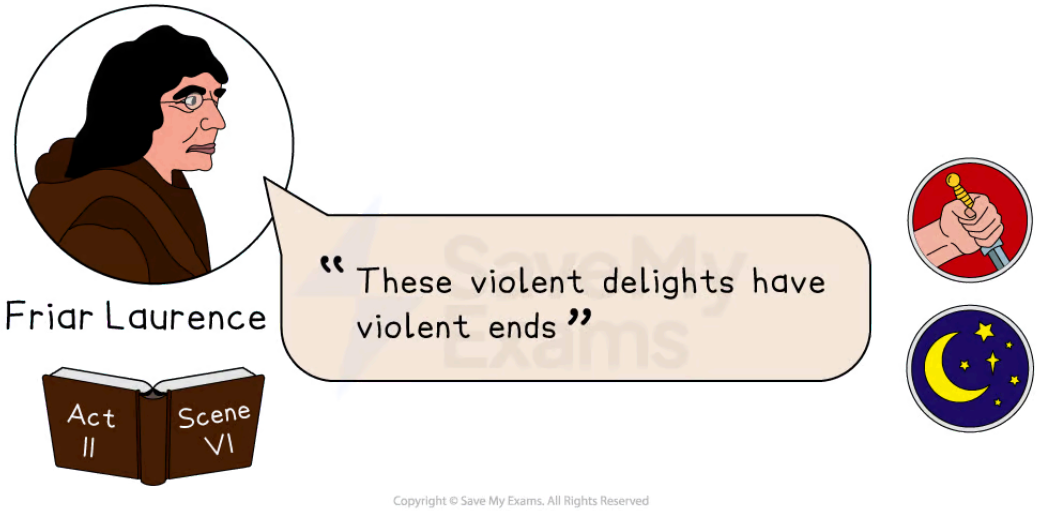
Analysis

- Audiences are introduced to Benvolio as a kind character who promotes peace
- This line has religious connotations, as Benvolio's dialogue mimics Jesus Christ's

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- His dialogue is used to contrast Mercutio and Tybalt's fiery nature
- Benvolio uses **metaphor** to equate the temper of the Capulets to the hot day
- In a dramatic and climactic scene in the middle of the play, Benvolio's dialogue acts as **foreshadowing**, preceding a fight

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"***These violent delights have violent ends"*** *Friar Laurence, Act II, Scene VI*

Meaning and context

- As the friar marries Romeo and Juliet he warns them that passion can be violent
- The secret and forbidden marriage is described here as having a tragic ending

Analysis

- The friar uses **oxymorons** here, and throughout the play, to show the relationship between opposites
- This line alludes to the opposing forces in all things: "violent" opposes the idea of "delight"
- The **repetition** of "violence" emphasises the tragic consequences of the **feud**
- The dark imagery **foreshadows** the marriage's tragic outcome
- Shakespeare uses the friar's character to present opposing forces in nature, a theme prevalent in the play

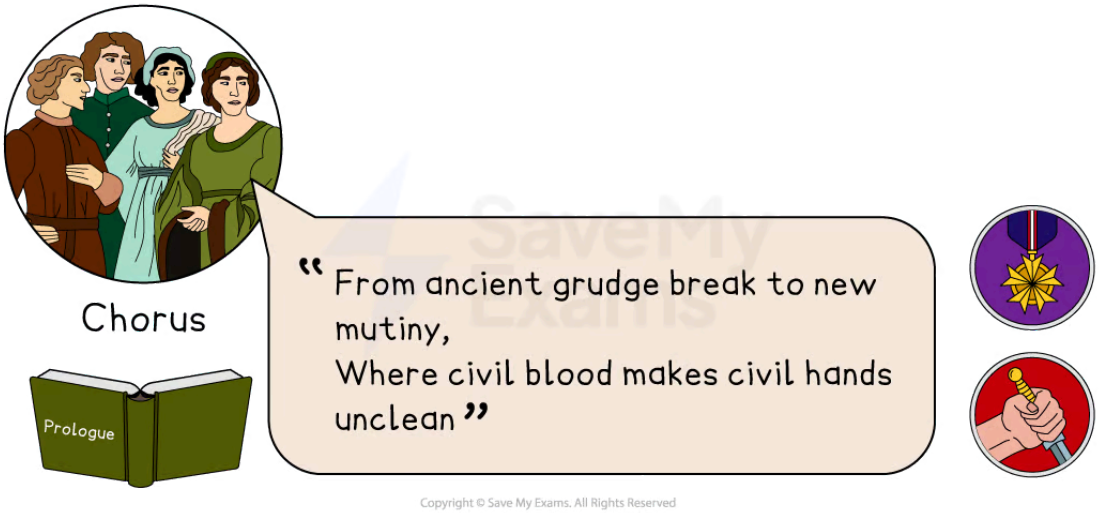
Honour

Romeo and Juliet's love is forbidden due to the "ancient grudge", or feud, between the houses of Capulet and Montague. The lovers are bound to their family name and the hatred as a result of it. The play explores,

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as many of Shakespeare's plays do, the challenges young people face when disagreeing with their families and the cultural values of the time.

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"From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean" *The chorus, The Prologue*

Meaning and context

- The **Chorus** tells audiences in the **prologue,** before the play begins, that there will be conflict in the town
- The **chorus** tells audiences that something the town is holding on to from the past will lead to the spilling of blood

Analysis

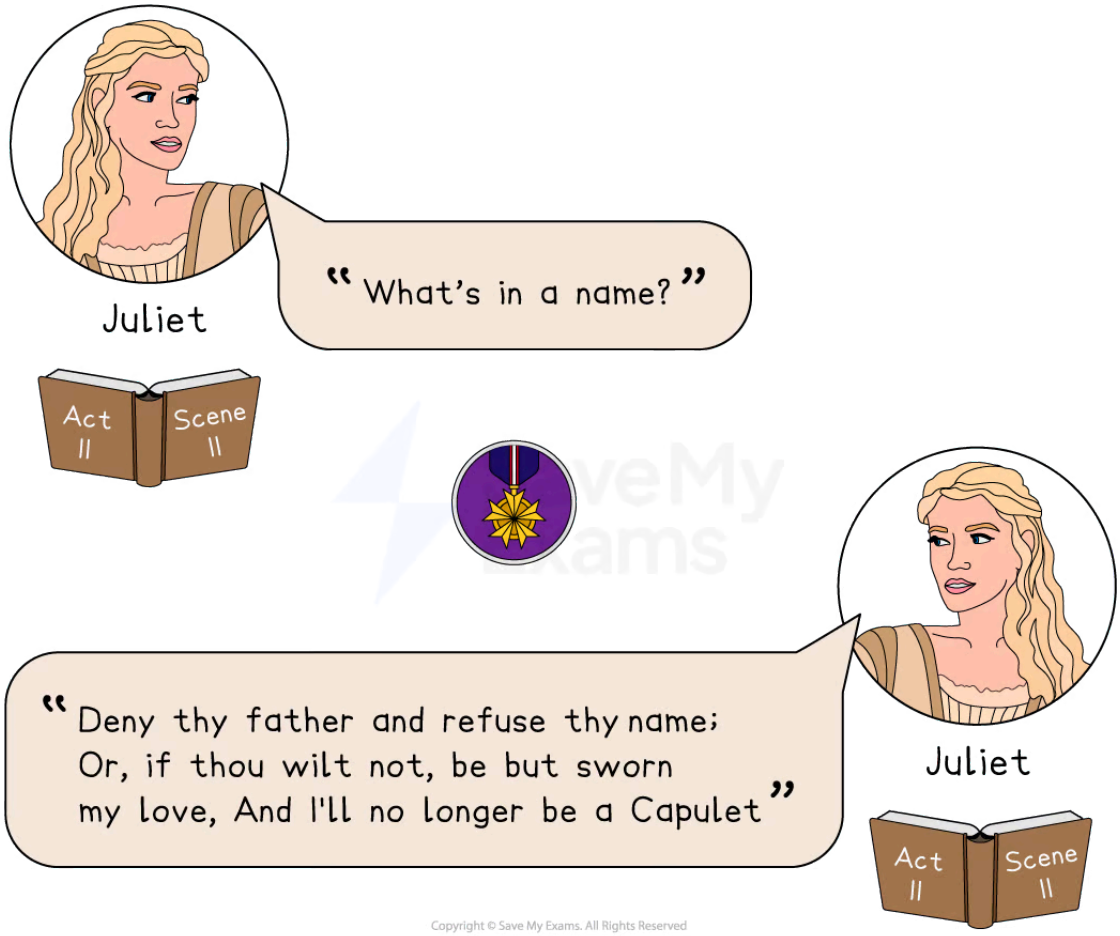
- The **Prologue** is a **sonnet** which introduces the play's theme of honour, subverting the tradition of sonnets as Italian poems about **courtly love**
- By using the form of a **sonnet**, traditionally a love poem, to introduce the feuding families Shakespeare shows a close connection between conflict, honour and love
- The "ancient grudge" remains unknown throughout the play, suggesting the families do not know the real reason for their **feud**
- This challenges **Elizabethan** perspectives on family honour, related to the religious battles at the time and the **patriarchal hierarchy**
- Here, the contrast of "ancient" and "new" represents old and young, meaning the young will attempt a mutiny on the old

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- The **metaphor** "civil blood" refers to the violence between the town's civilians
- The **ambiguous**meaning of "unclean" suggests to audiences that the violence is impure
- Shakespeare often uses the **metaphor** of blood on hands to symbolise guilt

Your notes

Paired quotations:



*"**What's in a name?**" Juliet Capulet, Act II, Scene II*

*"**Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,***

***And I'll no longer be a Capulet**" Juliet Capulet, Act II, Scene II*

Meaning and context

- In Act II, Scene II, Juliet is alone on the balcony after the Capulet ball
- Later in the scene, Romeo appears from hiding and declares his love

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- Juliet asks Romeo to turn his back on his family, and if he does not she will do it instead

Analysis

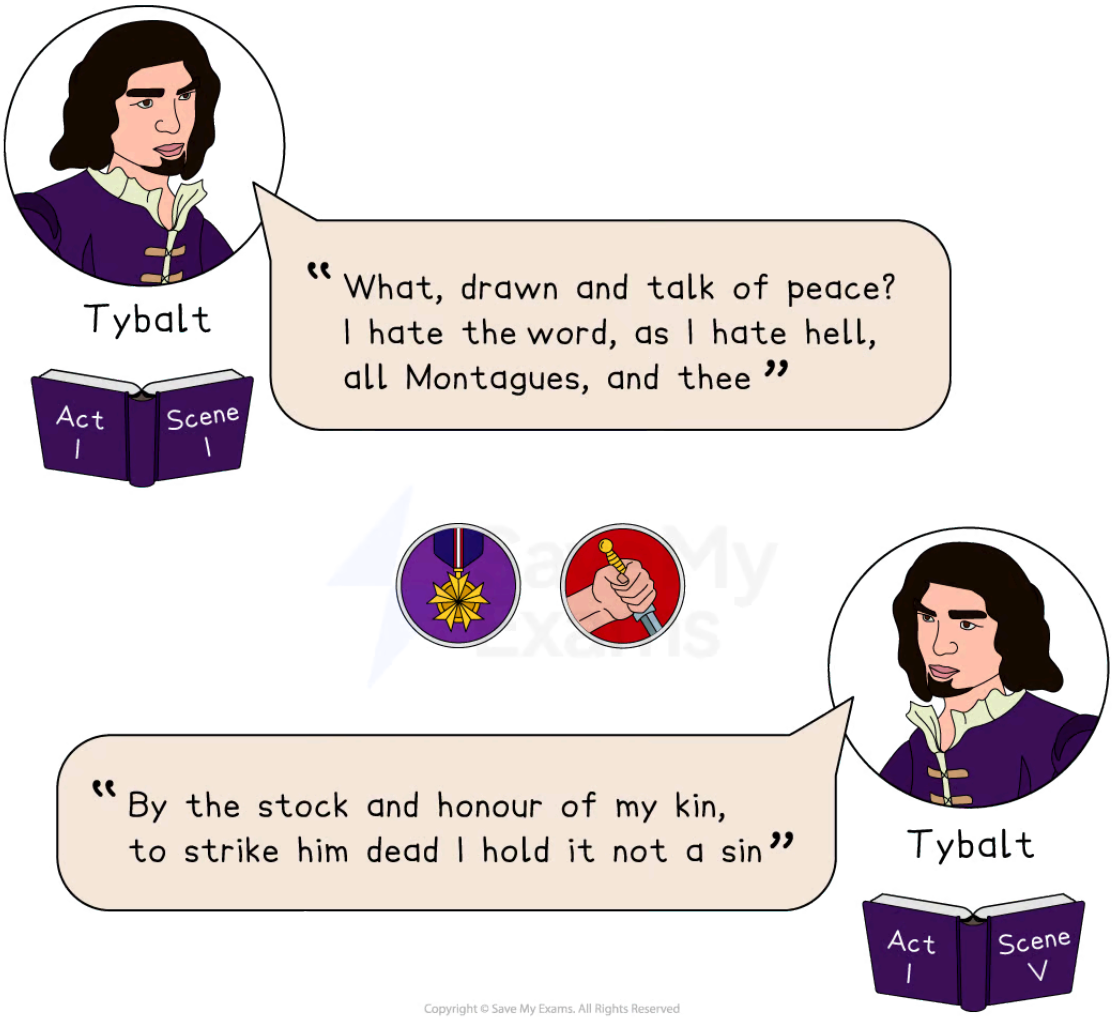
- Juliet's **soliloquy** is spoken alone, making this scene dramatic and highlighting its serious themes
- A **soliloquy** is used in drama to represent the character revealing their true feelings, adding authenticity to Juliet's controversial dialogue
- Juliet's **rhetorical question** in this **soliloquy** asks **Elizabethan** audiences to challenge values about family honour
- In the **soliloquy**, Juliet uses metaphorical language to consider the irrelevance of names in love
- Her use of **Imperative verbs** ("deny" and "refuse") suggests the strength of her feelings
- As Elizabethans held their family name in high esteem, here, Juliet is attempting to overthrow the **status quo**
- Shakespeare often presents characters in ways that **subvert** the stereotype
- Juliet, a young girl, delivers the most significant message in the play about hatred and discrimination
- Shakespeare shows the young couple finding it necessary to turn their backs on their families to be together, suggesting the impact of forced marriage and family **feud**

Paired quotations:


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"What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word, as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee" *Tybalt Capulet, Act I, Scene I*

"By the stock and honour of my kin, to strike him dead I hold it not a sin" *Tybalt Capulet, Act I, Scene V*

Meaning and context

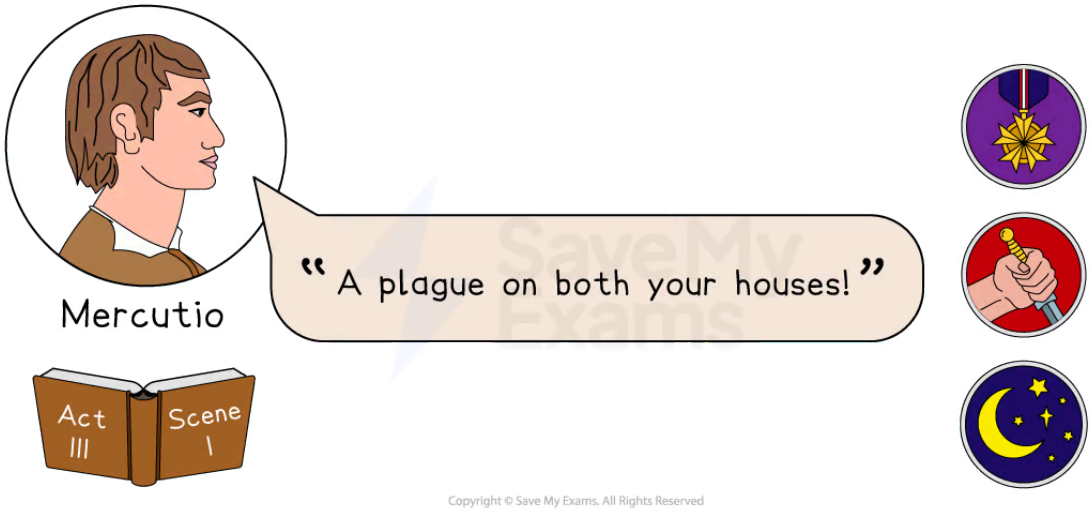
- In the opening scene, Tybalt asks Benvolio why he would talk about peace instead of fighting for his family name
- Later, in Act I, Scene V, Tybalt is offended by Romeo's attendance at the Capulet ball
- He asks his servant for a sword, claiming that murder is not a sin if you do it for family honour

Analysis

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- The opening scene shows the constant threat of fighting between the two families
- Tybalt's character is introduced as fiercely passionate about avenging his family's honour
- Tybalt's dialogue is dramatic, using **Rhetorical Question** to show his shock and offence at the suggestion of peace
- His **triple,** in a list which emphasises his hatred, links religion to violence and stresses that these ideas are opposed to peace
- In Act I, Scene V, Tybalt **foreshadows** further conflict by showing his bitterness towards Romeo, his enemy
- His **rhyming couplet** ("kin"/"sin") stresses the connection between sin and family honour
- The **verb** "strike" suggests the violence inherent in Tybalt
- His dialogue is dramatic and intense, to represent the intensity of the hatred in the **feud**
- Tybalt's dialogue is presented as bitter and angry, representing the strong feelings associated with honour



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"A plague on both your houses!" *Mercutio, Act III, Scene I*

Meaning and context

- In this climactic scene, Mercutio curses the Capulet and Montague families as he dies
- Despite being Romeo's friend, Mercutio is not involved in the feud until this scene

Analysis

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- Shakespeare's climactic scene of a public fight between Romeo and Tybalt creates a plot twist for audiences
- Mercutio, neither a Montague nor a Capulet, is killed in the feud, alluding to the deaths of innocent bystanders in the name of family honour
- The plague Mercutio delivers could be a biblical reference, suggesting a holy punishment for the meaningless violence
- It could likely refer to the disruptions of **Elizabethan** life by contagious diseases, mentioned later in the play
- Mercutio's curse comes true at the end of the play when a plague prevents the friar's important message from getting to Romeo
- Mercutio's curse comes from frustration at being killed by mistake, caught between Romeo and Tybalt
- Mercutio's earlier flippant dialogue changes quickly to an ominous curse, suggestive of his name "Mercury" - both a mythical winged messenger and a quick-changing metal

Your notes

Examiner Tips and Tricks

Don't include quotations that have nothing to do with the question. As tempting as it might be if you have them memorised, examiners really dislike when students "shoe-horn in irrelevant quotations".

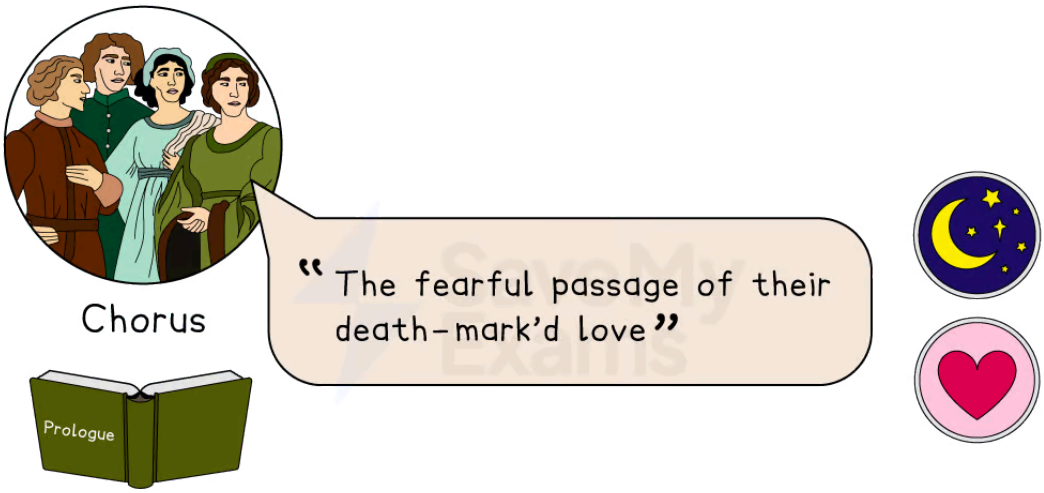
This can affect your overall mark since your response can become less focused. Use the evidence to support your argument. Evidence can be a reference to language, as well as dramatic devices.

Fate

From the very beginning and throughout the play, Romeo and Juliet's relationship is thwarted by pressures linked to cultural values and traditions, something that could be described as an "outside force". However, Shakespeare presents these forces as fateful, showing Romeo and Juliet giving in to fate until it is too late, in a bid to challenge contemporary belief systems.

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“The fearful passage of their death-mark’d love” *The chorus, The Prologue*

Meaning and context

- In the **prologue** , the **chorus** invites audiences to watch the “fearful passage” of the unfolding tragic love story
- The **chorus** refers to the “death-mark’d love” of Romeo and Juliet, suggesting the **fate** of the “star-cross’d lovers” is already marked, predetermined by the stars

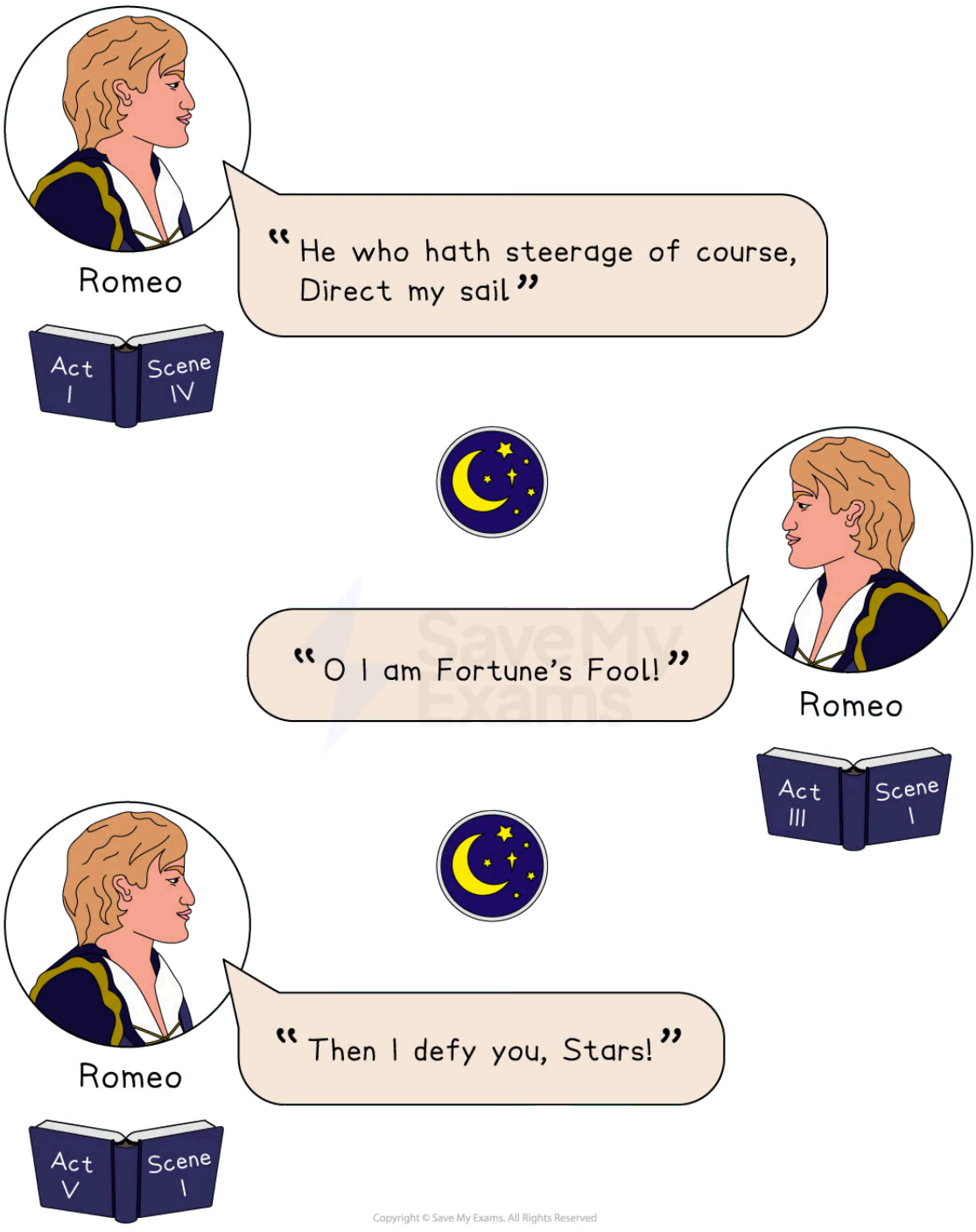
Analysis

- Shakespeare employs **dramatic Irony** by telling audiences the **protagonist’ fate**
- The **adjectives** “fearful” and “death-mark’d” connect the idea of destiny and fear
- By telling **Elizabethan** audiences that the tragedy is already predetermined, Shakespeare links **fate** to tragedy, challenging prevalent superstitious beliefs about fate

Paired quotations

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"He who hath steerage of course, Direct my sail" Romeo Montague, Act I, Scene IV

"O I am Fortune's Fool!" Romeo Montague, Act III, Scene I

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"Then I defy you, Stars!" *Romeo Montague, Act V, Scene I*


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Meaning and context

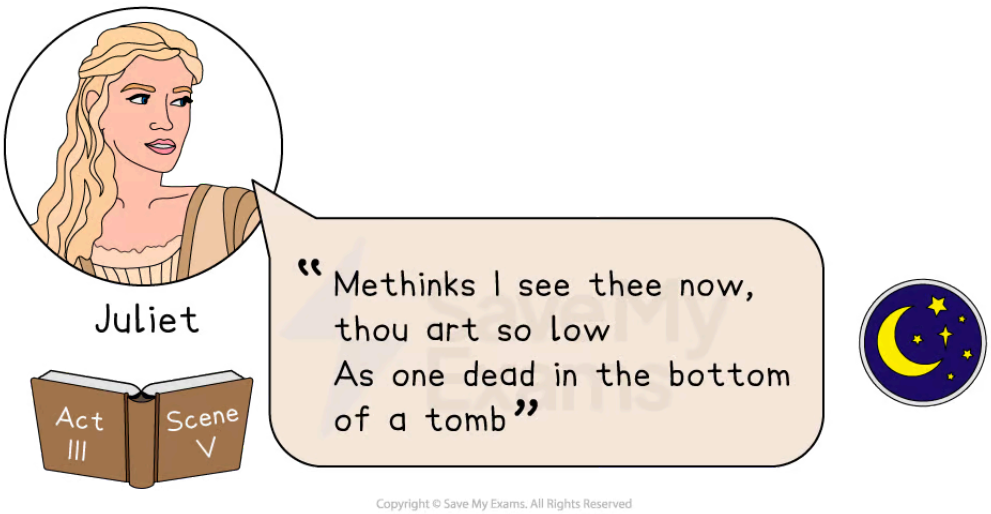
- In Act I, Romeo's fateful journey begins with a premonition of the consequences of his night at the Capulet Ball. Here, he addresses fate, asking whoever it is who decides his future to lead the way
- By Act III, Romeo has killed Tybalt and lost his friend, Mercutio, and acknowledges he has become a fool to fate/fortune
- By Act V, Romeo learns (mistakenly) that Juliet is dead and he turns against fate

Analysis

- At first, Shakespeare shows Romeo giving in to **fate**, a dominant ideology of the time
- Romeo's **direct address** speaks directly to Fate, personifying it as if it is a person who decides his future
- Audiences have been shown Romeo as an impulsive and fickle boy as he begins his fateful journey, and here again as he ignores a premonition and leaves his future in the hands of **fate**
- The **imperative verbs** , "Direct", suggests reckless confidence in his tone
- The **metaphor** of being on a boat and allowing nature to direct his way symbolises a fatalistic attitude which audiences know will be punished
- In Act III, Romeo addresses Fate once again, after the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt
- This time, he shouts his frustration at Fate's decision to make him "Fortune's fool", again implying he has little **autonomy** over his life
- The Elizabethans believed that the stars, planets and gods were powerful over human lives, and this line begins to question the influence of **fate** in the violence
- By Act V, Romeo turns his back on the decisions the stars and fate have made for him
- In grief, Romeo angrily addresses the stars and exclaims his defiance
- This line emphasises the desperation Romeo feels about his circumstances, and his decision to create some **autonomy** by returning to die with Juliet

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"***Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low As one dead in the bottom of a tomb***" *Juliet Capulet, Act III, Scene V*

Meaning and context

- In this scene, Juliet has a premonition about Romeo's future
- She sees him dead, sunk low down at the bottom of a tomb

Analysis

- Here, Juliet **foreshadows** the death of Romeo, suggesting his fate is sealed
- The explicit message is a stark message about Romeo's dark future
- Juliet's dialogue often refers to death. Earlier in Act II, she likens her marriage to a grave
- Juliet's premonitions build tension through the **dramatic irony** created in the **Prologue**
- Shakespeare challenges the audience's perceptions about **fate** and free will by showing both Romeo and Juliet instinctively knowing their doomed future

Examiner Tips and Tricks

For your exam, you are not expected to learn dozens of quotations by heart. Although examiners do reward the use of memorised quotations in your essay, you will also be rewarded for your ability to mention plot points from various points of the play. These are called "textual references", and do not

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have to include direct quotations. Try to remember keywords from the quotations to embed the most significant words in your answer.

Therefore, it is better to learn a few quotations and their wider significance, really well, than lots of random quotations: you will not be awarded more marks for more quotations.

The quotations above have all been chosen as they cover a good range of themes that Shakespeare explores in Romeo and Juliet.


Your notes

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Romeo and Juliet: Character Quotations


Your notes

GCSE English Literature exam questions usually focus on a theme, a character or a relationship between two or more characters. Examiners reward responses that track the development of characters or themes through the play.

When revising, try to consider quotes in terms of their narrative effects — how characters are presented, what attitudes or relationships are presented and why these ideas have been shown to the reader.

- **Romeo Quotes**
- **Juliet Quotes**
- **Tybalt Quotes**
- **Mercutio Quotes**



Examiner Tips and Tricks

One thing you can do to improve the quality of your response is to focus closely on the dramatic aspects of the scene in the extract, such as its setting. Examiners have commented on the quality of essays that discuss, for example, the significance of the balcony in the Capulet orchard and that it takes place at night. Another example would be the staging of the shared sonnet in the midst of the ball. Once you consider where the dialogue takes place you will be able to link your analysis to how this presents the character, and what broader issues are being conveyed.

Examiners like you to use references or quotes as support for your ideas. That's why we've included a "key word or phrase" from every one of our longer quotations to help you memorise only the most important parts of each quotation.

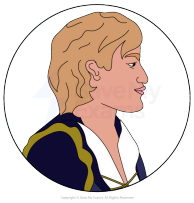
Romeo



"But He, that hath the steerage of my course,

Direct my sail!" - Romeo, Act 1, Scene 4

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 *Romeo*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "steerage of my course" and "Direct my sail!"	**What the quotation means:** As Romeo enters the Capulet ball he has a vision about his early death, but he dismisses it, telling whoever controls his future that he is willing to go wherever "He" takes him	**Theme:** Fate and Religion

- Shakespeare raises questions about fate and free will through his tragic hero:
  - Romeo's fatal flaw is his reckless dismissal of danger
  - Here, his **metaphor** implies he is a passenger on a ship into the future
  - **Personification** of fate ("He") implies an **omnipotent** presence
  - He willingly submits, asking 'him' to "Direct" his future
- Tension is built as Romeo disregards a premonition, heightened by **dramatic irony** (the Prologue warns of his doomed love)
- In Act 3, Scene 1, Romeo's attitude towards fate changes significantly:
  - After killing Tybalt, Romeo calls himself "Fortune's fool"
  - He believes that fate has turned against him, and he is upset by the direction it has taken him

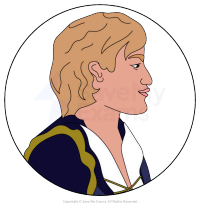
"With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;

For stony limits cannot hold love out" - Romeo, Act 2, Scene 2

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Your notes

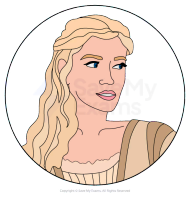
 *Romeo*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "love's light wings" and "stony limits"	**What the quotation means:** Romeo tells Juliet that he was able to climb over the wall into the Capulet garden because he 'flew' with love's wings, and adds that walls or barriers are not able to stop love	**Theme:** Love and Gender

- Shakespeare illustrates the Romeo's belief in the power of love:
  - Here, the **pun** of "stony limits" implies his disregard for the conflict between his and Juliet's families
  - He likens climbing the Capulet wall to overcoming the feud keeping him from Juliet
- The **alliterative** "love's light wings" is typical of Romeo's **hyperbolic imagery** about love:
  - The metaphor implies Romeo's desire to elude all barriers
  - Shakespeare presents his impulsive naivete as his hamartia

"Hence-banished is banish'd from the world,

And world's exile is death: then banished,

Is death mis-term'd" - Romeo, Act 3, Scene 3

 *Juliet*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "world's exile is death"	**What the quotation means:** A distressed Romeo says that the Friar does not understand that for a young boy in love, exile should be renamed "death", and that banishment from Verona equates to death	**Theme:** Conflict and Violence

- Shakespeare raises questions about the damaging consequences of conflict:
  - Romeo's distress is conveyed in his rambling and panicked dialogue

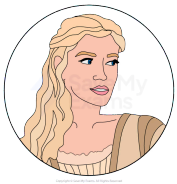
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- The repetition of "banish'd" and "death" suggests Romeo's frustration at his powerlessness
- Shakespeare **foreshadows** the tragedy that results from Romeo's exile:
  - Romeo hints that being isolated from the "world" will lead to his death

Your notes

Juliet

> **"Prodigious birth of love it is to me,**
>
> **That I must love a loathed enemy"** - Juliet, Act 1, Scene 5

 *Juliet*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "love a loathed enemy"	**What the quotation means:** At the Capulet Ball, after she and Romeo share a kiss, Juliet learns that he is a Montague and, in an aside, she says that her first love is unnatural and ominous ("prodigious") as she loves a hated enemy	**Theme:** Fate and Religion

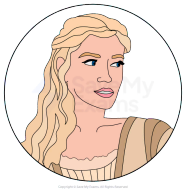
- Shakespeare's Juliet often refers to ominous warnings about the future:
  - When she meets Romeo she is more aware of the danger than Romeo is
  - Here she suggests she is fated to have a terrible, unnatural love
  - The modal verb "must" implies that her love for is destined, and she has no say in the matter
- The connection between love and hate is conveyed in Juliet's **alliterative oxymoron:**
  - It is because the lovers are "loathed" enemies that they are doomed
  - "Love" and "loathed" mean opposite things but sound very similar — a quality that implies that Juliet is already beginning to forget that she must loathe Romeo

> **"Proud can I never be of what I hate;**

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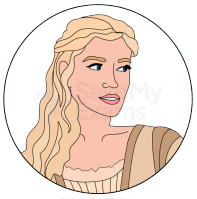
But thankful even for hate, that is meant love" - Juliet, Act 3, Scene 5

Your notes

 *Juliet*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "Proud can I never be of what I hate"	**What the quotation means:** Juliet tries to be respectful in her challenge to her father, saying that she can never feel pride for marrying someone that she hates, but that she is "thankful" for "hate" as it comes from "love"	**Theme:** Honour and Family

- Shakespeare presents Juliet as an intelligent, free-thinking young girl:
  - In this dramatic scene, her refusal to carry out her duties meets with opposition from her parents
  - Her unchanging stance despite her father's fury shows her strong will
- Juliet's dialogue often refers to themes about conflict related to family honour:
  - The emotive "Proud", "hate" and "love" conveys the close connection between the three ideas
  - She is portrayed, however, as respectful, despite her defiance
  - Although she is respectful, Shakespeare's audience would have seen her refusal to obey her father as an unusual act of female rebellion

"God join'd my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands" - Juliet, Act 4, Scene 1

 *Juliet*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "God join'd my heart and Romeo's"	**What the quotation means:** In his cell Juliet tells Friar Laurence that her love for Romeo is holy, and that as he married them (by joining their hands) he must help her escape marriage to Paris	**Theme:** Love and Gender

- Juliet's loyalty to Romeo is illustrated in the tense scene when she seeks the Friar's help:

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- **Alliteration** of the physical words ("heart" and "hands") emphasises their bond, and his involvement
- Shakespeare presents the love between Romeo and Juliet as pure and sacrificial:
  - Juliet alludes to their love as blessed by God
  - In the final scene, their deaths bring peace to Verona, and their father's take one another's hands as a sign of forgiveness

Your notes

Tybalt

> **"What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?**
>
> **Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death"** - Tybalt, Act 1, Scene 1

 *Tybalt*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "heartless hinds" and "death"	**What the quotation means:** Tybalt asks the Capulet servants why they have drawn their swords on the cowardly ("heartless") Montague peasants ("hinds"), and then immediately invites Benvolio to fight	**Theme:** Conflict and Violence

- Shakespeare presents Tybalt as a fiercely loyal and aggressive Capulet:
  - He is the **antagonist** of the play and a **foil** to Romeo (who prefers peace)
  - His sophisticated language presents him as a worthy opponent to Romeo
- Tybalt's sudden, meaningless aggression portrays him as hateful:
  - In the opening scene, he insults "all" Montagues and unjustifiably threatens to kill the peaceful Benvolio
  - The **alliteration** of "heartless hinds" sounds especially aggressive, with the repeated "h" sound giving the impression that these words are shouted

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Your notes

"A villain that is hither come in spite,

To scorn at our solemnity this night" - Tybalt, Act 1, Scene 5

 *Tybalt*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "villain" and "scorn"	**What the quotation means:** When Tybalt hears Romeo at the ball he tells Lord Capulet that their enemy (a "villain") has come to their house with intent to mock and disrespect the family (to "scorn" in "spite")	**Theme:** Honour and Family

- Through Tybalt, Shakespeare implies connections between honour and prejudice:
  - Tybalt's hatred is conveyed in the term he uses for Romeo: "villain"
  - Tybalt's sensitive pride is implied by his repeated use of "scorn"
- Shakespeare foreshadows conflict between Romeo and Tybalt in this scene:
  - Tybalt's seething, bitter indignance is conveyed in the **sibilance** of "spite", "scorn" and "solemnity"

"Well, peace be with you, sir: here comes my man" - Tybalt, Act 3, Scene 1

 *Tybalt*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "here comes my man"	**What the quotation means:** In the climax of the play, Tybalt's singular hatred for Romeo becomes evident when he dismisses Mercutio's taunts in favour of confronting Romeo, who he sees approaching	**Theme:** Conflict and Violence

- Shakespeare illustrates the significance of Tybalt's need to avenge his family:

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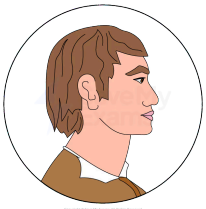
- Despite Mercutio's invitation to fight and his friendship with Romeo, Tybalt wishes him "peace" (although he may be being disingenuous here!)
- The short, emphatic phrase, "here comes my man" implies Tybalt's focus on Romeo

- Tybalt's calm demeanour hides his repressed anger, which builds tension:
  - The scene builds to a dramatic climax as Tybalt and Romeo fight

Your notes

Mercutio

> **"You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings,**
>
> **And soar with them above a common bound"** - Mercutio, Act 1, Scene 3

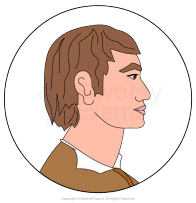
 *Mercutio*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "Cupid's wings" and "soar with them"	**What the quotation means:** Mercutio jokes with Romeo, telling him that if he is feeling heavily burdened by love he should use his "Cupid's wings" to allow him to fly high and cross any boundary	**Theme:** Love and Gender

- Romeo and Juliet explores aspects of masculinity and male friendship:
  - Mercutio often teases Romeo about his obsession with love and his time away from his friends
  - Here, his **metaphor** is sarcastic and mocks Romeo for being a "lover"
- Shakespeare presents the close relationship between Romeo and Mercutio:
  - They share sophisticated wit
  - This **metaphor**, said in jest, is mirrored by Romeo in the orchard

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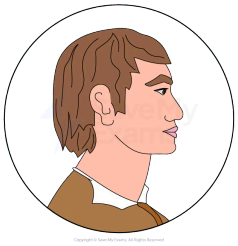
Your notes

"Alas poor Romeo! he is already dead; stabbed with a white wench's black eye; shot through the ear with a love-song" - Mercutio, Act 2, Scene 4

 *Mercutio*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "already dead" and "shot through the ear with a love-song"	**What the quotation means:** Mercutio tells Benvolio his concerns about Romeo's ability to stand up against Tybalt, but suggests that he is as good as dead anyway, having been "stabbed" and "shot" by love	**Theme:** Love and Gender

- Shakespeare highlights Romeo and Mercutio's contrasting attitudes to love:
  - Romeo is affected deeply by love in contrast to the flippant Mercutio
  - Mercutio's metaphorical language implies that love is violent
  - He **cynically** implies that Romeo has been swayed by words of love
- Shakespeare builds tension with Mercutio's dark and **oxymoronic** imagery:
  - Mercutio's joke, that Romeo is already dead, reminds audiences of Romeo's doomed fate

"No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve" - Mercutio, Act 3, Scene 1

 *Mercutio*	**Key word or phrase to memorise:** "'twill serve"	**What the quotation means:** Mercutio, having been stabbed by Tybalt, is dying in Romeo's arms. Even as he dies, though, he still displays wit and bravado	**Theme:** Loyalty

- Mercutio's character provides light relief to **juxtapose** dark themes:

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- Even while dying he is glib, using **similes** to describe his wound
- The comparison between his wound and a "well" or "church-door" builds sympathy for him, suggesting burial and a funeral

- Shakespeare uses Mercutio to create **pathos** in a dramatic climax:
  - His comment "'twill serve" ominously implies the significance of his death
  - His death signals a turning point and is a catalyst for Romeo's violence

Your notes

Source

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, OUP (2009)

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