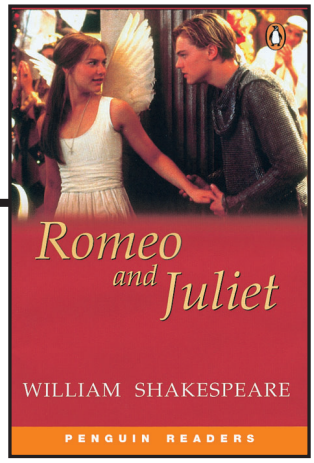
Teacher's Notes

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare



Summary

The play begins with two servants of the Capulet family meeting two servants of the Montague family in the town square in Verona. They exchange unpleasant words and begin fighting with their swords. This robust fight is interrupted by Benvolio, another Montague, who then gets drawn into the fight as well. They are joined by some of the townspeople, while other townspeople shout 'Down with the Capulets!' and others shout 'Down with the Montagues!' This sets the scene for the long and bitter battle between these two noble families, an important plot element that runs through the play.

The young Romeo is hopelessly in love with the beautiful Rosaline and decides to go to Lord Capulet's party to see her. But at the party he sees the beautiful Juliet across the room and Rosaline is forgotten. The couple meet and they immediately fall in love. This secret love between a Capulet and a Montague is most beautifully expressed when Romeo stands under Juliet's window that night and they decide to run away and marry. Romeo goes to Friar Laurence, who decides to help them only because he hopes this marriage will bring the two families together at last. Juliet's nurse gets drawn into the plan and helps them too. The Friar marries them, Juliet returns to her parents' house and waits for Romeo to return that night. In Act 3, another sword fight in the town square results in Tybalt killing Mercutio and Romeo killing Tybalt in revenge. When the Prince discovers what has happened, he banishes Romeo from Verona. As Juliet waits for the sun to set so that Romeo can come for her, the news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment is brought to her. The broken-hearted Romeo goes to the Friar for help. Juliet's nurse arrives at Friar Laurence's with a ring from Juliet and a message asking him to come and say goodbye to her. The action then moves away from the lovers and to the house of the Capulets, where Lord Capulet tells the young noble man, Paris, that he may marry Juliet in three days' time. Romeo returns that night to say goodbye to Juliet and to assure her that the Prince will forgive him after he learns about their marriage. After Romeo leaves, Lord and Lady Capulet deliver the news to Juliet of her planned marriage to Paris. In desperation, Juliet seeks help from the Friar once again. When she arrives, Paris is there and is telling the Friar about his marriage to Juliet. The Friar sends Paris away and tells Juliet his plan to drug her so that she appears dead in her bed. It seems a good plan. Everyone except the lovers and the Friar will think she's dead and her family will put her body in the vault. But then Romeo can return at night from Mantua when Juliet is waking up from her deep sleep and he can take her back there with him. But Romeo does not hear about the plan in time. Instead, he hears that Juliet, his true love, is dead. He decides to go to her side and poison himself so that the couple can be together in death. When Romeo arrives at the vault Paris is already there, placing flowers with the 'dead' Juliet. Paris attacks Romeo, and Romeo kills Paris. Then he kisses Juliet, drinks his poison, and dies. Only moments later Juliet lifts her head, and finds her love dead beside her. She kisses his lips hoping to taste some poison so that she too will die. She hears the sound of guards, and wishing to die quickly, she picks up Romeo's sword and kills herself. The tragedy ends with Capulet and Montague, two sad fathers, becoming friends because that is all they can do for their children now.

About the author

William Shakespeare lived from 1564–1616. In the late 1580s he left his family in order to go to London to write plays and to work as an actor. It did not take long for the theatre company that Shakespeare was in to become the best and the richest of all the companies. From 1599–1613, Shakespeare and his theatre company performed in the Globe Theatre on the banks of the River Thames in South London. The Globe was destroyed by fire during a performance of *Henry VIII* in 1613. A new Globe was built and Shakespeare became one of the four owners. He was a poet, a playwright and a great intellect. He understood the complete range of emotions and motives of his fellow human beings and he could write with extremely clever words and images. He wrote thirty-seven plays, which are as popular today as they were in Elizabethan England.

Background and themes

Romeo and Juliet deals with innocence and the power of love, and contrasts it with the total destruction brought on by hatred and revenge. At the same time that the play reveals what controls the hearts and dominates the minds of those who love and who are willing to die for love, it reveals the hearts and minds of those who lie, deceive and plot against others. Shakespeare's most famous tragedy revolves around the lives of two families and their servants. While it takes place in Verona, Italy, it could happen anywhere. The joy, hope and fear that each family feels is felt by all humans through all time.

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Teacher's Notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class Readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access center.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1 Find out how many of your students have read or seen the play or seen the movie *Romeo and Juliet*. Elicit from the class the names of the characters and their relationships to each other. Write the names on a large sheet of paper stuck on the wall. Draw links between parents and children, relatives and friends. Make sure everyone can pronounce the names correctly. The students will probably not be able to give very many names at this stage, so ask them to open their books to page viii to complete the wall chart. Keep it on the wall as a reference source while students read or perform the play. If the students are going to perform the play, now is a good time for them to choose their parts. If you have more students than characters, the others can be townspeople, or they can be the directors.

2 Ask the students to look at the cover and to say what they think Romeo is saying to Juliet in this scene from the film. Then ask them to look at the illustrations in the book and to say who is speaking the words in the captions. Why is the speaker saying these words and to whom?

3 Explain that in Act I the Capulets will give a party and the young men will arrive wearing masks so that when the boys ask the girls to dance, the girls will not know who they are dancing with. Tell them that Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio decide to go to the Capulet's party as uninvited guests. Put the students into small groups and ask them to discuss what they think, or know, happens at this party. How do Tybalt and Lord Capulet feel when they discover Montagues have been in the Capulet house? How does Juliet feel?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Act 1

1 After the students have read aloud their parts for the first scene of Act I, put the class in groups of four. They will take the parts of Sampson, Gregory, Abram and Balthasar. Each group will role-play page 1 up to when Benvolio speaks. Listen and correct pronunciation and intonation as needed. Give them fifteen minutes to prepare their role-plays, then ask them to perform for each other. Students can vote for the best performance and have a class discussion about what was particularly good, not so good and why.

2 After students have read aloud their parts for the rest of Act I, ask them to discuss these questions in small groups.

(a) How do Lord and Lady Capulet feel about Juliet marrying Paris?
(b) Why doesn't Romeo really want to go to the Capulet's party?
(c) How does Shakespeare show us that simple mistakes can turn to danger?

Acts 2 and 3

1 Write these sentences from Act 2 on the board. Ask students to work in pairs and to discuss what Shakespeare wants us to understand by these words. Do they agree with him? Afterwards, compare students' answers.

(a) If we call a rose by a different name, it will still smell just as sweet.
(b) Sometimes even bad things can do good.
(c) Young men don't fall in love with their hearts, only with their eyes.
(d) These strong feelings of love don't bring happiness. They burn, and then they die.

2 Write on the board, 'Banishment is more terrible than death' and ask the students to work in small groups and to discuss how Nurse, Friar Laurence, Romeo and Juliet feel about this statement and why. If the students were Romeo or Juliet, would they prefer banishment or death?

3 Ask students to open their books to page 30. Put them in groups of three, each student taking a part. Ask them to prepare a role play starting with 'You silly boy, listen to me' and finishing with [*Romeo gets up*] on page 31. They must do the actions and try to use the correct intonation. Then students can vote for the best performance.

Acts 4 and 5

1 Put students into groups of five and ask them to role-play Act 4 scene 2. They must not only read the lines correctly, but they must understand the stage directions, moving, entering and leaving as indicated. They should use facial expressions and try to convey the correct emotions. Choose the best group and ask them to perform for the rest of the class first. Then the other groups can perform their role play.

2 Ask the students to work in small groups and to discuss why Shakespeare had Paris and Lady Montague die in the story. How does he want us to feel about their deaths? Do the students feel sorry for them?

Glossary

Act 1

act (n) one of the main divisions of a stage play

character (n) a person in a book, play, film, etc.

gentleman (n) a man who behaves well towards others and always acts honourably

grave (n) the place in the ground where a dead person is buried

heaven (n) the place where God or the gods are supposed to live

lord (n) a man of noble rank

mask (n) a covering for the face or for part of the face

master (n) a man in control of people

noble (adj) of or belonging to the highest social class in society

peace (n) a condition in which there is no war between people

scene (n) (in a play) a division within an act

servant (n) a person who is paid to do personal services for someone, especially in their house

sword (n) a weapon with a long sharp metal blade and a handle

Acts 2 and 3

banish (v) to send away by official order, usually from one's own country

curse (n) words asking God to make something evil or harmful happen to someone

friar (n) a man belonging to a Christian religious group

poison (n) a substance that can cause illness or death if taken into the body

rope (n) a strong thick cord made by twisting together threads of cotton

vault (n) a room under a church where bodies of dead people are placed

Acts 4 and 5

crowbar (n) an iron bar used to force open a box, door, etc.

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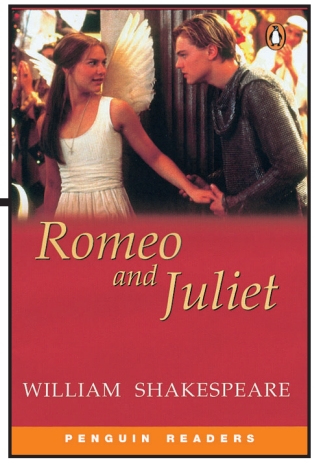
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Student's activities

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare



ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1 Read the Introduction and answer these questions.

(a) Where do the Capulets and Montagues live?
(b) Who tries to help Romeo and Juliet?
(c) Who laughs and jokes about love?
(d) Who does not understand Juliet?
(e) Where did Shakespeare get his ideas for *Romeo and Juliet*?

2 Read page vii then close your books and choose the correct words for the gaps below.

actions act actors characters scenes play

Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* for (a) _____ on a theatre stage. You can read the (b) _____ in a group with other people. You can speak the words and bring the (c) _____ to life. But you can have more fun if you (d) _____ the play. There are wonderful love (e) _____ The characters can show their feelings by their words and by their (f) _____

ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK

Act 1

1 Are these sentences right or wrong? Correct the wrong sentences.

(a) Sampson and Gregory want to fight with the Montague's servants.
(b) Benvolio starts a fight with Tybalt.
(c) Prince Escalus wants peace in the streets of Verona.
(d) Romeo has been seen in the wood after the sun comes up.
(e) When Romeo looks at other women, he thinks more about Rosaline.
(f) Paris thinks that Juliet is too young to be his wife.

2 Put the sentences into the correct order.

(a) ___ Sampson makes a rude face.
(b) ___ Lord Montague tries to join the fight.
(c) ___ Benvolio tries to stop the fight.
(d) ___ Tybalt attacks Benvolio.
(e) ___ Prince Escalus stops the fight and tells everyone to go home except Capulet.
(f) ___ Gregory tells Sampson to get ready to fight with his sword.
(g) ___ Romeo arrives.
(h) ___ Abram says that Sampson is lying.
(i) ___ Lord Capulet calls for his sword.

3 Who are the speakers, who are they speaking to and why?

(a) 'But now, sir, what do you say to my hopes of marrying your daughter, Juliet?'
(b) 'Go and find the people on this list. Invite them to my party this evening.'
(c) 'Can you read, sir?'
(d) 'Your great love, Rosaline, is going to be at this party."
(e) 'I'll look at him and try to like him.'
(f) 'I have a feeling that this party tonight is going to be the start of something terrible.'
(g) 'If he's married, I'll never have a wedding-bed, only a grave.'

Acts 2 and 3

1 Match the adjectives with the name of the character they best describe in Act 2.

Adjectives: (a) amusing (b) beautiful (c) brave (d) calm (e) uncomfortable (f) excited (g) frightened (h) grateful (i) nervous (j) impatient (k) romantic (l) rude (m) sensible (n) worried

Characters: Romeo, Juliet, Friar, Mercutio, Benvolio, Nurse

2 Circle the correct word in each sentence.

(a) A vault/curse on both your families!
(b) Tybalt pushed his sword/rope into Mercutio under Romeo's arm.
(c) And for this crime, I am going to return/banish him from Verona.
(d) Romeo planned to use the medicine/rope as a pathway to my bed.
(e) Tell her that on Thursday this noble/old gentleman will marry her.
(f) We look dark/pale because we're so sad.
(g) Put my wedding-bed in the dark vault/room where Tybalt's body lies.

3 Answer these questions.

(a) What will Juliet send to Romeo at nine o'clock?
(b) What is the Friar putting into his bag?
(c) What will happen if somebody tastes the flower?
(d) Why was the Friar unhappy about Romeo's love for Rosaline?
(e) Why did Romeo kill Tybalt?
(f) What does Lady Capulet ask the Prince to do after she finds Tybalt?
(g) What does the Prince say will happen to Romeo if he is found in Verona?

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Student's activities

Acts 4 and 5

1 Read each question about Act 4 and circle Yes or No.

(a) Is the Friar happy about Paris's plan to marry Juliet?
YES NO

(b) Does Paris think Juliet is sad about Romeo's death?
YES NO

(c) Does the Friar think Juliet is brave?
YES NO

(d) Will the Friar's medicine kill Juliet?
YES NO

(e) Will Paris think Juliet is dead in her bed?
YES NO

(f) Will the Friar ask Romeo to return to Verona?
YES NO

(g) Will Juliet wake up inside the vault?
YES NO

(h) Does Juliet lie to her father?
YES NO

(i) Does Lord Capulet go to bed after Juliet promises to marry Paris? YES NO

(j) Before Juliet drinks the medicine, is she very brave and happy? YES NO

2 In Act 5, who gives these things? To who?

(a) news about Juliet
(b) gold
(c) poison
(d) a letter for Romeo
(e) a crowbar
(f) a letter for Lord Montague

3 Complete these sentences.

(a) Friar John didn't take the letter to Romeo because
(b) Paris and his servant arrive at the Capulet's vault because
(c) Romeo breaks into the vault because
(d) Romeo kills himself because
(e) Juliet kisses Romeo's mouth because
(f) Juliet picks up Romeo's knife because

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

1 Imagine you are Friar Laurence at the end of the play. Write about what you did in a letter to the Capulets and Lord Montague. Write about how you feel you were right or wrong.

2 When you go to the theatre to see a play, you can buy a programme. Write one page for the programme. Tell your readers what Shakespeare wanted people to feel at the end of the play. What did he want people to think about?

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