



Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare

Edited by Adam Burke

Directed by Adam Burke

Scenic Design by Tom Burch

Costume Design by Michelle Tesdall

Lighting Design by Mike Eddy

Sound Design by Anthony Runfola

The Cast

Actor 1 (Romeo et al) Michael Arbuckle
Actor 2 (Juliet et al) Jessica Blaszak
Actor 3 (Mercutio et al) Slade Hall
Actor 4 (Tybalt et al) Cale Epps
Actor 5 (Nurse et al) Debra K. Stevens

Herberger Theater Center’s Stage West, March/April, 2005

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Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay’s Production of *Romeo and Juliet*

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your students for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you’ll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

From the Director:

What makes *Romeo and Juliet*, a historically well-liked play, so incredibly popular today? What is so compelling about a simple story of a young couple in love? What is it about a world in which two groups have hated each other for so long they have forgotten how it all began – that a Montague will kill a Capulet simply for being a Capulet? What is it about Romeo and Juliet finding in each other a love so passionate, explosive and electrifying that it is worth dying for – and that this love not only consumes them, but the hatred in the world around them? Perhaps it is just that we are able to see in them what is uppermost in our own minds. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* reminded us that plays, after all, are merely mirrors for us to look into and see ourselves. I look at the reflection and see a world that is filled with war, hatred and death. I see a society in which children are caught in a web not of their own making and destroyed by it. I see a world in which the sins of the fathers are very much visited upon the heads of the young. It could be any number of places in today's modern world but we will call it Verona.

In Verona, a young man named Romeo, as much in love as any young man has ever been, falls in love with Juliet. She returns that love. According to their traditions, the lovers ought to hate each other. The fact that, on the contrary, they are so passionately drawn together in mutual ecstasy bears witness from the outset to the strength of an emotion which not only neutralizes prejudice in their own minds, but continues to assert itself in opposition to the prejudices of their surroundings. This is no peaceful tenderness. It flashes forth like lightning at their first meeting and its violence, under the hapless circumstances, hurries these young souls straight to their tragic end.

In spite of the world around them, Romeo and Juliet bite their thumb at family, friends and anyone else who dares stand in the way of their ill-fated destiny. Destiny written in the stars only they can see. It’s heartening to imagine that in a world where everyone is looking down, a passionate young Romeo and Juliet are looking up at the stars. They look up and imagine a world where their love is right and accepted. They hope for a time when they can gaze tenderly into each other’s eyes and not be persecuted by their family, friends or government. I wish for a world filled with Romeo and Juliets - a world full of people not afraid to love. I hope for a world full of people who bite their thumb at the way things are and look towards the way things should be. I need to believe that a love exists that is the antithesis to prejudice and hatred. More than anything else, I need to believe in *Romeo and Juliet*.

**“For never was there a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo”**

About Our Production:

Childsplay's production of *Romeo and Juliet* is unique. There are only 5 actors who tell the story, each playing multiple characters (21 characters in all), often times changing costume and set pieces in full view of the audience so as to never break the flow of the story. The script has been edited so the performance runs around 95 minutes.

Shakespeare's language can be challenging to adjust to so it's important that the story and timeline are discussed before coming to the theater. Having a grasp on the storyline will help students to follow what's happening on stage.

The Story:

Day 1, Sunday (Act I, Scene 1– Act II, Scene 2)

As the play begins, a long-standing blood feud between the Montague and Capulet families continues to disrupt the peace of Verona, a city in northern Italy. A brawl between the servants of the feuding households prompts the Prince to threaten both sides to keep the peace on pain of death.

Benvolio advises his lovesick friend Romeo, (son of Montague), to abandon his unrequited love for Rosaline and seek another. That night, Capulet holds a masked ball to encourage a courtship between his daughter, Juliet, and Paris, a relative of the Prince. Concealing their identities behind masks, Romeo and Benvolio go to the ball, where Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight, but at the end of the evening discover their identities as members of the opposed families. On his way home from the feast, Romeo climbs into Capulet's orchard to glimpse Juliet again. Juliet appears at her balcony, and the couple exchange vows of love, agreeing to marry the next day.

Day 2, Monday (Act II, Scene 3 – Act III, Scene 4)

Romeo asks Friar Laurence to perform the marriage ceremony. Though initially reluctant, he finally agrees, hoping to reconcile the families, and marries Romeo and Juliet that afternoon. Meanwhile, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, sends Romeo a challenge to a duel. Romeo refuses to fight when Tybalt confronts him because they're now related. However, Mercutio, Romeo's quick-tempered friend, intervenes and accepts the challenge. Romeo tries to part the other two as they fight, but Mercutio is fatally wounded under Romeo's arm. To avenge Mercutio's death, Romeo kills Tybalt and then flees.

The Prince announces Romeo's banishment for Tybalt's murder. Romeo, in hiding at the Friar's cell, becomes hysterical at the news of his sentence and tries to kill himself, but the Friar promises to make Romeo's marriage to Juliet public and gain the Prince's pardon. Romeo and Juliet celebrate their wedding night before he leaves at dawn for Mantua.

Day 3, Tuesday (Act III, Scene 5 – Act IV, Scene 3)

That morning, Juliet discovers that her father has arranged for her to marry Paris on Thursday. The Capulets, unaware that Juliet is grieving for Romeo's exile rather than Tybalt's death, believe the wedding will distract her from mourning. Distressed at the prospect of a false marriage and isolated from her family, Juliet seeks advice from Friar Laurence, who offers her a sleeping potion to make her appear dead for 42 hours. During this time, the Friar will send a message to Romeo in Mantua so that Romeo can return to Verona in time for Juliet to awake. Juliet returns home and agrees to marry Paris. Juliet takes the potion that night.

Day 4, Wednesday (Act IV, Scene 4 – Act V, Scene 2)

Early on Wednesday morning, Juliet's seemingly lifeless body is discovered and she is placed in the family tomb. Because an outbreak of the plague prevents the Friar's messenger from leaving Verona, Romeo now receives news of Juliet's death instead. Desperate, Romeo buys poison from an apothecary and returns to Verona. Late that night, Romeo enters the Capulet tomb, but is confronted by Paris, whom he fights and kills. Still unaware that Juliet is in fact alive, Romeo takes the poison and dies as Juliet begins to stir. Juliet then stabs herself with Romeo's dagger.

Day 5, Thursday (Act V, Scene 3)

Friar Laurence arrives too late, closely followed by Capulet and Montague, who demand a full explanation of what has happened. The Friar comes forward to explain the tragic sequence of events. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet finally bring the feud to an end as Montague and Capulet join hands in peace.

This is Part 1 of a two-part activity. Part 2 will be done after seeing the play.

In small groups, consider the following behaviors. Talk about which of the behaviors is the most destructive and then rank the behaviors from 1-14, with 1 being the most serious.

- Planning to trick someone
- Lying to parents
- Killing someone for revenge
- Advising someone to marry for money
- Two families having a feud
- Selling poison
- Killing someone by mistake while fighting
- Swearing
- Killing someone in self-defense
- Committing suicide
- Going to a party uninvited
- Marrying against parents' wishes
- Giving the finger
- Starting a fight

Compare your group's answers with the other groups. Are they similar? Different? Discuss the behaviors that you seem to disagree on.



"My only love sprung from my only hate!"

Juliet

Things To Talk About and Do After the Performance:

Talk about love. Talk about the different kinds of love observed in the play. (Love between friends, romantic love, parent/child love, unrequited love, etc.) How are these different?

Talk about hate. Hate is a powerful and negative emotion that is manifested in many ways. What are some examples of hate from the play? Compare the examples from the play with hate in the world today.

Talk about fate.

Romeo and Juliet are described as "a pair of star-cross'd lovers". In Shakespeare's time many people believed that the positions of the stars and planets influenced events and peoples' lives here on Earth. This is the basis of **astrology**. At the moment when each of us was born, the stars and planets were all aligned in a unique way.

According to astrology, that's what makes each of us different. The stars do change in regular ways with the seasons. Astrologers divide the year into 12 periods associated with the appearance of certain constellations, or groups of stars, just like we have 12 months in a the year. These are the twelve astrological signs. People born under a certain sign are believed to have some similar qualities.

Astrologers also believe that some signs are more compatible than others--and so, two people can be "star-cross'd" if their signs are not compatible.

What's Your Sign?: Using the internet, research astrology. What is your sign? Draw the symbol for your sign. See if you can find your birthstone and your star stone. What other signs are you compatible with? Compare your sign with a friend's sign. Are you compatible?

Part 2: Have your feelings changed now that you've seen the play?

Using the same small groups (or as a class) talk about the following behaviors exhibited by characters in the play. Once again, talk about which of the behaviors is the most destructive and then rank the behaviors from 1-14.

- Friar Laurence planned a trick
- Juliet lied to her parents
- Romeo killed Tybalt
- Nurse advised Juliet to marry Paris
- Capulets and Montagues feud
- Apothecary sold poison
- Tybalt killed Mercutio
- Mercutio cursed both families
- Romeo killed Paris
- Juliet committed suicide
- Romeo goes to Capulet's party uninvited
- Romeo and Juliet married against their parent's wishes
- Sampson bit his thumb at Abraham
- Tybalt started a fight with Rome

Compare these rankings with the behavior rankings you did before seeing the performance. Are your rankings similar or different to your first rankings? Do you feel that a particular behavior was more acceptable during the period of the play than it would be today? Has your attitude changed about any of these behaviors?

Improv Insults: In pairs, create your own Shakespearean insults and use them in an improvisation.

To find the insults, go to www.renfaire.com/Language/insults.html. Now, create characters (made up or from the play) and decide on a conflict that causes them to insult each other.

Rehearse your scene, making sure it has a beginning, middle and end. Now share with the class!

Creative Writing Activities:

-Essay: Choose a character (other than Romeo and Juliet) who had an important role in the play. Describe and examine the character's decisions and how he/she affected the outcome of the play.

-What if you could change the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*? How would you do it? What would happen differently? Write a detailed description of your new ending.

-Choose a section of speech from *Romeo and Juliet* and translate it into modern day English, using words that you hear in every day life.

-Write a letter to "Dear Abby" from the point of view of either Romeo or Juliet, asking for advice on one of the conflicts that they face in the play. Now, write a response that offers them advice from your point of view.

Movie Comparison: A 1950's version of *Romeo and Juliet* is the musical *West Side Story*. Watch the movie version of *West Side Story*. Talk about the similarities and differences in the two stories. What if Romeo and Juliet were set in another location or time (the future, Northern Ireland, Iraq, today, etc.). Talk about the many ways the play could be adapted to various time periods and locations.

Character Collages: Choose a character from the play and create a collage using words and pictures from magazines and newspapers that describe the character and his/her emotions. Display in your room.

Star Drawings: Constellations appear in the scenic design of *Romeo and Juliet*. Choose a constellation and use its formation as a basis for a drawing (connect the dots and add details).

Themes in Music: Try and find themes from *Romeo and Juliet* in the music you listen to today! Find an example, bring it to class and share it, explaining what the similar theme is. How does your music relate to the play? Think about themes like love, hate, passion, parent and child relationships, etc.

***Romeo and Juliet* Booklist**

Prepared by Tim Wadham,
Youth Services
Coordinator for the
Maricopa
County
Library
District



Curriculum Keys:



Shakespeare

William Shakespeare and the Globe by Alik
The Shakespeare Stealer, Shakespeare's Scribe and Shakespeare's Spy by Gary Blackwood
King of Shadows by Susan Cooper
Shakespeare Stories by Leon Garfield
Shakespeare: His Life and His World by Michael Rosen
Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare by Diane Stanley
Understanding Romeo and Juliet by Thomas Thrasher
Shakespeare DK Eyewitness Books



Poetry

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup by Ron Koertge

Family Feuds

Sammy Keyes and the Curse of Moustache Mary by Wendelin Van Draanen
The Coffin Quilt: The Feud Between the Hatfields and the McCoys by Ann Rinaldi

Italy

Italy by Sarah De Capua
Dante's Daughter by Kimberley Burton Heuston
Shylock's Daughter by Mirjam Pressler
Italy by Jane Kohen Winter

Elizabethan Period

A Travel Guide to Shakespeare's London by James Barter
Black Swan by Farrukh Dhondy
A Midsummer Night's Dork by Carol Gorman
The Queen's Progress: An Elizabethan Alphabet by Celeste Davidson Mannis
The Princess in the Pigpen by Jane Resh Thomas

Tragedy

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse
The Silent Boy by Lois Lowry

Romance

Not Just a Summer Crush by C. S. Adler
Micheal Wait for Me by Patricia Calvert
Crush: Stories by Ellen Conford
Owl in Love by Patrice Kindl
You Don't Know Me by David Klass
Gossip Times Three by Amy Goldman Koss
Anastasia Has the Answers by Lois Lowry
Under the Watson's Porch by Susan Shreve
Popularity Contest by Rachel Vail
The Amazing and Death-Defying Diary of Eugene Dingman by Paul Zindel



Hate/Prejudice/Bullying

The King's Shadow by Elizabeth Alder
Burger Wuss by M. T. Anderson
Tangerine by Edward Bloor
The Giver by Lois Lowry
Shooter by Walter Dean Myers
Dear God, Help!!! Love, Earl by Barbara Park
Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson
Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli
Shredderman: Secret Identity by Wendelin Van Draanen

Interesting Web Sites:

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/shakespeare.html>
-Shakespeare's Language
<http://www.field-trips.org/lit/shake/index.htm>
-Elizabethan England
www.folger.edu/education/teaching.htm
-Folger's site on teaching Shakespeare
<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>
-all about Shakespeare, the man
www.renfaire.com/Language/insults.html
-create your own Shakespearean insults!
www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet
www.clicknotes.com/romeo/welcome.html
- resources for teaching R & J in class

About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.
Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.
We love to hear from our audience members!



Send letters, questions or reviews to:
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