

Knowledge Organiser: Romeo and Juliet

Writer's Intent		Key Idea	Explanation	How it's seen in the text	
<p>We have no hard evidence from Shakespeare himself as to why he wrote <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, so we cannot know for certain why he did so. We do know that he adapted the original source material (Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem <i>The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet</i>) of the play into its dramatic form because he realized that it had the makings of a really good play with its passionate love, feuding families, and tragic deaths. Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> has enthralled generations of theatregoers, and still retains relevance in the present day, mainly due to its focus on the intense passion that springs up at first sight between Romeo and Juliet. Whilst this love destroys individuals it ultimately heals the conflict of their society- so perhaps Shakespeare's intent was to explore both the destructive nature and the healing, transformative power of love.</p>		<p>Love</p>	<p>An intense feeling of deep affection.</p>	<p>The play explores different types of love and the consequences of such loves. Courtly Love, a medieval tradition of love between a knight and an unattainable noblewoman common in European Literature of the time; is portrayed by Romeo's expression of love for Rosaline at the start of the play and is juxtaposed with the love Romeo and Juliet share which is beautiful and passionate, pure, exhilarating and transformative.</p>	
		<p>Fate</p>	<p>The Development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.</p>	<p>No matter what the lovers do, what plans they make, or how much they love each other, their struggles against fate only help to fulfil it. But defeating or escaping fate is not the point. No one escapes fate. It is Romeo and Juliet's determination to struggle against fate in order to be together, whether in life or death, that shows the fiery passion of their love, and which makes that love eternal but also destructive.</p>	
		<p>Individual vs Society</p>	<p>The phrase refers to a conflict between an individual – one person- and the society in which they live.</p>	<p>Society is a group of people living together in a community which is ordered to a certain degree. Romeo and Juliet are forced into conflict with the social world around them because of their individual choice to love each other and to act on this love as individuals. This puts them in conflict with a number of aspects of society in the community of Verona: family; friends; political authority, and even religion.</p>	
		<p>Violence and Conflict</p>	<p>Violence is the action of physical force to inflict injury or cause damage to people or property. Conflict is a serious disagreement or argument, typically a long-lasting one.</p>	<p>Conflict is one of the key driving forces of the play and it occurs between a range of characters- within families; within friendship groups; between warring households and between members of the communities. This conflict results in a huge amount of violence- violence opens the play in scene one and concludes the play with the deaths of the two lovers.</p>	
		<p>The role of women in a patriarchal society</p>	<p>The expectations of how girls and women should act and behave in a society where men have the social and political power.</p>	<p>It is clear that Lord Capulet expects all the women in his household (Lady Capulet, Juliet. Nurse) to be subservient to him. Socially and legally he has power over them. The patriarchal structure of Verona is also seen in the rulership of The Prince and in the stereotypically masculine atmosphere of anger and violence on the streets of Verona.</p>	
Key Characters		Writer's Methods			
Romeo	<p>Intense, impulsive, intelligent, quick</p>	Method	Definition	Example	Purpose
Montague					



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	witted, and loved by his friends.				
Juliet Capulet	Naïve and sheltered at the beginning, develops into a woman with strength.	Prologue	A separate introductory section to a literary, dramatic, or musical work.	In Romeo and Juliet, the prologue summarises the events of the story, informing the audience that the protagonists 'take their life' at the end.	The prologue sets up the audience's expectations of the story. In the case of Romeo and Juliet, it immediately creates a heightened sense of tension.
Mercutio	Romeo's best friend and kinsman to Prince Escalus. Wild, playful and sarcastic.	Foreshadowing	A warning or indication of a future event.	Shakespeare foreshadows the tragedy of Romeo when Juliet has a vision of him 'As one dead in the bottom of a tomb'.	Foreshadowing is useful for creating suspense, a feeling of unease, a sense of curiosity, or a mark that things may not be as they seem.
Tybalt	Juliet's cousin. Consumed by issues of family honour. Hates the Montagues.	Dramatic Irony	A method and plot device where the full significance of words or actions is clear to the audience but unknown to the character.	Dramatic Irony is particularly apparent in the play once Romeo and Juliet are married as the majority of characters have no idea this has happened.	Dramatic irony often causes humour or heightens tension for the audience as they have a superior position of knowledge but no power to prevent or advance the action.
Benvolio	Romeo's cousin. Tries to keep the peace.	Bawdy Humour	'Off Colour' humour; about sex or other 'vulgar' topics.	The Nurse's bawdy humour is less sophisticated than Mercutio's but both character's puns are focused on sexual love.	It creates comic relief for the audience from the tension of the play; juxtaposes the views of characters of love as sexual or temporary with the love of Romeo and Juliet which is pure.
The County Paris	Lord Capulet's chosen husband for Juliet.	Oxymoron	A combination of words that have opposite or very different meanings.	'Parting is such sweet sorrow' 'O Brawling love! O Loving hate!' 'She speaks, yet she says nothing'.	Oxymorons can support a light hearted mood or tone, as well as emphasise conflict or create another dramatic effect.
Friar Lawrence	A Franciscan monk and a friend to both Romeo and Juliet.	Monologue	A long speech by one actor in a play, although there can be other characters present on stage.	Lord Capulet's monologue in response to Juliet's objection to her marriage to Paris demonstrates the patriarchal authority given to fathers over their daughters.	Monologues give the audience more details about a character or about the plot.



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Nurse	Juliet's nanny, friend and confidante.	Soliloquy	A speech where an actor speaks their thoughts aloud usually when by themselves on stage, or regardless of any hearers.	Act 1, Scene 5: 'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night. Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear'	Soliloquys reveal a character's inner thoughts and emotions and reveal their inner monologue.
Prince Escalus	Leader of Verona. Concerned with keeping order between the warring families.	Imagery	Figurative language (simile, metaphors and personification) to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.	The imagery of Romeo and Juliet as 'A pair of star-crossed lovers' is very tragic and symbolises two people who have gone against fate to be with each other, with disastrous consequences.	Imagery can make something abstract, like an emotion or theory, seem more concrete and tangible to the audience because we make sense of our world through our senses.
Lord Capulet	Head of the Capulet Household- Juliet's father. A patriarchal figure.	Sonnet Form	Three quatrains (4 line stanzas) and a final couplet in iambic Pentameter with a regular rhyme pattern (abab cdcd efef gg). Traditionally associated with romance and love poetry.	The prologue is written as a sonnet, and the first 14 lines that Romeo and Juliet speak before their first kiss creates a shared sonnet.	A sonnet is used to express an idealised form of love. The perfect form of the sonnet reflects the perfect idea of the love. By linking the sonnet of the prologue to the sonnet of the lover's first meeting, Shakespeare is expressing perfect love and linking it to tragic fate.
Lady Capulet	Wife of Lord Capulet and Juliet's mother.	Iambic Pentameter	A line of verse with five metrical feet, each one consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable.	'Two households both alike in dignity'	It imitates everyday speech. If a character changes from iambic pentameter to prose it can be used to symbolise a change in their character or to suggest an untruth or truth in what they are saying and what they are thinking.
Lord and Lady Montague	Romeo's parents.	Rhyming Couplet	A rhyming pair of successive lines of verse, typically of the same length.	Shakespeare finishes his play with the rhyming couplet, "For never was a story of more woe/than this of Juliet and her Romeo."	Couplets provide a punch, as the end rhymes make the audience take notice. The couplet provides the "turn," or the final summary or relief from tension.



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Key Word Glossary			
Word	Definition	Example	Word in Action
Tragedy	A play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character.	The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet is that they are victims of society.	
Tragic Hero	The protagonist of a tragedy.	Romeo is a romantic tragic hero .	
Tragic Victim	Innocent bystanders who get caught up in the action and suffer as a result	Paris is a tragic victim who dies protecting Juliet's tomb.	
Tragic Villain	A character who, although acting for primarily 'evil' or selfish goals, is not in full control of their actions or emotions.	The audience can feel sympathy for the tragic villain , Tybalt as he could be viewed as a victim of circumstance.	
Hubris	Excessive pride or self-confidence.	The hubris of Lord Capulet leads to the death of his only child.	
Hamartia	Fatal/ tragic flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero/ heroine.	Romeo's hamartia is his impulsiveness.	
Pity	Feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others.	The audience feel great pity when Mercutio dies.	
Catharsis	The process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions.	Friar Lawrence's end monologue provides catharsis .	
Tragic Structure	Also known as the five act structure, is made up of the exposition (introduction to the characters), rising action, climax, falling action and the resolution.	The play follows a traditional tragic structure .	
Elizabethan	Shakespeare wrote his plays when Elizabeth First and James 1 ST ruled England. We refer to the time that Elizabeth was on the throne from 1558-1603 as the Elizabethan Era and the time that James was on the throne as the Jacobean Era.	Elizabethan England was a society controlled by men. Women were seen as the weaker sex and were expected to be ruled over by men.	
The Great Chain Of Being	A hierarchical structure of all matter and life, thought by medieval Christianity to have been decreed by God. The chain begins with God and descends through angels, humans, animals, and plants, to minerals.	Juliet is described by Romeo as being at the top of The Great Chain of Being symbolising her purity and his passion.	
Feminism	The belief in full social, economic, and political equality for women.	Juliet's act of marrying Romeo is an act of feminism .	
Patriarchal	A system of society or government controlled by men.	Verona is patriarchal .	
Setting	The place or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where or when an event takes place	The setting of the play is violent and not civilised.	

