

# ROMEO & JULIET



*A tragedy by William Shakespeare*

## Dramatic Stylistic Devices

Device	Definition	Example on Romeo & Juliet
<b>Soliloquy/ Aside</b>	One character, alone on stage, sharing their inner thoughts and feelings, making an audience complicit, is a soliloquy. If other characters are present on stage, and the character still speaks directly to the audience, it is an aside.	Act 2 Scene 1: Romeo's opening speech is a soliloquy and he lets the audience know his true feelings for Juliet.
<b>Rhyme</b>	Rhyming couplets emphasise key ideas, and signal an end	Prologue. Romeo uses them in speeches when he's talking about Juliet. When he first sees Juliet In Act 1 Scene 5 his speech is written entirely in rhyming couplets: 'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright. / It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night'.
<b>Dramatic irony</b>	Audience knows more than characters.	Prologue: 'a pair of star crossed lovers take their life'.
<b>Repetition</b>	Repetition contributes to atmosphere, creation of character, and dramatic impact.	Act 4 Scene 4: repetition of 'what if' and 'how if' to show Juliet's indecision and the thought processes she is going through before she takes the potion.
<b>Foreshadowing</b>	Giving an advance hint of what is to come later in the story.	Act 3 Scene 1: Shakespeare also uses Mercutio's last speech to foreshadow how both families will suffer and are to blame 'a plague o' both your houses!'.
<b>Figurative language</b>	Phrases that go beyond the literal meaning to convey a message or additional meaning.	He also uses a lot of religious imagery 'pilgrims', 'profane', 'holy shrine', 'saints' to show that their love is holy and pure. Act 5 Scene 3: He uses imagery of journeys and travel – 'guide', 'pilot' 'seasick' 'dashing rock'
<b>Sonnet</b>	A sonnet is a one-stanza, 14-line love poem, written in iambic pentameter.	Act 1: Shakespeare uses a sonnet form (a 14-line poem with a rhyming couplet at the end) when Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time to show the strength of their love.
<b>Rhetorical questions</b>	A question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or to make a point rather than to get an answer.	Act 2 Scene 1: Shakespeare also uses a lot of rhetorical questions as Juliet questions her feelings and the issues around falling in love with a man from an opposing family.
<b>Simile</b>	A figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid.	Act 3 Scene 1: Shakespeare uses the opening of the scene to show how clever and funny Mercutio is as he uses a lot of puns and similes - 'beaten as addle as an egg', 'as hot as a Jack in thy mood'.
<b>Alliteration</b>	The use of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.	Act 4 Scene 4: Shakespeare uses <b>alliteration</b> – ' <i>faint cold fear freezes</i> '

## CONTEXT MORE GENERAL TO MOST SHAKESPEARE PLAYS

**Source:** As with many of Shakespeare's play, the basic plot outline is borrowed from pre-existing texts. The forfeit of a merchant's deadly bond was a common tale in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Shakespeare's time:** Shakespeare wrote his plays at the time of two monarchs: Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. The MOV was written fairly early in Shakespeare's career, during the relatively optimistic years of Queen Elizabeth I: this is when Shakespeare wrote the majority of his comedies, before the darker tragedies that he created during the reign of James I such a "Macbeth".

**Love and marriage:** Marriage was seen as property transaction: wealthy women would be much sought after as a means of ensuring financial stability for the sons of noble families. **WOMEN in Elizabethan times:** Nobility generally had arranged marriages in Elizabethan times. Women could not go to school, but noble women had private tutors - Queen Elizabeth set a trend amongst noble families of well-educated daughters. **Patriarchal Society:** Women were considered inferior to men in Elizabethan England, despite a powerful female on the throne defending her country against threats from the Spanish Armada and even courtiers within the English court. This patriarchal society was also the case in much of Europe including Italy. Women belonged to their fathers (or their brothers if their fathers had died) and then their husbands.

## Contexts and concepts in Romeo & Juliet

Tragedy: Shakespeare, and his audience, would have been very aware of the conventions of Roman and Greek tragedy. The chorus at the beginning, the idea of fate and the internal conflict of the characters are all features of a traditional tragedy.	Italy: The play is set in Verona, in Italy. At the time, Italy was seen as a place of advanced learning and an important place in terms of trade and wealth. It was also known for its warring states and families which make it a suitable setting for this play.
Family honour: The name of your family – and line of inheritance – were important at the time. The reputation of a family was everything and it was not unknown for men to duel each other if their family name was 'dishonoured'.	Courtly love: At the time, poetry and art had a very 'set' idea about love and how to express it. Sonnets were used by many of the great Italian poets (and Shakespeare) to show love and admiration. The love was expressed in a very idealised and perfect way.
Role of women and marriage: As we can see in the play through the character of Juliet, a lot of young women were used by their families to help strengthen ties with another family. Women were the property of their father, then became the property of their husband when they married. They were also expected to marry from a very young age by modern standards.	

## Themes and how they link to characters and plot in Romeo & Juliet

Love and hate: These are the overarching themes of the play and the reason why all of the events occur. Romeo and Juliet represent young love and how they use it to try to overcome the hatred between their two families. Romeo and Juliet's love is seen as idealized at first but their willingness to die for love highlights the pointlessness of the hatred within their society.	Fate: from the outset, there is an impression that Romeo and Juliet have their lives set out for them as they are described as 'star-crossed lovers'. The plot underlines this idea of fate as Friar Lawrence is unable to tell Romeo about the potion plot which leads to a serious of tragic misunderstandings which we feel the characters are unable to escape from. This is a key feature of traditional 'tragedy'.
Family: The 'ancient grudge' between the Montagues and the Capulets shows how important the characters view family and loyalty in the play. Juliet is tied to her family and is always fighting between her loyalty and love from them and her love for Romeo.	Violence and Conflict: The play opens with a physical fight and we can instantly see that the conflict between the families is violent. The violence continues as Tybalt is quick to anger and sees it as a way to resolve issues. All of the deaths in the play are a product of the conflict between the two families and how they resolve things with violent actions rather than words.

## Characters and what Shakespeare may have wanted them to represent

**Romeo:** Romeo is often seen as a 'tragic hero' as he is someone who cannot escape his fate. He is seen as immature and overly sensitive at the start of the play, but we see his love and sense of duty grow throughout the play. His love for Juliet is genuine and, tragically, he feels that he cannot live without her and her love.

**Lord and Lady Capulet:** Juliet's parents represent the older generation who are concerned with appearance. Lady Capulet loves her daughter but also wants her to understand her role in society. Lord Capulet threatens to disown Juliet when she disobeys him as she is not fulfilling her duty as a daughter.

**Nurse:** The Nurse can be seen as a comic character who can give some humour to the play. She is very rude and talks a lot, but she is also a mother-figure to Juliet and cares for her very much.

**Juliet:** Juliet is a very young girl who loves and respects her family. She is clever and witty. She falls madly in love with Romeo and this gives her the courage to question her parents and her role in society. Like Romeo, she is a tragic figure as we feel that there is little she can do about her fate.

**Mercutio:** Mercutio is Romeo's best friend and is witty, rude and clever. Mercutio is not as romantic as Romeo and laughs at him when he is in love. He has a quick temper and seems to act first and think later. His death is a catalyst for the tragic events in the play as Romeo is forced to 'avenge' his death.

**Friar Lawrence:** The Friar is a counsellor to Romeo and cares about Romeo's happiness. However, it can be argued that his actions (marrying Romeo and Juliet, suggesting the potion to Juliet, not telling Romeo in time) also cause a lot of the tragedy in the play.

## Plot summary

**Act 1:** The play opens with a prologue from a Chorus who outline the play and explain how this is a tragic story of two warring households in Verona. We then see a fight between the Montague and the Capulet family. The Prince stops the fighting and declares that he will use the death penalty if there is any more fighting. Romeo (who is a Montague) is in love with a girl called Rosaline and he is depressed as she doesn't love him. To take his mind off this, he goes with his friends, Mercutio and Benvolio, to a masked ball at the Capulets' house. Romeo attends and meets Juliet (a Capulet) and the two instantly fall in love. Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, hears Romeo's voice and want to fight him, but Juliet's father stops him.

**Act 2:** This act also opens with the chorus who recite another sonnet about love. Romeo has decided to try to find Juliet. He sees her on her balcony, and they talk about their love. They decide to marry despite their warring families. Romeo arranges the marriage with Friar Lawrence. He then arranges for Juliet's nurse to send Juliet to the Friar's chamber. She does this and the two are wed.

**Act 3:** Tybalt comes across Romeo's friend, Mercutio in the street. Romeo arrives and Tybalt challenges him to fight which he refuses as, although Tybalt doesn't know it, they are now family. Mercutio is annoyed and fights Tybalt. Tybalt kills him and Romeo kills Tybalt. The Prince declares that Romeo is exiled to Mantua. Juliet learns of all of this and the Nurse promised to find Romeo so they can say goodbye. They spend the night together and Romeo leaves. Meanwhile, Juliet's parents have arranged for her to marry Paris. When she refuses, they are furious and threaten to disown her.

**Act 4:** Juliet and Paris meet, and Juliet tells Friar Lawrence that she will kill herself if she is forced to marry Paris. Friar Lawrence suggests a plan in which he will give Juliet a potion, so she seems dead. She will then be put into the Capulet vault so Romeo can collect her and take her to Mantua. He assures her that he will write a letter and let Romeo know of this plan. Juliet tells her family that she will marry Paris and, despite her fears, takes the potion. The nurse finds Juliet and breaks the bad news to the family. They all mourn for Juliet and the Friar tries to console them by saying she is now in heaven.

**Act 5:** In Mantua, Romeo is told that Juliet is dead and vows to kill himself in her tomb so they can be together. Romeo obtains some poison and leaves for Verona. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence hears that his letter has not reached Romeo, so he decided to go to the tomb to be with Juliet when she wakes up. Romeo enters the tomb and is met by Paris. Romeo kills him. Romeo takes the potion and dies next to Juliet's body. Friar Lawrence arrives and sees Romeo has died, just as Juliet begins to wake up. Juliet sees Romeo and kills herself with a dagger. Friar Lawrence explains everything to the Montague and Capulet family, and they agree to put aside their differences in memory of their children and their needless deaths.

A dichotomy of good and evil

A tragic hero

Features of a Tragedy

Issues of fate or fortune

A tragic waste

Revenge

