

# DIGITAL THEATRE+

VIRTUAL LEARNING LESSON PLAN  
DRAMA/THEATRE



## ROMEO AND JULIET

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60+ MINUTES

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:**

- Understand characters and their motivations through script analysis and observation
- Analyse how character relationships assist in telling the story
- Demonstrate how language devices are used to create meaning in the text
- Compare and contrast multiple interpretations of the same text and consider how artistic choices create meaning
- Apply skills to develop a character and perform their own interpretation of the Balcony Scene (Act 2, Scene 2).

**To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources:**

- [\*Romeo and Juliet\* | Shakespeare's Globe](#)
- [\*Romeo and Juliet\* | Royal Shakespeare Company](#)
- [\*Romeo and Juliet\* Study Guide - Language Devices](#)
- [\*Romeo and Juliet\* Study Guide - Speaking the Text](#)
- [Compare and Contrast Choices Guide](#)

**Plus:**

- Electronic copies of Act 2, Scene 2
- Pens and paper or access to Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Highlighters - two different colours (pink and yellow)
- Access to video conferencing or shared documents (e.g. Google Docs)\*

**Further viewing:**

- [Star Cross'd: A Contemporary Take on Shakespeare's \*Romeo and Juliet\*](#)

*\*Keeping students and teachers safe during remote education is essential. Please ensure any online platform you are using to communicate or coordinate with students is suitable for their age group and check privacy settings. For further information, see the [NSPCC guidance](#).*

### EXERCISE 1

## ANCIENT GRUDGE



ESTIMATED TIME:  
**10 MINUTES**

#### Setting the scene:

- Provide students with the link to the Shakespeare's Globe version of [\*Romeo and Juliet\*](#).
- Instruct them to navigate to Act 1, Scene 5 (0:30:30-0:35:15), where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time at the Capulet Ball.
- During this scene, two 'star-crossed' lovers have just met at a party and it was love at first sight. The attraction is mutual, but they're from two feuding families with an ancient grudge.

The aim of this exercise is to give students an entry point to the play, to explore broad themes and subtext, and to help them make connections between their own contexts and the world of the play.

#### Assignment/Discussion:

- Create a spider diagram/list of what this ancient grudge might be:
  - As an individual activity, students can complete this work and share it directly with you.
  - If your class is able to meet virtually, you could discuss it together.
  - If you are using a shared document such as Google Docs, students could add their thoughts and ideas as well as respond to others within the document.
- Share some contemporary examples of long-established rivalries. This can be completed using the same suggestions above - either doing the work individually or as a group.

### EXERCISE 2

## WHEN WE MEET AGAIN

- Pair students up and assign one to be Romeo and the other to be Juliet.
- Using any chat option available (Zoom, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp etc.) ask the students to write a series of messages to each other in character - each student must write at least five messages/responses.
- The content of the messages should be what Romeo and Juliet would say to each other after the Balcony Scene - how would that conversation continue?
- Ask the students to screenshot their message thread and send to you.
- Students should then choose another member of the class to serve as their confidante. They should write a message to this friend describing the person they just met.
- Again, ask students to screenshot their messages and send to you.
- You can share some of the conversations with the class in your online learning environment.



ESTIMATED TIME:  
**10 MINUTES**

The aim of this exercise is for students to use their knowledge of *Romeo and Juliet* to improvise text and manipulate elements of drama to convey the psychological aspects (thoughts and feelings) of their characters.

## EXERCISE 3

## WATCH SCENE

- Provide students with a link to the Shakespeare's Globe version of [Romeo and Juliet](#).
- Instruct them to watch a section of Act 2, Scene 2 (0:45:04-0:50:30), where Romeo goes to visit Juliet at her house.



ESTIMATED TIME:  
**10 MINUTES**

The aim of this exercise is to evaluate part of the production, delve further into the central characters and their psychology, and provide rationale for artistic choices.

**Responses**

- Before watching the scene, students should prepare **two** sheets of paper or two documents online: one labelled **ROMEO** and the other labelled **JULIET**.
- As they watch the scene, students should write down words to describe each character on their named page.
- Ask students to watch the scene a second time and record evidence/rationale for these words - citing specific moments and text whenever possible.
- The work should be completed individually and turned in to you.

**Extension Activity/Option:**

- Have a virtual class meeting where the words and evidence can be shared and discussed as a group.



## EXERCISE 4

## CLOSE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

ESTIMATED TIME:  
**15 MINUTES**

Provide your students with the following:

- A digital extract of the Balcony Scene: from Romeo “But soft!” to Juliet “...be a Capulet.”
- Links to or copies of **Speaking the Text** and **Language Devices** from the Study Guide for students to refer to definitions and examples.

**Ask students to download and print\* the text in order to mark their script as follows:**

- Circle the **end word** on each line
- Highlight examples of **assonance** in pink
- Highlight examples of **rhyme** in yellow
- Put a star next to any lines with **11 beats** – or lines which do not adhere to the traditional form of **iambic pentameter**
- Underline the **Os** and **Ahs**.

*\*If a student is unable to download and print the text, they can mark it in an online program such as Google Docs or Microsoft Word. All noted markings can be done in these programs, though you can make whatever adjustments are necessary to work for you.*

**Watch:**

- Provide students with the link to watch the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) contemporary staging of **Romeo and Juliet** and direct them towards Act 2, Scene 2 (0:37:38-0:42:45).
- Ask them to listen intently to how the actors interpret the scene, specifically how they perform the language using rhythm, dynamics, actor-audience relationship and space.

**Reflection:**

- If you are able to meet in a virtual environment, discuss the interpretation based on the key points identified in the script. If you cannot meet virtually, ask students collaborate in pairs to answer the prompts below and turn the responses into you.
  - Looking only at the **end words**, what clues do we get to the subtext?
  - Discuss the effect of **assonance** in this scene.
  - Discuss the effect of **rhyme** in this scene.
  - Identify and discuss examples of **iambic pentameter** and **11-beat lines**.
  - Discuss the heightened language in the scene – **Os** and **Ahs**.

The aim of this exercise is to build on the previous task by having students apply their learning to an annotation task. Students will demonstrate their understanding of language by analysing the text in detail. Students will then analyse and evaluate two contrasting captured productions, and investigate how language and literary devices are used in the text.

### **Compare and contrast:**

Compare and contrast the contemporary RSC version to the traditional Globe version watched earlier, and answer the final questions in our [Compare & Contrast Choices Guide](#):

1. Which performance did you prefer and why?
2. What specific differences did you observe? Share your opinions on the decisions made and why they were chosen for that specific production.
3. Did you notice anything missing from either of the performances? Has the text been altered for the specific interpretation? If so, what effect did this have?

*There are many questions in the Compare & Contrast Choices Guide which you could choose to include in addition to these three final questions.*

### EXERCISE 5

## PERFORMING & EVALUATING



ESTIMATED TIME:  
**20+ MINUTES**

The aim of this exercise is to perform scripted drama and make deliberate artistic choices to create dramatic meaning. Students will also evaluate their work.

### Performing

In pairs, students will rehearse and perform Act 2, Scene 2 virtually using video conferencing. As Romeo and Juliet were not in the same space, this scene will work well in the virtual environment.

- Initial script analysis - have students identify the given circumstances, and a key motivation of each character.
- Read through the scene in pairs.
- Incorporating all of the research and discoveries made during this lesson, rehearse their interpretation of the Balcony Scene and prepare for performance.
- Pairs then work together to decide how to present their scene, for example:
  - Record a FaceTime or Zoom call
  - Record their videos separately and edit together.
- Have students perform and record their scene and then share that recording with you.
- If possible, you can publish the scenes onto your chosen virtual platform for other members of the class to see.

### Evaluating

Students should then reflect on and evaluate their own performance in their journal. You may choose to have students send their journal entry to you.

If you are able to publish the recordings for the entire class to see, ask students to respond anonymously to at least one other performance as well .



For further resources to help you teach *Romeo and Juliet*, including a [full-length production](#), and [study guide](#), visit [digitaltheatreplus.com](https://digitaltheatreplus.com)

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[Royal Shakespeare Company Production](#)

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[Study Guide](#)

[Hamlet Soliloquy Compare and Contrast](#)

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[BBC Production](#)

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***Macbeth***

**By William Shakespeare**

[Everyman Theatre Production](#)

[Study Guide](#)

[Manga Shakespeare](#)

[Shakespeare In Your Space Workshop](#)

**And more!**

### LANGUAGE DEVICES

#### RHYMING

This one's easy. Two or more different words that sound the same.

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*MERCUTIO*

*What eye but such an eye would spy out such a quarrel?*

*(ACT 3, Scene 1).*

---

#### REPETITION

Again, pretty straightforward.

---

*MERCUTIO*

*A bawd, a bawd, a bawd!*

*(ACT 2, Scene 4).*

---

#### ALLITERATION

When a row of words starts with the same letter such as this line of Romeo from Act 2, Scene 4. When Romeo is taking the mickey out of Mercutio he could use this run of 's's in this line.

---

*ROMEO*

*O single soled jest, solely singular for the singleness.*

*(Act 2, Scene 4).*

---

#### ASSONANCE

When the vowel sounds of two non-rhyming words rhyme, such as this line from one of the Nurse's speeches.

---

*NURSE*

*I am none of his skains mates.*

*(Act 2, Scene 4).*

---

### DISSONANCE

When the sounds of two words clash violently on the ear, so as to heighten both.

---

*MERCUTIO*

*Dido a dowdy...*

*(Act 2, Scene 4)*

---

### PARADOX

A more complicated idea. A paradox is an idea that has sound (or apparently sound) reasoning but leads to a conclusion that makes no sense or is self-contradictory. For example, to walk from the centre of a room to the wall I would have to go half the distance, but I would still have half the distance to travel. From that point I would still have half the distance to travel again. And so on and so on. I would always still have a half a distance to travel to the wall, ergo theoretically I would never reach the wall. Which is nonsense because I would. Paradoxes are often used to make an intellectual point, or to simply bamboozle.

### ANTITHESIS

Opposites. On the one hand this, and on the other hand that. The weighing up of two ideas. The setting of one idea against another to work out a bigger problem. The most famous example is of course Hamlet's line "To be or not to be...". The thoughts in Shakespeare's prose are often expressed antithetically. Antithesis can be comic as well as dramatic.

---

*PETER*

*But I am sent to find  
those persons whose names are here writ, and  
can never find what names the writing person hath  
here writ. (Act 1, Scene 2)*

---

### OXYMORON

A contradiction in terms. A tall dwarf. A white raven. An honest politician. A modest footballer. Shakespeare's characters often revel in a good oxymoron.

---

*MERCUTIO*

*Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting.  
(Act 2, Scene 4).*

---

### LISTS

The three-part list is one of the most famous rhetorical devices. Julius Caesar's famous quotation "Veni, Vidi, Vici" or "I came, I saw, I conquered". A more prosaic example is Tony Blair's "Education, Education, Education". What impact does a three-part list have upon the listener?

---

*MERCUTIO*

*Why, is not this a lamentable thing,  
grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with grandsire, that we  
should be thus afflicted with  
these strange flies, these fashionmongers,  
these pardon-me's... (Act 2, Scene 4)*

---

There are other rhetorical devices, too, but use this list as a rule of thumb and you can't go far wrong. The main thing, when reading these speeches, is to identify the rhetorical devices and use them, relish them, enjoy them, just as the character does. Remember they should always be played as self-conscious choices by the character. The following prose speech is from the play, can you spot all of the rhetorical devices in it? When you've found them read the speech aloud and see how it feels to speak compared with just a flat reading...

---

*MERCUTIO*

*The pox of such antic, lispng, affecting  
fantasticoes; these new tuners of accents! 'By Jesu,  
a very good blade! a very tall man! a very good  
whore!' Why, is not this a lamentable thing,  
grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with  
these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these  
perdona-mi's, who stand so much on the new form,  
that they cannot at ease on the old bench? O, their  
bones, their bones!*

*(Act 2, Scene 4)*

---

### SPEAKING THE TEXT

We're now going to look for the clues that Shakespeare gives the actors about how they might play their roles. Contained within the text are certain clues that can be read like musical notes on a staff.

As an actor you'd be charged with using what the writer has given you to keep the attention of the unruly Elizabethan audiences. Here is a list of some of the things Shakespeare uses to make the language sound lively and make people want to listen to it. He uses language like a film director uses a close-up or a wide shot, just to make you hear a particular bit of the story. Don't worry too much about the technical terms, Shakespeare may not have known words like "alliteration" and "litotes", but he would have understood the ideas. The most important thing when reading Shakespeare is to imagine how you would use these words to make an audience listen. Remember if they don't hear it, or you're boring, you'll get something thrown at you.

### ACTOR'S TOOLKIT

**REMEMBER** – in order to think like an Elizabethan actor, it's vital that you think about how every line sounds.

Here are some things to think about when handling **VERSE**:

#### ALLITERATION

When the first letter of the two or more consecutive words are the same, such as this line from the chorus

---

*CHORUS*

*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes*

*(PROLOGUE)*

---



### SINGLE SYLLABLES

Speak the lines of single syllables out loud. They usually make you go quite slowly. Often Shakespeare uses them to make an important or complicated point. The most famous example is “To be or not to be...”. In *Romeo and Juliet* when Lady Capulet is trying to explain something that is difficult to Juliet, i.e. who this 13-year-old might marry, she uses single-syllable words and takes it slowly...

---

*LADY CAPULET*

*The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride*

*For fair without the fair within to hide.*

*(Act 1, Scene 3)*

---

See what happens when you try to say it quickly.

### END WORDS

The end word of a line is usually important. They would have been stressed by the Elizabethan actor. In a big speech, a list of the end words of each line normally offer you a pretty good précis of the speech. Try it with the famous “**All the World’s a Stage**” speech by Jacques in *As You Like It*. You’ll notice that the titles of the individual “seven ages” are all placed at the line ends. “Infant”, “lover”, “soldier”, “justice” and so on...

Let’s look at one of the most famous speeches from *Romeo and Juliet* and the role of the final words of the verse line...

---

*JULIET*

*O ROMEO, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?*

*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.*

*(Act 2, Scene 2)*

---

### ASSONANCE

When the vowel sounds of two consecutive words are the same but don't rhyme.

---

*MERCUTIO*

*Of courtier's knees, that dream on curtsies straight.*

*(Act 1, Scene 5)*

---

### RHYMING

Pretty obvious this one, but always hit them. Shakespeare uses them deliberately. Again, he usually gives us important plot points in rhyme. Look at how Romeo and Juliet conclude the sonnet that they share together at the Capulet ball...

---

*JULIET* *Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake*

*ROMEO* *Then move not while my prayer's effect I take*

*(Act 1, Scene 5).*

---

### IAMBIC PENTAMETER

Five de-dums. Like the heartbeat. This is the basic rhythm that Shakespeare uses. He writes like this for a reason, it's to make the groundlings listen. It gives the language momentum and a beat that is pleasant on the ear. When a line fits neatly into that rhythm it sounds nice to say and it speeds along. Always beat out a line when you speak it out loud; make it fit the heartbeat rhythm. Often in an iambic line there is a word that doesn't fit in to the rhythm, these are often the important words. I've highlighted the word here:

---

*JULIET*

*Gallop apace you fiery footed steeds*

*(Act 3, Scene 2).*

---

The line ends are stressed as a matter of course and they give us the subject of the speech. It's important that Juliet wants the horses to gallop to pull the sun across the sky quickly. We stress the line ends as a matter of course, we know that she is talking about horses, and the rhythm of the line gives an impression of a gallop.

### ELEVEN BEAT LINES

If a line has more than ten beats there's normally a reason for that. If the line sounds fuller, more overwrought, that's normally because the character is feeling that way. The most famous line in Shakespeare is an 11-beat line:

---

*HAMLET*

*To be or not to be: that is the question*

*(Act 3, Scene 1)*

---

The 'ion' of question gives you an extra beat. At this point in the play Hamlet's got a lot on his mind. The line shows that. Also the word that doesn't fit is "question". If the actor embraces that extra line and stresses the word question we get a sense of the business of Hamlet's line but also the fact that he's asking a question. He is. He's asking the most important one. Shall I continue to live or not?

In the following extract, Romeo is coming to terms with the life-changing conversation he's just had with Juliet. The thoughts he is having are too big for his brain, so Shakespeare gives us an 11-beat line:

---

*ROMEO*

*Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books.*

*But love from love toward school again with heavy looks.*

*(Act 2, Scene 2)*

---

Romeo's over-complicating a very simple idea here. But it's deliberate on Shakespeare's behalf.

### ANTITHESIS/OPPOSITES

Shakespeare thinks in terms of opposites or antithesis. It helps him express his ideas. How often have you tried to describe a feeling, but you haven't been happy with your description? How often have you said something is "a bit like this and a bit like that"? By putting two images next to each other you get a new hybrid image. It's like mixing colours – blue and yellow make green. It's a way Shakespeare has of letting his audience easily understand very complicated ideas such as:

---

*"To be or not to be..."*

---

To act Shakespeare well you have to have a good grasp on all of the opposites. It also makes text easy to listen to, as it is constantly stimulating the imagination. Look how Juliet works through images of black and white in this speech

---

*JULIET*

*Come, night; come, Romeo; come thou day in night;*

*For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night*

*Whiter than new snow upon a raven's back.*

*(Act 3, Scene 2)*

---

How many opposites or antitheses can you spot in the speech? As well as ideas he also set rhythms in opposition to each other. The change of rhythm makes your ears prick up.

### OS AND AHS

These are moments where the characters can't use words because they are at a place of high emotion. Ahs and Os are big sounds. Don't hide them when you speak the text. Let it all hang out. They are used to focus the ear, and make you listen to the next line.

---

*ROMEO*

*O I am fortune's fool (Act 3, Scene 1)*

---

### FULL STOPS (THE CAESURA)

Shakespeare's actors never stop at the full stops. They always stop at the end of the line. Listen to how people talk in real life. If they have a lot to say they usually run over where the full stop is and put a little stop in the middle of a thought. People don't speak in an organised way to full stops and commas. Record someone speaking on a subject they are passionate about – transcribe the text and look where they pause. The full stop, question mark or exclamation mark for Shakespeare indicate a change of emotion in the line, a change of tempo, but NOT A PAUSE. For example:

---

*FRIAR LAURENCE*

*Peace, ho, for shame! Confusions cure lives not*

*In these confusions. Heaven and yourself*

*Had part in this fair maid. Now heaven hath all*

*And all the better is it for the maid.*

*(Act 4, Scene 5)*

---

Read that extract by pausing after the full stop. Then read the extract not pausing after the full stop and accelerating in to the next part of the line. You get the sense of a panicking friar trying to get people to listen to him.

### THE HALF LINE (OR SHARED LINE)

When two characters share a line it is important that the rhythm of the whole line is not broken. It's as if two actors share either side of a caesura. The line must still have that emotional and tempo change that is required to play the caesura. The effect is that one character speaks very quickly after another. Or that one character is champing at the bit to finish another's thought. There are many shared lines in the hot-blooded fight scenes in Romeo and Juliet – there are some examples here:

---

*TYBALT* *Thou, wretched boy, that didst come here  
Shalt with him hence.*

*ROMEO* *This shall determine that.*

---

*ROMEO* *O, I am fortune's fool!*

*BENVOLIO* *Why dost thou stay?*

*(Act 3, Scene 1)*

---

Shakespeare knew actors, you only have to read the advice that Hamlet gives to the players in Hamlet. Shakespeare was also an actor. Bad acting in Shakespeare's time was probably very similar to bad acting today. Shakespeare is giving a very clear note to the actors playing Romeo and Benvolio here. It would be very easy as an actor to be acting distressed about the stabbing of Mercutio and forget to come in on cue, slowing the action down. The drama at this point requires the characters to be making rash decisions in a tearing hurry. The line encourages the actors to play at a quicker tempo.

---



### QUESTIONS

1. What is the full title of the play *Romeo and Juliet*?

2. Who was Romeo in love with at the beginning of the play?

3. What are the names of Romeo's two closest friends?

4. Who said "Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift; Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift"?

5. Which character delivers the 'Queen Mab' speech?

6. Name three language devices used within the play, and provide an example of each.

7. Who do Juliet's parents want her to marry?

8. Out of Romeo and Juliet, who is a Capulet and who is a Montague?

9. Who said “Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged! Give me my sin again”?

10. Who said “Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds”?

### ANSWERS

1. What is the full title of the play *Romeo and Juliet*?

**Answer:** *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

2. Who was Romeo in love with at the beginning of the play?

**Answer:** Rosaline

3. What are the names of Romeo's two closest friends?

**Answer:** Benvolio and Mercutio

4. Who said "Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift; Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift"?

**Answer:** Friar Laurence

5. Which character delivers the 'Queen Mab' speech?

**Answer:** Mercutio

6. Name three language devices used within the play, and provide an example of each.

**Answer:**

#### **Rhyming**

Mercutio: "What eye but such an eye would spy out such a quarrel?" (Act 3, Scene 1)

#### **Repetition**

Mercutio: "A bawd, a bawd, a bawd!" (Act 2, Scene 4)

#### **Alliteration**

Romeo: "O single-soled jest, solely singular for the singleness." (Act 2, Scene 4)

#### **Assonance**

Nurse: "I am none of his skains mates." (Act 2, Scene 4)

#### **Dissonance**

Mercutio: "Dido a dowdy..." (Act 2, Scene 4)

#### **Antithesis**

Peter: "But I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here writ." (Act 1, Scene 2)

#### **Oxymoron**

Mercutio: "Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting." (Act 2, Scene 4)

#### **Lists**

Mercutio: "Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these pardon-me's..." (Act 2, Scene 4)

7. Who do Juliet's parents want her to marry?

**Answer: County Paris**

8. Out of Romeo and Juliet, who is a Capulet and who is a Montague?

**Answer: Romeo is a Montague and Juliet is a Capulet**

9. Who said "Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged! Give me my sin again"?

**Answer: Romeo**

10. Who said "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds"?

**Answer: Juliet**

**The following questions have been crafted to deepen and expand your students' understanding of the text. They can be used for homework or to prompt classroom discussions.**

### CHARACTERS

- What difference would it make if we knew why the Capulets and the Montagues had fallen out?
- What might be the reasons for the Montagues and Capulets falling out, and how might you express this in a production?
- What is the effect on the play if Romeo is not in love with Rosaline at the beginning?
- What impact does the Chorus have on your enjoyment of the play?
- What might happen to the play if the Chorus was cut?

### TRAGEDY

- Why is this tragedy about the death of two idealistic children still arguably Shakespeare's most popular work?
- Why are we so attracted to tragedy?
- What does it mean if something is said to be “written in the stars”?
- Are the deaths of Romeo and Juliet avoidable?