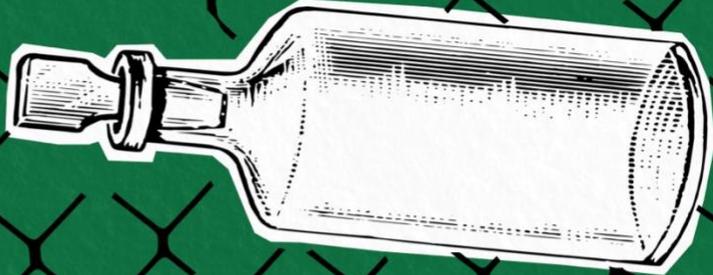




QUEENSLAND
SHAKESPEARE
ENSEMBLE

Oh, I am fortune's fool!



Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble presents

ROMEO & JULIET

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Rob Pensalfini



Aug 26 - 29, Sept 1 - 5, Sept 8 - 12
The Amphitheatre, Roma Street Parkland

qldshakespeare.org

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About the Company

Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble - Who are we?

The Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble (QSE) was founded in 2001. Since its inception, the Ensemble has gained a reputation for energetic, accessible and unique productions of Shakespeare's plays. We use Shakespeare as a platform for positive change, via our ongoing programs. These include:

- Mainstage performances for the general public
- The Apprenticeship program, supporting emerging artists by offering a 6 month training program
- *Dare to Share* showing of company training, at the company's home base – the Geoffrey Rush Studio, UQ
- *Shakespeare's Shorts*, touring to schools, festivals, markets and other events
- The Shakespeare Prison Project
- Our Shakespeare Beyond program, which includes A Night at the Theatre, Relaxed Performances, and Youth Justice workshops
- In-School Workshops in voice, Forum Theatre, and performing Shakespeare
- Actor training, including: Linklater Voice Work, Speaking Shakespeare in Your Own Voice, Theatre of the Oppressed, Shakespeare Scene Study, and the Young Actors Shakespeare Intensive

Our mission as an ensemble is to bring the language of Shakespeare to communities. QSE strives to strengthen the connections between and within communities by:

- sharing epic and eternal stories with a live audience
- creating evocative, engaging experiences in communities
- making Shakespeare accessible to all
- supporting marginalised people in having their voices heard
- reflecting the contemporary human condition
- developing an Ensemble of Artist managers
- inspiring a collaborative artistic and business environment

We believe:

- that Shakespeare's language demands an intense intellectual-emotional-physical-spiritual connection, and is the ultimate actor training and community building tool. Created when theatre was a rhythmic, physical, and aural experience, Shakespeare's plays insist on a whole-body relationship to words, challenging those who perform them to act boldly and speak with passion.
- that performance is most potent when it is embodied by actors who train together, exchanging skills and experiences, and sharing a sense of belonging with one another. We consider the human voice to be the ultimate vehicle for embodied expression and communal exploration.

- in the principles of Ensemble Theatre, and seek to develop a team of artist-managers who create an inspirational artistic and business environment to which others aspire.

Although the Ensemble performs the works of other playwrights and authors, particularly local ones, Shakespeare will always be the home from which we travel.

The Production at a Glance

Romeo & Juliet by William Shakespeare

In a city torn apart by families weaponising intergenerational discord, two young people push back against the expectations surrounding them. Juliet refuses to allow her life and sexuality to be traded for security, while Romeo distances himself from the boy's club mentality in which he was raised. In their greatest act of defiance, the two teenagers find unexpected love. But is youthful love enough to mend ancient rifts?

Marking the ensemble's return to the beautiful Roma Street Parkland, *Romeo & Juliet* promises to deliver the clarity, joy, and live music that QSE has become known for over the last 20 years.

Performance season:	26th August - 12th September, 2021 Wed - 6:30pm; Thurs & Fri - 7:30pm; Sat - 2pm and 7:30pm; Sun - 6pm
Location:	Roma Street Parkland Amphitheatre
Length:	2 hours and 30 minutes (including 20 minute interval) <i>AND 30 minutes of live music prior to the show</i>
Suitability:	Years 10 - 12
Please be advised:	This performance contains reference to death and suicide, sexual themes, drug use, and theatricalised violence.
Key themes:	Love Fate Intergenerational conflict Gender roles Coming of age Politics of love and relationships
Key Questions:	Universal (what does it mean to be human?) Do we have ultimate control over our lives and choices, or will there always be outside forces that lead us to a certain destination? Political (how must we act towards each other?) Is there a way to break intergenerational conflict and

trauma? How much of our worldview do we inherit from our parents?

Individual (what should I do?)

Is there such a thing as going too far for love? Where would you draw the line?

Cast and Creatives

Cast:

Capulet
Montague
Juliet / Abraham
Lady Capulet
Gregory / Watch / Servant
Romeo
Nurse / Lady Montague
Friar Lawrence
Sampson / Watch / Servant
Mercutio / Prince / Apothecary
Tybalt / Friar John / Watch
Balthasar / Citizen / Servant
Benvolio / Paris

Meg Bennet
Tom Coyle
Sarah Doyle
Leah Fitzgerald-Quinn
Grace Lofting
Lilliana Macarone
Rebecca Murphy
Rob Pensalfini
Isabella Ross
Rebekah Schmidt
John Siggers
William Summers
Angus Thorburn

Key Creatives:

Director
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Production Manager
Costume Designer
Set Designer
Lighting Design/Operation
Fight Choreographer
Deputy Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Managers
Front of House Manager
Marketing Assistant

Rob Pensalfini
Isabella Ross
Laraine Griffiths
Kylli Davies
Leah Fitzgerald-Quinn
Rob Pensalfini
B'Ellana Hill
Rob Pensalfini
Mikala Crawley
Megan Ella, Thien Nguyen
Willem Whitfield
Mikala Crawley

Band: *Maiden Blush*

Original Compositions by Lilliana Macarone, Rob Pensalfini and John Siggers

Music Director
Bass / Cello
Violin
Drums / Guitar / Vocals
Clarinet / Banjo / Guitar / Vocals
Guitar / Vocals
Clarinet / Drums

Rob Pensalfini
Tom Coyle
Leah Fitzgerald-Quinn
Lilliana Macarone
Rob Pensalfini
John Siggers
Angus Thorburn

Playgoing in the Elizabethan Style

We'd like to welcome you to the experience of attending a live performance in a non-traditional setting. When we perform in the amphitheatre we set our audience on stage with us, and use the parkland itself as the background to the action. Just like in any theatre there are most of the usual expectations – and while we know you get all the etiquette stuff, here's a reminder of some simple information you can pass on to your students.

1. We would love you to get involved in the performances by applauding and laughing at appropriate moments. If you have a specific question – ask your teacher at the interval/end of the show or ask one of the cast, if you have a chance for a Question & Answer session (which can be held with prior arrangement after any show within the season).
2. You are welcome to eat during the show, but please be mindful of other patrons. Snacks and drinks (including water) can be purchased at the front-of-house prior to the show and during interval, and you are welcome to take these back to the audience space with you. Please be mindful of the placement of drinks, and keep all bottles closed when not being used.
3. Live theatre is different to TV – the actors on stage can hear and see you and there are other members of the audience to think about. If you need to leave the performance for any reason, please ensure this is done quickly and quietly and at an appropriate break in the action
4. Please ensure that you switch off your mobile phone (not just to 'silent' and leave it in your bag before the performance begins; and if you wear a smart-watch and are not wearing long sleeves to cover this, consider removing it also. The glow of the iPhone screen and even a watch (which can be set off whenever you shift your arm) is obvious to others and can be very distracting!
5. Additionally, because of our beautiful open-air performance space, and despite the warmth of our actors' marvelous performances, evening shows can be a little chilly. We do provide some blankets for our audience, but please remember to wear warm clothes, bring a jacket, and feel free to bring your own blanket too!
6. Lastly, a reminder that there will be 30 minutes of live music performed by the band prior to the show. Audience seating will be open during this time, so you can enjoy from the audience space on stage, or it is also a popular audience tradition to bring dinner and/or a picnic blanket to enjoy the music from the grounds in and around the amphitheatre. We would just ask that if you do choose to sit in the audience seating, that you keep conversation to a non-intrusive volume level. Thank you for your consideration of the band's and other audience members' enjoyment.

Play Synopsis

The city of Verona has been plagued for some time by the violent interactions between the wealthy merchant houses – the Montagues and the Capulets. The play begins as another street brawl breaks out between their servants. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to stop the fighting, but is himself embroiled when the rash Capulet, Tybalt, arrives on the scene. After citizens outraged by the constant violence beat back the warring factions, Prince Escalus, the ruler of Verona, attempts to prevent any further conflicts between the families by decreeing death for any individual who disturbs the peace in the future.

Romeo, the son of Lord Montague, runs into his cousin Benvolio, who had earlier seen Romeo moping alone. After some prodding, Romeo confides that he is in love with Rosaline, a woman who does not return his affections. Benvolio counsels him to forget her and find another, more beautiful woman, but Romeo remains despondent.

Meanwhile, Paris, a kinsman of the Prince, seeks Juliet's hand in marriage. Her father Lord Capulet, though happy at the match, asks Paris to wait two years, since Juliet is not yet even fourteen. Capulet dispatches a servant with invites to his annual masquerade. He invites Paris to the feast, hoping that Paris will begin to win Juliet's heart.

Romeo and Benvolio, still discussing Rosaline, encounter the Capulet servant bearing the invitee list. Benvolio suggests that they attend, since that will allow Romeo to compare his beloved to other beautiful women of Verona. Romeo agrees to go with Benvolio to the feast, but only because Rosaline will be there.

In the Capulet household, young Juliet talks with her mother, Lady Capulet, and her nurse about the possibility of marrying Paris. Juliet has not yet considered marriage, but agrees to look at Paris during the feast to see if she thinks she could fall in love with him.

The feast begins. A melancholy Romeo follows Benvolio and their witty friend Mercutio to Capulet's house. Once inside, Romeo sees Juliet from a distance and instantly falls in love with her; he forgets about Rosaline completely. As Romeo watches Juliet, entranced, Tybalt, recognizes him, and is enraged that a Montague would sneak into a Capulet feast. He prepares to attack, but Lord Capulet holds him back. Oblivious to this, Romeo speaks to Juliet, and the two kiss, not even knowing each other's names. When he finds out from Juliet's nurse that she is the daughter of Lord Capulet—his family's enemy—he becomes distraught. When Juliet learns that the young man she has just kissed is the son of Montague, she grows equally upset.

As his friends leave the Capulet estate, Romeo leaps over the garden wall, unable to leave Juliet behind. From his hiding place, he sees Juliet in a window above the orchard and hears her speak his name. He calls out to her, and they exchange vows of love.

Romeo hurries to see his friend and confessor Friar Lawrence, who, though shocked at the sudden turn of Romeo's heart, agrees to marry the young lovers in secret since he sees in their love the possibility of ending the feud between Capulet and Montague. The following day, Romeo and Juliet meet at Friar Lawrence's cell and are married.

The next day, Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt—Juliet's cousin—who, still enraged that Romeo attended Lord Capulet's feast, has challenged Romeo to a duel. Romeo appears. Now Tybalt's kinsman by marriage, Romeo begs the Capulet to hold off the duel until he understands why Romeo doesn't want to fight. Disgusted with this plea for peace, Mercutio says that he will fight Tybalt himself. The two begin to duel. Romeo tries to stop them by leaping between the combatants. Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm, and Mercutio dies. Romeo, in a rage, kills Tybalt. Romeo flees from the scene. Soon after, the Prince declares him forever banished from Verona for his crime. Friar Lawrence, assisted by Juliet's Nurse, arranges for Romeo to spend his wedding night with Juliet before he has to leave for Mantua the following morning.

In her room, Juliet awaits the arrival of her new husband. The Nurse arrives and reveals that Romeo has killed Tybalt. Juliet is distraught that her new husband is responsible for the death of her kinsman; but realizes that her duty belongs with her love: to Romeo.

Romeo sneaks into Juliet's room that night, and at last they consummate their marriage and their love. As dawn arrives, they bid farewell, unsure when they will see each other again. Juliet then learns that her father now intends for her to marry Paris in just three days. Unable to reveal to her parents that she is already married to Romeo, but unwilling to marry Paris now that she is Romeo's wife, Juliet asks her nurse for advice. She counsels Juliet to proceed as if Romeo were dead and to marry Paris, who is a better match anyway. Disgusted with the Nurse's disloyalty, Juliet disregards her advice and hurries to Friar Lawrence. He concocts a plan to reunite Juliet with Romeo in Mantua. The night before her wedding to Paris, Juliet must drink a potion that will make her appear dead. After she is laid to rest in the family's crypt, the Friar and Romeo will secretly retrieve her, and she will be free to live with Romeo, away from their parents' feuding.

Juliet returns home to discover the wedding has been moved ahead again, and she is to be married tomorrow. That night, Juliet drinks the potion, and the Nurse discovers her, apparently dead, the next morning. The Capulets grieve, and Juliet is entombed according to plan. But Friar Lawrence's message explaining the plan to Romeo never reaches Mantua. Its bearer, Friar John, gets confined to a quarantined house.

Romeo learns only of Juliet's death and decides to kill himself rather than live without her. He buys a vial of poison from a reluctant Apothecary, then speeds back to Verona to take his own life at Juliet's tomb. Outside the Capulet crypt, Romeo comes upon Paris, who is scattering flowers on Juliet's grave. They fight, and Romeo kills Paris. He enters the tomb, sees Juliet's inanimate body, drinks the poison, and dies by her side. Juliet awakes as Friar Lawrence arrives and realizes what has happened. He hears the coming of the watch; when Juliet refuses to leave with him, he flees alone. Juliet sees

her beloved Romeo and realizes he has killed himself with poison. She kisses his poisoned lips, and when that does not kill her, buries his dagger in her chest, falling dead upon his body.

The watch arrives, followed closely by the Prince, the Capulets, and Lord Montague. Lord Montague declares that Lady Montague has died of grief over Romeo's exile. Seeing their children's bodies, Lord Capulet and Lord Montague agree to end their long-standing feud and to raise gold statues of their children side-by-side in a newly peaceful Verona.

Based on: <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/summary/>

Director's Notes

Rob Pensalfini - Artistic Director of QSE and Director of *Romeo & Juliet*

"Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied, and vice sometimes by action dignified."

Shakespeare's most widely known work is rife with examples of good actions that turn out to have bad consequences, and vice versa. Our production focuses less on the much-touted 'foolishness of youth' than it does on the ramifications of internecine and intergenerational discord. We see what happens when love is moved from its rightful place as the antidote to selfishness and becomes weaponised in the service of parochial interests. In Shakespeare's Verona, the impetuosity and inexperience of youth meets the intransigent habits of establishment. Juliet, not yet fourteen, pushes back against the view that her life and sexuality can be traded for security. Romeo, in his romanticism, pushes back against the boys club mentality in which he was raised. Yet at the same time as they rebel against the prevailing culture, they are products of it. Everyone who can remember being a teenager can probably relate to Romeo's "I am fortune's fool."

You'd probably be disappointed if I didn't say something about the choice to cast a woman in the role of Romeo. It's not such a radical idea, and in fact female Romeos were somewhat the norm in the mid 19th century (Charlotte Cushman being the most famous). The Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble has been pairing uncommon casting with textual fidelity for the entire twenty years of our existence, and we find that practices such as cross-casting, ambiguous casting, and re-gendering (which does not happen in this production), serve to highlight the socio-political themes in the plays – in this case gender, age, and class. Shakespeare is perfect for what has come to be known as non-traditional casting, given that his own productions would have featured a male Juliet and a forty year old Romeo. Indeed 'traditional' casting is an invention of that dull period of Shakespeare production that began in the late nineteenth century and has put generations of real-life Romeos, Juliets, and Mercutios off Shakespeare for over a century.

"Well, death's the end of all."

Pre-show Discussion Questions

- Have you ever been in love? What was your experience of ‘falling in love’?
 - If your answer is ‘no’, talk to someone close who has. Ask them to describe the emotional experience.
- What are you passionate about?
 - Can you think of anything (or anyone) that you think you would risk injury – or death – for?
- Have you ever been involved in an argument that has continued for a long time – perhaps past the point where anyone involved remembers what it was originally about? How did you feel about the other people involved in the disagreement?
- Can you think of a time that you have acted impulsively or irrationally, with big consequences?
- Have you ever had to choose between two things (or people) that you value dearly? What was the experience like? How did you make the choice?
- How important are your friends to you? Would you choose love over friends, or vice versa?
- Have you ever tried to do something helpful for someone else, and had it backfire? Perhaps even have the opposite effect than intended?

Advice for Listening to Shakespearean Language

When watching a production of Shakespeare's work, there are a few things to keep in mind to get the most out of the experience:

If you walk away feeling like you didn't understand what was happening, or who was generally doing what to who and more or less why, rest assured that the fault lies not in you, but (most probably) in the production.

Don't seek to understand every word - there will be words that you probably don't understand. If it's true that Shakespeare invented a lot of words, then there are words that his audience would not have understood in isolation either. But the words are never in isolation: the context, the sound of the word, the action, and the actor's intonation and intention will, in a good production of a Shakespearean play, allow you to glean what the word is doing. Seek to understand the gist.

Let the words wash over you and into you. Don't focus so hard on the meaning that you miss the images, the thoughts and mental pictures that your own mind makes out of them, the things they remind you of. Let the rhythms and sounds of the language in. The play is every bit as much yours as it is Shakespeare's or the actors'.

Practical Activity - Plot Summary in Action

In groups of 4 – 6, using minimal props and costume items to suggest characters, have students rehearse and perform for each other the following excerpt from QSE's *Instant Romeo & Juliet* (our 40 minute version of the play) which presents a short summary of the story. This excerpt is taken from the Friar's monologue from act 5 scene 3. Encourage the non-speaking characters (all but the Friar) to add very specific actions to illustrate the narrated events. Stage directions below are suggestions only.

Extension (Drama): have students choose whether they are aiming to create a comic or a dramatic *mood*. Ask them to consider in particular their use of *time* (tempo) and *movement* (especially gesture and facial expression). Encourage them to remove any 'unnecessary' (distracting) movement as they polish their performance.

ENCORE (*Instant Romeo and Juliet*)

Originally performed by four actors, with the following doubling:

1. Friar Lawrence (the narrator)
2. Romeo / Lady Capulet
3. Nurse / Tybalt
4. Juliet / Prince

Enter Friar

FRIAR: A pair of star-cross'd lovers took their lives.
The story of their love and parents' rage
And how their deaths bury their parents' strife
Is now the three minutes' traffic of our stage.
I married them, and their stol'n marriage-day

Romeo and Juliet enter from opposite wings, and meet. They exit together.

Was Tybalt's dooms-day, whose untimely death

Tybalt and Romeo enter from opposite wings, charging at each other. Tybalt exits, dying.

Banish'd the new-made bridegroom from the city,

The Prince (ruler of Verona) appears (from above) and gestures an 'order' for Romeo to leave. Romeo exits.

For whom, and not for Tybalt, Juliet pined.

Juliet enters and sits, weeping.

Lady Capulet enters and 'orders' Juliet to marry; Juliet refuses.

Her mother, to remove her siege of grief,
Betroth'd and would have married her perforce

Lady Capulet exits.

To County Paris: then comes she to me,

Juliet crosses to Friar and 'pleads' with him.

And, with wild looks, bid me devise some mean
To rid her from this second marriage,
Or in my cell there would she kill herself.
Then gave I her, so tutor'd by my art,

Friar gives Juliet a potion.

A sleeping potion; which so took effect

Juliet drinks the potion, instantly falling asleep.

As I intended, for it wrought on her
The form of death: meantime I writ to Romeo,

A letter appears above the set / from the wings

That he should hither come as this dire night,
To help to take her from her borrow'd grave,
But he which bore my letter, Friar John,
Was stay'd by accident. Then all alone
Came I to take her from her kindred's vault;

Friar exits; Romeo enters and finds Juliet 'dead'. He reveals a bottle of poison, and dies on-stage. Friar re-enters to discover him dead.

But when I came, some minute ere the time
Of her awaking, here untimely lay
True Romeo dead as you do see him now.

Juliet wakes up.

She wakes; and I entreated her come forth,
But she, it seems, did violence on herself.

Juliet crosses to Romeo and attempts to drink from the bottle of poison; then stabs herself with his dagger.

And never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

Plot Summary Chart

♥ Romeo and Juliet

Here's how the lovers go down:

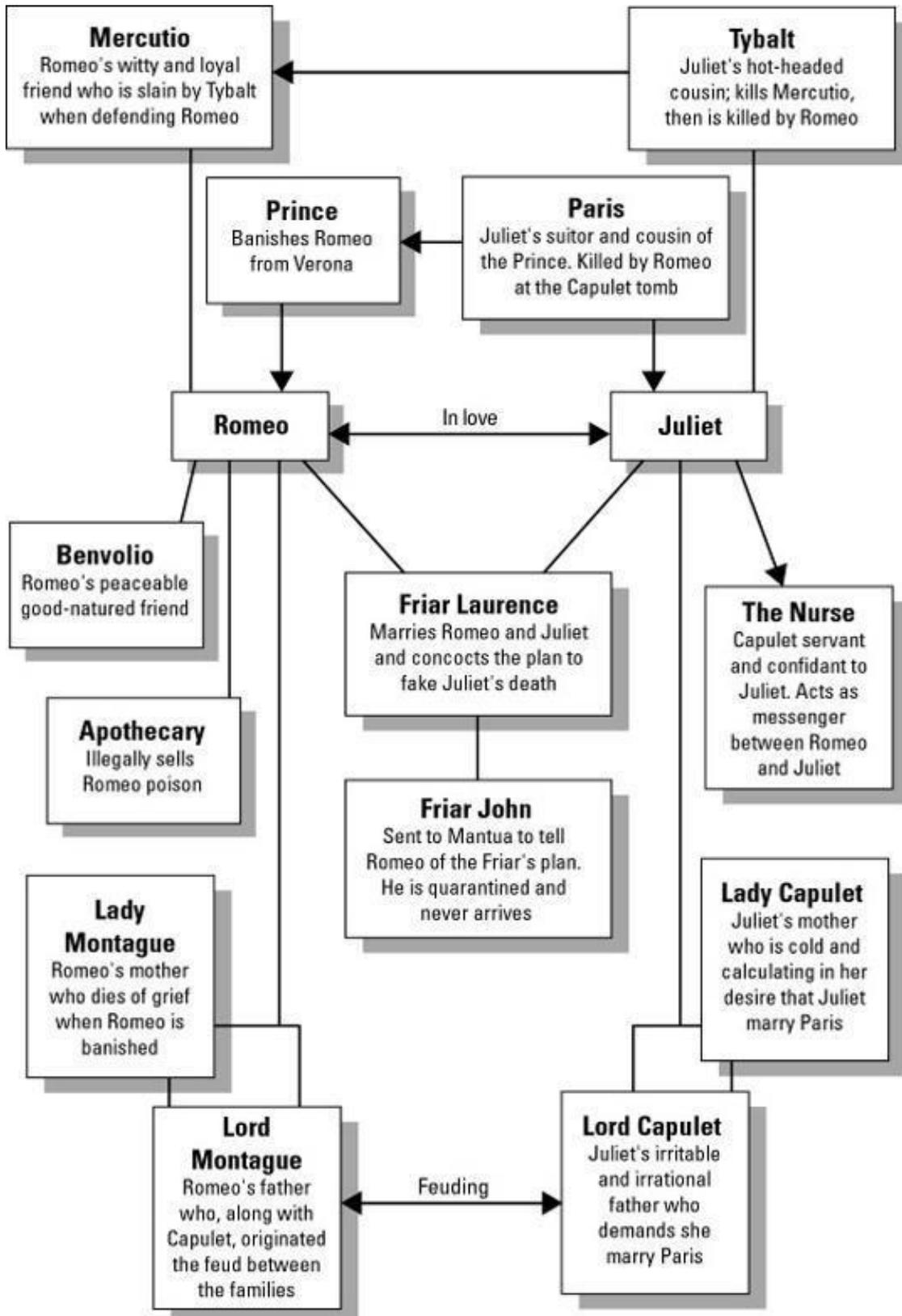
- **1 Duel**
The Montagues and Capulets have a duel. At the end, Verona's Prince says, "the next to fight will die."
- **2 Masquerade Ball**
Romeo wants to crash the Capulet dance to get with Rosaline but meets someone else....
- **3 Marriage**
Romeo falls for Juliet and they arrange a secret wedding.
- **4 Fight**
Tybalt and Mercutio fight it out. Romeo gets in the middle and kills Tybalt.
- **5 Sadness**
Juliet is sad that Romeo has killed her cousin. To make her happy, dad says she should get with Paris.
- **6 Sleeping Potion**
To avoid marrying Paris, Juliet takes a sleeping potion so everyone will think she's dead.
- **7 Death and more Death**
Romeo finds Juliet and thinking she's dead, kills himself. Juliet then wakes to find Romeo's dead body and does the same.



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<https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/romeo-and-juliet/summary>

Character Map - Verona's Nobility



Pre-show Activity - Making Character Connections

Materials needed:

Character cards & glue (optional)

Poster-sized sheets of paper (or work as a whole class on the whiteboard)

Markers

Once students are familiar with Romeo and Juliet's narrative, have them work in groups of 3 – 4. Rather than (or before) giving them the character map, have them create their own. Provide them with a list of the key characters and ask them to draw the relationship connections between the characters.

Key Characters

Synopsis and Discussion Questions

Character summaries below are sourced from the website:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/characters/>

Questions listed below each character may provide stimulus for discussion either pre or post-show viewing. They may be useful for students to consider if completing a forming task inspired by or presenting task based on extracts from the script. They could also be used as a stimulus for persuasive-writing based English tasks.

Romeo

The son and heir of Lord and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. He lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets, but he is not at all interested in violence. His only interest is love. At the beginning of the play he is madly in love with a woman named Rosaline, but the instant he lays eyes on Juliet, he falls in love with her and forgets Rosaline. Thus, Shakespeare gives us every reason to question how real Romeo's new love is, but Romeo goes to extremes to prove the seriousness of his feelings. He secretly marries Juliet, the daughter of his father's worst enemy; he happily takes abuse from Tybalt; and he would rather die than live without his beloved.

Romeo's deep capacity for love is merely a part of his larger capacity for intense feeling of all kinds. Put another way, it is possible to describe Romeo as lacking the capacity for moderation. Love compels him to sneak into the garden of his enemy's daughter, risking death simply to catch a glimpse of her. Anger compels him to kill his wife's cousin in a reckless duel to avenge the death of his friend. Despair compels him to suicide upon hearing of Juliet's death. Such extreme behavior dominates Romeo's character throughout the play and contributes to the ultimate tragedy that befalls the lovers. Had Romeo restrained himself from killing Tybalt, or waited even one day before killing himself after hearing the news of Juliet's death, matters might have ended happily. Of course, though, had Romeo not had such depths of feeling, the love he shared with Juliet would never have existed in the first place.

Questions to consider:

- *Is Romeo truly in love with Juliet; is he just infatuated (in lust!); or is he 'in love with being in love'?*
- *How much do you think the relationship being 'forbidden' may have added to Romeo's attraction to Juliet?*
- *Why does Romeo so easily forget about Rosaline when he meets Juliet?*
- *Do you believe Romeo truly understands how to recognize 'true love'?*

- *Do you think Romeo would have taken up Tybalt's challenge to a duel if he hadn't just fallen in love with (and married) Tybalt's cousin?*
- *How responsible is Romeo for Mercutio's death?*
- *Why do you think the Prince chooses to banish Romeo instead of killing him?*
- *If the story ended differently (i.e. Friar Lawrence's message reached Romeo, and he rescued Juliet), do you think they could have succeeded in having a happy marriage in Mantua, away from their families' feud (and support)?*

Juliet

The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child who has thought little about love and marriage, but she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family's great enemy. Because she is a girl in an aristocratic family, she has none of the freedom Romeo has to roam around the city, climb over walls in the middle of the night, or get into sword fights. Nevertheless, she shows amazing courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo, even refusing to believe the worst reports about him after he gets involved in a fight with her cousin. Juliet's closest friend and confidant is her nurse, though she's willing to shut the Nurse out of her life the moment the Nurse turns against Romeo.

Though profoundly in love with Romeo, Juliet is able to see and criticize Romeo's rash decisions and his tendency to romanticize things. After Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished, Juliet does not follow him blindly. She makes a logical and heartfelt decision that her loyalty and love for Romeo must be her guiding priorities. Essentially, Juliet cuts herself loose from her prior social moorings—her nurse, her parents, and her social position in Verona—in order to try to reunite with Romeo. When she wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she does not kill herself out of feminine weakness, but rather out of an intensity of love, just as Romeo did. Juliet's suicide actually requires more nerve than Romeo's: while he swallows poison, she stabs herself through the heart with a dagger.

Questions to consider:

- *Do you think Juliet feels restricted by her gender, familial and societal role at the start of the play? Do you think she is already questioning these; or is this entirely brought on by her encounter with Romeo?*
- *Is Juliet truly in love with Romeo; or is she just infatuated (in lust)?*
- *How much do you think the relationship being 'forbidden' may have added to Juliet's attraction to Romeo?*
- *What causes Juliet to go from a stated uninterest in marriage altogether, to a complete willingness to marry and elope? Can you imagine / describe the internal transformation that Juliet goes through?*
- *Is there anything, aside from her declared love of Romeo, that contributes to her choice of loyalty towards him over her slain cousin (Tybalt)?*
- *What do you think were the cultural assumptions and beliefs around the institutions of marriage, family, and gender roles in 15th century Verona? Which do you think Juliet agreed with, and which did she not value?*

Friar Lawrence

Friar Lawrence occupies a strange position in *Romeo and Juliet*. He is a kindhearted cleric who helps Romeo and Juliet throughout the play. He performs their marriage, and gives generally good advice, especially in regard to the need for moderation. He is the sole figure of religion in the play. But Friar Lawrence is also the most scheming and political of characters in the play: he marries Romeo and Juliet as part of a plan to end the civil strife in Verona; he spirits Romeo into Juliet's room and then out of Verona; he devises the plan to reunite Romeo and Juliet through the deceptive ruse of a sleeping potion that seems to arise from almost mystic knowledge. This mystical knowledge seems out of place for a Catholic friar; why does he have such knowledge, and what could such knowledge mean? The answers are not clear. In addition, though Friar Lawrence's plans all seem well conceived and well intentioned, they serve as the main mechanisms through which the fated tragedy of the play occurs; in essence, his perhaps well-meaning actions create the conditions for the key tragedy.

Questions to consider:

- *Both Romeo and Juliet place a large amount of trust in the Friar. Do you think this is justified?*
- *What is the Friar's relationship to the Lords and Ladys Capulet and Montague? What is theirs to him?*
- *Why does the Friar agree to defy social and familial hierarchies to marry Romeo and Juliet? What does he stand to gain – and what does he stand to lose?*
- *Do you believe the Friar's actions are well intentioned?*
- *Where did religion (and religious figures) stand within the social hierarchy of 15th century Verona? Does this influence the Friar's actions or their consequences?*

Mercutio

A kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo's close friend. Though he constantly puns, jokes, and teases—sometimes in fun, sometimes with bitterness—Mercutio is not a mere jester or prankster. With his wild words, Mercutio punctures the romantic sentiments and blind self-love that exist within the play. He mocks Romeo's self-indulgence just as he ridicules Tybalt's hauteur and adherence to fashion. The critic Stephen Greenblatt describes Mercutio as a force within the play that functions to deflate the possibility of romantic love and the power of tragic fate. Unlike the other characters who blame their deaths on fate, Mercutio dies cursing all Montagues and Capulets. Mercutio believes that specific people are responsible for his death rather than some external impersonal force.

Questions to consider:

- *Why do you think Mercutio is Romeo's friend?*
- *What are Mercutio's beliefs about love?*

- *What are Mercutio's beliefs about the role of men (what a man should be), and of and women's in relation to them?*
- *Does Mercutio see Romeo as an equal?*
- *Why does Mercutio (who is neither Montague or Capulet) take up the duel with Tybalt in Romeo's place?*
- *How do you think Mercutio and Romeo's views on choice and fate differ?*

Nurse

Juliet's nurse, the woman who breast-fed Juliet when she was a baby and has cared for Juliet her entire life. Until a disagreement near the play's end, the Nurse is Juliet's faithful confidante and loyal intermediary in Juliet's affair with Romeo. She provides a contrast with Juliet, given that her view of love is earthy and sexual, whereas Juliet is idealistic and intense. The Nurse believes in love and wants Juliet to have a nice-looking husband, but the idea that Juliet would want to sacrifice herself for love is incomprehensible to her.

Tybalt

A Capulet, Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. Once drawn, his sword is something to be feared. He loathes Montagues.

Lady Capulet

Juliet's mother, Lord Capulet's wife. A woman who herself married young (by her own estimation she gave birth to Juliet at close to the age of fourteen), she is eager to see her daughter marry Paris. She could be perceived as an ineffectual mother, and liable to fly into a rage when respect or propriety is lacking.

Prince Escalus

The Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. As the seat of political power in Verona, he is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs. Nevertheless, he fails to prevent further outbreaks of the violence between the Montagues and Capulets. Only the deaths of Romeo and Juliet restore peace.

Conventions of Elizabethan Theatre

A brief summary, drawn from the website:

<http://www.thedramateacher.com/elizabethan-theatre-conventions/>

with examples from *Romeo and Juliet* referenced below.

Prologue

A convention used in several of Shakespeare's plays, to introduce the action, characters, or situation, used to various effect. A prologue is a speech delivered by an actor introducing a play, a character, or a situation. In *Henry V*, for example, the prologue that encourages the audience members to use their imaginations to create what an Elizabethan stage cannot: battlefields, clashing swords, the might of warriors. In *Romeo & Juliet*, however, the prologue is used to foreshadow the outcome of the tragedy – to free the audience from wondering what the ultimate consequences will be, and allow them to invest in what leads to the tragedy. In QSE's production of *Romeo & Juliet* the prologue has been cut, here is what the director Rob Pensalfini has to say about why:

"A number of people have asked me "Why did you leave out the prologue?" Often followed by "it's so beautiful" or "It's so famous."

The short answer is that it's unnecessary in 2021. The basic story of *Romeo and Juliet* is extremely well known in this place and time. I've worked with people who have no formal schooling, who have never heard of William Shakespeare, but they've all heard of *Romeo and Juliet*, and can tell you as much as is basically contained in that prologue. Shakespeare's audience may have needed that quick prologue, but - and thanks to Shakespeare - a modern audience does not. So in the interest of a pacy production that plays to its audience, it seemed redundant.

Plus, I wanted to get on with the fighting."

Soliloquy

This popular Elizabethan convention is a literary or dramatic technique in which a single character talks aloud inner thoughts to him or herself, but not within earshot of another character. Typically, a soliloquy is lengthy with a dramatic tone.

There are many good examples of soliloquies within *Romeo & Juliet* – and in fact, many of them are Juliet's – notable because this is rare across the breadth of Shakespeare's work). Perhaps her most famous is her impatient bargaining with the night to deliver her new husband to her: "Gallop apace you fiery footed steeds..." (**Act 3 Scene 2**).

Aside

The aside existed in Shakespeare's times, and continued into the melodramas of the 19th century. An aside is a convention that usually involves one character addressing the audience "on the side", offering them valuable information in relation to the plot or characters that only the audience is privy to. The audience now feels empowered, knowing more about the events on stage than most of the characters do.

Perhaps one of the most well known asides from *Romeo & Juliet* occurs in **Act 2 Scene 2**, when Romeo, observing the unknowing Juliet up on her balcony, asks himself – and the audience – "Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?"

Boys Performing Female Roles

Acting in Elizabeth's England was frowned upon by many in society as a profession unsuitable for women, as it was rough and rowdy instead of genteel. As a result, Shakespeare and his contemporaries cast boys and younger men in the roles of women.

QSE holds gender parity as one of its core values (both on and off stage), and casts characters across gender. Given the majority of roles in *Romeo & Juliet* (like most Shakespearean plays) are male, this more commonly means that female actors play traditionally male roles in the company's productions – in QSE's *Romeo & Juliet* Romeo, Mercutio and Lord Capulet are played by female actors. In a contemporary reference to Elizabethan traditions, rather than changing the gender of the characters (and the language of the original text), these characters are all still identified as their intended gender. However, it can often add extra layers of meaning or nuance when text referring to gender is spoken by a character that is being played by an actor of a different gender. This is just one way that contemporary performance can continue to unlock new interpretations of Shakespeare.

Eavesdropping

Eavesdropping was a dramatic technique that sat neatly between a soliloquy and an aside. Certain characters would strategically overhear others on stage, informing both themselves and the audience of the details, while the characters being overheard had no idea what was happening. This convention opened up opportunities for the playwright in the evolving plot.

The most notable point at which this is utilised in *Romeo & Juliet* is, of course, the opening of the balcony scene (**Act 2, Scene 2**). This serves more for us to see into each character's independent emotional state before they are united than it does to progress the plot itself, as Romeo breaks the common rule applied to within the convention – he reveals himself to the character on whom he is eavesdropping. This also serves to reinforce his passionate impulsiveness; as well as to allow the audience to begin to empathise with both of the protagonists equally (*Romeo & Juliet*, quite

uniquely for the period in which it was written, frames the dramatic action to share the protagonist role between both characters).

Presentational Acting Style

It is generally agreed by scholars that Elizabethan acting was largely presentational in style. Plays were more overtly a “performance” with clues the actors were aware of the presence of an audience instead of completely ignoring them as part of their art. Movements and gestures were more stylised and dramatic than one might ordinarily expect in a modern naturalistic or realistic drama, speech patterns were heightened for dramatic effect, and the use of conventions such as the aside, prologue, epilogue and word puns directly connected characters to the audience watching. The aside, the prologue, the soliloquy and the epilogue were all variations on a characters’ direct address to the audience when staged.

QSE endeavours to stay true to the presentational style of Shakespeare’s plays by referencing, addressing and including its audience – not only in asides but also throughout the production – while also incorporating contemporary acting’s focus on emotional truth. For example, in this production of *Romeo & Juliet*, the servant who cannot read the names of the people invited to Capulet’s feast asks the audience for help.

Poetic Language

Elizabethan plays commonly consisted of dialogue that was poetic, dramatic and heightened beyond that of the vernacular of the day. Shakespeare took great care in composing dialogue that was sometimes prose but and sometimes verse – either blank (unrhymed) or rhyming (couplets) and generally using five stressed syllables in a line of dialogue (iambic pentameter).

QSE approaches Shakespeare’s text using the guidelines that verse indicates heightened emotion, while the use of prose may suggest more ‘every-day’ dialogue. This can also serve to further emphasise contrasting concepts, such as Mercutio’s pragmatic view of love (and women) as a matter of sexual conquest (described – in prose – in **Act 1 Scene 4**), and Romeo’s more idealistic – and passionate – perception of love (epitomised in his poetic admiration of Juliet as he watches her from her garden – **Act 2 Scene 2**).

Puns

Puns are words that play upon multiple meanings. They were considered a vital part of Elizabethan word usage, and Shakespeare used them often, particularly for comic effect. Even as he is dying, the ever-witty Mercutio is able to remark to Romeo, “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man” (**Act 3, Scene 1**).

Stagecraft

In terms of stagecraft, Elizabethan dramas used elaborate costumes, yet quite the opposite for scenery. Acting spaces were largely empty (bare stage) with symbolic and isolated set pieces and minimal use of props (a single tree equalled a forest, a throne for a King's palace). This explains the use of rich dialogue full of imagery, as there was no set on stage to designate the scene's location. However, Elizabethan costumes were often rich and colourful, with a character's status in society being denoted by their costume alone. There were no stage lights of any kind, with plays strictly performed during daylight hours. A simple balcony at the rear of the stage could be used for scenes involving fantastical beings, Gods or Heaven, while a trap door in the stage floor could also be used to drop characters into Hell or raise characters up from beneath. Entrances and exits were at two doors at the rear (tiring house) and not the side wings, as is the case in modern theatre. An Elizabethan actor exiting side stage may well have landed in the groundings after falling off the edge of the (three-sided) thrust stage that jutted out into the audience!

Romeo & Juliet will be performed on the amphitheatre stage in Roma Street Parkland, with the audience on stage forming a three-sided thrust, and the parklands as an open backdrop. QSE references Elizabethan traditions with their set design, using minimal, symbolic set pieces and often referring to and including the backdrop of the parkland as part of the scenery.

Advice for Interpreting Shakespeare

Rob Pensalfini, Artistic Director of QSE, says:

1. Read the play aloud!

These plays were written down only in order to be spoken, not to be read silently from a page. There is no evidence that Shakespeare ever sought to have his plays published – and were it not for two actors from his company scrounging together all the papers they could, half of his plays would have been lost.

Speak the words – it makes it much easier to understand. Ideally, get a bunch of people together and share out the parts. Stop and help each other understand what's going on, but don't get bogged down in detail too much on a first read out loud.

2. Enjoy the physicality of the language

Once you read Shakespeare aloud, you will find that the physical stuff of speaking, the sounds and rhythms, often convey as much as the meaning of the words themselves.

When you get a line like the Friar's "and flecked darkness like a drunkard reels", enjoy those 's' sounds and the pops of the 'k', 't', and 'd'.

Enjoy the energy of the rhythms, which demand a certain degree of quickness and lightness, and carry the argument forward in terms of energy and intention.

3. Literalise the images

We all know that Shakespeare's plays are loaded with metaphors. Every situation, every relationship, every feeling, is likened to this or that natural phenomenon, commercial enterprise, plant, or animal. Rather than rushing to translate the images into what they stand for, take time to imagine the images as literally true. For example, don't replace the phrase "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" with the thought 'unpredictable disasters'. Instead, imagine being pelted with actual sling stones and arrows, ideally fired by the goddess Fortune (look her up if you have no idea what she looks like), and what the word 'outrageous' does to this image.

One way in to this is to actually physicalise the images, make your body into the shapes of the images, as you speak the words. I mean in the early stages of getting to know the text, not in performance.

4. Keep an eye out for in-text stage directions

Shakespeare often gave his actors stage directions within the words their characters spoke. If your character says, for example, "Thus with a kiss, I die" (Romeo, Act 5 Scene 3) there is no avoiding the action – Shakespeare has given his actor playing Romeo a specific direction, and it will only look incongruous if the actor does not follow through. Do not let your character just describe an action that they are doing – incorporate this into your blocking or movement score for the scene.

Practical Exercises

From the QSE Rehearsal Room

1. Geography of Thought (Literalising the image)

Elements of Drama: Exploring Language, Space, and Movement

Rob Pensalfini encourages actors to physicalise the literal images their characters are describing as they speak the words in early rehearsals. This can be a very useful way of creating personalised connections with the character's words and with their emotional state, as well as bringing the symbolic imagery to life. The below monologue could be explored by one actor with the whole class assisting or audiencing, or the activity could be undertaken in small groups, as a practical exploration of this rehearsal technique.

Suggested classroom activity:

Have one actor read through Juliet's monologue (below).

As a class / group, work through the images in the monologue, discussing briefly what they entail (it can even be very useful to research or print out images that relate to those described, especially for specific mythical references such as Phaedron's lodging).

Have the actor read through the monologue again, this time standing on a 'stage' space; as the actor names each new image, invite other group members to enter the stage and create a freeze-frame of that image (if using a larger group, each image can stay; if smaller groups of 4 – 5, the 3 – 4 non-speaking actors will need to create a simple choreography, moving from one freeze-frame to the next, as appropriate). Encourage large, heightened shapes, incorporating levels, and using the full breadth of the stage space available.

Have the actor playing Juliet speak the speech a third time, this time directly to the relevant images created by their peers. Encourage him or her to move freely among, towards or away from the images / freeze-frames. Invite them to respond with movement if Juliet's words or actions invite this.

Finally, have the image-actors return to the audience and invite the actor playing Juliet to share the speech with the audience one more time, allowing the literalised imagery to colour their movement and vocal delivery.

Discuss with the class whether (and where) this increased the clarity (and their understanding) of the speech, and how it changed their perception of Juliet's emotional state and / or the scene's mood.

Romeo and Juliet

Act 2, Scene 2

Juliet: Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

2. Scene in Gibberish

*Elements of Drama: Exploring **Language** (verbal and non-verbal), **Tension** and **Mood***

Shakespeare's language is powerful and specific, but it is also visceral – the whole being speaks. These days our experience of language tends to be more disembodied, and actors approaching Shakespeare sometimes leave behind their non-textual communication skills like body language, gesture, and tone – which convey the stakes and urgency of what they are saying.

The actors in the scene play out the scene in gibberish, a made-up (on the spot) babble which sounds like language, but sounds like no specific language. They shouldn't try to replicate the scene line by line, but essentially play out the intentions and ideas and actions in the scene. They will be forced to rely on all of these non-verbal strategies to communicate and get their needs met.

Then, immediately go back and play the written scene, this time **adding** language to the non-verbal expression they have discovered. Keep encouraging them to find the level of intensity and energy they had in the gibberish version of the scene, with the mere addition of the text to further support it, not replace it.

Suggested classroom activity:

As a group, have students read **Act 2 Scene 2** – Romeo's encounter with Juliet at her window. Ensure that they understand the meaning of the words. A modern translation is provided below, drawn from:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/romeojuliet/>

Workshop the scene as a class by having pairs 'present' the scene. The first pair should attempt the scene using the original text; following pairs will attempt the scene using only gibberish (there is no need to hold the script or follow the intent of each line exactly – but they should be attempting to recreate as much of the intention of the original as possible, without sensible dialogue).

After each gibberish performance, elicit feedback on which sections of the scene were clearest, and what gestures, movements, or vocal intonation assisted this. For every two or three gibberish performances, have a pair return to using the original text, incorporating as much of the useful gestures, movement and intonation as they are able.

Discuss as a class how the performance of the scene has changed through the focus on communication of dramatic meaning through non-verbal language and vocal intonation (rather than just through the meaning of the words themselves).

Act 2 Scene 2 - Capulet's orchard.

ROMEO

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me!

ROMEO

She speaks:

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou

Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

ROMEO

[Aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

ROMEO *[stepping forth]*

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET

Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?
How camest thou hither, tell me, and
wherefore?

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these
walls; For stony limits cannot hold love out.

JULIET

Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'

If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:

Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,

I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,

So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world

Modern Translation

ROMEO

But wait, what's that light in the window over there? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Look how she leans her hand on her cheek. Oh, I wish I was the glove on that hand so that I could touch that cheek.

JULIET

Oh my!

ROMEO

She speaks.

JULIET

(not knowing ROMEO hears her) Oh, Romeo, Romeo, why do you have to be Romeo? Forget about your father, change your name.

ROMEO

(to himself) Should I listen for more, or should I speak now?

JULIET

What's a Montague anyway? It isn't a hand, a foot, an arm, a face, or any other part of a man. Oh, be some other name! What does a name mean? The thing we call a rose would smell just as sweet if we called it by any other name.

ROMEO

Just call me your love, and I will take a new name. From now on I will never be Romeo again.

JULIET

Aren't you Romeo? And aren't you a Montague? Tell me, how did you get in here? And why did you come? The orchard walls are high, and it's hard to climb over them. If any of my relatives find you here they'll kill you because of who you are.

ROMEO

I flew over these walls with the light wings of love. Stone walls can't keep love out.

JULIET

Do you love me? I know you'll say "yes," and I'll believe you. Oh Romeo, if you really love me, say it truly. Or if you think it's too easy to win my heart, I'll frown and play hard-to-get, as long as that will make you try to win me, but otherwise I wouldn't act that way for anything

Preparing for Performance

An Actor's Warm-up

Rob Pensalfini, Artistic Director of QSE, says:

Warm up together as a cast. Let the warm up be a way to connect to your fellow performers so that you are all inhabiting the same world even before the performance begins.

A warm up should bring you gradually from everyday energy to performance energy. Begin with observation of how you feel (physically, mentally, emotionally), and work to free yourself of physical tension and vocal inhibition. Include plenty of yawning and humming, increasing in range and power.

Never move or make sound mechanically. You are not warming up an instrument; you are warming up the connection between your body, your thoughts, your feelings, your intentions, and your voice. Every sound you make is a release of thought, some part of your psyche speaking.

A short group warm up may include activities to:

- Facilitate self-observation (e.g. a 'body scan' visualisation; or neutral walking through the space, observing weight placement, tension points, and movement of breath)
- Connect out to members of your ensemble (e.g. Salute to the Sun, or similar repetitive movement sequences that the group works to perform simultaneously)
- Connect to the space and build energy (e.g. the 'bomb and shield' drama game)
- Activate your voice, such as:
 - Gentle yawning, sighing and humming through your range (can be done in combination with spinal rolls)
 - Massaging the jaw and the sinuses
 - Stretching the lips, tongue (roll it out over your bottom teeth), and soft palate (create an unvoiced 'k' sound on both in and out breath)
 - Stretching the ribs (can also use gentle massage / vibration on the chest)
 - A vocal scale - working through combinations of vowels and consonants at varying pitches
 - Tongue twisters (to activate articulators)

Backstage Pass - Interview with the Actors

Lilliana Macarone - Romeo

Q: What has helped you empathise with and inhabit the character of Romeo?

A: Well, it all begins with the text. So much of Romeo's text is so beautiful. It's just gorgeous verse! Rich and detailed and really vibrant language, shaping a person that is full of conviction and desperately in love. Saying those words, finding the shape, breadth, weight and texture of them in my own body and voice, tells me much of how Romeo feels and how he responds to the world around him. Our rehearsal process is very embodied, we are fed the text until we've learnt it so we are able to discover the character on our feet, in relationship to the other people in the scene (who are likewise discovering their characters) – this is sooo helpful in inhabiting the character! Beyond that, there are the similarities between myself and Romeo, the experiences, habits, and social structures that are familiar to me, that allow me to easily empathise and understand his motivations and responses.

Q: What do you consider Romeo's biggest weakness?

A: He is so young and idealistic that he can be very blinkered in his approach, refusing to hear other perspectives. He has big feelings and such conviction – his status makes him entitled, thinking he knows it all already.

Q: What is his biggest strength?

A: He is extremely focussed, loyal and loves fully. His devotion to love and his willingness to hold love above any peer pressure or threat of dishonour, makes him unique among men like Tybalt and Mercutio.

Q: Why are you looking forward to sharing this production with the audience?

A: Because I am a woman, in her 40s, playing ROMEO – the quintessential romantic lead – a role usually reserved for young men. When do you get a chance to see that?! While it's not the norm, Shakespeare is a realm in which cross-gendered casting is not foreign (young men played all of Shakespeare's women originally) but getting to play the romantic lead – the male romantic lead, with all the agency that comes with that – is rare. To be able to bring all of my life experience, my training and my love of this work to a role as rich as this, where instead of being ruled by a father, husband or son, I get to BE one of the boys: I get to decide for myself, fight for myself, and most importantly, to LOVE for myself. And that I do it in this body with this voice, in this day and age, in this society and culture – one that is youth obsessed and promotes/favours the male voice – is significant. I'm excited that our production will allow women to see themselves in these roles (Mercutio and Capulet are also played by women), and allow men to see the potential and possibilities of our bodies and our voices telling these stories. We are deep into rehearsals now and I am so immersed in this play – not only discovering new things every day, but really feeling the shape and nuances, the conflicts and contrasts, the

connections and symmetry. This is a play of extremes, of love and death, epic in its emotional labour, joyous and tragic in its fatalism. Being swept up in it is both ravishing and heartbreaking, it demands so much, and is aching for an audience to complete it.

Q: What is your favourite line in the play?

A: Oh, there are so many! I put some of my favourite lines into the songs I wrote for this production. Hmm... Ok, I'm going to jot down the first few that come to mind! Here goes:

- O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
- It is my lady, O, it is my love! O that she knew she were!
- O teach me how I should forget to think!
- Night's candles are burnt out and jocund day / Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
- How silver-sweet sound lover's tongues by night
- I have been feasting with mine enemy
- As he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds / And sails upon the bosom of the air.
- I defy you stars!

(Ok, that's more than a few...)

Sarah Doyle - Juliet

Q: What has helped you empathise with and inhabit the character of Juliet?

A: Juliet – like most of Shakespeare's characters – is incredibly clear and vocal about what she thinks and feels. Understanding her thought processes really helped me empathise with her character. Like Juliet, I have experienced people having certain expectations of me – especially as a young woman. I have since discovered many other points of commonality between myself and Juliet, however, starting with this one point of intersection really helped me inhabit her character.

Q: What do you consider Juliet's biggest weakness?

A: I think that Juliet's biggest weakness is her sometimes black-and-white moral compass. Although her reasoning is strong and her convictions are impressive, her firm opinions on what is right vs wrong make her life a little bit harder in the play. Many of her beliefs, however, are very indicative of the time that her character was written in.

Q: What is her biggest strength?

A: I believe that Juliet's biggest strength is her ability to stand by what she wants. There are many times in the play when it would be easier, safer, or more comfortable for Juliet to keep quiet. But consistently, Juliet chooses to speak up for herself and not compromise on what she really wants.

Q: Why are you looking forward to sharing this production with the audience?

A: I'm so excited to share this production with audiences because I think it's got so much heart in it. Wherever you turn, characters are throwing themselves into tumultuous situations because they genuinely believe they are acting in someone's best interests. That's what excites me most – playing with an enthralling cast who appreciate that every single character loves, strives, and tries, just like we do.

Q: *What is your favourite line in the play?*

A: "And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains."

It's a quite a morbid image, but it really paints the picture!

Preparation for Responding (Drama)

Responding requires students to:

- analyse the use of the Dramatic Languages within a production to create dramatic action and dramatic meaning
- evaluate the success of this creation of dramatic meaning for the audience
- synthesise their understanding of how the use of the Dramatic Languages worked to engage the audience.

The Dramatic Languages include:

Elements of Drama	Skills of Drama	Conventions of Elizabethan Theatre
Characters / Roles	Acting (voice & movement)	Poetic language
Relationships	Directing (responsible for dramatic meaning)	Blank verse (iambic pentameter)
Situation / Context	Design / Stage craft (set, lighting, costume, sound)	Rhyming couplets
Place		Prose (often used in less emotionally charged scenes)
Space		Presentational acting style
Movement		Soliloquies
Language		Asides
Symbol		Eavesdropping
Mood		Play within a play
Dramatic focus		Elaborate costumes
Dramatic tension		Symbolic (minimal) scenery
Contrast		

Students' process for planning a Responding essay may include these steps:

1. Decide what the overall dramatic meaning of the production was (this may change as you analyse the production further).
2. Decide on the key Dramatic Languages that effectively contributed to the creation of dramatic action and meaning throughout the production.
3. For each body paragraph - choose a moment within the play that contributed significantly to the creation of this dramatic meaning (a moment that made an impact!)
4. Analyse which of the key Dramatic Languages have been used to create this impact
5. Connect (synthesise) the use of element(s) of drama with skill(s) of drama and/or convention(s) of form and style within the chosen moment
 - You could link a key convention that was present in the chosen moment with an element of drama that has also been effectively used
 - You could link two elements of drama together where one element impacts on another e.g. dramatic tension often enhances mood
 - You could link a convention with one of the skills of drama
 - You could link an element of drama with one of the skills of drama
6. Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the creation of dramatic action and meaning within the chosen moment.
 - Evaluative words could include:
 - Successful
 - Effective
 - Engaging
 - Disjointed
 - Confusing
 - Heightened
 - Enhanced
 - Confronting
 - Well-developed

Responding Scaffolding Table

Your students may use a table similar to this one to link their notes around the use of the dramatic languages within QSE's production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Elements of Drama	Conventions of Style	Skills of Drama	Purpose / Meaning	Examples in the production	Topic Sentence
Dramatic Meaning:					

Structuring a Senior Drama Responding Essay

A Responding essay is not a review. There is no obligation to include plot or character summaries (beyond what may be necessary within the analysis of the use of the Dramatic Languages), and evaluation of the production is focused on how effectively the Dramatic Languages were used to create dramatic action and dramatic meaning (rather than on whether the show was well-received / liked).

The structure of a Responding essay may include:

1. Introduction

- Introduce the text (*Instant Romeo and Juliet*) and the style (Elizabethan Theatre)
- Frame the key question of the Responding task as a statement – form a ‘hypothesis’ that takes a position (one way or the other) on answering the key question, which will be supported with evidence throughout the essay.

2. Body Paragraph - each paragraph may focus on a single key moment from the production, and will include:

- Topic sentence – introducing the focus ‘moment’ and key Dramatic Languages used within that moment
- Evidence – describe how these Dramatic Languages were used within the focus moment to create dramatic action and meaning.
- Evaluate – was the moment effectively realized, referring to the Dramatic Languages
- Link – back to your hypothesis and / or Dramatic Meaning

3. Conclusion

- Refer to each of the key points within your body paragraphs.
- Summarise your analysis with a final evaluation

Further Resources

Cliff's Notes – *Romeo and Juliet*

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/romeo-and-juliet/romeo-and-juliet-at-a-glance>

Plot and scene summaries; character and theme analysis.

MIT Full Text – *Romeo and Juliet*

http://shakespeare.mit.edu/romeo_juliet/full.html

Full text, scrollable (on one web-page).

Schmoop – *Romeo and Juliet*

<https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literature/romeo-and-juliet/summary>

This site uses informal language and modern 'slang' throughout; it encompasses plot and scene summaries, theme and character analysis, and complete text with modern interpretation.

Spark Notes – *Romeo and Juliet*

<https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/>

Provides plot summary, theme and character analysis, and modern translation of complete text. Uses more academic language.