

Study Guide for William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*



The Barter Player ENCORE Company's production of *Romeo and Juliet* is
part of *Shakespeare in American Communities*,
a program of the
National Endowment for the Arts
in partnership with Arts Midwest

The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest presents *Shakespeare in American Communities*. The Barter Player ENCORE Company is one of 40 professional theater companies selected to participate in bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the twentieth year of this national program, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.

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Barter Playwright-in-Residence

Romeo and Juliet

Written by William Shakespeare

Adapted by Katy Brown

*Especially for Grades 7-12

By The Barter Encore Players, Spring 2022

(NOTE: standards below are included for reading William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and for completing the study guide.)

Virginia SOLs

English – 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.6, 10.1, 10.3, 10.4, 10.6, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.6

Theatre Arts – TL.8, TL.9, TL.10, TL.11, TL.12, TL.13, TL.16, TL.17, TH.9, TH.11, TH.12, TH.15, TH.16, TH.21, T3TH.7, TH.8, TH.9, TH.12, TH.17, TIV.12, TIV.13

Tennessee Common Core State Standards

English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.10

English Language Arts – Writing: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.6, 11-12.10

Tennessee Fine Arts Curriculum Standards

Theatre 9-12 – HS1.T.Cr1, HS1.T.R1, HS1.T.R3, HS2.T.Cr1, HS2.T.R1, HS3.T.Cr1, HS3.T.R1, HS4.T.Cr1, HS4.T.R1

North Carolina Common Core State Standards

English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.10

English Language Arts – Writing: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.6, 11-12.10

North Carolina Essential Standards

Theatre Arts – B.C.2, B.A.1, B.AE.1, B.CU.1, B.CU.2, I.C.2, I.A.1, I.CU.1, I.CU.2, P.C.1, P.A.1, P.CU.2, A.C.2, A.A.1, A.CU.1, A.CU.2

Setting

Various locations in Verona, Italy, including the home of the Capulets, the garden under Juliet's balcony, the cell of Friar Laurence and a crypt.



Characters

The Prince of Verona – a statesman

Romeo – a member of the house of Montague

Juliet – a member of the house of Capulet

Montague – Romeo's father

Lady Capulet – Juliet's mother

Mercutio – related to the Prince of Verona and a friend to Romeo

Paris – young count who wants to marry Juliet.

Tybalt – the nephew of Capulet and a cousin to Juliet

Benvolio – Romeo's friend, strives for peace between the families

Nurse – Juliet's friend and nursemaid

Friar Laurence – a man of God who marries Romeo and Juliet

Friar John – a friend of Friar Laurence's

Apothecary – a druggist

Note: Cast Size and Doubling of Actors

In this production of ***Romeo and Juliet*** only ten actors will be used, with some actors playing more than one role. Doubling of actors requires distinction between characters. In this production, characters will be distinguished by costume, voice and other physical character traits.



Biography of the Playwright

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England, and his birthday is traditionally celebrated on April 23. At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children. By 1592, he was living in London and working as an actor and playwright. He was part owner of the acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later called the King's Men), which built and performed in the Globe Theatre. Over the course of his career Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets and many other poems. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.



Define the following vocabulary words

grudge
mutiny
rebellious
profaner
importune
grievance
shrift
chaste
consent
counsel
disposition
solemnity
pilgrim
trespass
prodigious
utterance
enmity
prorogued

perjury
rancour
salutation
counterfeit
confidence
devise
herald
nimble
courteous
warrant
virtuous
blazon
riband
consort
appertaining
cockatrice
banished
carrion

vestal
modesty
lamentation
jocund
fettle
inundation
surcease
prosperous
gadding
prostrate
orison
conceit
dram
vengeance
conjunction
contagion
restorative
ambiguity

Synopsis

Romeo Montague is brooding because his love Rosaline no longer loves him. Then he discovers that Rosaline will be attending a party at the Capulet house, and even though the Montagues and Capulets are sworn enemies, he crashes the event with his friends Benvolio and Mercutio. Romeo is recognized by Tybalt, a Capulet cousin, who wants to kill him. Capulet refuses to allow this, for the Prince of Verona has ordered death for the next man to bring violence. Romeo and his friends stay on and Romeo glimpses Juliet, Capulet's daughter, with whom he falls instantly in love. The feeling is reciprocated, but at the party's conclusion, Romeo and Juliet discover that they have fallen in love with their sworn enemy. Later that night, Romeo hides in the orchard beneath Juliet's balcony. Juliet comes to the window and Romeo leaps out from hiding. They declare their love for each other, and Juliet promises to send her Nurse to Romeo tomorrow so he can tell her when and where they will be married.



The next morning Romeo tells Friar Laurence about his plans to marry Juliet. He agrees to help the two lovers, hoping that their marriage will end the feud between the two houses. Nurse meets Romeo and he informs her that Juliet is to meet him at Friar Laurence's cell. Nurse delivers the message and later that day, Juliet meets Romeo and Friar Laurence marries the two.



Meanwhile, Tybalt has been searching for Romeo to punish him for attending the party and flirting with Juliet. He confronts Mercutio and asks him where Romeo is hiding. Romeo enters and Tybalt challenges him to a duel, but Romeo refuses. Instead, Mercutio draws his sword and fights Tybalt. Romeo tries to stop the fight, but his interference accidentally accounts for Mercutio's death. Enraged, Romeo turns on Tybalt and kills him. The Prince learns of the deaths and banishes Romeo.

Synopsis (cont.)

Romeo sees Juliet one last time, spending his last night in Verona with her. After he sneaks off, Lady Capulet tells Juliet that she is to marry her kinsman Paris in a few days. Unsure what to do, Juliet goes to see Friar Laurence. He agrees to help her and comes up with the following plan: Juliet would drink a potion that will make her appear dead. The effects of the potion would last long enough for her to be placed in the crypt, where she would awake. Friar Laurence would send a letter to Romeo to let him know what was happening. Romeo would then return and let her out of the tomb, and they could live the rest of their lives together, free from the confines of their families' mutual hate. Juliet agrees to the plan. She returns home and takes the poison. The next day, Nurse finds her and the news of Juliet's death spreads. Romeo's servant finds him in Mantua and tells him that he saw Juliet being placed in the Capulet tomb. Romeo returns to Verona immediately to see if it is true. In the meantime, Friar Laurence sends the letter to Romeo, but it is too late. Romeo enters the tomb and sees Juliet. Believing her to be dead, he drinks poison and dies instantly. Juliet awakens to find Romeo dead beside her. Juliet takes Romeo's dagger and stabs herself. Montague, Capulet, and the Prince arrive. The Friar explains everything that has happened. Montague and Capulet finally see how much damage their feuding has done so they decide to end the war between their houses.



***“But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.”***



A Brief History

Barter Theatre was founded during the Great Depression by Robert Porterfield, an enterprising young actor. He and his fellow actors found themselves out of work and hungry in New York City. Porterfield contrasted that to the abundance of food, but lack of live theatre, around his home region in Southwest Virginia. He returned to Washington County with an extraordinary proposition: bartering produce from the farms and gardens of the area to gain admission to see a play.

Barter Theatre opened its doors on June 10, 1933 proclaiming, “With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh.” The price of admission was 40 cents or the equivalent in produce, the concept of trading “ham for Hamlet” caught on quickly. At the end of the first season, the Barter Company cleared \$4.35 in cash, two barrels of jelly and enjoyed a collective weight gain of over 300 pounds.

Playwrights including Noel Coward, Tennessee Williams and Thornton Wilder accepted Virginia ham as payment for royalties. An exception was George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian, who bartered the rights to his plays for spinach.

Today, Barter Theatre has a reputation as a theatre where many actors performed before going on to achieve fame and fortune. The most recognized of these alumni include Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Hume Cronyn, Ned Beatty, Gary Collins, Larry Linville and Frances Fisher. The list also included James Burrows, creator of *Cheers*, Barry Corbin, and the late Jim Varney.

Robert Porterfield passed away in 1971. His successor, Rex Partington, had been at Barter in the 1950s as an actor and in the 1970s as stage manager. Rex returned as chief administrator from 1972 until his retirement in 1992. In March 2006, he passed away.

Richard Rose was named the Producing Artistic Director in October 1992. During his tenure, attendance grew from 42,000 to more than 163,000 annual patrons. Significant capital improvements were also made, including renovation of the main stage (now Gilliam Stage) in 1995 and the 2006 addition of The Barter Café at Stage II (now the Smith Theatre). Rose retired in December of 2019 and Katy Brown, who had been at Barter since 1998 as the Director of the Barter Players and as an Associate Artistic Director, was named the fourth Producing Artistic Director – and is the first woman to hold the position.

Barter represents two distinct venues of live theatre: Barter Theatre’s Gilliam Stage, and Barter’s Smith Theatre. Gilliam Stage, with over 500 seats, features traditional theatre in a luxurious setting. Barter’s Smith Theatre offers seating for 167 around a thrust stage in an intimate setting and is perfect for more adventurous productions. Barter Theatre is also home to The Barter Players, a talented ensemble of actors who produce plays for young audiences throughout the year.

History is always in the making at Barter Theatre, building on legends of the past; Barter looks forward to the challenge of growth in the future.

WORD SEARCH

Find the following words below: **Romeo, apothecary, Friar Laurence, Verona, dagger, Capulet, poison, Juliet, balcony, Nurse, Montague, Tybalt, woe, Will Shakespeare, Mantua, villain, Mercutio, Paris, crypt, banished, Benvolio, wedding, rapier**

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| Q | L | N | O | S | I | O | P | D | S | I | R | A | P | V |
| A | U | F | R | I | A | R | L | A | U | R | E | N | C | E |
| E | P | D | E | H | S | I | N | A | B | P | M | T | N | R |
| O | A | O | P | O | D | H | U | I | S | G | O | L | U | O |
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True or False

Write **T** if the statement is **True** and **F** if the statement is **False**.

1. ____ Romeo was of the House of Montague.
2. ____ The main action of the play is set in Mantua.
3. ____ Paris wants to marry Juliet.
4. ____ Romeo was in love with Rosaline.
5. ____ Nurse raised Romeo from babyhood.
6. ____ The Montagues and Capulets were friends until Romeo flirted with Juliet.
7. ____ Paris kills Mercutio.
8. ____ Shakespeare describes Juliet as being 14 years of age.
9. ____ Romeo kills Tybalt.
10. ____ Verona is a town in southern Spain.
11. ____ Juliet's father wants her to marry Benvolio.
12. ____ Romeo is banished by the Prince of Verona.
13. ____ Friar Tuck marries Romeo and Juliet.
14. ____ The apothecary sells Romeo a dagger.
15. ____ Juliet kills herself by drinking poison.

Matching

Match the person/place in the 1st column with the corresponding description in the 2nd.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ____ 1. Paris | a. where the apothecary lived |
| ____ 2. Nurse | b. asks Juliet's for her hand in marriage |
| ____ 3. Juliet | c. the son of Lord Montague |
| ____ 4. Verona | d. Romeo's friend and a peacemaker |
| ____ 5. Mercutio | e. a holy man, married Romeo and Juliet |
| ____ 6. Romeo | f. kin to the Prince of Verona |
| ____ 7. Tybalt | g. a town in northern Italy |
| ____ 8. Benvolio | h. the daughter of Lady Capulet |
| ____ 9. Mantua | i. Juliet's hot-tempered cousin |
| ____ 10. Friar Laurence | j. Juliet's confidante |

Questions and Activities

1. Shakespeare begins this play with a Prologue. What is the purpose of this device? What themes are established there? Who speaks it? Why do you think Shakespeare tells us how the story ends before it even starts? **Discuss.**

“A pair of star-cross’d lovers...”

2. Shakespeare describes Romeo and Juliet as “a pair of star-cross’d lovers.” What does this mean? Where does the expression “it’s in the stars” come from? Why do you think we connect our fate/luck/future with the stars? **Discuss.**

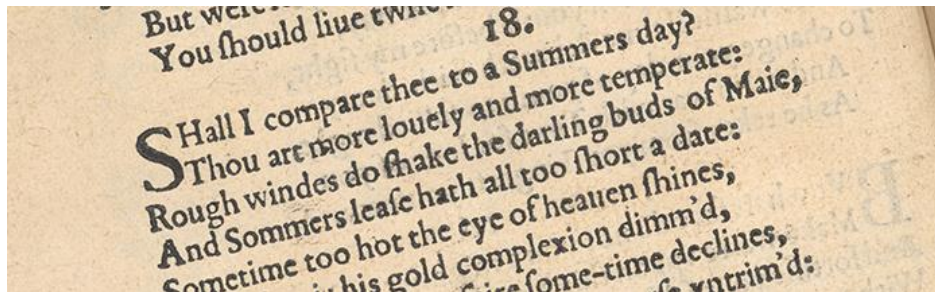
The Sonnet

The Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* is in the form of a “sonnet.” A sonnet is a poem that is 14 lines long, written in iambic pentameter and follows a rhyme scheme of

a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g

ACTIVITY

**Write a prologue to your favorite novel/story using the sonnet form.
Share it with your class.**



3. Shakespeare never tells us the reason the Montagues and the Capulets are feuding. How long do you think the feud has been going when the story opens? Consider both families social standing (wealthy), the time the play was written (1590's) and its setting (Verona, Italy): **using the internet, research that period and make a list of reasons the feud may have begun. Present your findings to the class.**

Family Feud!

Next to the fictional Montagues and Capulets, perhaps the most famous feuding families in history are the very real Hatfields and McCoys, who dwell in Kentucky and West Virginia.



ACTIVITY

Research the feud between the Hatfields and McCoys. When and why did it start? How long did it last? What finally brought it to an end? Present your findings to the class.

4. Discuss Juliet's relationship with her Nurse. Why was Nurse willing to help Juliet marry Romeo only to turn around later and encourage her to marry Paris? Was she justified in her actions? How did Juliet view this reversal? **Discuss.**

5. The most famous scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, if not all of Shakespeare's canon, is commonly referred to as The Balcony Scene. What takes place between Romeo and Juliet that makes this scene so famous? Are any well-known Shakespearean quotes derived from their conversation? If so, what are they and what do they mean? How long had Romeo and Juliet known each other when this scene occurs? **Discuss.**

6. Why is Tybalt so determined to kill Romeo? Why did Mercutio feel compelled to draw his sword against Tybalt? **Discuss.**

7. What Role did Friar Laurence play in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet? What more could he have done to prevent this tragedy? Should he have involved himself as much as he did (help them get married, give Juliet the potion, etc.)? **Discuss.**



8. What is the function of Benvolio in this play? How does his function compare to that of Mercutio? Why do you think Shakespeare found it necessary to have Paris killed at the end of the play? **Discuss.**

9. How many characters are in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*? How many characters are in this adaptation? Did you think the story was still told in spite of the fact that several scenes and characters were eliminated? **Discuss.**

Blank Verse

Shakespeare wrote most of *Romeo and Juliet* in “blank verse.”

blank verse: unrhymed verse having a regular meter, usually of iambic pentameter.

iambic pentameter: a common meter in poetry consisting of an unrhymed line with five feet or accents, each foot containing one **unaccented** syllable followed by one **accented** syllable, like this:

ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM

Consider the line in Act II, scene 2 when Romeo spies Juliet on the balcony:

“But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?”

Can you count the five stressed accents in the line? Do you notice how the word “Be” at the beginning of the line is unstressed?

**What is the difference between poetry and prose?
How does Shakespeare use both?**

ACTIVITY

Below, Lady Capulet implores Juliet to consider marriage to Paris.
Rewrite this in prose!

*What say you? Can you love the gentleman?
This night you shall behold him at our feast.
Read o’er the volume of young Paris’ face
And find delight writ there with beauty’s pen.
Examine every married lineament
And see how one another lends content,
And what obscured in this fair volume lies
Find written in the margin of his eyes...*



10. As a class, watch Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 movie version of *Romeo and Juliet*. How well does the story translate to film? **Write a paper comparing and contrasting Barter's production with the Zeffirelli film.** Be sure to include which version you preferred and why.



MAP IT!

Locate the town of Verona on a map of Italy. What sort of landscape/terrain surrounds it. Next locate the town of Mantua. How far is it from Verona? How long would it have taken Romeo to move between the two towns on foot?



11. How would knowing history of family feud in Italy or the geography of the Italy better help you understand this play? How does knowledge of the different poetic styles and meters – and Shakespeare’s use of them – make the play more accessible? **Discuss how the various subjects studied in school often overlap.**

12. Characters in a play or a book always have a reason for doing what they do. This is referred to as their “motivation.” What motivates Tybalt to pick a fight with Romeo? What is the Friar’s motivation to help Romeo and Juliet get married?

Make a list of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet*. Next to each name write that character’s primary action in the play and their motivation. **Cite passages from the play to support your reasoning.** Did interactions with the other characters change or alter their motivations? If so, how did this affect the plot?

13. Define “protagonist.” Who is the protagonist of *Romeo and Juliet*? Why? **Discuss.**

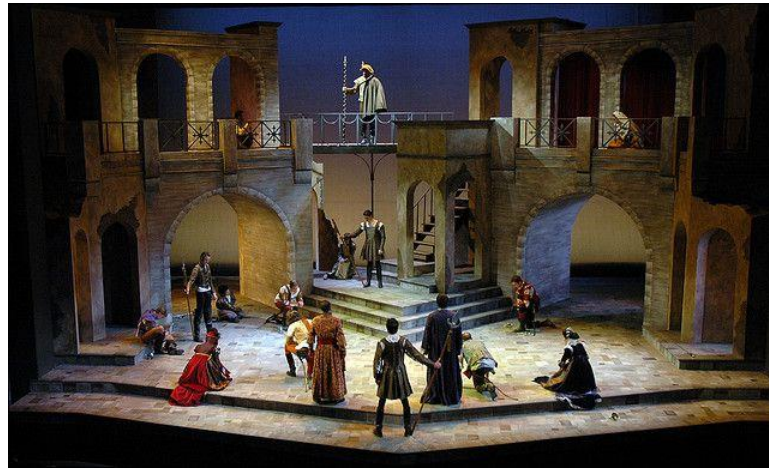
14. How many actors performed this play? What did the actors change, besides their costumes, to become new characters? How were the various locations in the play represented? **Discuss.**

15. Write a critique of Barter’s production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Be sure to include descriptions and analyses of the individual performances, the directing/staging choices, and the design elements (costume, set, props, sound). Why do you think some of these artistic choices were made? How would you have done it differently?

16. Breaking into groups, **pick a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, rehearse it and perform it for your class.** Now **pick another scene and rewrite it** in contemporary English for a contemporary setting. Rehearse and perform it for your class. **Compare the two experiences.**

17. What was your personal response to this production of *Romeo and Juliet*? Were you entertained? What did this play teach you about the human experience? How does it fit into Barter’s 2022 theme of “Common Ground?” **Discuss.**

18. Pick your favorite scene from *Romeo and Juliet* and **design a set** for it. Keep in mind time, place and location. Is it the streets of Verona? Juliet's bedroom? Is it day or night? Also consider the entrances and exits of your characters. How do they enter the scene? How do they exit? **Draw a picture of what your set should look like. Then make a model of it and present it to your class,** explaining how it will work when built.



Did you know....?

In 2007, skeletons of a young man and woman locked in an embrace were discovered in Mantua, Italy. The skeletons are from the Neolithic Age (approx. 5000 years ago) and are referred to as “Romeo and Juliet.”



Suggested Reading/Links

Books about William Shakespeare

Shakespeare: The Biography by Peter Ackroyd

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt

Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life by Katherine Duncan-Jones

Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare by Jonathan Bate

Shakespeare Links

To find out more about William Shakespeare, his life and his works, check out the links below...

Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=863>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>