



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2025, 2026, and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030).

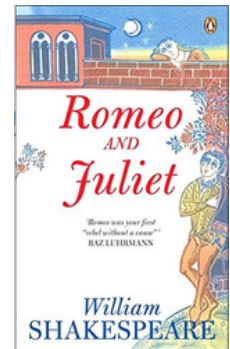


Image courtesy of
Penguin

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Romeo and Juliet* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. What's in a Feud?

Write "Montagues vs Capulets" on the board. Explain that these are two families who have hated each other for years. Ask why might two families become enemies? After this discussion, ask what happens to people caught between two feuding sides?

2. Honour and Reputation Discussion

As a class, mind map two words: *honour* and *reputation*. Discuss the connotations of these words. Once complete, have pairs of pupils discuss and note down their answers to the following questions: What do these words mean today? Would you defend a friend's honour, even if it caused trouble? Is violence ever justified to protect your reputation?

3. Context Research

Have pupils do some research on gender roles and masculinity in Shakespeare's time. Encourage them to write 3-5 findings and then discuss their work with a partner. Ask then how might men at this time behave when their masculinity was threatened? Guide pupils to discuss their thoughts on whether this is right, wrong or even relevant to today's society.



Extract

In this extract from Act 3 Scene 1, we see the two feuding families come to blows. Tybalt, a fiery Capulet, is unaware of Romeo's marriage to his cousin, Juliet. Mercutio, a Montague, is equally fiery and despite a ban on public fighting, seems unbothered by the idea of a public brawl.

BENVOLIO

We talk here in the public haunt of men.
Either withdraw unto some private place,
Or reason coldly of your grievances,
Or else depart. Here all eyes gaze on us.

MERCUTIO

Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze.
I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I.

Enter Romeo.

TYBALT

Well, peace be with you, sir. Here comes my man.

MERCUTIO

But I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery.
Marry, go before to field, he'll be your follower.
Your Worship in that sense may call him "man."

TYBALT

Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford
No better term than this: thou art a villain.

ROMEO

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting. Villain am I none.
Therefore farewell. I see thou knowest me not.

TYBALT

Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw.

ROMEO

I do protest I never injured thee
But love thee better than thou canst devise
Till thou shalt know the reason of my love.
And so, good Capulet, which name I tender
As dearly as mine own, be satisfied.

MERCUTIO

O calm, dishonorable, vile submission!
Alla stoccato carries it away. He draws.
Tybalt, you ratcatcher, will you walk?

TYBALT What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO

Good king of cats, nothing but one of your
nine lives, that I mean to make bold withal, and, as

you shall use me hereafter, dry-beat the rest of the
eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pilcher
by the ears? Make haste, lest mine be about your
ears ere it be out.

TYBALT I am for you. *He draws.*

ROMEO

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

MERCUTIO Come, sir, your passado. *They fight.*

ROMEO

Draw, Benvolio, beat down their weapons.

Romeo draws.

Gentlemen, for shame forbear this outrage!

Tybalt! Mercutio! The Prince expressly hath

Forbid this bandying in Verona streets.

Hold, Tybalt! Good Mercutio!

Romeo attempts to beat down their rapiers.

Tybalt stabs Mercutio.

MERCUTIO I am hurt.

A plague o' both houses! I am sped.

Is he gone and hath nothing?

BENVOLIO What, art thou hurt?

MERCUTIO

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, 'tis enough.

Where is my page?—Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

The Page exits.

ROMEO

Courage, man, the hurt cannot be much.

MERCUTIO

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as
a church door, but 'tis enough. 'Twill serve. Ask for
me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I
am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A plague o'
both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a
cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart, a rogue, a
villain that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the
devil came you between us? I was hurt under your
arm.

ROMEO I thought all for the best.

MERCUTIO

Help me into some house, Benvolio,

Or I shall faint. A plague o' both your houses!

They have made worms' meat of me.

I have it, and soundly, too. Your houses!

All but Romeo exit.

(William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1983, p.67)



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Visual Response

Invite students to sketch or describe one image that stands out from the extract. Underneath, have them write three adjectives to describe the mood of this moment. Gallery walk as a class.

2. Quote Explosion

Guide pupils through the language of a quotation from the scene. Focus on effect, context and theme. *"Tybalt: O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!"*

3. Language Analysis

Give pupils the question prompt: *How does Shakespeare use language in this scene to show how quickly anger and pride can lead to tragedy?* Guide pupils to write an analytical paragraph answering the question.

3. Recreate the Scene



Click to watch a modern version of the scene with pupils and discuss the different presentations of the conflict. Guide pupils in a discussion about how else this sort of conflict might be shown, for example in a school, a boardroom etc. Task pupils to re-write the scene in another context.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Who's to Blame?

Guide students in examining the actions and words of the characters. In pairs, allow them to discuss which character they think is most to blame for what happens.

2. Mercutio's Death

Yield space for students to consider the prompt below and have them write a response discussing how Shakespeare presents Mercutio's personality and why his death is so powerful. Prompt: *"Mercutio is one of the most entertaining and lively characters in this scene."*

3. Personal Response

Guide students to write a personal response about the statement: *"A moment of anger can change everything."*

4. Shakespeare's Motivation

Guide a class discussion about what message Shakespeare might have wanted to send about violence and revenge. Ask pupils if they think similar situations could happen today. Instruct pupils to write a personal reflection about his motivations.

5. Persuasive Response

Instruct pupils to write a persuasive argument with the title: *Violence Never Solves Anything*. They may wish to argue for or against the statement.