

# romeo and juliet

chicago  
shakespeare theater  
on navy pier



Teacher Handbook

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	1
Art That Lives . . . . .	2
Bard's Bio. . . . .	2
The First Folio . . . . .	3
Shakespeare's England. . . . .	4
The Renaissance Theater. . . . .	5
Courtyard-style Theater. . . . .	6
Timelines . . . . .	8

### *Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*

Dramatis Personae . . . . .	10
Relationship Web . . . . .	10
The Story . . . . .	11
Act-by-Act Synopsis . . . . .	11
Shakespeare's Sources for <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . . . . .	13
To Have and To Hold: Elizabethans and their Bonds of Marriage . . . . .	14
Shakespeare, Tragedy, and Us . . . . .	15

### *Scholars' Perspectives*

The Timeless Tragedy . . . . .	17
Love in a Harsh World. . . . .	18
What the Critics Say. . . . .	19

### *A Play Comes to Life*

<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> in performance. . . . .	28
A Conversation with the Director . . . . .	31
A Conversation with the Fight Choreographer . . . . .	34
Strategies for Using Film to Teach Shakespeare. . . . .	36

### *Classroom Activities*

Before You Read the Play . . . . .	42
As You Read the Play . . . . .	46
After You Read the Play. . . . .	59
Preparing for the Performance . . . . .	64
Back in the Classroom . . . . .	67
Theater Warm-ups . . . . .	69
Suggested Readings . . . . .	74
Techno Shakespeare . . . . .	77

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# chicago shakespeare on navy pier theater

**Barbara Gaines**   **Criss Henderson**  
Artistic Director   Executive Director

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

Now in its twenty-sixth season, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and diverse audience of 40,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of main stage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools. This year, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, honored that vision with the prestigious Shakespeare Steward Award. The 2012-2013 Season offers a student matinee series for three of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length productions: in the winter, *The School for Lies*, a new adaptation by David Ives of Molière's *The Misanthrope*; and in the spring, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Henry VIII*. Also this winter, a 75-minute abridged version of *Romeo and Juliet* will be performed at the Theater on Navy Pier and will tour to schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage. †

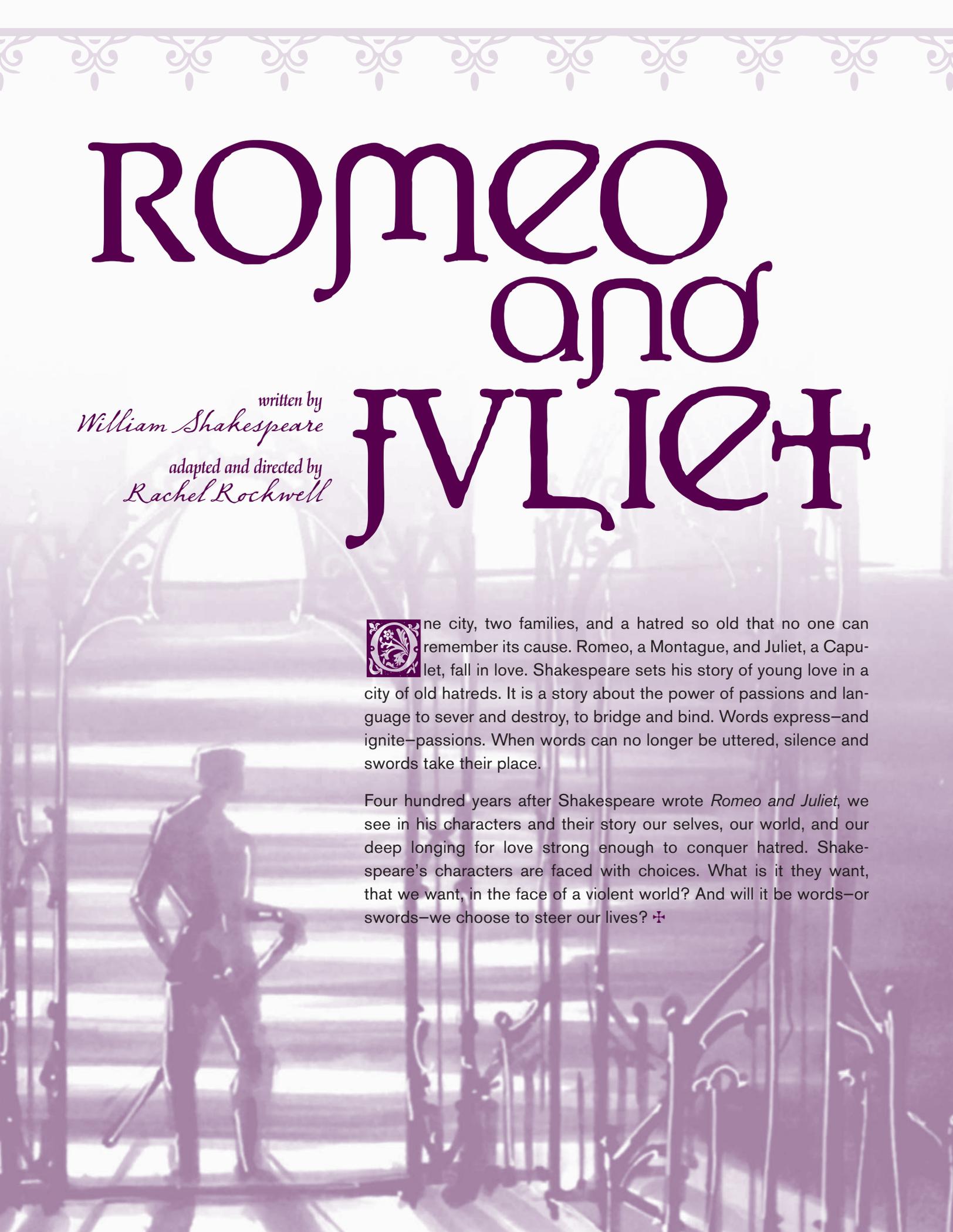
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# ROMEO and JULIET

written by  
*William Shakespeare*

adapted and directed by  
*Rachel Rockwell*



**O**ne city, two families, and a hatred so old that no one can remember its cause. Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, fall in love. Shakespeare sets his story of young love in a city of old hatreds. It is a story about the power of passions and language to sever and destroy, to bridge and bind. Words express—and ignite—passions. When words can no longer be uttered, silence and swords take their place.

Four hundred years after Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, we see in his characters and their story our selves, our world, and our deep longing for love strong enough to conquer hatred. Shakespeare's characters are faced with choices. What is it they want, that we want, in the face of a violent world? And will it be words—or swords—we choose to steer our lives? †



## ART THAT LIVES

**D**rama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Cave paintings depicting men disguised as animals reveal that since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have served humans in their efforts

to express themselves and to communicate. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances.

Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice. Drama not only depicts human communication, it is human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our universe.

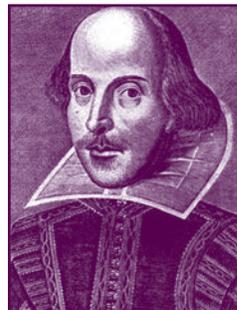
A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they too are distracted and the play they create is less interesting. One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and will help us to give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

*[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play... to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.*

—TYRONE GUTHRIE, 1962

*How can you help us give you the best performance we can?*

- ✦ **Please no talking during the performance.** It distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.
- ✦ **Respond naturally to our play.** Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- ✦ **Please leave all “noisemakers”—**food, gum, cell phones, iPods, etc.—**back at school or on the bus!** In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included.
- ✦ **No photographs of any kind, please!** Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.



## BARD'S BIO

**T**he exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally three days after a child's birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and prominent town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind. Some skeptical scholars have raised doubts about whether Shakespeare, due to his relatively average level of education and humble origins, could have possibly written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare's death, did these theories arise—and, to all appearances, Shakespeare's contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

At eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age eleven. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven so-called "lost years" are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. The company's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Commonwealth closed the theaters in 1642. Beginning in 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately twenty years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated on what most scholars now agree upon as thirty-eight plays. His earliest plays, including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. His great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the so-called "romances," which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier historical and tragic forms.

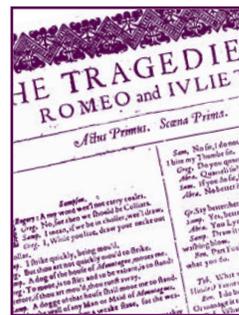
Shakespeare seldom devised his own plots for his plays, but creatively borrowed here and there from histories, prose romances, poems, and plays of his own and others. Shakespeare was an ingenious dramatic artist with a vast imagination. He created masterpieces out of conventional and unpromising material.

In Shakespeare's time, ancient stories were told and re-told. The important thing was not the originality of the plot but how the story was told. In the telling of a story, there are few writers who rival Shakespeare in theatricality, poetry, and depth of character.

By 1592 Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London's leading theater company for nearly twenty years. Shakespeare retired in 1611 to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

*Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.*

—JOHN DRYDEN, 1688



## THE FIRST FOLIO

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as its script and acting "blueprint."

The First Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication. Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for print. In Shakespeare's day, plays were not considered literature at all. When a play was published—if it was published at all—it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an oversized book called a "folio," that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, showed absolutely no interest or involvement in the publication of his plays. During Shakespeare's lifetime, only half of his plays were ever printed, and those as quartos. He did, however, oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets. It was not until seven years after the playwright's death that two of his close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, the First Folio, a book containing thirty-six of his thirty-eight plays, was published. The First Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, the playwright's handwritten manuscripts, various versions of some of the plays already published, and from his actors' memories. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the "authority" of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare's First Folio took five "compositors" two and one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected, but due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains an original First Folio in its rich collections.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as the basis for its playscripts. Its punctuation gives clues to actors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today they still help actors make the language easier to break apart—even though you're hearing language that's 400 years "younger" than ours.

*A key to understanding Shakespeare's language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God's final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.*

—DAVID BEVINGTON, 1980



## TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

**Teachers, looking for new ideas?** Check out our Teacher Resource Center, located on the Theater's fourth level. In addition to its primary focus on teaching Shakespeare in performance, the collection includes a number of biographies, history books, scholarly criticism, periodicals and books for young readers about Shakespeare's life and times. The collection also includes reference materials and dictionaries that specifically target Shakespeare's language.

**Call the Education Department at 312.595.5678 to schedule a visit—on your own or with your colleagues.**



## SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

**E**lizabeth I ruled England for forty-five years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. "Few monarchs," says Shakespearean scholar David Bevington, "have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp

on it so permanently." The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and an illegitimate monarch. The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth's reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years.

Elizabeth had no heir, and throughout her reign the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation's peace—and provided a recurrent subject of Shakespeare's plays. While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, the Earl of Essex, one of the Queen's favorite courtiers, rebelled against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the forced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who "enclosed" what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up.

London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. For the first time in English history, a rising middle class aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

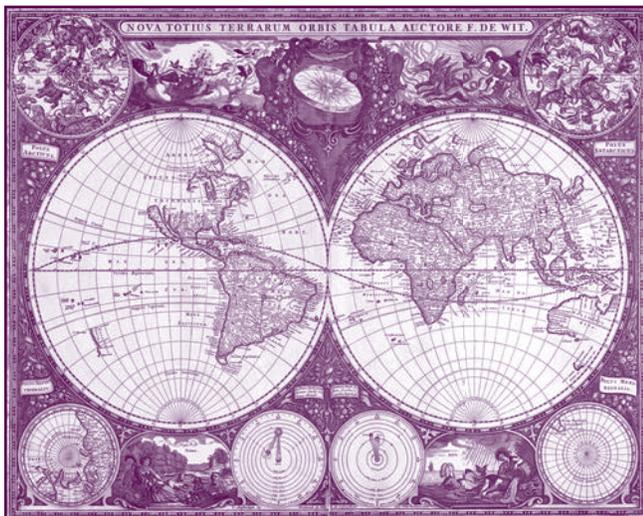
Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and Catholic doctrine into an Episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by Rome's Pope.

Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered.

“Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary,” says David Bevington, and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Early Modern Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchs like Queen Elizabeth I was absolute. She and her subjects viewed the monarch as God’s deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare’s history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God, but could not protect Elizabeth from rebellion at home, even from her closest advisors, or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England’s King James I. Ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), James I was responsible for overseeing the creation of a new bible, which in its powerful cadence and poetry would remain a legacy of this fertile time, just as Shakespeare’s canon has. But his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. It would be James’s son, Charles I, who was beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s for tyrannically abusing what he believed was his divinely ordained power. ✚



## THE RENAISSANCE THEATER

 A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare’s, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before Shakespeare first arrived on the London theater scene—a

convergence of two events that would change history. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of “Shoreditch.”

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council of London by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London’s brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare’s day were legally given the status of “vagabonds.” They were considered little better than common criminals unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They provided popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth’s court as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King’s Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain’s company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city’s jurisdiction as one of the first public theaters in England.

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform the courtyard of an inn or town square into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, stage, and storage for props and costumes. Their horses pulled the cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered around to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible—the form of theater that endured throughout the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the enacted stories became more secular. Public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London’s walls came to be feared as places where

physical, moral and social corruption spread. The authorities frequently shut them down during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague or by political and social rioting. When the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

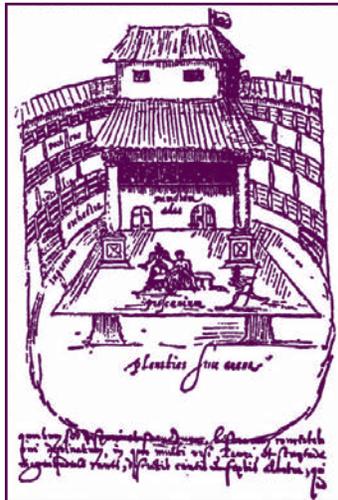
All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another. They arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments sold at the lays. An outing to the theater might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert, than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day’s wages for a skilled worker. They were a diverse and demanding group, and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations that appealed to every cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare’s plays were performed primarily in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play’s royalty.

Most new plays had short runs and were seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man’s shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.



An Elizabethan sketch of the original Swan

In 1642 the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During the eighteen years of Commonwealth rule, years when the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost.

The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare’s plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original scripts to suit the audience’s contemporary tastes. It is left to scholars of Early Modern English drama to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind. †



## COURTYARD-STYLE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s unique performance space reflects elements of both the first public playhouses in London and the courtyards of inns-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan theater’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing, acting and design elements.

The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform.

As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors' energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. Architect David Taylor and his company, Theatre Projects Consultants, worked closely with Chicago Shakespeare Theater's leadership to design this courtyard theater. "It's important that we don't lose the performer among the faces, but it's essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what's going on," Taylor explains. "That's the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design."

"The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race," Taylor notes, "so we're putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater." According to Taylor, "this close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience. The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting." Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the "leaning rails" to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn's balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: "They're not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There's a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage." Actors are always fed by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.



*Chicago Shakespeare Theater*

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. With their deep thrust stages, both were designed

to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience. Prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls helps diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater's design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space.

Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor describes the experience, "You're the scenery. You're the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front, and out of, you." ✚



## BARD CARD PROGRAM

The **Bard Card Program** encourages Team Shakespeare students who first attend Chicago Shakespeare Theater on a field trip to return on their own with friends and family. Bard Card student members may purchase two tickets to each full-length, main-stage show at \$17 each for the remainder of the 2012/13 Season and all of the 2013/14 Season. The two-year membership is designed to bridge the gap between a school trip and a student's personal life. The program's mission is to make tickets affordable to students, so they learn how to make Shakespeare and theater a continuing part of their lives.

**You and your students will be receiving information on the Bard Card when you come to the Theater. Please encourage them to consider becoming members!**

**1300**

- 1326** Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348** Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349** Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387** Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

**1400**

- ca.1440** Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472** Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497** Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

**1500**

- 1501-4** Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503** Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512** Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518** License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot
- 1519** Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519** Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522** Luther's translation of the New Testament

**1525**

- 1531** Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533** Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539** Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540** G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541** Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

**1550**

- 1558** Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562** John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564** Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565** Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570** Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573** Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

**1575**

- 1576** Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City  
Burbage erects first public theater in England  
(the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577** Drake's trip around the world
- 1580** *Essays of Montaigne* published

**SHAKESPEARE'S  
PLAYS**

**ca. 1592-1595**  
*comedies*

- Love's Labor's Lost
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Taming of the Shrew

*histories*

- 1, 2, 3 Henry VI
- Richard III
- King John

*tragedies*

- Titus Andronicus
- ✦ Romeo and Juliet

*the sonnets*

probably written  
in this period

- 1582** Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway  
Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened
- 1585** Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith
- 1587** Mary Queen of Scots executed
- 1588** Destruction of the Spanish Armada
- 1592** Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1593-4** Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months
- 1595** Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John
- 1596** Death of son Hamnet, age 11  
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
- 1597** Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights,  
buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1599** Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men,  
with Shakespeare as part-owner

## 1600

- 1602** Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens
- 1603** Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I  
Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I
- 1603-11** Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)
- 1605** Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published
- 1607** Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall  
Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on  
American mainland
- 1608** *A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed  
in Virginia* by John Smith  
Galileo constructs astronomical telescope
- 1609** Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater,  
becomes winter home of the King's Men
- 1611** "King James Version" of the Bible published
- 1613** Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
- 1614** Globe Theatre rebuilt
- 1615** Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time
- 1616** Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney  
Death of William Shakespeare, age 52
- 1618** Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church
- 1619** First African slaves arrive in Virginia
- 1623** The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

## 1625

- 1625** James I dies, succeeded by Charles I
- 1633** Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636** Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642** Civil War in England begins
- 1642** Puritans close theaters throughout England until following the Restoration  
of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II
- 1649** Charles I beheaded
- 1649** Commonwealth declared

## ca. 1596-1600

### comedies

- The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

### histories

- Richard II
- 1,2 Henry IV
- Henry V

### tragedies

- Julius Caesar

## ca. 1601-1609

### comedies

- Troilus and Cressida
- All's Well That Ends Well

### tragedies

- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus
- Measure for Measure

## ca. 1609-1613

### romances

- Pericles
- Cymbeline
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest
- The Two Noble Kinsmen

### histories

- Henry VIII

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### The House of Capulet

**LORD CAPULET** head of the Capulet household

**LADY CAPULET** his wife

**JULIET** their only child

**TYBALT** nephew to Lady Capulet

**NURSE** nurse to Juliet

**PETER** servant to Juliet's nurse

**SAMSON** servant to Capulet household

**GREGORY\*** servant to Capulet household

### The House of Montague

**LORD MONTAGUE** head of the Montague household,  
father to Romeo

**LADY MONTAGUE\*** his wife

**ROMEO** their only child

**BENVOLIO** cousin to Romeo

**BALTHASAR** servant to Romeo

**ABRAHAM\*** servant to Montague household

### The Church

**FRIAR LAURENCE** mentor to Romeo

**FRIAR JOHN** Franciscan friar

### The Court

**ESCALUS** Prince of Verona

**PARIS** the Prince's kinsman, betrothed to Juliet

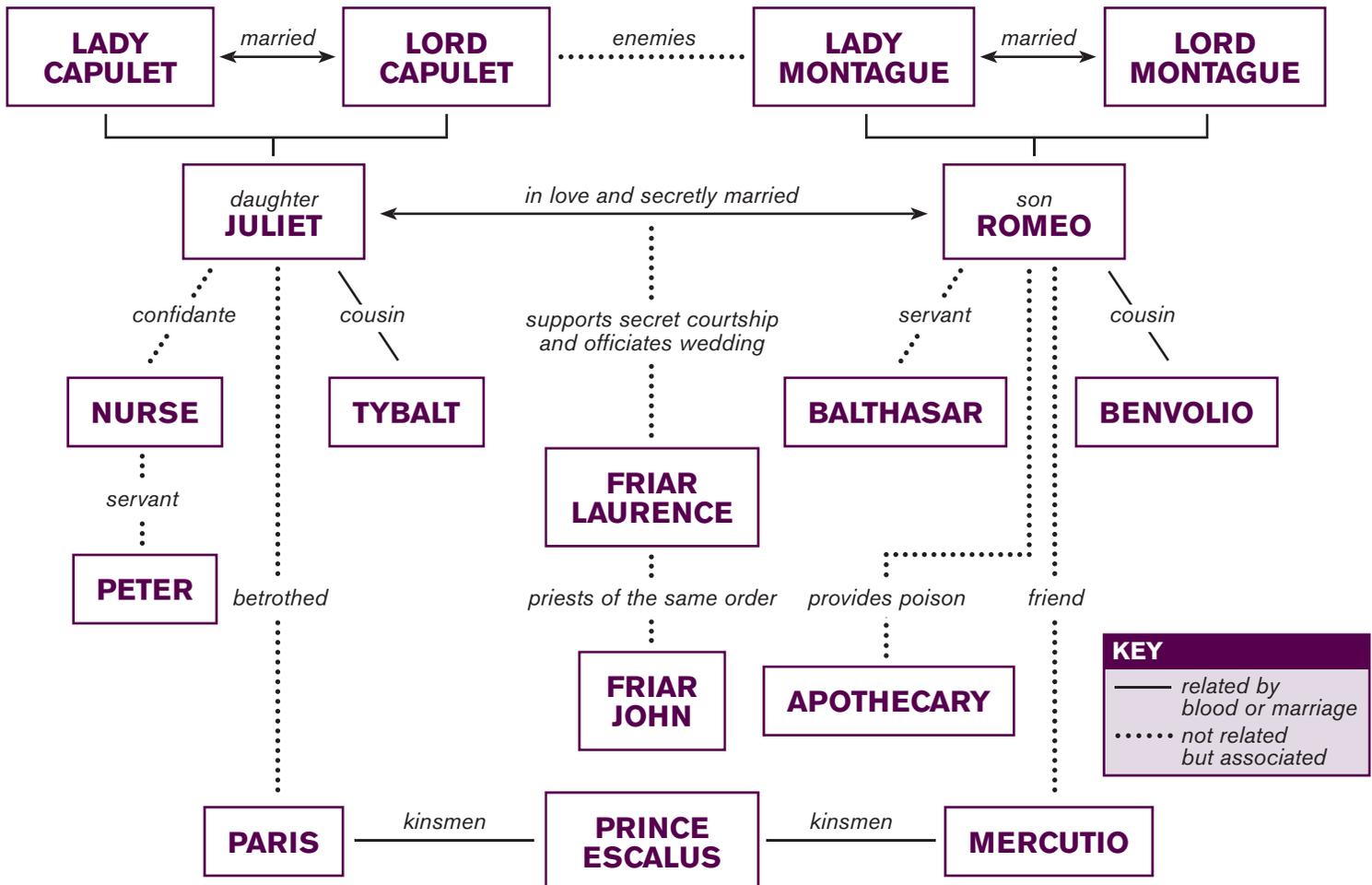
**MERCUTIO** kinsman to the Prince and friend to Romeo

### Mantua

**APOTHECARY** potion maker who sells Romeo poison

\*Character does not appear in

CST's 2013 abridged production





## THE STORY

**I**n Verona, the Montague and Capulet families are enemies, and have been for longer than anyone can remember. The Prince decrees that the violence between these two proud households must end—under penalty of death.

Life in Verona goes on. For sport, the young Montague men decide to crash Lord Capulet's party. Romeo, Montague's only son, sees Capulet's daughter Juliet there, and the two fall in love. The next morning, Friar Laurence agrees to wed the young couple, hoping that this marriage will put an end at last to their families' endless discord. Sending word by Juliet's Nurse the next morning, Romeo arranges their marriage that same afternoon at Friar Laurence's cell.

Their secret vows made, Romeo is confronted in the street by Juliet's cousin Tybalt, who is enraged by the Montague's intrusion the night before. Romeo refuses to engage in a fight, and instead it is Mercutio who accepts Tybalt's challenge. As Romeo attempts to break the two apart, Tybalt stabs Mercutio with a fatal blow. Romeo turns on his new kinsman, murdering him.

The Capulets demand Romeo's death, but the Prince chooses to banish the young Montague from Verona. Early the next morning, Romeo and Juliet part from one another. Moments later, Lady Capulet enters her daughter's room to bring news: Juliet's marriage to Count Paris is all arranged. Juliet begs her parents to reconsider, but her pleas are met with rage. When her Nurse advises Juliet to forget Romeo, the young bride seeks out the Friar's counsel. His plan is a desperate one: Juliet must take an herbal potion that induces a deathlike trance. Once she is buried in the Capulet tomb, the Friar will send word to Romeo to rescue his bride, returning with her to Mantua until their two families can be reconciled.

But the Friar's letter never reaches Romeo, who hears instead of his love's death. Armed with poison, he approaches the Capulet tomb. Holding Juliet's lifeless body, Romeo takes the poison. Moments later as Juliet awakens from the potion's trance, she looks upon her husband and refuses to leave with the desperate Friar. With Romeo's dagger, she takes her life. Too late to save their own children, the Montagues and Capulets vow to end their hatred. ✚



## ACT-BY-ACT SYNOPSIS

### *Prologue and Act 1*

**I**n the Prologue, the Chorus tells us that the play is set in Verona, where there is a long-time feud between two families, which nothing can mend. The play will tell the story of the "death marked love" of their two children, "a pair of star-crossed lovers," whose self-inflicted deaths signal an end to their families' violent struggle.

The servants of the two families—the Montagues and Capulets—engage in a street brawl. Romeo's cousin Benvolio, a Montague, enters and tries to stop the fight but is challenged by Lord Capulet's nephew, Tybalt. The fathers, Lord Montague and Lord Capulet, arrive and immediately are drawn into the brawl. Prince Escalus enters and forbids, on pain of death, any more fighting between the two households. Lord and Lady Montague discuss their son Romeo's recent distracted behavior with Benvolio, who offers to find out what troubles him. To his friend's inquiries, Romeo expresses his unrequited love for Rosaline, a young woman determined to remain chaste, and he rejects Benvolio's advice to forget her and look around for someone else.

Lord Capulet gives Count Paris permission to court his young daughter, Juliet, at the Capulets' party that night. Lady Capulet tells Juliet of Paris's desire to marry her; obedient, Juliet agrees to entertain Paris's attention to her. Benvolio and Romeo, learning of the Capulet feast where Rosaline is among the invited guests, decide to attend in disguise. Romeo confesses his reluctance to go because of ominous dreams, and his friend Mercutio teases him and tells him that a tiny fairy named "Queen Mab" has caused his nightmares. Tybalt catches sight of Romeo at the party and angrily storms away when his uncle, Lord Capulet, forbids any confrontation in his house. Romeo and Juliet meet and immediately fall in love; both are deeply distressed to find out that their new love's family is an enemy to their own.

## Act 2

**A**s Romeo and his friends leave the party, he slips away and hides in the Capulets' garden. Thinking that she is alone on her balcony above the garden, Juliet speaks of her new feelings for Romeo. When he reveals himself, both confess their love. Juliet tells Romeo that she will send a messenger to him the next day to find out his plan for their marriage. Romeo confides in Friar Laurence and asks him to help them marry; hoping to end their families' hatred, the Friar agrees. The next morning in the public square, Romeo instructs Juliet's Nurse to tell Juliet to go to Friar Laurence, who will join them in marriage that same afternoon. The Nurse returns to tease Juliet, who is impatient to hear Romeo's plan. When she learns of Romeo's proposal, Juliet leaves immediately for the Friar's, where she and Romeo are secretly married.

## Act 3

**T**ybalt, enraged by the Montague's uninvited presence at his uncle's party the night before, looks for Romeo to confront him, but he comes upon Benvolio and Mercutio instead. Mercutio picks a fight. When Romeo arrives, Tybalt insults him and challenges him to a duel. Romeo refuses the challenge, saying that he loves Tybalt as his own family. Mercutio, disgusted by Romeo's apparent cowardice, challenges Tybalt. Romeo intercedes to stop the fight, and, as he does, Mercutio is slain, receiving a mortal wound as Romeo tries to pull him away. Now in blind rage, Romeo avenges his friend's death and kills Tybalt, and then flees to Friar Laurence's cell. Prince Escalus spares Romeo's life but banishes him from Verona, sentencing death if he returns.

Juliet, longing for night so that she can see her husband, is informed by her Nurse of Tybalt's murder and Romeo's banishment. Juliet talks of suicide but is comforted when the Nurse offers to find Romeo and bring him to her. Friar Laurence informs Romeo of his banishment and advises him to spend the night with his bride, then flee to Mantua until the Friar can reveal the marriage. Romeo agrees. Lord Capulet accepts Paris's offer for his daughter's hand and sets the wedding three days away. Romeo and Juliet take their farewells as daybreak lights Juliet's bedchamber. Lady Capulet enters to inform Juliet that she is to marry Paris. She refuses, and Lord Capulet, enraged by her disobedience swears to disown her. Ignoring her Nurse's advice to forget Romeo and marry Paris, Juliet seeks counsel from the Friar.

## Act 4

**A**t Friar Laurence's cell, Juliet encounters Paris and avoids his advances. She privately confesses her despair to the Friar and talks of killing herself. He persuades her instead to follow his plan: to return home and consent to marry Paris; then, on the night before the wedding, to drink the herbal potion he now gives her. The potion will induce a deathlike trance, and she will be entombed in the Capulet crypt; when she wakes Romeo will be there to take her to Mantua, where the couple can live until their two families are reconciled.

Juliet returns home, and, apologizing for her disobedience, agrees to marry Paris. Lord Capulet decides to move the wedding to the next day. Alone in her room, Juliet fears that the potion might kill her or that she will wake before Romeo arrives and, trapped in a tomb with Tybalt's corpse, that she will go mad. Invoking Romeo's name, she drinks the potion. The next morning, her body is discovered by her Nurse. Her family and Paris are devastated. Friar Laurence instructs the family to arrange for her funeral.

## Act 5

**B**efore news of the Friar's plan reaches him in Mantua, Romeo learns of his beloved's death from his friend Balthasar, and, resolving to join her in death, buys poison from a poor Apothecary. Friar John returns from Mantua, informing Friar Laurence that he was prevented from delivering the Friar's letter to Romeo. Friar Laurence heads to the tomb to avert disaster. When Romeo reaches the tomb, he encounters Paris, whom in the darkness of night he does not recognize. When Paris sees him, he challenges a desperate Romeo to a duel. Romeo urges him to get away, but when Paris refuses, they fight and Romeo kills his opponent before recognizing him. Entering the tomb and kissing Juliet, Romeo drinks the poison and dies. The Friar enters the tomb as Juliet awakens. He begs Juliet to flee with him, but she refuses and kills herself with Romeo's dagger as she hears the townspeople outside. The two families and Prince Escalus are summoned. The Friar recounts the whole story, volunteering for a punishment of death if the Prince finds him guilty of misconduct. The Prince blames the children's deaths on their parents' hatred. The two lords resolve to abandon their feud and vow to erect golden statues in memory of their two children. †

## SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW *Shakespeare's Sources for Romeo and Juliet*

*He was more original than the originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life.*

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, 1846

*The detection of [Shakespeare's sources] has its own fascination and is useful insofar as they illustrate the workings of Shakespeare's imagination, but the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed.*

—R.A. FOAKES, 1984



**R**omeo and Juliet is in many ways a familiar story, not just because it is one of Shakespeare's best-loved plays, but because the play has thematic roots in myths as old as storytelling itself. A man and a woman fall in love; they are young and their love is so consuming that the world and all the people around them seem to vanish. The young woman dies, or appears to die, and her grief-stricken lover determines to win her back from death, either by his wits or by joining her in the afterlife. In some versions of the story he succeeds, though only for a time. The themes of the story—love, death, resurrection, and death again—are clearly present in the ancient Greek myth of *Orpheus and Eurydice*:

when Eurydice dies, her lover Orpheus defies Death and brings her back from the underworld, only to lose her again when he doubts his success. Another myth is that of Demeter and Persephone, though it concerns a mother and daughter's relationship. In this story, Hades, the god of the underworld, has kidnapped Demeter's beloved daughter Persephone and Demeter fights him until he allows her to have Persephone back for half of every year.

As far as scholars can tell, Shakespeare used only one source for his version of *Romeo and Juliet*: a narrative poem by the sixteenth-century English poet Arthur Brooke, entitled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. The origins of Brooke's poem

can be traced back to the second century AD, to a romance called *The Ephesiaca*, by Xenophon of Ephesus. In Xenophon's story, two teenagers—Anthia and Habrocomes—fall in love at first sight and they marry. But when Anthia is rescued from robbers by Perilaus, he too wants to marry her. Attempting to kill herself in order to avoid marrying Perilaus, Anthia drinks a potion that she believes to be poison, but rather than dying, she falls into a deathlike sleep. Habrocomes visits her tomb to mourn, and eventually the lovers are reunited, living happily ever after.

*The Ephesiaca* holds many familiar sections for readers of *Romeo and Juliet*: a hidden marriage, a second suitor, a potion that causes the appearance of death, and a scene in the young woman's tomb. Masuccio Salernitano's similarly themed *Cinquante Novelle* of 1476 tells of the romance between Mariotto and Gianozza. The lovers are secretly married by a friar; Mariotto is banished for killing another citizen; Gianozza's father chooses a husband for her and she goes to the friar for help. He gives her a sleeping potion, which she drinks; she appears to be dead and is entombed. Although she has sent a note to her husband, he does not receive it. Anguished by reports of his wife's death, Mariotto rushes home, only to be arrested at her tomb and put to death. Gianozza subsequently dies of grief.

At least three other versions of this story were written between Salernitano's and Brooke's, and each include elements that would become essential in Shakespeare's tragedy. The most influential is Luigi da Porto's 1530 version. In it, he renames the lovers Romeo Montecchi and Giulietta Capelletti; he calls the friar Lorenzo. Da Porto introduces a character called Marcuccio, a friend of Romeo's (noted only for his icy hands), and also identifies the man whom Romeo kills as Theobaldo Capelletti.

Da Porto's story adds the ball, the balcony scene, and the lovers' double suicide at Giulietta's tomb—which Giulietta accomplishes by holding her breath! Matteo Bandello's 1554 *Novelle* gives the Nurse the significant part that she plays in Shakespeare's retelling. In 1559 Pierre Boiastuau has Romeo go to the Capulets' ball in hopes of seeing his unrequited love, whom Shakespeare would later call Rosaline. Boiastuau was the first to write of Juliet's grief when her husband murders her cousin Tybalt, and his version was the first in which the character of the Apothecary appears.

Arthur Brooke's poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, published in 1564, adheres to the framework constructed in the previous stories, while adding more developed characters and relationships. He adds the character

## Romeo and Juliet... has thematic roots in myths as old as storytelling itself

of Benvolio, and concentrates on deepening relationships, such as Juliet's to her father, and the Nurse's to the lovers. Brooke's poem slightly expands the role of Mercutio, paving the way for Shakespeare to develop one of his most fascinating characters. About thirty-five years later, ca. 1597, William Shakespeare would write the version of *Romeo and Juliet* that today remains the best known and loved.

Why is Shakespeare's play the one we remember? His story is quite similar to Brooke's poem—adapting Brooke's plot, characters, and sometimes even his characters' speeches. What makes Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* a classic while Xenophon of Ephesus's *The Ephesiaca* and Brooke's *Tragicall Historie* are obscure artifacts? What ensures the survival of one retelling rather than another?

Shakespeare used the English language with a precision and an imagination that no other playwright has achieved, before or since. Lines like "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" or "Parting is such sweet sorrow" may seem clichéd now, but their familiarity is a testament to their lyrical—and lasting—power. Another essential difference between Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the earlier versions is the development of character and plot. Shakespeare recreates each character, filling out the framework of the story so that they all—even the ones who appear only briefly like Peter—seems like a person we know. When Juliet proclaims her love to Romeo, she speaks it beautifully; the exchange between them feels almost too perfect. She even wonders aloud if she should have been "more strange"—or in other words, kept her true feelings private. We've all had the feeling of having said too much and we can relate to how she feels.

Shakespeare also gives a social context to his love story, setting the play in a Verona that is bawdy and bustling with life. The private scenes between the lovers capture us, in part, by the way they are brilliantly set against other scenes so full of people and action that we hardly know where to focus our attention. Romeo and Juliet create a private world of love, into which Shakespeare allows us to enter; he brings us so close that we feel their agony, even after we close the book or leave the theater. Using Verona and the families' feud as background, Shakespeare brings us into the intimate story of the lovers. Like the writers before him, Shakespeare touches on eternal themes of love, death, hatred and reconciliation. However, unlike the other stories, Shakespeare's play helps us understand where these themes dwell in our own lives. †



## TO HAVE AND TO HOLD: *The Elizabethans and Their Bonds of Marriage*

From his very entrance in the play, Lord Capulet expresses his desire to match Juliet to the suitor as the most suitable for his daughter's—and the family's—future. It is, of course, of the utmost importance to him to secure the safety of his only heir; but at what cost? Is he preventing his daughter from finding true love? Is he ignoring his daughter's rights as an individual coming into womanhood? Most of us are taught from an early age, through Disney Princess movies, Hollywood romantic comedies and pop love songs that love is the be-all and end-all of our relationships. Not only is this a romantic ideal in our society, but it has also become an American value preserving an individual's basic human right: men and women should be allowed to marry whom they choose for themselves. That Lord Capulet so tarnishes and disregards this value—of ours—when he forces Paris upon his daughter is why his actions seem so disturbing to modern audiences. Rest assured, this practice was quite customary of the Tudor Period.

For centuries, the marriage contract was exactly that: an agreement between two parties (the parents or guardians of the bride and groom) that constituted a "merger," not unlike corporate mergers of today. Marriage solidified the merging of a variety of largely important societal and economic factors, including the acquired property, power of societal status, and ancestral bloodlines of both parties involved. With the strong alliances marriages provided at the time, almost no parent could pass up the opportunity to better their ancestral line by choosing their child's intended.

However the Tudor period, in which Shakespeare lived and wrote all his plays including *Romeo and Juliet*, was in many ways a transitional pe-

riod when long-held traditions and social values were in a state of flux. With the advent of the Renaissance came an exalted view of the individual. The standard contractual marriage was challenged by a multiplicity of factors. In keeping with the Renaissance ideal of individualism, "companionate" marriage arose—a bond of marriage based upon the free choice of two individuals.

## Why is Shakespeare's play the one we remember? What ensures the survival of one retelling rather than another?

As with the dispersing of any long-held belief, change comes slowly, and with much public debate and social anxiety. With its contrasting projections of marriage, with nostalgia for the old order on one hand and, on the other, with a growing awareness of, and respect for, individual and human rights and passions, this period of transition proved to be a great source of inspiration for writers like Shakespeare. Early modern literature, like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, reflects the debate, commenting on the unsettling of traditional reasons for marriage, and immortalizing the state of flux in which England and other European countries found themselves. Capulet's expressed right to choose his daughter's husband collides with Juliet's exerted right to choose her own love, erupting into an explosive catastrophe—and mirroring the conflict of the social transition taking place in England and beyond. Considering the end of his play, it is difficult to come to a conclusion about Shakespeare's opinion on this historic conflict. Perhaps William Shakespeare sets out to endorse neither a centuries-old tradition nor the individual's free choice but instead opens the door to understanding the anxieties of his Elizabethan audience, as diverse ideologically as it was socially. †



ENGRAVING OF JAMES I AND ANNE OF DENMARK,  
KING AND QUEEN OF ENGLAND BY RENOLD ELSTRACK



## SHAKESPEARE, TRAGEDY, AND US

**W**e all know something about tragedy. We lose someone we love, or have to leave a place we don't want to leave. Or perhaps make a mistake of judgment that leads to consequences we never imagined. Tragedy is a part of our lives

as humans—no matter how much we wish to avoid it and its pain. So why read tragedy? Why come to see a tragic play at the theater? What point is there in entering, by choice, so dark a world? Clearly, it's more fun to watch *Glee* than to read *Romeo and Juliet*, so why do it?

We respond to stories that show us people who are somehow like us, versions of ourselves under different circumstances. In other words, we can best understand characters who bear some resemblance to us, and often sympathize with them. As we come to understand the people on the page or on the stage, we can also reach some understanding about our own world—about ourselves and the people around us—and about the tragedies we have to face in our lives.

Shakespeare's tragedies, like our own lives, are stories that interweave opposites: joy and sorrow; farce and harsh reality. How often in the span of a single day, week or month do we experience the extreme poles of our emotions? Until its third act, *Romeo and Juliet* behaves very much like a romantic comedy—a love story replete with obstacles in the lovers' way, secret messages and messengers, an inflexible, traditional society that challenges the freedom of the younger generation. But in one moment with the slaying of Mercutio, the story suddenly is drained of its bawdiness, its wit, and playfulness. Tragedy follows. Shakespeare penetrates this truth with a mastery few other writers attain.

Where do we find our story in theirs? Often the characters face some very difficult choices, and the story follows them as they wrestle with making their decisions. In tragedy, the hero typically faces some "fearful passage" (from the Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*)—a path traveled for the first time where old answers and old behaviors are suddenly not sufficient. The stakes are very high, and the risk to the individual, to the family—and sometimes to an entire society, as in *Romeo and Juliet*—is great.

There is much discussion in literature about the tragic hero and his inherent "tragic flaw." Shakespearean scholar Russ McDonald warns that in labeling the hero as inherently weak and not up to the challenge, we're inclined to judge him critically. But the

heroes of tragedy typically display great strengths, says McDonald. Their tragedy lays not so much in a weakness of character, but in a “kind of tragic incompatibility between the hero’s particular form of greatness and the earthly circumstances that he or she is forced to confront.” McDonald points out how differently the heroes of Shakespeare’s tragedies speak, not only from us, but also from all the other characters around them. Their poetic language, he says, expresses their “vast imaginations.” They see the world more completely than the rest of us.

Tragic figures imagine something extraordinary, and seek to transcend the compromises of the familiar; we both admire that imaginative leap and acknowledge its impossibility. The contest between world and will brings misery, but it also produces meaning and magnificence.

Through their journeys, the tragic hero and heroine learn something about themselves and about their lives. It is understanding that comes, however, from unbearable loss and pain. It has been noted by some scholars that in *Romeo and Juliet*, the earliest of Shakespearean tragedies, the hero and heroine themselves do not learn as much from their tragic path as do the survivors and the city they leave behind. It is Verona suffering through the consequences of the disagreements and violence that leads

to wisdom and reconciliation. In this sense, according to David Bevington, the community itself becomes a protagonist in this early play. In his later tragedies, those lessons are internalized into the consciousness of Shakespeare’s heroes and heroines through their tragic journeys.

In our own lives, we will likely never face the same choices that *Romeo and Juliet* did. But we will face choices that seem too big for us to handle. One day we will be required to go through

some “fearful passage” of our own, where old ways of thinking and behaving don’t work. We will face head-on the consequences of choices we’ve made, wishing that what’s done could somehow be undone.

What makes art different from life is exactly that.

The tragedy in *Romeo*

*and Juliet* is temporary. We close the book; we leave the theater. But when we enter that world and come to know its characters, we come to know ourselves. The damage that is permanent and irreversible to tragedy’s heroes is reversible and temporary for us as witnesses. And when our own “fearful passage” comes along, we will have learned along the way about ourselves and the nature of others, and be able to make our choices with the benefit of these characters’ experiences. †

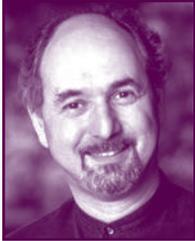
It has been noted by some scholars that in *Romeo and Juliet*... the hero and heroine themselves do not learn as much from their tragic path as do the survivors and the city they leave behind.



photo by Liz Lauren

KENN E. HEAD AS PRINCE ESCALUS IN CST'S 2010 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY GALE EDWARDS.

## THE TIMELESS TRAGEDY



**PETER HOLLAND** is the McMeel Family Professor in Shakespeare Studies and Chair of the Film, Television and Theatre Department at the University of Notre Dame. His most recent books include *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s and From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*. The following scholar notes were first published in the play program for CST's 2005 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Mark Lamos.

**I**t's fascinating how Shakespeare plays show you how you change as you get older. I can remember when I thought *Romeo and Juliet* was the great tragedy of adolescent passion. Now, part of my mind wants to say 'Damn kids!' and I can end up, at some productions, feeling sorrier for their parents.

When Shakespeare read Arthur Brooke's long and really rather boring poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) and saw the possibilities of turning it into exhilarating drama, he also found that Brooke thought his young lovers were indeed damned. Brooke blamed them for:

*...thralling themselves to dishonest desire, neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends, conferring their principal counsels with drunken gossips and superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity), attempting all adventures for th'attaining of their wished lust,...abusing the honorable name of lawful marriage..., finally, by all means of dishonest life, hastening to most unhappy death.*

Brooke's poem is perhaps not quite as moralistic as this passage suggests. But at the heart of Shakespeare's play, as throughout his work, is a deep anxiety about making judgments, moral or otherwise. The mad haste which drives the action onwards, barely giving anyone a chance to think or reflect, the impetuosity that prevents the characters from taking Friar Laurence's advice ("Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast"), also means that it is difficult to blame these "star-crossed" figures for what they are driven to do.

Allocating responsibility matters less than accepting that, as the Prince states so fiercely, "All are punished," suffering through their grief—and that includes the Prince himself, for, while the Prologue told us that this is a tale of "Two house-

holds, both alike in dignity," the Prince's own family is the third to be involved: Mercutio and Paris, two of the slaughtered young, are his kinsmen. Over and over again, the characters would like to say, with Romeo, "I thought all for the best." But none of the play's children survive, except perhaps Benvolio, the man whose name means "I wish well" but who vanishes from the play after Romeo kills Tybalt, the point when there seems no longer a possibility of drawing back from the rush to tragedy.

These hectic events of mid-July, which last only from a Sunday to a Thursday—and the play is surprisingly precise about its time of year and days of the week—are increasingly out of control, subject to accident, chance, and that terrifying delay, the single minute that causes the final tragedy—for, if Romeo had only waited another minute before taking the poison, Juliet would have woken up in time. But little in this play is ever "in time"; this is the great drama about being short of time, out of time, never timely.

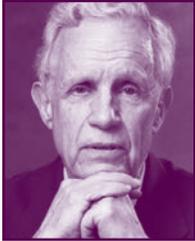
Instead, *Romeo and Juliet* teases us with shapes and repetitions that tantalizingly suggest order. Take the way, for example, that the Prince appears three times, at the beginning, middle and end of the action, each time responding to civil disorder; or the shapely poetic form of the sonnet that is both the structure of the opening Prologue and of the first exchange between Romeo and Juliet, and then is heard in fragments of quatrains and couplets right through to the play's end; or the way the Nurse three times interrupts the lovers' attempts to be together (at the party, in the balcony scene, and in that terrible dawn of parting). Such devices set up resonances and echoes that remind us how the fluidity of the action, its immediacy and disorderly energies, are also part of something that Shakespeare here seems to define as the "stars" that Romeo defies.

**But little in this play is every  
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Mercutio's death and the Nurse's urging Juliet's marriage to Paris leave the lovers most completely alone, in a space where they make their own choices. The result is that moral judgments prove unexpectedly true: it is over Juliet's

feigned death that Friar Laurence pontificates "she's best married that dies married young," never guessing how appallingly it will become the case. Now that our society seems particularly full of people offering to force their own moral views on the rest, *Romeo and Juliet* can, in its reminding us of the inefficacy of such actions, prove newly timely. ✚

## LOVE IN A HARSH WORLD



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When Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* complains that "The course of true love never did run smooth," obstructed as it is by inequalities of social rank, family antagonisms, death, and sickness, he might as well be talking about *Romeo and Juliet*. *Romeo and Juliet's* passionate desire to spend their lives together is hindered by just such difficulties. Juliet's well-to-do but non-patrician parents are dazzled by the prospect of marrying her to the aristocratic Count Paris. Families that we might call "bourgeois" or "nouveau riche" often bought their way into high society (and still do; think of Grace Kelly, or Princess Diana) by such marital alliances.

**An aspect of *Romeo and Juliet's* timeless appeal is a feeling we all share: that the deck is stacked against young love in a world filled with hatred.**



photo by Michael Brosilow

FROM LEFT: CARMAN LACIVITA AS ROMEO AND JULIE COFFEY AS JULIET IN CST'S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY MARK LAMOS

Compounding such social hazards in *Romeo and Juliet* are elements of uncontrollable misfortune. A bout of plague prevents Friar Laurence from getting a message to Romeo instructing him to return to awaken Juliet from a deep sleep induced by the Friar's potion as a means of escaping the marriage to Paris. Misunderstanding and failures of communication are also crucial factors: Juliet cannot tell her father and mother that she is already married into the family of the Montagues, ancient enemies of the Capulets.

An overwhelming cause of tragedy is indeed the enmity of Capulets and Montagues, two long-established families of Verona whose cause of feuding is so ancient that no one knows how or why it began. The play's Prologue promises that the lovers' "star-crossed" search for romantic happiness will be thwarted by an "ancient grudge" that "breaks to new mutiny." Friar Laurence sees the conflict in terms of a cosmic struggle between good and evil. This perception lends depth to a lovely poetic figure that runs through the play, one in which the opposites of good and evil paradoxically meet. "My only love sprung from my only hate!" observes Juliet, when she is told by her Nurse that the young man she has just met and fallen in love with at the Capulets' ball is a Montague.

Are Romeo and Juliet then victims of circumstances beyond their control? In good part they are. Capulet, in the play's closing moments, refers to Romeo and Juliet as "poor

sacrifices of our enmity." An aspect of *Romeo and Juliet's* timeless appeal is a feeling we all share: that the deck is stacked against young love in a world filled with hatred. Romeo's murder of Tybalt is a regrettable caving in to the feuding mentality of his peers at the expense of his commitment to Juliet. The code of the vendetta is a timeless enemy of love, as in the New York gang warfare scene of *West Side Story*, and to this extent Romeo is to blame for the tragedy. Still, we feel deeply that the lovers' death is a price that they must innocently pay for our corrupted human nature. The play ends with old Capulet and Montague vowing to end their feud by honoring the lovers' memory with a statue of pure gold.

Written about the same time—in the 1590s, fairly early in Shakespeare's career—*Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are an interesting pair. Both have left us with some of Shakespeare's most wonderful comic characters and scenes. *Midsummer's* play-within-the-play of "Pyramus and Thisbe," about two lovers from feuding families, resembles *Romeo and Juliet* to such an extent that we cannot be sure which play was written first. Together they offer a splendid and timeless tribute to the exquisite brevity of young love in this harsh world. ✚

## ...ON CHARACTERS

**1600s** *Shakespear [sic] show'd the best of his skill in his Mercutio, and he said himself, that he was forc'd to kill him in the third Act, to prevent being kill'd by him. But, for my part, I cannot find he was so dangerous a person: I see nothing in him but what was so exceeding harmless, that he might have liv'd to the end of the Play, and dy'd in his bed, without offence to any man.*

—JOHN DRYDEN, POET, 1672

**1700s** *Mercutio's wit, gaiety and courage, will always procure him friends [among critical scholars] that wish him a longer life but his death is not precipitated, he has lived out the time allotted him in the construction of the play; nor do I doubt the ability of Shakespeare to have continued his existence, though some of his sallies are perhaps out of the reach of Dryden [see quote above]; whose genius was not very fertile of merriment, nor ductile to humour, but acute, argumentative, comprehensive, and sublime.*

—SAMUEL JOHNSON, CRITIC, 1765

**1800s** *[The Nurse] is possessed of cunning which is counteracted by her ignorance, thus she insinuates herself into the secrets of her young lady to gain over an insolent ascendancy, and thus, a stranger to the gratitude due to her benefactors, she abuses that indulgence, and betrays that confidence of which they themselves ought to have known her unworthy. There cannot be a properer lesson to parents and children than this. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the various instances of family misery happen through the improper confidence placed in servants.*

—CHARLES DIBDIN, ACTOR, 1800

*All Shakspeare's [sic] women, being essentially women, either love or have loved, or are capable of loving; but Juliet is love itself. The passion is her state of being, and out of it she has no existence. It is the soul within her soul...*

—ANNA BROWNELL JAMESON, WRITER, 1833

*[Friar Laurence] represents, as it were, the part of the chorus in this tragedy, and expresses the leading idea of the piece in all its fullness, namely, that excess in any enjoyment, however pure in itself, transforms its sweet into bitterness; that devotion to any single feeling, however noble, bespeaks its ascendancy; that this ascendancy moves the man and woman out of their natural spheres; that love can only be an accompaniment to life, and that it cannot completely fill out the life and business of the man especially...These ideas are placed by the poet in the lips of the wise Laurence in almost a moralizing manner with gradually increasing emphasis.*

—G.G. GERVINUS, LITERARY HISTORIAN, 1849

*It is impossible to agree with those critics, among others Gervinus, who represent the friar as a kind of chorus expressing Shakspeare's [sic] own ethical ideas, and his opinions respecting the characters and action. It is not Shakspeare's practice to expound the moralities of his artistic creations; nor does he ever, by means of a chorus, stand above and outside the men and women of his plays, who are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. No! Friar Laurence...is moving in the cloud, and misled by error as well as the rest. Shakspeare has never made the moderate, self-possessed, sedate person a final or absolute judge of the impulsive and the passionate. The one sees a side of truth which is unseen by the other; but to neither is the whole truth visible....Shakspeare did not believe that the highest wisdom of human life was acquirable by mild, monastic meditation...Friar Laurence too, old man, had his lesson to learn.*

—EDWARD DOWDEN, CRITIC, 1881

**1900s** *Romeo and Juliet don't know each other, but when one dies, the other can't go on living. Behind their passionate suicides, as well as their reactions to Romeo's banishment, is finally a lack of feeling, a fear that the relationship cannot be sustained and that, out of pride, it should be stopped now, in death. If they become a married couple, there will be no more wonderful speeches—and a good thing, too. Then the real tasks of life will begin, with which art has surprisingly little to do. Romeo and Juliet are idolaters of each other, which is what leads to their suicides.*

—W.H. AUDEN, POET, 1946

*Romeo...falls back on the testimony of all history that only force can overcome force. He descends from the level of love to the level of violence and attempts to part the fighters with his sword.*

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, SCHOLAR, 1951

*Romeo as an honorable man avenges his friend. but in proving himself a man in this sense, he proves himself less than the perfect lover...the play is usually explained as a tragedy of the excess of love. On the contrary it is the tragedy of a deficiency of it. Romeo did not 'follow it utterly,' did not give quite 'all' to love.*

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, SCHOLAR, 1951

*When we first hear of Romeo in Shakespeare's play he is described in the attitude of a typical Elizabethan melancholy lover; he is young and untried, but there is at first an element of parody in Shakespeare's presentation of him; his conventionality and bookishness are obvious in the first words he speaks, all absurdly stereotyped paradox and similitude.*

—BRIAN GIBBONS, EDITOR, 1980

*[Romeo's] unwillingness to look into circumstances and his headlong pursuit of suicide demonstrate that his assumptions about his life and death have been made before the immediate events of the play take place.*

—MARILYN L. WILLIAMSON, SCHOLAR, 1981

*Even when Juliet's language seems to place her in the same imaginative world with Romeo, there is often a contrast between the tendency of his metaphors to keep love distant and remote, and hers to bring it up close, and make it possible. Romeo's preoccupation with the light of beauty, for instance, isolates the object of his desire, and mystifies the distance that separates him from it. When Juliet has recourse to the idea, however, beauty's light becomes an enabling force that emanates from the consummated relationship.*

—EDWARD SNOW, SCHOLAR, 1985

*Romeo's line 'He jests at scars that never felt a wound' not only ironically prefigures the nature of Mercutio's death, but also suggests that Romeo is unaware of the depth of Mercutio's feelings for him.*

—ROGER ALLAM, ACTOR, 1988

*Juliet is, I think, consistently positive about the relationship. From the beginning right up to the moment when she discovers Romeo dead, she is hopeful, willing their love to work. Her foreboding remarks—'my grave is like to prove my wedding bed,' 'I have no joy in this contract tonight,' etc.—come from a kind of sixth sense, below conscious thought. They are remarks for the audience to absorb... but they have no effect on the positive attitude they both take to the relationship. ... To play Juliet as if she is conscious of the inevitability of tragedy is the same thing as to play her wisely aware of all the faults of the society she lives in.*

—NIAMH CUSACK, ACTOR, 1988

*[Romeo] has deliberately cast aside as 'effeminate' the gentle and forgiving qualities he has learned from his love of Juliet and thus is guilty of a rash and self-destructive action. To ascribe the cause of the tragedy in Aristotelian fashion to his and Juliet's impulsiveness is, however, to ignore much of the rest of the play.*

—DAVID BEVINGTON, SCHOLAR, 1992

*The play's configuration of Juliet's womanhood and Romeo's manhood actually runs counter to the sense of the rites of passage proper to the opposed genders. Romeo swerves away from the phallic violence of the feud and when he meets adversity, the banishment decreed by the Prince, can only weep and moan in a fashion scorned as womanish. Juliet embraces her "fall" into eros as precociously as the Nurse's husband predicted but with a courage and resolution that her culture would call masculine, resists her father's will to the death.*

—COPPELIA KAHN, SCHOLAR, 1998

**2000s** *Rather like the 'two households, both alike in dignity,' ... males and females in Romeo and Juliet do not mingle much in public, and not coincidentally, when they do mingle it is in moments of chaos or some other form of social disorder.*

—THOMAS MOISAN, SCHOLAR, 2000

*Juliet is very isolated in life. She's never out by herself, she always has a guard with her because of the violent street fighting between the Capulets and Montagues. The only places she goes to are her bedroom, the atrium of the castle, maybe a couple of parties in her own castle, and church. That's it. Fortunately she's educated because she is of a certain class. Why else can she say these amazing words? She's not given an opportunity to voice her mind to anybody until she meets Romeo; it's in meeting him that she finds herself.*

—JULIA COFFEY, ACTOR, 2005

*[Lady Capulet] I don't think of her as unfeeling or unloving; she's not a bad person. In fact, she stands up to Capulet when she sees him getting angrier and angrier at Juliet...However she only goes so far; she knows her duty, and her powers were very limited then.*

—SUSAN HART, ACTOR, 2005

*Benvolio is the peacemaker and is the most even-tempered of everyone in the play. He's the person who can always get a straight answer from him. He describes everyone truthfully: Tybalt is fiery, Mercutio is bold and brave, and he asks the right questions of Romeo such that you (and he) can see his heart.*

—ROBERT PETKOFF, ACTOR, 2005

*The Prince comes in at the beginning, middle, and end, and there is almost a choric structure to his speeches. He is very formal and his language reflects that. He bears a lot of responsibility for the way the events unfolded. Not only did he banish Romeo, he also could have stopped the feud earlier but he didn't. He might have escalated it, in fact, by meeting with each party separately and ordering them to stop instead of meeting with them together and dealing with the issues.*

—NICK SANDYS, ACTOR, 2005

*Mercutio, by contrast, has more of the philosopher in him, and this aspect takes shape in terms of fencing. Unafraid of motion, he can, nonetheless, step back and observe. In ways no other character in the play does, Mercutio recollects knowledge; he understands numbers and technical terms. As the Queen Mab speech brilliantly shows, he has the capacity to reflect on the nature of motion and Shakespeare indulges him with impressive set speeches...Whereas Romeo and Tybalt embody motion, Mercutio puts motion to the test, but his pupils always fumble over the examination.*

—DARYL W. PALMER, SCHOLAR, 2006

*An apparently minor character who actually plays a critical role in Romeo and Juliet, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin is the catalyst for two (nearly three) brawls between the Montagues and Capulets, the last of which causes his own and Mercutio's violent deaths, plus the banishment of Romeo and the sequences of events that inevitably eventually resolve the tragic drama. He is hungrily belligerent at every appearance and, more so than any other character in the play, symbolizes the unreasonable feud between the warring families, as well as the tragedy's ubiquitous cruel irony...if anyone in this tragedy of circumstance can be characterized as a villain, beyond the "crossed" stars and Fates, then Tybalt himself fits that bill.*

—R. BRIGHAM LAMPERT, TEACHER, 2008

*When Romeo is introduced, he is already lovesick, and very poetic and direct about it. What he's feeling isn't withheld to create a revelation at the end of act one. Because it defines Romeo, it comes out in his opening scene. Further, the dramatic purpose of his introduction isn't to make a statement about the kind of character he is. It's to show a young man in the anguish of first love that will quickly be tested.*

—BILL JOHNSON, PLAYWRIGHT, 2012

...ON PLOT

**1600s** *[I went to] the Opera, and there saw Romeo and Juliet, the first time it was ever acted, but it is a play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life.*

—SAMUEL PEPYS, CRITIC, 1662

**1800s** *The necessity of loving creates an object for itself in man and woman; and yet there is a difference in this respect between the sexes, though only to be known by a perception of it. It would have displeased us if Juliet had been represented as already in love, or as fancying herself so;—but no one, I believe, ever experiences any shock at Romeo's forgetting his Rosaline, who had been a mere name for the yearning of his youthful imagination, and rushing into his passion for Juliet.*

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, POET, CA. 1836

*It should never be forgotten in judging an attempt to play Romeo and Juliet that the parts are made almost impossible, except to actors of positive genius, skilled to the last degree in metrical declamation, by the way in which the poetry, magnificent as it is, is interlarded by the miserable rhetoric and silly logical conceits which were the foible of the Elizabethans.*

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, PLAYWRIGHT, 1895

**1900s** *Few other plays, even by Shakespeare, engage the audience so intimately. The hearts of the hearers, surrendered early, are handled with the greatest care until the end, and with the greatest human respect. No distinction of Shakespeare is so hard to define as this distinction of his which consists of knowing the spectator through and through, and of valuing what is there. The author of Romeo and Juliet watches us as affectionately as he watches his hero and heroine; no sooner has he hurt our feelings than he has saved them, no sooner are we outraged than we are healed.*

—MARK VAN DOREN, POET, 1939

*The love of Romeo and Juliet is beyond the ken of their friends; it belongs to a world which is not their world.*

—H.B. CHARLTON, SCHOLAR, 1948

*Romeo and Juliet was his first successful experiment in tragedy. Because of that very success, it is hard for us to realize the full extent of its novelty, though scholarship has lately been reminding us of how it must have struck contemporaries. They would have been surprised, and possibly shocked, at seeing lovers taken so seriously. Legend, it had heretofore taken for granted, was the proper matter for serious drama; romance was the stuff of the comic stage. Romantic tragedy...was one of those contradictions in terms which Shakespeare seems to have delighted in resolving.*

—HARRY LEVIN, SCHOLAR, 1960

*It is not accidental that Mercutio's outcries come at the exact center of the play. 'A plague o' both your houses!' is both a judgment and a prophecy, as well as a curse. Through the repetition of this line Mercutio rises almost physically above the action of the play. And as this line sounds and resounds, one begins to realize that the whole play pivots on it.*

—STEPHEN A. SHAPIRO, SCHOLAR, 1964

*Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of first love. For these young lovers, in their abandon, the world does not exist. That is, perhaps, why they choose death so easily.*

—JAN KOTT, SCHOLAR, 1965

*[In West Side Story] the final moment is even more significant, for the curtain falls with Laurents' Paris and Juliet (Chino and Maria) still alive...To understand what this alteration in the story means, requires us to turn from purely plot considerations to look at character and at Laurents' intent as opposed Shakespeare's. The contemporary American playwright obviously feels that suicide is inconsistent with his heroine's character, that their death by her own hand would only diminish her stature. More significantly, however, her act of not killing herself or any of the gang members whom she threatens in the final scene, underlines the basic difference between this play and Shakespeare's: West Side Story is conceived as a social document, Romeo and Juliet as a Liebestod. Consequently, it becomes important to the contemporary play's message that a resolution of the gang warfare be effected, not as a postscript, so to speak, but by the hand of one of the play's protagonists.*

—NORRIS HOUGHTON, DIRECTOR, 1965

1900s  
continued

*The world at large rushes and the lovers haste toward one another, but when they are united, especially in the orchard, time and motion cease. Given the contrasting principles of movement and stasis, the form of the play might be diagrammed as a horizontal line interrupted by several circles indicating the times when Romeo and Juliet are together. For in each of these five scenes the primary tension is between staying and departing, and in each scene the lovers are called out of stillness by the exigencies of time and motion.*

—JAMES L. CALDERWOOD, SCHOLAR, 1971

*Voluntarily Romeo enters the world of the tragedy. There is no question but that he believes in the efficacy of dreams of warning, but he chooses nonetheless to disregard them...Romeo's denial of the dream is more than behavior, more than device. It seals him as an actor in a world he only partially comprehends. It is an act and a sign at once. From this point the tragedy extends.*

—MARJORIE GARBER, SCHOLAR, 1974

*The two of them enter into a dialogue that's an exquisitely turned extended (eighteen-line) sonnet. That's not 'realistic,' of course: in whatever real life may be, lovers don't start cooing in sonnet form. What has happened belongs to reality, not to realism; or rather, the God of Love...has swooped down on two perhaps rather commonplace adolescents and blasted them into another dimension of reality altogether.*

—NORTHROP FRYE, SCHOLAR, 1986

*There's something about the story itself that can take any amount of mistreatment from stupid producing and bad casting. I've seen a performance with a middle-aged and corseted Juliet who could have thrown Romeo over her shoulder and walked to Mantua with him, and yet the audience was in tears at the end.*

—NORTHROP FRYE, SCHOLAR, 1986

*Their kind of passion would soon burn up the world of heavy fathers and snarling Tybalts and gabby Nurses if it stayed there. Our perception of this helps us to accept the play as a whole, instead of feeling only that a great love went wrong. It didn't go wrong: it went only where it could, out. It always was, as we say, out of this world.*

—NORTHROP FRYE, SCHOLAR, 1986

*With Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare was trying to write a new kind of tragedy. Traditional tragedies were about good deaths: protagonists who rose to the challenge of the worst life brings to us, accepting with calm and fortitude that every life must have an end. The essence of a good death was readiness for it: accounts settled, old scores paid off, enemies forgiven, last words said. A bad death was one which came too quickly for preparation: by accident, sudden violence or murder, random and unexpected. By definition, all young deaths are bad deaths, coming too soon, before the young victim has lived long enough to learn how to leave the world behind. The death of young people could scarcely be tragic, consoling or edifying in any way. It was simply horrifying, a breach in nature, a wound to the cycle of the community's existence. Shakespeare wants the deaths of Romeo and Juliet to be all those things—they must horrify Verona into ending their families' feud.*

—RONALD BRYDEN, SCHOLAR, 1992

*Recent work by social historians on the history of private life in Western European culture offers a complicating perspective on the timelessness of Romeo and Juliet. At the core of the play's evident accessibility is the importance and privilege modern Western culture grants to desire, regarding it as deeply expressive of individual identity and central to the personal fulfillment of women no less than men. But, as these historians have argued, such conceptions of desire reflect cultural changes in human consciousness in ways of imagining and articulating the nature of desire. In England until the late sixteenth century, individual identity had been imagined not so much as the result of autonomous, personal growth in consciousness but rather as a function of social station, an individual's place in a network of social and kinship structures.*

—GAIL KERN PASTER, SCHOLAR, 1992

**1900s**  
continued

*Is Romeo and Juliet a tragedy of fate or a tragedy of character? In Shakespeare's other tragedies, the fault lies within the hero's nature, and he dies with the knowledge of his fatal flaw. But Romeo and Juliet are victims of a universe not of their making. They are "star-crossed," born in a fateful hour; Shakespeare's only romantic tragedy is a dram of missed chances, poor timing, accidents, and mistakes. The teenaged lovers are also victims of the older generation who, failing to understand them, contribute to their deaths.*

—NORRIE EPSTEIN, SCHOLAR, 1993

*Though Shakespeare allows to neither of his protagonists in this play the full tragic realization of what has happened to them that he will allow such later figures as Hamlet and Othello, much less any anguished questionings about their own contribution to it, both do eventually reach a maturity of feeling, if not of understanding, that was not theirs at the play's beginning.*

—MAYNARD MACK, SCHOLAR, 1993

*We have not shied away from clashing low comedy with high tragedy, which is the style of the play, for it's the low comedy that allows you to embrace the very high emotions of the tragedy... Everything that is in the movie is drawn from Shakespeare's play. Violence, murder, lust, love, poison, drugs that mimic death, it's all there.*

—BAZ LURHMANN, DIRECTOR, 1996

**2000s**

*The lesson the Chorus teaches is to use the opening lines not merely as a premise against which to test the unquestioned statements of characters in the play and then, in turn, to examine the play not for its events but for its choices ... In the end, the dead teach us, the living: Romeo and Juliet, through their actions, experiences, and choices, finally meld paradox and parable ... They displace the earlier, more limited Chorus because their wider, deeper comment on the risk and cost of life is one that the Chorus never understood.*

—ARTHUR F. KINNEY, SCHOLAR, 2000

*The play was in its way experimental; the usual source of tragedy was an ancient hero or some comparably great figure. Here the story comes from a modern novella and is set in modern Verona. This innovation called for new thinking about tragic experience, now less remote from ordinary life. The play is sometimes said not to be truly tragic, that Romeo's late arrival is simply accident. But that may be an aspect of its modernity. We use the word 'tragic' differently nowadays, and a change of sentiment in regard to tragedy may be sensed in Romeo and Juliet.*

—THOMAS MOISAN, SCHOLAR, 2000

*There may have been little hope for Hamlet's survival in the rotten state of Denmark, or even for the adulterous love of Antony and Cleopatra caught up in the snares of Roman politics, but for these great lovers of Verona, things could so easily have been otherwise ... It is, in a sense, a problem of genre that there is no such thing as a romantic narrative after marriage: somehow or other the story seems to end. In the major tragedies, the prognosis for more fully developed love relationships, especially marriages, is not very promising.*

—DYMPNA C. CALLAGHAN, SCHOLAR, 2002

*While Romeo and Juliet has rarely been off the stage since Shakespeare's time, it has rarely—if ever—been there as Shakespeare wrote it. Wide discrepancies between the two quarto texts suggest a degree of instability in the play even in Shakespeare's day, and since the theaters reopened after the Restoration the play has undergone radical transformations. It has always been popular, but it has also always been edited, adapted, and rewritten. In spite, or perhaps because, of its enduring appeal as the definitive love story, Romeo and Juliet has been a dynamic and unstable performance text, endlessly reinvented to suit differing cultural needs.*

—JAMES N. LOEHLIN, SCHOLAR, 2002

**2000s**  
continued

*In the great legends of medieval romance, the obstacle to love can sometimes appear more or less manufactured: the sword that lies between Tristan and Iseult; the endless trials that, ever more fantastical, keep Lancelot from Guinevere. These old stories were not aiming for verisimilitude: instead they set up laboratory conditions under which this peculiar thing that is romantic love could be ratcheted up to ever more exquisite and refined degrees. Shakespeare's mimetic drama, by contrast, moves in the opposite direction. By producing a simulation of real life it works to maintain our collective faith in this passion we so passionately want to believe in. The illusion that things might have been otherwise—if only circumstances had been different...is, of course, no less artful than any other literary form, but it is a different kind of art: the art that conceals art, the collective illusion of the stage-play world.*

—CATHERINE BATES, SCHOLAR, 2004

*Romeo's urgency is sketched rather cursorily; it is Juliet's that is given much fuller scope and intensity. Similarly, it is eminently likely that Anne [Hathaway], three months pregnant, rather than the young Will, was the prime source of the impatience that led to the bond. To be sure, this was Elizabethan and not Victorian England: an unmarried mother in the 1580s did not, as she would in the 1880s, routinely face fierce, unrelenting social stigmatization. But the shame and social disgrace in Shakespeare's time were real enough.*

—STEPHEN GREENBLATT, SCHOLAR, 2004

*It's sort of the quintessential play where you want to stand up and say "No! No! No! No! Don't do that, don't do that!"—the way you do in children's theater. And I think that's also part of its appeal: we know often in Shakespeare what mistake the character is making; we've been given the information, and we know what the problem is. It's what makes Cymbeline (or A Midsummer Night's Dream) so funny so much of the time, because you're in this godlike position and know who's who. We are given information ahead of all the characters, and that serves to give the play both its tragic and comic edge. We don't know that much in Hamlet. Here, just as in a comedy, we know she's alive when Romeo kills himself, and that's why it's just "this close" to comedy. It's that closeness that's so dangerous, but that's also what gives it its tremendous light.*

—MARK LAMOS, DIRECTOR, 2004

*People think of it as a love story and a tragedy because two people fall in love and kill themselves in the end. And that's true; that's what happens. But what I think this play is about is generations, about a younger generation not served by the older generation. One generation inherits the anger and violence of their parents. It might just as well be passed along in the mother's milk. No one even remembers who started the war or why. They're just fighting and they've been fighting for as long as anyone can remember. Does all this sound familiar? Tybalt does exactly what he's been brought up to do. The strangers in this world are Romeo and Juliet.*

—GALE EDWARDS, DIRECTOR, 2010

**...ON THEME****1800s**

*The sweetest and the bitterest love and hatred, festive rejoicings and dark forebodings, tender embraces and sepulchral horrors, the fullness of life and self-annihilation, are here all brought close to each other; and yet these contrasts are so blended into a unity of impression, that the echo which the whole leaves behind in the mind resembles a single but endless sigh.*

—AUGUST WILHELM SCHLEGEL, PHILOSOPHER, 1811

*He has founded the passion of the two lovers not on the pleasures they had experienced, but on all the pleasures they had not experienced. All that was to come of life was theirs...Their hopes were of air, their desires of fire.*

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, SCHOLAR, 1817

*This reckless passion, this fatal vehemence of love is contrasted by a hate quite as passionate and as fatal. Hate is, as it were, but the reverse of love, the same passion in its negative force...Their love has to overcome this hate and to assert itself in opposition to it; whether, and in what way their love conquer it, will be the test of their power and their right.*

—HERMANN ULRICI, PHILOSOPHER, 1847

*The rational object of marriage is for man to exist in the Family, which, if it cannot be reached through one person, must be sought through another. The Institution is higher than the Individual; but, in the present drama, the love of an individual assails the Family on its universal side; thus there must result a tragic termination. For, truly considered, love, which is the emotional ground of the Family, is here destroying the Family itself. Love thus annihilates its own object, puts an end to itself.*

—DENTON J. SNIDER, SCHOLAR, 1887

**1900s** *In tragedy the individual is not reconcilable with the universe, and the symbol for their opposition is death. In comedy the individual is reconcilable with the universe, and the symbol for their harmony is marriage. In ancient tragedy the universe refuses reconciliation, in modern tragedy the failure is the result of the individual's choice. Comedy includes both fate and choice...Romeo and Juliet are not right to commit suicide... Romeo and Juliet confuse romance and love. The ancient tragic character is one with whom fate is passionately offended. The modern tragic character is passionately related to an untruth. It is the passion that makes the aesthetic interest, it is the untruth that makes the tragedy.*

—W.H. AUDEN, POET, 1946

*The theme of Romeo and Juliet is love and violence and their interactions. In it these two mightiest of mighty opposites meet each other squarely—and one wins. And yet the other wins.*

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, SCHOLAR, 1951

*Whatever literal epidemic there may have been in the region, it is plain that fear is the real pestilence that pervades the play. It is fear of the code of honor, not fate, that drives Romeo to seek vengeance on Tybalt. It is fear of the plague, not accident, that leads to the miscarriage of Friar Laurence's message to Romeo. It is fear of poverty, not the chance of his being at hand at the moment, that lets the apothecary sell the poison. It is fear of the part he is playing, not age, that makes Friar Laurence's old feet stumble and brings him to the tomb just a few seconds too late to prevent Romeo's death. It is fear of being found at such a spot at such a time, not coincidence, that lets him desert Juliet at last just when he does. Fear, fear, fear, fear. Fear is the evil 'star' that crosses the lovers. And fear resides not in the skies but in the human heart.*

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, SCHOLAR 1951

*The image that remains most strongly in our minds is not of the lovers as a couple, but of each as a separate individual grappling with internal energies that both threaten and express the self, energies for which language is inadequate but that lie at the root of language, that both overturn and enrich society. Touched by adult desire, the unsounded self burst out with the explosive, subversive, dangerous energy of the sword, gunpowder, the plague; and every aspect of our experience of Romeo and Juliet in the theater engages us in this phenomenon.*

—MICHAEL GOLDMAN, SCHOLAR, 1972

*The lovers themselves have neither the time nor the inclination to attempt to come to terms with the hostility and lack of understanding of their world.*

—DERICK R.C. MARSH, SCHOLAR, 1976

*The feud in a realistic social sense is the primary tragic force in the play—not the feud as agent of fate, but the feud as an extreme and peculiar expression of patriarchal society, which Shakespeare shows us to be tragically self-destructive. The feud is the deadly rite-de-passage which promotes masculinity at the price of life.*

—COPPELIA KAHN, SCHOLAR, 1977–78

*In Mercutio's sudden, violent death, Shakespeare makes the birth of tragedy coincide exactly with the symbolic death of comedy. The alternative view, the element of freedom and play, dies with Mercutio. Where many courses were open before, now there seems only one.*

—SUSAN SNYDER, SCHOLAR, 1979

*The permanent popularity, now of mythic intensity, of Romeo and Juliet is more than justified, since the play is the largest and most pervasive celebration of romantic love in Western literature.*

—HAROLD BLOOM, SCHOLAR, 1998

**2000s** *We are encouraged to read their death through an image of their life and love and to feel some redemption. If we take the bait we may be resounding to our own wishful desire that passionate love and marriage are compatible ... Shakespeare and many of his contemporaries acknowledged the madness in love; but for many modern interpreters not even self-destruction can dampen our relentless glorification of love madness. Love, it seems, remains one of the last bastions of modern life that we are unwilling to demystify.*

—IVO KAMPS, SCHOLAR, 2000

*Power in this play is all about expression—not about the weapons its characters eventually resort to. They use language as their survival tool. We have the potential within us to resolve conflict with our words. That's power. Language is power. Diplomacy requires a lot of clarity; aggression, on the other hand, is all about acting. I truly believe that tragedy happens—in this play and in our world—when language breaks down.*

—GARY GRIFFIN, DIRECTOR, 2003

*With Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare created a force field that surrounds points of tension, polarities that are based on resemblance: love/hate, ideal/real, young/old, innocence/worldliness, deliberation/ haste, spontaneity/calculation, lyrical/prosaic, personal/social. All of these polarities—and more like them—are embraced by the tragicomic mode that governs Shakespeare's approach. A production of Romeo and Juliet will succeed to the extent that it captures and expresses these polarities. No film version of the play entirely succeeds in reproducing the essential richness of Shakespeare's text; each sacrifices some points of tension for the sake of others or, more often, slights one of the paired terms in favor of the other.*

—MICHAEL ANDEREGG, SCHOLAR, 2004

*Romeo and Juliet embodies problems specific not to Verona or to sixteenth-century England, to young love or ancient grudge, but to language generally: the relation between word and meaning, and between name and being. It is the lovers' attempt to negotiate an identity independent of family name which leads to Juliet's famous antinomialist soliloquy: 'What's in a name?'*

—LAURIE E. MAGUIRE, SCHOLAR, 2004

*The romantic love of Romeo and Juliet impedes the Capulets' desire to enhance their new money by marrying their daughter to title and lineage. Act 5's gold monuments, which the grieving parents propose to erect as memorials to their dead teenagers, indicate that Verona's mercantile values have not been altered by tragedy...*

—LAURIE E. MAGUIRE, SCHOLAR, 2004

*Fate is a powerful force in Romeo and Juliet, and the main characters are highly aware of it. Romeo, for instance, has premonitions of his own death several times. Despite Romeo trying to avoid killing Tybalt, Fate intervenes, and the consequences are inevitable. Juliet should recover from the sleeping potion and all should be well, but Fate, in the form of a plague, has kept Friar John from delivering Friar Laurence's message; Romeo and Juliet's predetermined destiny thwarts every strategy that could have saved them from death.*

—PAUL MOLIKEN, EDITOR, 2005

*Although Romeo and Juliet's love represents not only youth, but also the future—implying a generalized hope, plus particular familiar reunion and growth—what prevents such progress is their families' hatred, so historical and ingrained that neither the cause nor the time of its inception is ever divulged, if even remembered. In short, the past prevents the potential future from occurring, creating instead an imminent future that may include sorrowful regret and reconciliation, but will be totally devoid of love.*

—R. BRIGHAM LAMPERT, TEACHER, 2008

## A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

### *Romeo and Juliet in Performance*

*Whether his dramas should be taken as plays or as literature has been disputed. But surely they should be taken as both. Acted, or seen on the stage, they disclose things hidden to the reader. Read, they reveal what no actor or theater can convey.*

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

**R**omeo and Juliet. Despite being solely fictional characters, the young lovers' names have become part of everyday language through various idioms: "He's a real Romeo," someone might say about a flirtatious young man, or perhaps a new movie's advertising campaign proclaims it "a *Romeo and Juliet* for our times." All around the world people use these names to signify romantic love, even if they haven't read or seen *Romeo and Juliet*. The longevity and familiarity of the "star-crossed lovers" story from many centuries ago is a strong testament to the play's timelessness and popularity.

*Romeo and Juliet* was one of Shakespeare's early tragedies, it was written in the same period as his well-known comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The first printed text of the play, which was published in 1597, stated that the play had been performed often and "with great applause." The presence of stage directions in this first printed script suggests that it was written down from the memories of actors following a production; however the first written documentation of a performance comes from the 1662 diary entry of the apparently unimpressed Samuel Pepys. Though Mr. Pepys disliked the play, it must have been well received by others, because another revival opened just a few years later. This version was directed by James Howard, who rewrote the ending of the play and kept the lovers alive. In addition to using his new ending, he also staged the original ending, and alternated the sad and happy endings from night to night so that audience members could see whichever they liked!

In 1748, the well-known actor-manager David Garrick staged his adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. He simplified the language, cut a few characters, eliminated all the bawdy references, and added some extra speeches. Garrick's version would be performed for the next 100 years, with his chang-

es helping to make *Romeo and Juliet* the most popular of Shakespeare's plays through the late eighteenth century. Subsequent nineteenth-century productions restored Shakespeare's text (they still made cuts, as do today's directors), but frequently rearranged scenes to accommodate the elaborate scenery in vogue at the time. Often cuts were made so that famous actors in the title roles would be assured more stage time than anyone else.

Though in his play, Shakespeare makes it clear that Juliet is not yet fourteen and Romeo not much older, it was not unusual for the actors in these roles to be in their thirties or even their forties. Though the basic story stays the same despite the age of the actors, having younger actors closer in age to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* can change the way the audience interprets the play. In a 1912 speech about William Poel's 1905 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, George Bernard Shaw said:

*When Poel found that a child of fourteen was wanted, his critics exclaimed 'Ah—but she was an Italian child, and an Italian child of fourteen looks exactly the same as an English woman of forty-five.' William Poel did not believe it. He said, 'I will get a child of fourteen,' and accordingly he performed Romeo and Juliet in that way, and for the first time it became endurable.*

Though in his play, Shakespeare makes it clear that Juliet is not yet fourteen and Romeo not much older, it was not unusual for the actors in these roles to be in their thirties or even forties.

One of the milestone English productions of the play took place at London's New Theatre in 1935. John Gielgud directed and played Mercutio, Laurence Olivier portrayed Romeo, Peggy Ashcroft

played Juliet, and Edith Evan was the Nurse. Olivier and Gielgud, each fascinated with both Romeo and Mercutio, switched roles after six weeks. The switch was well received; critics and audiences praised each actor for the different qualities they brought to both parts.

By the 1930s, Shakespeare's original text had been restored, but directors still cut most of Shakespeare's sexual references. The comedy in *Romeo and Juliet* relies on bawdiness and innuendo, but until the 1960s many productions focused more on the tragedy and romance of the play. In the 1960s, productions around the world began to work with the play's sexual humor, pointing up the contrast between the play's notion of sex as vulgarity and the ideal love that Romeo and Juliet share. It was soon discovered that a production set in the sexually repressed Victorian era could contrast the "dirty" jokes of the all-male street scenes with the "clean" sexuality of the lovers.

One famous production was staged at The Old Vic Theatre in 1960 by Italian director Franco Zeffirelli. In keeping with the more permissive atmosphere of the sixties, Zeffirelli restored the comic bawdry, and emphasized the youth and passion of the lovers. Although critics complained that some of Shakespeare's language was neglected, audiences loved the vitality and sexuality of the production. This production was revived in 1964 in Verona, Italy (where Shakespeare set the play); critics loved the way the scenic design "blended...harmoniously with the surrounding city architecture." The culmination of Zeffirelli's stage productions was his 1968 film version starring Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey. The youth and beauty of the lovers was emphasized, and the movie, with its beautiful sets and music, was a great hit with teenagers, who strongly identified with the characters.

The story of the young, star-crossed lovers has proven to be universal, despite language or cultural differences. Productions in Communist nations like the former Soviet Union have tended to emphasize the politics of the play over the love story; in these productions the lovers' union defied not only their families but also a corrupt medieval government.

**In keeping with the more permissive atmosphere of the sixties, Zeffirelli restored the comic bawdry, and emphasized the youth and passion of the lovers.**

Other stagings have picked up on the theme of political corruption, setting the play in places like fascist Italy or Margaret Thatcher's England. Many recent American productions have cast the Capulets and Montagues as different ethnic groups in an effort to make their feud relevant to contemporary audiences. One of the first versions of the play to attribute ethnic hatred as the cause of the feud was the musical *West Side Story*. It updated *Romeo and Juliet*, calling the lovers Tony and Maria and setting the story in New York City in the 1950s. Its feud is between rival gangs, one Puer-

to Rican and the other melting-pot white American; Maria's brother is the leader of the Sharks and Tony's best friend heads the Jets.

In 1996 the 33-year-old Australian film director, Baz Luhrmann (whose

previous film *Strictly Ballroom* showed the artist's propensity for a quirky, operatic directorial vision), decided to take on the world's most famous love story. Luhrmann's title, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, flagged the association to his source that many critics of the film dismissed. He set his story not in a distant, long-forgotten Verona, but instead in a very Latin, very Catholic, Verona Beach—a violent, multicultural, amphetamine-driven city, where the guns and switchblades of deadly street gangs have replaced rapiers and daggers. Like Zeffirelli, Luhrmann, too, cast two young actors in the title roles; however unlike his predecessor, he chose two of the leading teenage heartthrobs of the day—Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. Mercutio was portrayed as a black drag queen and the Friar was a tough, tattooed clergyman of the streets. Some dismissed Luhrmann's production as having very little in common with its titular playwright and play; they were frustrated by his liberal cutting of Shakespeare's text (approximately half of the original found its way to the screen) and the young actors' flattened delivery of the language. Other scholars and critics hailed the production's bold expression of its source material, and praised how palpably frightening Verona's violence became in the hands of Luhrmann's street thugs.

The story also has been adapted and made accessible to younger generations. In 1998 Disney released a sequel to *The Lion King*, called *The Lion King 2: Simba's Pride*, which shares a similar plot as *Romeo and Juliet*. In this animated interpretation the young lovers are portrayed as lions belonging to two different prides. *Gnomeo and Juliet*, released in 2011, is another animated film telling this familiar story. In this version, the main characters are garden gnomes that have been



photo by Michael Brosilow

FROM BOTTOM: RONDI REED AS NURSE, CARMAN LACIVITA AS ROMEO AND MIKE NUSSBAUM AS FRIAR LAURENCE IN CST'S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY MARK LAMOS



photo by Liz Lauren

FROM LEFT: ORA JONES AS NURSE AND JOY FARMER-CLARY AS JULIET IN CST'S 2010 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY GALE EDWARDS.

brought to life! Garden gnome Gnomeo falls in love with garden gnome Juliet and the two try to be together, despite the divide between their two backyards. In both of these interpretations, the lovers do not commit suicide, but there are still some fight scenes where tensions are high.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater has previously staged *Romeo and Juliet* as an abridged production for students and families seven times, most recently in 2008 when it was adapted and directed by Amanda Dehnert. Past abridged productions of the play have been set in contexts as diverse as the American prairie of the early settlers and traditional Renaissance Italy.

*Romeo and Juliet* was first staged at CST as a full-length production in 2005, directed by former Hartford Stage Artistic Director Mark Lamos, who focused on the musicality of Shakespeare's language. Set in lavish fourteenth-century Italian Renaissance dress, the stage was awash with vivid color. A second full-length production was staged at CST in 2009, interpreted by Australian director Gale Edwards. Choosing to

focus on the violent world of the play, she set the production in a world that was once quite beautiful but was now disintegrating; it was a shadowy world in which Juliet brought light into the dark.

In addition to the abridged and full-length productions, two notable adaptations of the play have been staged at CST: a musical spoof by The Second City, entitled *The People vs. Friar Lawrence, the Man Who Killed Romeo and Juliet*; and *Shakespeare's R and J*, a modern retelling through the eyes of four adolescent, prep school boys, discovering the play and their own sexuality.

*Romeo and Juliet* will continue to be performed around the world, and its "star-

crossed lovers" immortalized in operas, ballets, films, and paintings yet to be realized. It is a story that has inspired the creative genius of artist after artist, and continues to touch the imagination of audiences worldwide. ✚

One of the first versions of the play to attribute ethnic hatred as the cause of the feud was the musical *West Side Story*.

## A CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR



Director Rachel Rockwell talked with our Education team about her thoughts on her upcoming production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

### Coming back to the play, are you finding discoveries that now, as an adult, are surprising?

It is a relationship that is not easy for outsiders to understand. I believe that there are people who are extraordinary, and those people find one another. They create a love that people around them cannot comprehend because it is so different—especially in the period in which this play is set when economic, social and political criteria predetermined marriages. Romeo and Juliet’s relationship is based only on love. I don’t see it as petulant and immature, as I once did because it’s easy to play it that way. I do think there’s something noble in this relationship. And they have to be this age because, if they were older, they would not have jumped to those same conclusions. I don’t think it would have ended so violently. They would not have been so impulsive. I do think that these two souls find one another, and it really doesn’t matter what chronological age Romeo and Juliet are. This bond is a bond that’s already forged and so it will transcend understanding of almost everyone around them. They have to fulfill this destiny. And it ends in violence because it’s such a passionate relationship. It could not possibly contain itself in the real world.

**They create a love that people around them cannot comprehend because it is so different**

**So in a hypothetical world, had these two met ten years later...**

They probably would have lived. I think they would have found a different path—and lived. I think they would have decided that exile wasn’t impossible. But when you’re young, the idea of losing the only world you know keeps you nailed to the floor; you can’t go.

**Their language in a sense defies their ages.**

I think that their exquisite language is a result of their relationship being fated. I think their “emotional IQ” is raised because they have experienced this relationship. I think they bring with them some of the emotional maturity that perhaps has been gained throughout multiple incarnations of this relationship that allows them to have this kind of poetic dialogue with one another. It’s almost like they’re channeling something higher than themselves. They shouldn’t be able to speak to one another in this way, but I think that there’s something about this need for each other that elevates them in a way that is incomprehensible

to others. I wonder if the dialogue even sounds the same to other people. If their dialogue were overheard, would anyone else take away from it what Romeo and Juliet hear in each other’s words?



photo by Michael Brosilow

FROM LEFT: BRAD ERIC JOHNSON AS ROMEO AND CASSANDRA BISSELL AS JULIET IN CST’S 2003 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY KATE BUCKLEY.

**Q** It's really only the Friar who is in dialogue with them.

**A** Yes, and they're not as poetic in front of him as they are when they're only with each other. They're much more practical, I think, with him than they are when they're alone.

**Q** How do you understand the relationship between them and the world that they find themselves in?

**A** I believe that Romeo is becoming increasingly more isolated within that world. And I believe that because Juliet is reaching a marriageable age, she is on the verge of being required to be her most social self. In this way the two are in polar opposite places when they meet. Romeo's love for Rosaline is pulling him away from his peers and family, while she's being paraded around because she needs to be married off. I think she's desperately looking toward her mother for a way to act and how to go about making this transition from childhood into marriage and womanhood, and her mother has nothing to offer her other except to say, 'This is the way it was for me and must be now for you.' And her precious relationship with the Nurse, I think, is changing from 'Come and sit on my lap' to 'Now we're going to talk about you having sex on your wedding night.'

I think both Romeo and Juliet are at the tipping point at the end of childhood. Oddly, he is at a more 'feminine' and emotional place, a tortured romantic, while she is much more practical, I think, about the whole thing because she doesn't have the option to be romantic about it. She might in her own inner life, but they're about to marry her to Paris. She doesn't get to sit around and fantasize about what it's going to be; it's going to be a contractual agreement that's imminent. I don't think she picks up a hairbrush and sings in her bedroom. She's not been allowed that kind of teenage fantasy life. The balcony scene only happens because she met Romeo. She doesn't fantasize in the abstract.

**This bond is a bond that's already forged and so it will transcend understanding of almost everyone around them.**

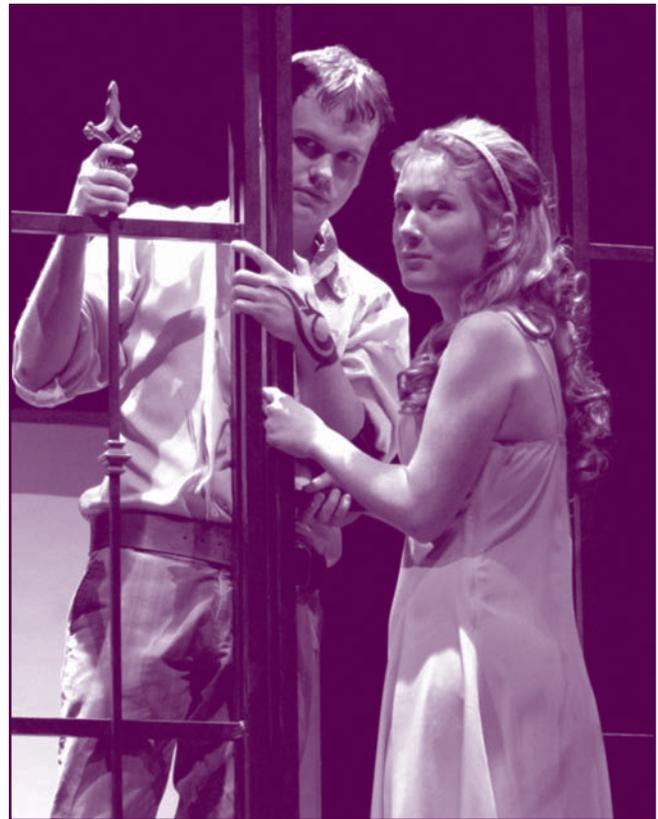


photo by Michael Brosilow

FROM LEFT: STEPHEN LOUIS GRUSH AS ROMEO AND LEE STARK AS JULIET IN CST'S 2008 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY AMANDA DEHNERT.

**Q** And the violent heritage they grow up in, can you talk about that?

**A** I'm placing our production right at the turn of the sixteenth century as the 1500s begin—at the highest point of the Renaissance. But also at that time, Alexander VI was Pope and there was unbridled corruption in the Church. And

there was a great division between Girolamo Savonarola and the Borgia family. One faction was still very religious; the other was driven by greed and power. While I don't believe that the Montagues were as pious as the devote followers of Savonarola, I think that this historical split can serve as a basis for some of the feud, or different points of view, between the two families. I see the Montagues as being critical of the Capulets' wealth. At the core, it is really not much different than the things that divide us politically now: money, religion, morality...

The violence. I don't know if it ever changes. It's always so ego-driven and always male and so immature and no one will ever win. What's 'winning'? I don't see any winning. I think that both sides have grown accustomed to violence. I think violence exists in tandem with power. And I think that both these families, because of their enormous power, have been enmeshed in a lot of violence throughout their respective histories to maintain their standing in the world. It's just assumed that there will be violence along the way. I think that had Romeo not indulged in these romantic fantasies, he too would have been in the center of his family's violence along with the other men.

I think it would have been completely natural for him to have been with them, but I think accessing this emotional part of himself makes it harder and harder for him to follow their course of action. I think his path is a different path and he's starting to follow that path, which makes him look at the violence in a different way than he had previously. Violence is simply an innate part of his family and culture, which he begins to pull away from. And as he does, it gives him some perspective and it starts to seem like something more abhorrent.

The real tragedy is that, in the end, the violence that has surrounded them their entire lives leads them to take their own lives. Violence begets violence. Once it touches you, even if you ultimately oppose it, it changes you. It opens you to violence as a course of action.

**Q** You imagine Romeo perhaps a year prior being part of that gang.

**A** I do. I think that it was just an expected transition for the male members of that family and, for whatever reason, either spiritually or emotionally, as he withdraws, he looks at it all with different eyes. And I think then, once he is forced to participate again, the belief system that has developed in that time just destroys him, the understanding of it all and the guilt. He just looks at it in a different way, and I don't think he can ever go back to, 'This is just what we do. These are the enemy, and you must do what you must do for us to be successful. We can't both be successful. We have to cancel one another out. So you're either you're with us or you're dead!'

**Q** Is that emotional opening in him even before he meets Juliet, then, in his 'doting' on Rosaline?

**A** I think so, yes. Once you start to look at the world in an emotional way, you just have to look at violence in a different way. Your perspective shifts. Before, they can't see the Capulets as people. They must be erased or else the Montagues cannot flourish. They can't both exist. But once he starts to find love in the world, in himself, it's very hard to look at violence in the same way again. †



photo by Liz Lauren

FROM LEFT: DAVID LIVELY AS FRIAR LAURENCE AND JEFF LILLO AS ROMEO  
IN CST'S 2010 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY GALE EDWARDS.

## A CONVERSATION WITH THE FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER



Recently, Fight Choreographer Matt Hawkins sat down with Director of Education Marilyn Halperin to discuss his work.

**Q** Matt, why do you think that we theatricalize violence?

**A** Violence exists. It exists in our world and we're not going to get rid of it, as much as we talk about it and want to. What we put onstage, all of our work onstage, is hopefully a representation of humanity, of our world and our views of it. Hopefully it gets us to ask questions. Putting guns onstage for *Julius Caesar*, or rapiers and daggers in *Romeo and Juliet*, one argument could be: Look, we're glorifying violence, using it as entertainment. You can make that argument. So what I'm saying is that it's our responsibility that there's that follow-up conversation with students. I think that's so, so important. Why did that happen? What would you have done if you'd been in that same situation? Why are people violent? Why would they do that?

**Q** So, you're saying that the experience of witnessing violence in the theater requires conversation afterwards—that the two must go together?

**A** If you're going to put violence onstage and you're going to show death and destruction, and you don't make it a learning experience, then we're failing. We are failing the world in fighting violence. What I'm saying is—and this sounds weird—you can create peace in the world by putting violence in front of people in the theater so that people will ask: Why are people violent? It's all about self-reflection as human beings, right? That's how you make change. Self-exploration.

**Q** In *Romeo and Juliet*, why do these young men kill?

**A** Violence happens when a person does not know how to speak anymore. When they've realized that words can't deal with their situation, that's when the violence happens. And that's what I think is good about looking at these plays. These families hate each other. They want to kill each other. And every play I work on, that's what I try to get the director and actors to realize: at this point, if the playwright wrote that there's a fight, that must mean we don't have any other option, or we think we don't. But when we stage violence and then put these stories in front of younger audiences, I hope that we have to ask that question of: Why, why, why, why, why?

**Q** And is the violence qualitatively different in our contemporary production of *Julius Caesar*, or is it simply that the actors are carrying weapons we recognize as dangerous?

**A** Regardless of how events are staged, violence is violence and killing another human being is killing another human being. But our modern sensibility is going to be much more sensitive to killing someone with guns as opposed to swords and dag-

gers. We don't see people on television or in the news getting killed in the real world with blades, we see guns. And in 2013, with guns killing people, we have a much more immediate emotional response. When we stage one of these classic plays in

The real tragedy is that, in the end, the violence that has surrounded them their entire lives leads them to take their own lives. Violence begets violence.



photo by Michael Brosilow

FROM LEFT IN FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND: STEPHEN LOUIS GRUSH AS ROMEO, MATT LUKASIEWICZ AS TYBALT, CHRISTOPHER PRENTICE AS MERCUTIO AND BRANDON MILLER AS BENVOLIO IN CST'S 2008 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY AMANDA DEHNERT.



photo by Liz Lauren

FROM LEFT: ZACH APPELMAN AS TYBALT AND ARIEL SHAFIR AS MERCUTIO IN CST'S 2010 PRODUCTION OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*, DIRECTED BY GALE EDWARDS.

period costume, like we're doing *Romeo and Juliet*, the most dangerous weapon in that world is a dagger. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a knife or sword was endowed with as much violence and destruction as an automatic rifle is for us today.

**As someone who spends his work life focused on stage combat, what is your understanding of what, at its core, triggers violence?**

For me, it's about fear. I can't speak for anybody else, right? But we've all had those feelings. We've all wanted to do something, but then it's that next beat. There's nothing wrong with being angry—that's a real thing. It's what do we now do with that, right? And that's where we get in trouble, where we get out of control. When I've gotten to the point that I've felt compelled to act on anger, it's normally 'cause I'm afraid. I'm afraid the other person is going to make me look stupid, or the other person is going to make me feel insecure, or they've hurt my ego or what I think is my masculinity, and I'm afraid of feeling small. I'm afraid of feeling not as good as they are. Or if I'm physically threatened. So I think fear has a lot to do with it.

**Do you ever have second thoughts about staging violence?**

I change my mind almost every day. Something happened a couple years ago here we did *Edward II*, and I choreographed the stage violence. Edward is assassinated, in the most

violent, grotesque way imaginable. And I remember one night seeing an audience member bolting from the room. The young Matt Hawkins would have been thinking: 'Yeah! We're creating a visceral experience.' But it didn't seem like a cathartic experience for that woman. It seemed that there was some history that it conjured up in her. That moment was the first time that I started questioning my profession and my specialty skill of violence. It's a very violent, aggressive world that I inhabit in my work.

**How did you get into theater—and this particular aspect of it—in the first place?**

I'm from Texas, so it was football, football, football. I grew up playing football, and then I ended up hurting my back. What else was I going to do with my life? A football buddy of mine was in a show and I went and saw it, and thought, 'Oh, I can do that better than he can.' So this competitive side is actually how I got into it. Then I started to go to the theater and I started acting. I wasn't very good and I couldn't find my bearings. Then when I was an undergrad at SMU, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, I did *Henry IV Part 1*, and I played Prince Hal and got to use a broadsword and shield. And I thought, 'Oh, theater can be athletic? Oh. That's new.' I had never seen that before and I never felt that before. I was really blessed because there was an individual on faculty there, a mime and a boxer, and he taught me everything he knew. ✚

# Strategies for Using Film to Teach Shakespeare

**MARY T. CHRISTEL** taught AP Literature and Composition as well as media and film studies courses at Adlai E. Stevenson High School from 1979 to 2012. She has published several works on media literacy including *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom* with Ellen Krueger (Heinemann) as well as contributing articles to *Teaching Shakespeare Today* (NCTE), *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century* (U of Ohio), *For All Time: Critical Issues in Shakespeare Studies* (Wakefield Press). Ms. Christel has been recognized by the Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for promoting media literacy education.



iven that Shakespeare, as a playwright in Elizabethan England, found himself at the epicenter of popular culture, one can't help but wonder if he wouldn't be writing screenplays if he were alive today. He would likely be pleased that his legacy is not only perpetuated on stages like CST but also on the silver—and now digital—screens. It is up to the savvy teacher to determine how to help students “read” Shakespeare in the three ways Mary Ellen Dakin suggests: as text, as performance and as film.

Mary Ellen Dakin's recently published a book entitled *Reading Shakespeare Film First* (NCTE 2012), which might seem a bit contradictory to the approach many English/Language Arts teachers take. How can one “read Shakespeare” if one places “film first”? Film might be considered an enemy when helping students to read and appreciate Shakespeare's work. For most teachers, film generally follows the reading of a play and functions as the “dessert” at the unit's end. The strategies that follow are intended to help teachers reconsider how and when film can be used in order to motivate, clarify and enrich students' engagement with any play.

## FILMS CAN BE USED BEFORE READING...

...to preview the story, characters and themes



any of the stories that Shakespeare dramatized were familiar, even well known, to his audience, so providing students with a broad outline of the action of a play prior to reading it would be consistent with the knowledge that Renaissance audiences brought to many of the plays they saw performed on stage. Previewing can be accomplished in the classroom in one of two ways.

First, twelve of the plays were adapted into thirty-minute animated films, which aired in the 1990s on HBO and now are distributed on DVD by Ambrose Video. These “Shakespeare in short” adaptations retain the play's original language and present the essentials of the story in an abbreviated form. This activity acquaints students with the major characters, incidents and themes, providing a “road map” for students who might get mired in sorting out who's who and what's what as they adjust themselves to the language and structure of play.

A second method requires the teacher to select key scenes from a film that takes a relatively conventional approach to the play. For example, Franco Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) would be preferred over Baz Luhrmann's film (1996), while Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) is a rare “full text” version and useful in this context whereas Zeffirelli's adaptation (1990) reduces the text to two hours on screen. The BBC filmed all of Shakespeare's plays for television in the 1970s and '80s; these versions are faithful to the texts, with relatively traditional staging and the full

text intact. Like the animated films, the teacher's scene selection should provide students with a broad outline of the play, as well as introduction to key events, main characters and crucial soliloquies. Students can, and do, use these scenes as reference points in their discussion of the play as they read it.

### ...to create context



ilm can be utilized as an introductory element of a unit to provide a context prior to reading a specific play. A&E's Biography series provides students with Shakespeare's biographical details and a survey of the times in *Shakespeare: A Life of Drama* (1996), a conventional approach to delivering contextual information. (Materials to frame the use of this fifty-minute program can be located at [http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study\\_guide/archives/aetv\\_guide.0550.html](http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study_guide/archives/aetv_guide.0550.html).) Historian Michael Wood takes viewers on a lively tour of various locations throughout contemporary England to explore Shakespeare's life, times, and plays in this acclaimed four-part series, *In Search of Shakespeare* (2004). (An episode guide is available at [www.pbs.org/shakespeare/theshow/](http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/theshow/) to facilitate selection of the most appropriate segments from this comprehensive work.)

Context can be built by viewing a commercially released film that "sets the stage" for the Elizabethan era, enabling students to get a sense of the politics, social customs, and "look" of the times. A film like *Elizabeth* (1998) starring Cate Blanchett has little to do with Shakespeare, but it provides a vivid glimpse into the monarch's struggle to claim and maintain the throne. *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *Anonymous* (2011) provide glimpses into the world of early modern theater practice and Shakespeare himself, but the liberties these films take with conventional historical fact can create more confusion than clarity for many students. Excerpts, however, could be used to help students visualize the time and the occasion of attending the theater, but contextual information is required to help students sort out historical accuracy from bias, poetic license or pure invention.

Al Pacino's documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996) provides an ideal way to contextualize the study of *Richard III*, but it should not be overlooked as a viewing experience to help students of any play understand what makes the study and performance of Shakespeare invigorating for actors, directors, scholars, readers and audiences. Pacino's passion for the hunchback king is infectious and the film is effectively broken up into sections, focusing on a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, Shakespeare's Globe as it rebuilt in contemporary London, brief conversations with modern Shakespearean scholars and directors, as well as observing actors in rehearsal tackling the meaning of particularly dense passages of text. The film may not be practical in most cases to screen in full, but it certainly helps to build anticipation and knowledge prior to diving into a full text.

Films that document students interacting with Shakespearean texts can also generate enthusiasm for reading, and perhaps performing, a selected play. *Shakespeare High* (2012) showcases California high school students who annually compete in a Shakespeare scene contest. Students, who are both likely and unlikely competitors, are followed from scene selection, casting, rehearsal, through the final competition. *The Hobart Shakespearians* (2005) features fifth-graders, whose home language is not English, performing scenes with uncommon poise and command of the language as a result of a dedicated teacher's commitment to offering his students the rigor of studying Shakespeare. These films shared, in full or in part, can provide motivation to not only read and understand the text but to take it to the next level of student engagement: performance.

Films Media Group, formerly Films for the Humanities and Sciences, has an extensive catalogue of films useful in providing context; many titles are available as streaming video, allowing teachers to "sample" a film without that "lifelong commitment" to purchasing a DVD that can cost several hundred dollars and sometimes not be the proper fit for students' interest or abilities. Many of their offerings have been produced in the UK or by the BBC and cover the gamut of plays and approaches to Shakespeare in performance and on the page. (That search can start at <http://ffh.films.com/>.)

## FILMS CAN BE USED DURING READING...

### ...to clarify understanding

**F**or students who are having difficulty visualizing the action or fully comprehending the language, it is beneficial to watch a faithful adaptation incrementally, act by act. Again, Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* works well. The film is easily broken down act by act with all the critical incidents and speeches intact. Students should be given a focus for their viewing, through the lens of their own questions and quandaries that they retain after reading an act, along with thoughts on how the film might address them. As students become more comfortable with the reading/viewing rhythm as they work through the play, they can adopt a more "critical" attitude toward examining later acts to discuss choices made by the screenwriter/adaptor, director, designers and actors.

When working with students who are really struggling with the language and where listening to a recorded version of a play isn't particularly helpful or engaging, a film can also be used in a "read along" fashion for the exposition and key scenes or speeches. Students follow in their own printed text while the film is running, and are coached to follow in their book while taking "peeks" at the screen when they need the support of the image to clarify their understanding of the language. "Staged" versions of a play with close adherence to the script (BBC, for example) are better choices for this application. More "cinematic" versions tend to be so visually rich that students have a hard time reading rather than watching. For example, the RSC filmed version of *Macbeth* (1979) featuring Ian McKellan and Judi Dench in the leading roles follows the standard text fairly closely in most of the interactions between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This strategy is best used for the analysis of short scenes or at moments of crisis in students' understanding. It is essential for teachers to prescreen scenes to make sure that they closely follow the edition of the play being studied as much as possible.

### ...to make comparisons

**F**ust as the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries adapted Shakespeare's scripts to fit the fashion and tastes of the theater-going audiences (as susceptible to trends as the fashion industry), once Shakespeare's work entered the multi-media performance space of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the text is often transformed to support the spectacle of the cinematic image. Every cinematic adapter of a complex dramatic text must consider the balance of "showing" versus "telling," sometimes choosing to emphasize the visual over the verbal. These adapters struggle with the question: What can the art of cinema reveal visually through a close-up, crosscut, or a montage that effectively augments or replaces the text?

In the past thirty years, Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories, and romances have been transported to modern settings that maintain the broad outlines of plot and character but replace Shakespeare's blank verse with contemporary language and colloquialisms. A sample list of adaptations includes:

<i>Zebrahead</i> (1992)	.....	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Ten Things I Hate About You</i> (1999)	.....	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
<i>O</i> (2001)	.....	<i>Othello</i>
<i>She's the Man</i> (1996)	.....	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
<i>My Own Private Idaho</i> (1991)	.....	<i>Henry IV</i>
<i>Tempest</i> (1982)	.....	<i>The Tempest</i>
<i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1997)	.....	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Scotland, PA</i> (2001)	.....	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>Men of Respect</i> (1990)	.....	<i>Macbeth</i>

Additional adaptations of plot, characters and setting include four plays in the BBC series, entitled *Shakespeare Re-Told* (2005): *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A second type of adaptation shifts the plot and characters to another genre, such as the musical (*West Side Story/Romeo and Juliet* or *Kiss Me Kate/The Taming of the Shrew*), science fiction (*Forbidden Planet/The Tempest*) or the Western (*Broken Lance/King Lear*). *Royal Deceit* (aka *Prince of Jutland*, 1994) tells the story of the “historical” Prince Hamlet using Danish source material to differentiate the story from Shakespeare’s approach. Akira Kurosawa produced the best-known adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays placing them in a different cultural context with his films *Throne of Blood* (1957) based on *Macbeth* and *Ran* (1985) based on *King Lear*. Soviet filmmaker Grigori Kozintsev adapted both *Hamlet* (1964) and *King Lear* (1991), which have been restored and released recently on DVD. For film historians and real curiosity seekers, a collection of adaptations, which run from a few minutes to over an hour, showcase the earliest eras of cinema, entitled *Silent Shakespeare*. Sharing these adaptations, in part or in full, can facilitate the discussion of the relevance of Shakespeare’s themes, conflicts and characters across time, cultures, and cinematic traditions.

## FILMS CAN BE USED AFTER READING...

...for culminating projects and summative assessment



tudents can successfully engage in their own film production as a collaborative project. A movie trailer can tout an imagined film adaptation of the play they have just studied. The necessary steps involved can be found in *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-Rich Classrooms* (NCTE 2007), which includes Scott Williams’s lesson, “Turning Text into Movie Trailers: The Romeo and Juliet iMovie Experience.” Creating a trailer requires that students: first focus on the essential elements of plot, character and theme in order to convey excitement; and second, develop an imagined version in a highly condensed and persuasive form, which comes to life in a minute or two.

## TERMS TO EXAMINE THE PAGE-TO-SCREEN PROCESS

(adapted from *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore)

**Fidelity** Much discussion in film adaptation criticism focuses on how faithful a film is to the source material. Obviously, film and literature use very different narrative strategies and tools of composition. A fruitful way to have students approach the question of fidelity is to ask them to list the scenes, characters, motifs, and symbols that are essential to telling the story of the source text. Then as they watch a film adaptation, they can keep track of how those elements are handled by the film version.

**Film as Digest** This concept acknowledges that the written text is far more detailed and comprehensive in its ability to set a scene, develop a character, reveal a narrative point of view, or create a symbol. Film works best in developing plot and showing action.

**Condensation** Due to the “film as digest” phenomenon, characters and events need to be collapsed or composited in order to fit the limitations and conventions of the film adaptation. Students can explore this term by determining which characters can be combined based on their common functions in the text.

**Immediacy** Viewing a film is a far more “immediate” experience cognitively than reading a book. We decode visual images much faster and more readily than the printed word.

**Point of View** What many viewers of film fail to comprehend is that the camera can express a point of view, just as the narrator of a written text can and does. Voice-over narrators are seldom used in film, since it seems artificial and intrusive. Point of view in film is visual and subtle.

### Here are three ways to express or describe the point of view in a film:

- ✦ **Neutral:** the camera is merely recording events as they happen in a reportorial fashion. This is the most common shot in filmmaking.
- ✦ **Subjective:** the camera assumes the point of view of one of the character so the viewer sees what the character sees.
- ✦ **Authorial:** the director very deliberately focuses the camera on a feature of a sequence or shot to comment on the action or reveal something.

**Shot and Sequence** As defined by *Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary*, a “shot” is the “basic unit of film structure or an unbroken strip of film made by an uninterrupted running of the camera.” Think of a shot as a “still” image that is combined with other still images to create a moving picture. A shot captures its subject from a particular distance and angle. The camera can be stationary or moving as it captures its subject. Individual shots then are joined together by the editing process to create a sequence of action.

## KEY QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

### Prior to viewing:

- ✦ In order to maintain fidelity to Shakespeare’s play, what are the essential scenes that must be included in an adaptation to cover the basic plot? Considering that film is a digest of the original play, what constitutes the exposition, inciting incident, central conflict, complications, climax, and resolution to represent and streamline the central action?
- ✦ What point of view dominates the play? Who is the central character? Which character has the most soliloquies or asides and might have the strongest relationship with the reader/viewer as a result? How could the viewpoint of the central character or the character that has the most direct connection with the audience be represented through the use of the camera? Or, should the camera maintain a neutral position to reveal the story and the characters?
- ✦ What details does the play provide to guide the casting of principle actors for the central characters? Looking at the text carefully, which details regarding physical appearance, class or behavior should be embodied by an actor to make an immediate impression on the viewer?
- ✦ Which supporting characters are essential to the development of the plot and main characters? Which characters serve the same functions in the story? How might several of those characters be composited in order to condense the story in helpful and necessary ways considering a film will normally be shorter than a stage production?

- ✦ Which central images, motifs, symbols, or metaphors are central to the literary source? How could one or two of these literary techniques be translated into visual or sound techniques to make their impact more immediate in order to support or to replace the play's language? How would they be represented on the screen or through the musical score?

### During viewing:

- ✦ How much of the actual dialogue from the play itself is used in a scene?
- ✦ To what extent does the camera work seem unobtrusive, natural or obvious, stylized?
- ✦ Which character(s) appears mostly in one shots?
- ✦ At what point in the scene are two shots used? What is the effect of their use at that point?
- ✦ What is the typical distance (close, medium, long) of the camera to the subject of the shots? To what extent does the manipulation of camera distance make the scene an intimate one or not?
- ✦ To what extent are most of the shots at eye level, slightly above, or slightly below? How do subtle changes in angle influence how the viewer perceives the character in the shot?
- ✦ To what extent does the scene make use of extreme high or low angles? To what effect?
- ✦ To what extent does the camera move? When? What is the effect of the movement?
- ✦ To what extent does the sequence use music? If it does, when do you become aware of the music and how does it set a mood or punctuate parts of the dialogue?

### After viewing:

- ✦ Which choices made to condense the events of the play by the screenwriter are the most successful in translating the original text to the screen? Which choices are less successful or satisfying?
- ✦ Which narrative elements (events, characters, key speeches) omitted from the screen adaptation of the play shift the focus of the comedy, tragedy or history in comparison to the original text?
- ✦ If any characters were composited, what was gained or lost by reducing the number of characters or altering the function of a particular character through compositing?
- ✦ Which actors performed their roles in expected and/or unexpected ways? How did the original text dictate how roles such be performed?
- ✦ Which visual elements of the film made the strongest impression on you as a viewer?
- ✦ How did the visuals help draw your attention to an element of plot, a character or a symbol that you might have missed or failed to understand when reading the play?
- ✦ As a reader of the play, how did viewing the film help you to better understand the overall plot, particular character, or specific symbol/theme?

# Before You Read the Play

## AS A CLASS

### 1 Bard Board

Start a bulletin board for *Romeo and Juliet*, to which you can add as you read and discuss the play. Start by putting up pictures or words that represent anything you know or think about *Romeo and Juliet* before you start reading. Look for pictures of some of the play's predominant symbols—the moon, the sun, a mask, a sword, a grave. As you study the play, add images, quotes, current headlines, or poetry that reminds you of characters, events, key objects, words—whatever you feel is relevant to your thoughts about the play. As a class, discuss your additions as you go deeper into the play. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2, SL1**

### 2 Sound and Sense

*Teacher: excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line or lines to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character that spoke it. Look at your line/s and, as you all walk around the room say it aloud again and again—without addressing or looking at anyone. Continue to walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates, as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, each reading your line aloud in turn. Sit down in the circle and discuss the lines. What questions do you have about the words? Imagine what this play is about based on some of the words you've heard its characters speak. What do you imagine about the character who spoke your line? Did you hear lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character? All ideas are encouraged, and none can be wrong! This is your time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you've just entered. CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R5, SL1*

### 3 Get into the Rhythm

Shakespeare often writes in iambic pentameter. Reading Shakespeare can be a lot easier (and a lot more fun) if you get into the rhythm! Read the Prologue at the opening of *Romeo and Juliet* aloud (but on the quiet side) to yourself. Count the number of syllables in each line—there may be one that isn't "a perfect 10." Forming a circle, walk as you read the lines out loud. Let the rhythm of the writing set the pace. You shouldn't think too hard about this, just read the passage and walk in the circle. Allow the rhythm of the writing to affect the pace of your steps. You're walking in iambic pentameter! This is an excellent activity to build fluency. When you get to the end, just pick right up at the beginning again. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARD L3**

## COMMON CORE

Last year, Illinois joined the cadre of states to adopt the new Common Core State Standards. You'll notice throughout the Classroom Activities section that we have suggested several Anchor Standards in Reading Literature, Language, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. We have referenced the Anchor Standards so that teachers can apply them as they are relevant to different grade levels. By readily adapting and sometimes extending a suggested activity, its alignment to a specific standard can be strengthened.

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

## 4

## How Insulting!

In groups of 4-6: Practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—some of the insults that characters from *Romeo and Juliet* sling at each other. Find your own or practice with the ones listed here. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to the meaning than you might think. Once you've slung quite enough at each other, do it now in turn, and after someone has hurled an insult, it's a race among the rest of you to imagine a contemporary situation that might provoke such a rebuke! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, SL4, L3, L4**

Some good insults:

<i>Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit.</i>	1.3.42
<i>He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not: / The ape is dead.</i>	2.1.15–16
<i>O that she were / An open-arse and thou a poperin pear!</i>	2.1.37–38
<i>Her vestal Livery is but sick and green / And none but fools do wear it.</i>	2.2.8–9
<i>She speaks, yet she says nothing.</i>	2.2.12
<i>These strange fl ies, these fashion-mongers, these `pardon-me's'!</i>	2.4.32–33
<i>O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified.</i>	2.4.38–39
<i>In such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.</i>	2.4.52–53
<i>I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.</i>	2.4.78
<i>What saucy merchant was this, that was so full of his ropery?</i>	2.4.142–143
<i>Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat.</i>	3.1.22
<i>The love I bear thee can afford no better term than this: thou art a villain.</i>	3.1.59–60
<i>O calm, dishonorable, vile submission.</i>	3.1.72
<i>O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face.</i>	
<i>Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?</i>	3.2.73–74
<i>Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical,</i>	
<i>Dove-feather'd raven, wolfish-ravening lamb!</i>	3.2.75–76
<i>Blister'd be thy tongue for such a wish.</i>	3.2.90–91
<i>Thou cut'st my head off with a golden axe</i>	
<i>And smilest upon the stroke that murders me.</i>	3.3.22–23
<i>Thy noble shape is but a form of wax</i>	
<i>Digressing from the valor of a man.</i>	3.3.125–126
<i>Peace, you mumbling fool! Utter your gravity o'er the gossip's bowl,</i>	
<i>For here we need it not.</i>	3.5.173–175
<i>[Your] foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in.</i>	4.3.34
<i>Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death.</i>	5.3.47–48
<i>Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,</i>	
<i>And in despite I'll cram thee with more food.</i>	5.3.47–48
<i>Remain with worms that are thy chambermaids.</i>	5.3.108–109

## 5 Creative Definitions

In small groups, leaf through the script to find two words that you're pretty sure will be completely unknown to everyone. Then using the footnotes (or a free online Shakespeare lexicon like [www.shakespeareswords.com](http://www.shakespeareswords.com)), look up and write out the definitions. Now as a group, make up two more completely convincing definitions for each word that your classmates might believe. First, read the line in which the word appears out loud. Then read the three definitions out loud, including the correct one. Then as a class, vote on the definition you think is correct. Often in Shakespeare, the context of the word can lead you to its definition—even words you've never heard before. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, L4, L5**

## 6 Character Study

Working in pairs, imagine that you are the actor and understudy for one of the parts in *Romeo and Juliet*. Select a character from the *Dramatis Personae* to explore through the play. Skim through the text and copy any speeches or lines that seem to well represent your character into an actor's notebook. Select three to four small segments that seem to best portray your character and prepare to present your findings to the class. This is how Elizabethan actors learned their roles too! They were given only their own lines and the cue lines that immediately preceded theirs, but they were never given an entire script. (At the end of your study of *Romeo and Juliet*, go back and repeat this exercise with the same character. As a class, discuss the differences in your interpretation now that you've read the play.) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1, SL4**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 7 Make a Connection

One of the reasons Shakespeare's plays haven't disappeared is that his characters experience life as we still do. Before you start reading *Romeo and Juliet*, it may be helpful to think about your own experiences to help you better understand what the characters experience. Jot down some of your ideas about one of the following situations. Don't worry about your writing style. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R6, W3, W4**

- ✦ Think about a significant time in your life when you acted impulsively without thinking the situation and your options through completely. What was the situation? What about the circumstances launched you into making your decision too quickly? What were the consequences? Looking back with some perspective now, what other way might you have acted if you'd taken more time and thought things through? Where do you imagine that "road not taken" might have taken you?
- ✦ Think about an important event in your own life that happened by accident. What happened, and how did it change things that followed? What's your understanding—did it happen simply by accident, or was something like fate (or a higher power) involved? What part, if any, did decisions you made have something to do with the course of events? Or did things happen that, regardless of any decision you could make, seemed destined to happen anyway? Looking back, has your point of view changed at all?

- ✦ One of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* will call dreams “the children of an idle brain.” But others treat dreams as premonitions of what’s to come. What do you understand dreams to be? Have you ever had a dream that you felt might come true? What were your feelings remembering it? Did it, in fact, come true? Did the dream change your behavior in any way? Do you think we can learn anything from our dreams? Can you recall a dream that helped you understand something?

## 8

## Punctuation Exploration

Read aloud the verse passage below, stripped of all punctuation. Read it again several times aloud, listening for the rhythm and to find the sense of the verse. When you feel you have grasped the meaning, add punctuation and compare it with the text. Why did you punctuate where you did? Punctuation and the fundamentals of grammar are some of the tools of the trade for poets and writers, similar to certain carpenter’s tools. How does Shakespeare use punctuation to enhance and dictate the text? How would other forms or placements of punctuation or capitalization alter what the character is saying? If time allows, try this with other passages.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, L1, L2, L3**

**Juliet****Act 2, Scene 2**

*Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face  
 else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
 for that which thou hast heard me speak to-night  
 fain would I dwell on form fain fain deny  
 what I have spoke but farewell compliment  
 dost thou love me I know thou wilt say 'Ay'  
 and I will take thy word yet if thou swear'st  
 thou mayst prove false at lovers' perjuries  
 they say Jove laughs o gentle Romeo  
 if thou dost love pronounce it faithfully  
 or if thou think'st I am too quickly won  
 I'll frown and be perverse an say thee nay  
 so thou wilt woo but else not for the world  
 in truth fair Montague I am too fond  
 and therefore thou mayst think my behavior light  
 but trust me gentleman I'll prove more true  
 than those that have more cunning to be strange  
 I should have been more strange I must confess  
 but that thou overheard'st ere I was ware  
 my true love's passion therefore pardon me  
 and not impute this yielding to light love  
 which the dark night hath so discovered*

## 9 Backpack Snapshots

Choose a character from *Romeo and Juliet*. As you read the play, collect materials which you think your character would carry around in a backpack. Once you've finished the play, present the items in your backpack—and explain why you chose each item. Other students in your class should be encouraged to ask questions: “Was that item a gift? Who gave it to your character?” and so on. An actor must be as specific as possible in creating a character. For example, Tybalt might not be seen carrying any old piece of fabric on which to wipe his sweat—but he might carry a piece torn from the sleeve of the first Montague he fought! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL5**

# As You Read the Play

## BELL-RINGERS

*These are brief introductory activities to set the stage for class. They are simple two to five minute attention-getters and focus-ers. They can help students connect, create class unity and focus, or simply add some fun to the beginning or end of class. Teams, rewards and bonus points often heighten focus and enjoyment. Many of these activities work well as class conclusions, emergency substitute activities and creative full-class activities as well.*

## 10 Character Quarantine

*To the teacher: Cut up and distribute, one per student, the lines below including the character's name. Once you receive a quote, arrange yourselves in groups based on the character who said your quote. As you read the lines aloud and notice the plot clues in them, work with one another to determine the order of your quotes through the arc of the story. Once you have arranged yourselves, come up with a still-frame position you think your character would assume onstage at the moment he/she says that line. When the teacher says “Go!” everyone assumes their position and reads each line in order. Repeat once more, so your classmates have a good idea of the plot points, as well. Then ask them if they think any of the quotes are out of order. Once everyone agrees they are in order, go down the line and explain your still-frame statues to the class. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, SL1***



## TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

If you have an activity or lesson plan that was a classroom success with your students, we want to hear about it! Consider donating your lesson plan to the Teacher Resource Center, and become part of our ever-growing, permanent collection! Need inspiration? If you are looking for the perfect activity or “proven” lesson plan, visit the Center and see what other educators have offered us. **Call the Education Department, 312.595.5678, to make an appointment.**

**Lord Capulet**

<i>My sword, I say! old Montague is come, And flourishes his blade in spite of me.</i>	1.1.68-69
<i>But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart You'll make a mutiny among my guests!</i>	1.2.16 1.5.79
<i>I tell thee what: get thee to church a'Thursday, Or never after look me in the face. Death lies on her like an untimely frost Brother Montague, give me thy hand.</i>	3.5.161-2 4.5.28 5.3.296

**Friar Laurence**

<i>Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear, So soon forsaken?</i>	2.3.66-67
<i>For by your leaves, you shall not stay alone Till Holy Church incorporate two in one. Thou shalt continue two and forty hours, And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.</i>	2.6.36-37 4.1.105-106
<i>Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead; But then a noise did scare me from the tomb, And she too desperate would not go with me</i>	5.3.155 5.3.262-263

**Juliet**

<i>It is an honor that I dream not of.</i>	1.3.67
<i>'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; That villain cousin would have killed my husband.</i>	2.2.38 3.2.101
<i>What if this mixture do not work at all? This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die.</i>	4.3.21 5.3.169-170

**Nurse**

<i>Thou wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nursed. ...my young lady bid me enquire you out; Then hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell, There stays a husband to make you a wife. Romeo that killed him, he is banishèd. O woeful day, O woeful day!</i>	1.3.61 2.4.134-135 2.5.67-68 3.2.70 4.5.54
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**II** **Romeo and Juliet Today**

Do a brief “show-and-tell” presentation connected to the scenes and characters you are studying that day. Each day, what—locally or around the world—makes you think of the play? What connections are you making with *Romeo and Juliet* and your personal lives as young adults? *To the teacher: you can select the items, or leave it wide open for imaginative and cultural connections.* **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, R7, SL4, W7**

## I2 Key Quote Chant

As a class, choose a key quote to memorize. During the time that you will be studying the play, use the opening minutes of each class to collectively recite it. Use different tones and voice inflections (a western accent, in robust Italian, with a French accent, like Elmer Fudd, in British high style, Cockney, etc...). Say it fast and slow, sing it, chant it, be creative each day—and soon you will know it and have learned it together. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, L3**

## I3 Significant Passage Pull

Go back into the act you just read and pull the quote you found that best represents a theme in the play. In a small group, pick the one you all agree on and present it to the class. Explain why you chose it and its significance to the play. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R5, SL4**

# Act 1

## AS A CLASS

### I4 Speak the Speech

As a class, sit in a circle and read Prince Escalus's speech from 1.1, lines 83-105, aloud in unison. Read it aloud again, this time going around in the circle and reading the passage one line at a time. After this second reading, work together to discuss and define any words that are new, confusing, or particularly interesting. Finally, return to the speech one more time, this time going around the circle and taking turns reading one line at a time, then paraphrasing it into contemporary, easy-to-understand English. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R4, L4, L5**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### I5 Shared Lines

Shakespeare's text contained many clues to help his actors, who had only a few days to rehearse a play. You'll notice that some lines are deeply indented, starting well to the right of other lines. This happens when two speakers share a ten-syllable (sometimes eleven...) verse line. By sharing a line, Shakespeare indicates to his actors that the pace is fast, and the two lines are to be delivered as one. There should be no pause between the end of one character's line and the beginning of the next. Romeo and Benvolio share quite a few lines in 1.1. First, identify which lines they share. Then read silently from Romeo's entrance to the end of the scene. Pair up and read these scenes to one other, each person choosing a part. Whenever a single verse line is split between characters, practice until you get to the point that there is no pause between where one character's line ends and the other's begins. You can also use a ball (like a hot potato!) for this activity to throw back and forth as you toss the lines to each other. Discuss what the shared lines suggest about Romeo and Benvolio's relationship. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R5, SL1**

## 16 So Much Pun

In groups of four: In 1.4, Mercutio, Benvolio, and Romeo banter with each other. They use a number of puns, such as:

- ✦ soar/sore
- ✦ soles/soul
- ✦ done/dun

While three of you read the scene aloud (lines 1–43), the fourth listens closely, jotting down all the puns. When you finish, the listener shares his/her list of puns. Now everyone studies the text. Are there more puns to be found? Were they each clear in the language as you read aloud? If not, discuss what can be done to emphasize them. Do the exercise three more times, switching the listener each time so that each of you gets a chance to listen. See if you can find ways of pointing out the puns to the listener as you read. What must actors do to help the audience understand the humor of this scene? (*To the teacher: if you have some leeway in your classroom to discuss sexual innuendos in Shakespeare, a book entitled Shakespeare's Bawdy may be a classroom resource to consider since so many of Shakespeare's puns are double entendres.*) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R4, L4, L5**

## 17 Cue Me In

For this exercise, you'll need to make three different transcriptions of 1.4, lines 1–48 (to "...no wit to go"). Each copy should include just one character's lines and cue lines—that is, the last several words of the line preceding theirs. For example, on one copy only Romeo's lines and cue lines are transcribed. You can download the passage from MIT's Shakespeare site, <http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare>.

If you saw the movie *Shakespeare in Love*, you saw a glimpse of how in Elizabethan times playwrights might be finishing a play all the way up to curtain! In a society where pirating plays between rival theater companies was common, the full script existed in only one or two people's hands—and was closely held. Therefore (and also because paper was enormously expensive), actors were not given copies of the entire play, but instead were given copies of their own characters' lines, with a line or so from the end of the speech preceding their own, prompting them when to speak. These were called "cue lines"—and an actor's turn to speak is still known as his "cue." Having only his own lines plus a cue line forced an actor to truly listen to his fellow actors.

Not only did the actor have to memorize lines this way, he also had to get to know his character—just from his own lines! Divide the class into six groups, each group taking one character's lines—Romeo, Benvolio or Mercutio—in 1.4, lines 1–48. Choose one member of the group to read aloud any line immediately preceding your character's lines and another member to read that character's lines. What do you learn about your character from what he says in the scene? Are you still able to follow the scene's conversation and action? Now come back together as a class. As one person from each group speaks the character's lines, listen to how the lines resonate differently within the context of the whole scene? Share what you notice about the character that your group focused upon.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, R5, R6**

## 18 A “Duel-ogue”

In groups of four, act out the servants’ lines from 1.5.1–14. You’ll find you can perform this tiny bustling scene opening in many different ways. Invent as much “stage business” as you like to suit the words. Using the same characters and the same framework, update the scene to a present-day party. What might be the servants’ concerns now? Shakespeare used duologues—the conversations between two people—to heighten a play’s intensity and to reveal information about each character and about the complexity of the relationship between them. Often the two are left alone together on stage. The duologue can have the feel of a duel between two combatants whose “swords” are their words. Working in pairs, take the duologue between Lord Capulet and Tybalt in 1.5.54–91 (from “What dares the slave...” to “...convert to bitt’rest gall!”). Explore the movement of the scene by standing up and each taking a part. As you read your lines, try to get a feel for the way the duologue positions you for attack and retreat.

The lines, like two swords, “cut and thrust.” At what point specifically is the conflict at its highest tension? At what line is the tension released? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 19 Time Flies

The events in *Romeo and Juliet* happen very quickly—you’ll be surprised how quickly by tracking them on a timeline. As you move from day to day in the script, make a note of it on your time line. And if you know the time of day, mark that, too. Compare your timeline at the end of the play with your classmates’. Do situations in real life happen as quickly? Why might Shakespeare have handled time in the way he does? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, SL1, W9**

### 20 What She Isn’t Saying

In Shakespeare’s plays, as in real life, you can sometimes tell more from what someone doesn’t say in a conversation than what they do say. The conversation between Lady Capulet and Juliet in 1.3 is a good example. Lady Capulet talks to her daughter about marrying Count Paris. Juliet doesn’t say very much. What do you imagine Juliet is thinking and feeling? Write an inner monologue for Juliet where she responds to her mother. Write in your own style—or try writing in Shakespeare’s. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, L1, W3, W10**

### 21 This Just In!

At the end of Act 1, review the action so far and, by using no more than ten quick “sound bites,” summarize what has happened. You can either use newspaper-type headlines to grab our attention, or better yet, use rap or rhyme to encapsulate Act 1. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, SL4**

## 22 Current Event Sonnet

The Prologue is a fourteen-line poem called a sonnet. Each line has ten syllables with a specific rhyme scheme:

*ABAB CDCD* (first eight lines)  
*EFEF* (next four lines)  
*GG* (last two lines)

Look at a current newspaper and find a story describing a conflict of some sort (country vs. country, person vs. law, person vs. person, etc.) After reading the article, write your own sonnet based on the newspaper account. Look at the prologue as you write, using it as your guide for rhythm and rhyme. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, W2, W3, W4**

# Act 2

## AS A CLASS

### 23 All You Need Is Love?

At the end of Act 2, Romeo and Juliet are married by Friar Laurence—the day after they first meet! Make a “Pro and Con” list for their sudden marriage. Imagine that you have the chance to give them premarital counseling—what is some advice you would give them? Do you think they are in love? As a class, discuss the implications of their unique situation of love-at-first-sight, and of love-at-first-sight in general. Think of some modern-day movies or TV shows that deal with love and love-at-first-sight. Compare those situations and relationships with Romeo and Juliet’s. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R9, SL1, W1**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 24 Read Between the Lines

Reading Shakespeare’s plays involves some sleuthing to search out hidden meanings, innuendos and double entendres that he weaves throughout. Shakespeare was famous for weaving in these gems in all of his plays. When you first read the witty banter between Benvolio and Mercutio in 2.1, it may just sound like a bunch of meaningless words hurled at one another. In groups or pairs, read it aloud once. Now return to the lines and really accentuate those “hidden gems” you have discovered. What are these men doing with their words? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R4, L4, L5**

## 25 Make the Cut

Rarely is one of Shakespeare's plays performed in its entirety. Most would last between three and four hours—even without an intermission! And even though the Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* refers to “two hours traffic of our stage,” played in its entirety, the play would last at least three hours. You can learn about Shakespeare's use of language by reducing a longer speech or scene while trying to retain its original meaning, its poetic language whenever possible, and its purpose to further move the plot. In your small groups, work together to edit the first 115 lines of 2.2. Aim for a scene no longer than 65 lines. When you have finished, present your abridgment to the class and see how well each version works. What is lost by cutting text, if anything? What can be gained?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, R5, SL4**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 26 Prompts

Directors and stage managers use “prompt books,” or scripts with line and technical notes, to keep track of what should be happening on stage. Make a photocopy of 2.4. Glue the sheet in the middle of a legal-size piece of paper, turned on its side. On the right hand side, write in red suggestions to the actors concerning how the lines should be said. On the left side, in another color, write suggestions to the stage manager about lighting and sound effects. You can also make any “blocking” notes about where you think the characters should be moving on stage. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6, W9**

# Act 3

## AS A CLASS

### 27 Romeo and Juliet's Geographical Center

As you read Shakespeare, you'll learn a lot by not only reading “between the lines,” but also “between the scenes”—in other words, by watching out for the way the playwright arranged his scenes, one after another. Often, the juxtaposition of two very different scenes will give you important clues into the behavior of characters or the story's most important ideas. The “geographical center” of *Romeo and Juliet* falls between scenes 2.6 and 3.1: the wedding followed by the street brawl that ends in Tybalt's death. According to scholar Stephen Shapiro, the reversal that takes place in these two scenes encapsulates the meaning of the play. As a class, explore this idea. Why do you think Shakespeare might follow 3.1 hard on the heels of 2.6? What are the contrasts? Are there any similarities? What might Shakespeare be up to? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, R5, SL1**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 28 Hidden Directions

In Shakespeare's time, very few stage directions were written into the script apart from the actors' entrances and exits. Directors and their actors must decide on everything else—like tone, emphasis, pause, facial expression, and movement. In 3.1 of *Romeo and Juliet*, there are many actions implied by the text, like: "Draw, Benvolio, beat down their weapons." Look for other lines in this scene that give the actors clues about their actions and movements on stage, and write down your own stage directions. Now in small groups perform this scene for your classmates, incorporating your stage directions and using any necessary props. Compare and contrast various choices. Did some choices work better than others? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, R5, SL1, SL6**

### 29 Oxymoron Statues

*Romeo and Juliet* is full of contradictory words that are put together to create a vivid and unexpected picture. Juliet's speech in 3.2 is full of these "oxymorons," such as "beautiful tyrant" and "dove-feathered raven." Be on the lookout for these as you read the play, and in pairs, choose two. Illustrate each by becoming statues that, as a pair, suggest something about the contradiction. Think about the condition of the characters' lives, and why these paired opposites might turn up again and again in their language. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, L3, L4, L5**

### 30 Echo the Darkness

In groups of four: Sit or stand in a close circle facing each other. Turn to Juliet's "Gallop apace..." speech (3.2.1–34). As one person reads the speech out loud, the rest echo the words in the speech that relate to darkness, blindness, or night—for example, 'cloudy night,' 'wink,' etc. Repeat the exercise three more times so that each has a chance to read the speech through as well as to echo. When you've completed the exercise, talk together about the echoed words. Why are they significant? Why do you think Juliet chooses these words to express herself at this moment? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R4, R6, L5**

### 31 Subtext

There are many ways the same words can be spoken in a script—just as we can convey many different meanings in the way we say a simple "Good morning." What we imagine the character to be thinking but not saying as he speaks is called the "subtext." In playing a role, the actor must constantly be making decisions about what he thinks his subtext is in order to bring a certain mood, tone, inflection, and pace to the line. In your small groups, practice saying "Good morning" to one another to express the subtext of:

- ✦ I can't possibly talk to you right now. I'm in a hurry.
- ✦ I'm so glad to see you.
- ✦ You're the 200th person my job has required me to say good morning to already.
- ✦ I'm not pleased to see you after that fight we had last night.
- ✦ I'm very pleased to see you after our romantic evening together...

Now look at the beginning of 3.5, and imagine different possibilities for the characters' subtexts. What if Juliet is feeling loving? Bossy? Sleepy? Impatient? Fearful? What if Romeo is loving? Afraid? Irritable? Secretly wishing to go? Are all of these possibilities from the lines in front of us? Practice with them, and see what you discover.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6**

## 32 Living Statues

A tableau is a wordless picture composed of still bodies. Theater productions sometimes end in a still life “picture” or tableau. Tableaux are fun to play with, and can help you look below the surface of some of Shakespeare’s metaphors and images. In your small groups, look at each of the passages below from Act 3. As a group, create a tableau for each that illustrates the meaning of each passage. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, SL1, SL2, L5**

<i>O then I see that mad men have no ears.</i>	3.3.61–62
<i>Thou art wedded to calamity.</i>	3.3.3
<i>In one little body</i>	
<i>Thou counterfeitst a bank, a sea, wind...</i>	3.5.130–1
<i>What sorrow craves acquaintance at my hand</i>	
<i>That I yet know not?</i>	3.3.5–6
<i>There is no world without Verona walls,</i>	
<i>But purgatory, torture, hell itself.</i>	3.3.17–18
<i>Thy wit.../Like powder in a skillless soldier’s flask,</i>	
<i>Is set afire by thine own ignorance.</i>	3.3.130–3

## ON YOUR OWN

### 33 Metaphorical Cartoons

In 3.4.70, Mercutio calls Tybalt “Prince of Cats” and “King of Cats.” Draw a picture or cartoon of Tybalt, the Prince of Cats. Now try this exercise with other metaphorical descriptions in the play, such as “a pair of star-crossed lovers” (Prologue), or Juliet’s line, “Civil night/Thou sober-suited matron all in black” (3.2). Or pick a metaphor that you especially like and draw that one. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, L5**

# Act 4

## AS A CLASS

### 34 Blame Game

When Juliet’s friends and family discover her to be dead, there is a lot of weeping and wailing going on—especially by the Nurse, Lady and Lord Capulet, and Paris. Who do you think is responsible for Juliet’s death? Make a list on the board of all the characters that you think are in some way responsible. Placing “Juliet’s death” in a circle in the middle of the board, draw spokes out in all directions from the circle, one for each name you’ve listed. Now, individually choose a character and search through the play for his/her words or actions that lead to Juliet’s death. Discuss and write these words beside each character’s name on a spoke. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, R6, SL4**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 35 Would You Rather

In 4.1.77–86 list at least six things Juliet says she is prepared to do rather than marry Paris. Work out a mime to show six or more of the actions she describes. Talk together about some of the things you would rather do than marry someone not of your own choice. Write your own list, matching it as closely to Juliet's as possible. Present a mime of your preferred actions to the rest of the class, to see if they can guess what you would rather do!

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, SL4, SL5**

### 36 The “Suitability” of Paris

*[Paris] is an eminently suitable wooer for Juliet, rich and nobly born, yet considerate, peace-loving, and deeply fond of Juliet.*

—DAVID BEVINGTON, 1992

At the beginning of Act 4, Juliet gives Paris the brush-off for the last time. In your small groups, debate Paris's “suitability.” One half of the group should take one position, while the other half assumes the other. Return to the text to either support or refute Bevington's argument. Now discuss which characters in the play would agree with Bevington. Which would not? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6, SL1, SL4**

### 37 Consumer Profiling

Nowadays, advertisers categorize us by ‘consumer profiling.’ Judge where the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* would fit in today's society. Define them by the products they would use if they were alive today. What kind of car would Romeo drive? What music would Juliet listen to? What ads would be targeted to Lady Capulet? Find specific evidence from the script to support your choices! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1**

### 38 To Cut or Not to Cut

Practically every Shakespeare film and staged production cuts the text—sometimes by a line here and there, and sometimes by entire sections. If you had to cut an entire scene from Act 4 to make your production of *Romeo and Juliet* shorter than the three-plus hours it takes to perform the play in its entirety, which scene would you cut? Why? Would anything be lost by the cutting of it? Anything gained? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R5**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 39 Lend a Helping Hand

What do you think of the Friar's plan to help Juliet? What would you do if you were he? Write down your own plan to help Juliet. It can be just as improbable as the Friar's but, like the Friar's, it should have a chance at working. Share your plan with your class. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1, W3, W9**

## 40 Shakespeare's Leading Ladies

If you have read or seen another Shakespearean play with a lead female role (such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*), imagine that Juliet meets a few of these women as they are stranded at O'Hare Airport due to a horrible snowstorm. What might Juliet, Ophelia and Helena have to say to one another? What would they say about their fathers? Love? Their future dreams? Where are they going to, or coming from? Write out the conversation that you imagine them having. Be sure to give the context, and write a two-page dialogue between a few of these characters in which their behavior and character remains true to Shakespeare's renditions. Use a minimum of two different quotes for each character from Shakespeare's script in yours. You might decide to develop dialogues into short one-act plays and perform them for the class. This exercise could be done with male roles, as well. Be prepared to give evidence from Shakespeare's own text to support your choices. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, W3, W4, W9**

# Act 5

## AS A CLASS

### 4I Considering Fate

Read the following quotes about fate in preparation for thinking about fate and the role that it plays in *Romeo and Juliet*.

*The best of men cannot defend their fate: The good die early and the bad die late.*

—DANIEL DEFOE, 18TH CENTURY

*Our hour is marked and no one can claim a moment of life beyond what fate has predestined."*

—NAPOLEON, 19TH CENTURY

*What fates impose, that men must needs abide;  
It boots not to resist both wind and tide."*

—SHAKESPEARE, HENRY VI, PART 3

How would you define fate? Do you know anyone who believes their lives are ruled by fate? What might be the advantages of feeling this way? What are the disadvantages? Now think about connecting those ideas to *Romeo and Juliet*—how is fate a part of the play? If you made the diagram in Activity 34, "Blame Game," add "Fate" as a character to an additional spoke and discuss if it was fate that caused the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, R9, SL1**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 42 The Friar's Cut

Using Friar Laurence's speech (5.3.229–269), act out the whole story as he tells it. There are at least thirty incidents listed by the Friar. Try to enact as many as possible. Have one of your classmates read the speech aloud, slowly, while your group performs this very abridged version of the play! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL2, SL5**

### 43 Making Gestures

Look back through the play and create a typical gesture for four or five of the characters you've met. Present your group's ideas to the rest of your class. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2**

### 44 Extra! Extra!

Based on the scenes you are studying, create a newspaper for Verona. Creative sections can be: local news, world news, obituaries, "Dear Dr. Phil," entertainment, sports, business, personals, classified ads, political cartoons, etc. In small groups develop and design your newspaper. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2, W3, W4**

### 45 E! True Hollywood Story

Often the actors you see on stage will imagine the life of their characters outside of the play in order to get into the role and add "flesh to the bones" of the character—in other words, make him more real. They call this "creating a back-story." It is fully hypothetical and subjective, but hopefully well informed by a thorough understanding of the text and its characters. Choose a character, and imagine that it is now ten years after the action of the play. Write an article about the course your character's life has taken. How old are you now? What are your current activities? Have you led a difficult life, or a charmed one? Why? What's your outlook on life now? What factors have led to your outlook on life as reflected in the play? How did the deaths of Romeo and Juliet affect your life? Root your work as much as possible in clues from the text. Discuss your profile in small groups or pairs. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1, W3, W7**

## ON YOUR OWN

## 46 Imagining the Apothecary

The Apothecary is vividly illustrated in Romeo's words (5.1). Draw a picture that conjures up these images in your mind. What mood do you want to convey? How does your picture set about doing that? Which of Romeo's words convey a similar mood? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R4, SL4, SL5**

## 47 The Hero Journey

The "hero journey" is described by Joseph Campbell, a scholar of mythology, as one that leads the individual into unknown and risky territory—unknown not only geographically but also psychologically. The hero faces many obstacles and barriers (some physical, some emotional), and through his/her journey, overcomes them. Trace Romeo's "hero journey"—complete with all the references you can find in Shakespeare's script to barriers and obstacles in his way. As Romeo, write about your journey, or part of it if you prefer to focus on one part of the story. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, W3, W9**

## 48 Discovering Motives

List five of the major characters who appear in this play. Write a single sentence for each that begins, "What I most want is..." Take a risk—there's not just one right answer! Then write a sentence for each character that begins, "What I'm most afraid of is..." Is there ever a situation when what one most wants is also what one most fears? Share your answers with the class and talk about all the different ideas of what the characters' motives might be. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, SL1, W1**

## 49 Like Mother, Like Daughter?

*Lady Capulet would like to be a real mother, and say things more appropriate to a well-born girl awaiting courtship and marriage. But she really has nothing to say ... If she hadn't seen Romeo, Juliet would probably have been talking in the same way to her daughter fifteen years or so later.*

—NORTHROP FRYE 1986

Think about Frye's statement. Do you agree, or is Juliet somehow different from her mother—regardless of whether she had met Romeo or not? Imagine that you are Juliet after the exchange with her mother in 1.3. In a narrative that follows your thoughts as they occur, write down what you're thinking and feeling after your mother has proposed the idea of marrying Paris to you. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R8, W3, W9**

## 50 The Juliet Letters

In Italy, there is a tradition similar to our tradition of writing letters as small children to Santa Claus. But there, it is Juliet to whom lonely young people write letters. Rock singer/composer Elvis Costello took a number of these letters and set them to music in his CD, *The Juliet Letters*. Here is an excerpt of what one Italian wrote in her letter to Juliet, which Costello later set to music:

*Is anyone there I can talk to? Give us a sign if you're with me. CAN'T you see that I'm dying to hear you. EVERYONE ELSE HAS LOST INTEREST AND I'M ALONE IN THIS DREAM HOUSE. Though you're gone, I don't feel like crying. Romeo is calling you.*

Write your own letter to Juliet, and if you are musically inclined, set it to music. (And if you have the chance, listen to Costello's take on the subject.) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W3, W4, W10**

# After You've Read the Play

## AS A CLASS

### 51 Romeo and Juliet Jeopardy

*(This activity works well as a review session. It's set up like the TV game show, and does take some preparation—but it goes more quickly than you would think! A few students can set up the game for extra credit.)* First, choose several categories. For example: the Capulets, the Montagues, Quotes, etc. Then leaf through the text and find several bits of information and creative facts to use as “answers”—eight per category, or more. The more specific and exclusive the information is, the less ambiguous the game will be. Organize the “answers” by range of difficulty and create a point value sheet. An overhead projector sheet works well for this; then the whole class can see the categories being marked off as the game progresses. Divide the class into a few teams. A student from the team chooses a category: “The answer is ... Romeo's ex-girlfriend.” The student answers in the form of a question to try to win the points: “Who is Rosaline?” A correct “question” wins the points for the group. It is then the next group's turn to choose a category, and so on. If the student is wrong, don't give the correct “question,” because when the next group chooses a category—they can choose the same one if they wish. The more exclusive the information is, the fewer options the students will have to develop multiple correct “questions” for the “answer.” **CONSIDER COMMON CORE STANDARDS R1, L1**

## 52 Objection, Your Honor

Shakespeare closely followed his primary source for *Romeo and Juliet*, a long, narrative poem entitled “The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet,” composed by Arthur Brooke in 1562. At the end of Brooke’s poem, the Prince decrees that the Nurse is banished and the Apothecary hanged. But the Friar, “Because that many times he woorthely did serve / The commen welth, and in his lyfe was never found to swerve.” is exonerated. Imagine that it is now up to your class to put on trial any and all of the guilty parties for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. First, divide up roles. Choose who will play the defendants (and which characters you think those are!), the prosecution and the defense lawyers. Select witnesses for each side, and name a judge. The rest of the class will act as the jury. Before the courtroom drama takes place, participants should prepare for their roles in the trial. Give each participant a brief description of his character and role. The description should explain what will happen in the trial and explain the character’s involvement in the tragic events. The defense attorney should list the arguments that the defendants might use to justify or excuse their actions. The prosecuting attorney should also have reasons that prove their actions cannot be justified. At the end of the trial, have the jury vote. Finally, the judge should deliver the appropriate sentence. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R6, SL3, SL4**

## 53 Give Peace a Chance

Can death lead to peace? The ending of *Romeo and Juliet* suggests that the longstanding feud between the Capulets and Montagues is at last reconciled through the deaths of their two children. As a class, discuss the plausibility of such a resolution. Think about examples in history or in our own time to support your point of view. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, SL1**

## 54 Romeo and Juliet in Music

A song called “Romeo and Juliet” was written by the group Dire Straits (there is also a version of the song recorded by The Indigo Girls). Read the lyrics following to yourself. If anyone has a copy they can bring to class, listen to the song as you read, and then discuss the song. What story do you think the song tells? What does it have to do with the play? Make a list of elements of the play that the song includes. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R7, R9, SL2**

*a lovestruck romeo sings the streets a serenade  
laying everybody low with a lovesong that he made  
finds a streetlight steps out of the shade  
says something like you and me babe how about it?*

*juliet says hey it's romeo you nearly gave me a heart attack  
he's underneath the window she's singing hey la my boyfriend's back  
you shouldn't come around here singing up at people like that  
anyway what you gonna do about it?*

*juliet the dice were loaded from the start  
and I bet and you exploded in my heart  
and I forget I forget the movie song  
when you gonna realize it was just that the time was wrong juliet?*

*come up on different streets they both were streets of shame  
both dirty both mean yes and the dream was just the same  
and I dream your dream for you and now your dream is real  
how can you look at me as I was just another one of your deals?*

*well you can fall for chains of silver you can fall for chains of gold  
you can fall for pretty strangers and the promises they hold  
you promised me everything you promised me thick and thin  
now you just say oh romeo yeah you know I used to have a scene with him*

*juliet when we made love you used to cry  
you said I love you like the stars above I'll love you till I die  
there's a place for us you know the movie song  
when you gonna realize it was just that the time was wrong?*

*I can't do the talk like the talk on the tv  
and I can't do a love song like the way it's meant to be  
I can't do everything but I'd do anything for you  
can't do anything except be in love with you*

*and all I do is miss you and the way we used to be  
all I do is keep the beat the bad company  
all I do is kiss you through the bars of Orion  
julie I'd do the stars with you any time*

*juliet when we made love you used to cry  
you said I love you like the stars above Ill love you till I die  
there's a place for us you know the movie song  
when you gonna realize it was just that the time was wrong?*

*a lovestruck romeo sings the streets a serenade  
laying everybody low with a lovesong that he made  
finds a convenient streetlight steps out of the shade  
says something like you and me babe how about it?*

## 55 Romeo and Juliet in Art

In addition to music, there has been a lot of art that is based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Analyze one of these works and think about the following questions:

- ✦ Who is illustrated?
- ✦ What scene is being depicted?
- ✦ What is the importance of the scene?
- ✦ What details did the artist accentuate and for what purpose?
- ✦ What details in the artwork allude to the previous scene?
- ✦ Are there any foretelling details of the plot yet to come?
- ✦ What imagery is strong in the illustration, and how?

There is a helpful website, "Shakespeare Illustrated," that provides Shakespeare-inspired artwork which you can use to support this activity. The web address can be found on page 80 of the "Techno Shakespeare" section of this handbook. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R9, R6, R7**

## 56 The Ball's in Your Court

Ask the class to think of a few basic trivia questions about *Romeo and Juliet*. Come up with questions like: "Who was Juliet supposed to marry?" or "What is Tybalt's nickname?" or "How old is Juliet?" Choose a leader to stand in the middle of a circle, with the rest of the class standing around him/her, passing a small ball around in clockwise direction. When the leader says, "Stop," the person who has the ball has to answer the leader's question about the play before the ball makes it back around the circle. If you don't answer the question correctly by the time the ball makes its way around the circle, you take the leader's place inside the circle—and start thinking of questions. Hint: It's helpful to write down a list of them beforehand! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3**

## IN SMALL GROUPS

### 57 SuperShortShakespeare

Split the class into five groups, each group takes one act of the play. Using only lines from the script, produce a three-minute version of your act. When you are ready, put each of the five acts together to produce a fifteen-minute version of the whole play. To mix it up a bit, perform each act using a different genre—soap opera, mystery, western, Broadway musical, etc. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, SL2, SL4**

### 58 Shakespeare on the Spot

As a group, generate five questions that you would ask William Shakespeare about his play if you could. Pass your group's questions to the group next to you. Now as a small group, role-play William Shakespeare, and attempt to answer another group's questions. Of course, your answers will be purely speculative, but you should root your answers in the text or historical fact as much as possible. Share some of the most interesting questions and answers from each group with the rest of your class. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, SL1, SL3, W9**

## 59 Fate or Choice

In your small groups, use *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* or a similar reference source of quotations to come up with three quotes about fate, not all expressing the same point of view. Then pick out three quotes about choice. Discuss among your group the role of fate and choice in this play. Return to the script to find words and moments that suggest fate's role, on the one hand, and personal choice and decision on the other. As a class, discuss which quotes come closest to supporting your points of view. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, R9, SL1**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 60 Overhaul

Update *Romeo and Juliet* to our own times. Write a few pages of your modern version of the story. What brings the lovers together? What tears them apart? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, W3, W9**

### 61 Connecting to Characters

Search out a passage or a line in the play that holds great power for you. Using either a written essay, or illustration, or music, explore what this character is saying in relation to the play. What does s/he say that strikes a chord in you? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R7, R9**

### 62 Character Slogans

If you had to pick out one line that might serve as a character's personal slogan that you could see him/her walking around with on a t-shirt, what would it be? Choose a character that interests you. The front of the t-shirt displays the character's line. What would the back of the t-shirt say—as a subtitle in either your own words or those of another character? (You may want to actually create these on paper to display for the rest of your class.) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, SL5**

### 63 Scrapbook the Words

Taking quotes and events from the play's text, make a scrapbook using current photos, headlines, news clips, advertisements, cartoons, etc. that evoke the play's words for you. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R4, SL2, SL5**

### 64 Free-writing

Shakespeare was a gifted descriptive writer. On your own, write for 10–15 minutes. Choose a location that is active, like a school hallway, the cafeteria, or outside somewhere. Don't stop writing until the time is up! Just write whatever you see, hear, smell, and how the place feels. Make your writing as descriptive as possible. Poets like Shakespeare rely on metaphors—comparisons of seemingly dissimilar things, like love and food—to describe abstract emotions and sensory experiences. Test out your metaphorical skills. Share your piece with the class or a small group and see if they can tell where you were. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, W3, W4, W10**

# Preparing for the Performance

## AS A CLASS

### 65 Director's Point of View

The first time we meet Juliet is in 1.3, when her mother suggests the prospect of marriage to her fourteen-year-old daughter. The scene reveals a great deal to the audience about a director's interpretation of the relationship between mother and daughter. Zeffirelli's 1968 film and Baz Luhrmann's more recent 1996 production are readily available—and offer two very different interpretations of this scene. As a class, talk about Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's points of view. How does each view Juliet? Her mother? Do you notice any differences in the way the scene is cut? Where is it shot, and what are they doing? After you “read” these two directors' interpretations, you'll have the opportunity when you attend Chicago Shakespeare's play to compare CST's director's take on this revealing scene between mother and daughter. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6, R7, R9**

### 66 Rachel Rockwell's Vision

Before you see the characters of *Romeo and Juliet* brought to life on stage by the vision of a director, spend some time imagining your own versions. Then after you see the play, contrast your vision to that of the director, Rachel Rockwell. Take, for example, Romeo, or the Nurse. Go back to the text and look for clues that suggest what he/she might look like and how he/she would behave. What star might you cast in this role? When you see Chicago Shakespeare's production, how does its interpretation of the character you cast compare to yours? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6, R7**

### 67 Great Expectations

Before seeing the production, individually or as a class, create a list of expectations of what you hope to see when you watch Chicago Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. After the show, discuss whether or not your views about the play or any of the characters changed. If so, how? Try to be very specific about moments in the action that affected you. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, R7, SL1, SL2**

### 68 Justify Your Movement

Part of the actor's job is learning why his character does what he does. Everything from taking a sip of water to sitting down is carefully thought through by both performer and director. Clear some space in your classroom and pull one chair out into the open space. First, move the chair around with no motivation or reason in mind. Now try moving your chair as Romeo might, or Juliet, or Tybalt—as any of the characters from *Romeo and Juliet* might perform such a task. Now move the chair again as if this same character were angry, in love, or depressed. Using their personalities to inform your movements, notice how much more interesting it is to simply move a chair when you're concentrating on how another person might do it. When you watch Chicago Shakespeare's production, keep an eye out for how and why the actors perform everyday tasks and see what it tells you about their characters. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, R6, SL4**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 69 Dream Team

Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s casting director is responsible for finding the right person for every character you see on our stage—no small task! After you’ve read the play, think about each character—how do they look, sound, move, and behave? Think of television and film celebrities who fit your image of the character and, in groups, discuss who your “dream team” would be for your version. Since it’s all fantasy, you might choose a blend of two or more people. Your vision of Tybalt might be the looks of Will Smith mixed with the fiery personality of Russell Crowe. Now start clipping out magazines and create your perfect cut-out cast! Then present your cast to the other groups, explaining why you made each decision, and compare your ideas with everybody else’s.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, SL2, SL5**

### 70 Director’s Chair

Designers play a critical role in the interpretation of a play. The decisions they make about costume, set design, props, sound and music must work logically in conjunction with the director’s vision of the production. The visual and tactile elements of the costumes and the sets help set the mood for the audience watching the play, as do sounds and music. What do you think *Romeo and Juliet*’s Verona is like? In what time period will you set the play? What pace and style of music will accompany the scenes? Use magazines, catalogues and the Internet to find ideas and pictures, as well as the “Performance History” essay from this handbook to help you. **CONSIDER**

**COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2, SL2, SL5**

- ✦ **Costumes:** In small groups, design costumes for *Romeo and Juliet*—you need not be artists! Take several pieces of cardboard or poster-board, swatches of fabric, pencils, markers, and paper with which to sketch out your ideas. The sketches can be very rough, and you can stick the fabrics to the poster-board with staples, pins, or glue. Aim to create one costume for every character in the play. As a class, build a “production costume board.” (To build on this exercise, students can bring in articles of clothing and/or accessories or explore a thrift store for costume pieces that could be hung on the walls or used for group presentations during the study of the play).
- ✦ **Setting:** Many directors take a traditional approach aiming to set Shakespeare’s plays as they imagine it to be played in Elizabethan England. In the world of theater, there are no rules about how to present a Shakespearean play. What time period will you choose? What is Verona like? What do you want your audience to see when they first enter the theater? What colors will you use? What mood do you want to create? Is there a particular landscape you want to represent?
- ✦ **Sound and Music:** Would you like to incorporate any sound and/or music into your version of *Romeo and Juliet*? Brainstorm adjectives, mood ideas and songs that come to mind. Make a list of songs and/or music that you think might fit your ideas for the play. Present your ideas to the class—all ideas are welcome when designing a play! As a class, discuss the implications of the decisions made by the groups. What impact would certain designs have on specific audiences? How would audiences respond to specific characters based simply on how they look? How could a single costume, a style of design or a piece of music affect the interpretation and presentation of the play as a whole?

## 71 Colorado Shakespeare Theater's Whirlwind Plot

This "whirlwind plot," developed by the education director at Colorado Shakespeare Theater, is meant to be read aloud (and played out with students) at breakneck speed. The purpose is not to "dumb down" Shakespeare, but simply to recount his often intricately woven story lines in a manner which can be readily digested by young, modern sensibilities. These whirlwind plot notes are written to excite. True illumination of Shakespeare's plays comes with witnessing the "original" text on stage or "playing" with it aloud with like-minded peers. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R3, R9**

### **Romeo and Juliet Whirlwind Plot** (reprinted courtesy of Colorado Shakespeare Festival)

*Meet a couple of rich feuding families in Verona with a Prince who can't control them. (Nobody seems to know what the fight is about, it started so long ago—sound familiar?) It's hot, it's summer!—and everybody is cranky. The local boys have fun by biting their thumbs and poking their swords at each other in the town plaza...sure enough, someone gets hurt. The Prince comes out, wags his finger and issues a decree: the next person I catch with a sword in his hand dies!*

*Our Hero (OH) is from one of the rich families. He's in LOVE! His friends make fun of him because he won't shut up about it! They crash a party at the other rich family's house. OH thought he was in love before—but he was wrong. NOW he is REALLY IN LOVE! Turns out the Beautiful Girl (BG) is daughter of his family's enemy! But they don't care!—they croon at each other in a dark garden, she in the balcony, he on the ground—and they decide to get married! The Fat Nurse plays cupid for them, making the marriage arrangements, and the two get hitched by a Sympathetic Priest.*

*It's another hot day, and OH's buddies start another fight—this time it's between OH's Best Friend and BG's cousin, The King of Cats! OH tries to stop them, Best Friend gets killed—and in a rage OH kills the King of Cats and this is the very same day OH got married! The Prince wags his finger again—but instead of death, he tells OH, "Get outta town!" (But what about the wedding night?!?!) OH and BG have one secret night together and he leaves town the next morning.*

*Meanwhile, BG's dad decides she should marry Dork Boy! BG flips out, saying she'll never marry Dork Boy, (But daddy, I'm already married!—but noooo, she can't tell him that!) BG's dad says, Marry Dork Boy, or else I disown you! BG asks Fat Nurse "What do I DO?!" Fat Nurse says, "Forget Our Hero. Marry Dork Boy! BG thinks, "Fat chance, Fat Nurse!" What does she do? She goes to Sympathetic Priest. He has an idea...with a potion that will make her look dead and he will have OH rescue her from the burial vault. (Yeah—great idea!)*

*So BG takes the potion—sure 'nuf—next day, Fat Nurse can't wake her up and BG's mom and dad FREAK! Sympathetic Priest sends message to OH about BG being "fake dead." OH doesn't get the message in time. He finds out from a friend that BG is DEAD-DEAD. He FREAKS! He goes to the burial vault where BG is— finds Dork Boy—kills him. OH gives BG one last kiss (ewww! dead kiss!—well, she still looks pretty good—CUZ SHE'S NOT REALLY DEAD!)—and takes poison. He's dies. She wakes up. BG sees OH—he's dead, he's WARM—oh no, HE'S FRESHLY DEAD! He's taken poison and didn't leave her any! She stabs herself.*

*Prince and Families find out due to the hullabaloo at the burial vault. Sympathetic Priest explains all, the families forgive, and the curtain falls...*

—WRITTEN BY MELINDA J. SCOTT,  
COLORADO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

# Back in the Classroom

## AS A CLASS

### 72 Sweet Sorrow

Think back to the final moments of this production. What happened? What were the final words spoken, and by whom? What was the final image we're left with? As a class, take a look at the last few frames of Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. After the camera pulls back from Romeo and Juliet's bodies, it zooms in for a close-up of Juliet's ring, inscribed "I love thee." Finally we see the couple again as they appeared in the balcony scene—underwater and embracing. How do you read Luhrmann's choices for his ending? How do you understand his choices in contrast to the director's choices for the stage? What does the stage allow that film does not—and vice versa? Beyond the medium, what do you think about the respective viewpoints about the story revealed by the choices each director made for the end of his production? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, R6, R7, R9**

### 73 Dramatic Interpretation

When approaching a scene, a director must think of how to make the scene alive in a dramatic way which will enrich Shakespeare's words. Turn to 2.2, the famous balcony scene, where Romeo secretly visits Juliet hours after they meet. In director Baz Luhrmann's 1997 movie, the scene is presented quite differently from Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production. Compare the ways in which each interpretation enriched Shakespeare's scene. What did each interpretation tell you about the relationship between Romeo and Juliet? How did either vary from the text you read? Did the changes you mentioned help or hinder the scene? If you were to approach directing this scene, how would you bring it to life? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, R6, R7, R9**

### 74 And the Prologue Goes to...

Since the first performances of Shakespeare's plays, actors have always been required to double and triple roles since his plays involve thirty characters or more. (Compare this to your knowledge of modern plays by Arthur Miller or Harold Pinter, for example.) Return to the play's Prologue with the knowledge you now have of Shakespeare's story. Who among your cast of characters would you have deliver the Prologue? Why? **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, R4, R5**

### 75 What's Your Opinion?

*Teacher:* Select quotes that you find relevant to class discussions you've had about the play from the handbook section "What History and the Critics Say." Cut the individual quotes into strips and put them in a bowl. Pass the quotes around the class and have everyone pick out a quote. Respond individually to the ideas with your own point of view based on themes and discussion topics in class, your play-going experience, and your reading of the text. Make sure to share with the class everything you remember about the character, controversy, theme, etc. Be specific about moments in the production and use lines in the text that support your viewpoint! **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R8, SL1, SL3, SL4**

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR IN PAIRS

### 76 Production Poster

In small groups, design the production poster advertising Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. What are some of the key images from the production that you think the poster should include? Are there any particular quotations from the play you would use to grab people's interest? Choose a few key words to incorporate into your poster to evoke the mood of the production at a glance. Discuss your choices and display your group's poster in class. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2, SL1, SL2**

## ON YOUR OWN

### 77 A Critical Eye

You are a drama critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Look at some real theater reviews online or in the newspaper to get some ideas. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the production—including the casting, acting, setting, lights, music, costumes, cuts you particularly liked or did not like, and explain how you thought each worked to tell the story. How easy/difficult was it to understand the language? How much did you “believe” what was happening? (These are good clues to a production's strengths or weaknesses.) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W1, W2, W4, W10**

### 78 Dear Director...

Write a letter to Chicago Shakespeare Theater expressing your opinions about the play. What was your favorite part? What part, if any, didn't you like? Tell us your responses, especially about the following aspects:

- ✦ Did seeing the play performed make you change your mind about any of the characters or scenes?
- ✦ How did you feel about the choices the director and designers made about the costumes, set, and music in the play?
- ✦ Were there any interpretations of characters or scenes with which you especially agreed or disagreed? Why?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2, R7**

### 79 Album Art

Design a CD or album cover for *Romeo and Juliet*. Give related song titles with a description of the lyrics. For extra credit, create your own CD from music you know. Annotate each song to explain which character “sings” it, to whom, and at what exact moment in the play (include the line number!) **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R7, R10**

### 80 It's in the Stars

Choose five characters from Shakespeare's play and determine what astrological sign they were born under. Now, write a horoscope for them. Be prepared to quote lines from the play to support your astrological intuition about each character's sign. **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3, W3, W10**

# Theater Warm-ups

Unlike many of the classic works studied in the English classroom, Shakespeare's plays were written to be spoken out loud and heard by an audience. Introducing performance into the classroom can be a powerful tool for increasing fluency and comprehension, encouraging empathy, and exploring character perspective and choices. A student who has had the chance to "be" Juliet and create their own interpretation of "Wherefore art thou Romeo..." is less likely to be intimidated by the foreign nature of Shakespeare's words.

Learning and understanding Shakespeare is a skill. It is different from history or math classes where you are required to learn and apply facts. Learning Shakespeare can be compared to learning music, sports or other "learning by doing" classes. How does a music class usually begin? With a warm-up. How do you start a physical class? With a warm-up! Most of the time, those warm-ups are physical and usually not only engage the body but also engage the mind.

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a "classroom mode" to a "studio mode." It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense. And you will find that after the first couple of times, your students' nerves—and yours—will be unseated by energy and focus. A few rehearsals in the privacy of your own home can do a lot to bolster your courage! Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor's (and the student's) tools in mastering Shakespeare.

## PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

### Getting Started

- ✦ creates focus on the immediate moment
- ✦ brings students to body awareness
- ✦ helps dispel tension

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

### Warm-up from the top of the body down

*(approximately seven to ten minutes)*

- ✦ gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
  - ✦ increases physical and spatial awareness
- (a) Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.
  - (b) Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.

- (c) Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.
- (d) From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.
- (e) Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
- (f) Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

### VOCAL WARM-UPS

*Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly  
(This entire process should take about seven minutes.)*

- ✦ helps connect physicality to vocality
- ✦ begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

- (a) Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
- (b) Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This exercise will seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that’s often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.
- (c) Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”
- (d) Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.
- (e) Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face –A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.
- (f) Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

## Tongue Twisters

- ✦ red leather, yellow leather ... (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- ✦ unique New York... (focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- ✦ rubber, baby, buggy, bumpers... (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- ✦ *Peter Piper* picked a peck of pickled peppers... (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)
- ✦ the lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue, the tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips (focus on crisp and frontal placement of consonants)
- ✦ I carried the married character over the barrier (focus on consonants with vowel shading)
- ✦ toy boat, toy boat, toy boat (focus on the long /o/)

## Stage Pictures

- ✦ shows how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- ✦ encourages the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- ✦ begins to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Ask your students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. Encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might “Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees.”

After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation.

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad. He created elderly characters and hunchbacked characters; clowns, star-crossed lovers and cold-blooded killers. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

## Mirroring

- ✦ helps build trust within the ensemble
- ✦ encourages the students to “listen” with all their senses
- ✦ helps the students reach a state of “relaxed readiness,” which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Either ask your students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other's small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss.

## COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand our imaginations, increase our sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and encourage being “in the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor's training—and, of course, they are fundamental, too, to the learning process in the classroom.

### Four Up

*(This exercise takes about five minutes, but can also be extended.)*

- ✦ helps the ensemble work together
- ✦ helps to slowly introduce physical activities in the classroom
- ✦ helps to bring focus to the classroom

For this game, everyone should be seated; it would be fine for the students to stay seated at their desks. The goal of this game is to have four people standing at all times. There are a few rules—everyone can stand up whenever they want, but only four should be standing at a time and they can only stand up for a maximum of 5 seconds. Finally everyone needs to pay attention to each other and everybody should participate and try to stand with a group of four.

A sense of community and having a strong focus can be the keys to a successful production (and classroom too!). This exercise can help to establish those things in a fun way that is also getting the students up on their feet.

### Zing! Ball

*(This exercise lasts about five minutes and requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter.)*

- ✦ helps the ensemble grow together
- ✦ helps the students let go of their internal “censor” and begin tapping into their impulses
- ✦ brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other?

Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real—and the characters believable.

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries with it energy. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the person throwing should say “Zing!” Note: Encourage the students to experiment with the way they say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy.

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure.

### Zing! Ball (without a ball)

*(This activity takes five to seven minutes.)*

- ✦ asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- ✦ focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zing!,” toss the ball to a student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they’ve changed it. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare’s plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor’s job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

### Wah!

*(This activity can take between five and ten minutes)*

- ✦ facilitates physical awareness and risk-taking
- ✦ encourages vocal projection
- ✦ helps actors increase their sense of timing and decrease response time

Ask your students to stand in a circle, facing in. They are no longer students, but fearsome warriors, and their hands, with palms pressed flat together, have become their swords. To begin the game, one warrior raises his or her sword straight up, then brings it down, pointing at another warrior in the circle. The warriors must make excellent eye contact, to avoid confusion. As the warrior brings down his or her sword, he or she utters a fearsome battle cry, by saying, “Wah!” (Be wary, warriors, of shouting, which comes from the throat and leads to laryngitis, a warrior’s worst enemy. Using the good support and deep breathing from the beginning of your warmup will help you keep your vocal chords in top fighting condition.) Once the warriors have made eye contact, the second warrior raises his or her sword, crying “Wah!,” and allows the warriors on either side of her to slash his or her stomach, as they cry “Wah!” in unison. Then the warrior with his or her sword up slashes down, making eye contact with someone else and saying “Wah!” and the game continues. Each “battle” should therefore include three cries of “Wah!” Encourage your students to increase their speed and volume. This is a silly game; remind your students that warriors don’t care about “looking cool” because they’re too busy fighting unending battles. When a warrior misses his or her cue, stop the round and start it again until everyone is comfortable being loud and making big physical choices.

# Suggested Readings

**Most of the books suggested here are available to peruse in our Teacher Resource Center, open after Teacher Workshops and by appointment.**

**Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London, 1986.** A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare's words an insider's insight into making Shakespeare's language comprehensible.

 **Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary.** Dir. Sheldon Renan. Pyramid Films, 1970.

 **Bevington, David, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2008.**

**Boose, Lynda E., and Richard Burt. *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and Video*. London, 1997.** A valuable resource in teaching a wide variety of film adaptations, and especially the film adaptations of the 1990s. The first chapter provides an examination of the proliferation of film adaptations in the '90s that appeal to both teachers and students, and a useful overview of the styles of film adaptations that have evolved.

**Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare, Volumes 1–6*. Cambridge (1988–2007).** Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist's craft.

**Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. New York, 1975.** The classic reference detailing Shakespeare's sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

 **Cartmell, Deborah. *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*. New York, 2000.** Focus on film and violence, gender, sexuality, race and nationalism as they pertain to the analysis of film adaptations of plays like *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *The Tempest* and *Henry V*.

**Chrisp, Peter. *Shakespeare*. London, 2002.** Part of DK Eyewitness Books' "children's series," this title, plus a number of others (*Costume*, *Arms and Armor*, *Battle*, *Castle*, *Mythology*) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom's Shakespeare study.

 **Christel, Mary T., and Scott Sullivan. *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-rich Classrooms*. Urbana, IL, 2007.** Scott Williams' lesson plans for creating movie trailers are included in this collection.

 **Dakin, Mary Ellen. *Reading Shakespeare Film First*. Urbana, IL, 2013.** A comprehensive overview of ways to use film to enhance the study of any play with students at every level.

 **Davis, James E., and Ronald E. Salomone. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. Urbana, IL, 1993.** This text is similar in format to *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-first Century*. In combination, they provide the greatest wealth of teaching ideas, including the use of film.

 **Donaldson, Peter Samuel. *Shakespearean Films/Shakespearean Directors*. Boston, 1990.** This study of Shakespearean film adaptations focuses on: gender and Olivier's *Henry V*; allegory in *Throne of Blood*; several chapters on *Othello*; male bonding in *Romeo and Juliet*; and Godard's controversial adaptation of *King Lear*.

 indicates a focus on methods for teaching Shakespeare through film

**Foster, Cass. *Sixty-minute Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*. Chandler, AZ, 2000.** Swan Books developed a series of “short Shakespeare” editions with Shakespeare’s original language, abridged for younger students. It’s an excellent series for elementary and ESL teachers to know about.

**Freeman, Neil. *The Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet*. Vancouver, 1998.** Applause Books has published the first Folio editions (spellings, punctuations and all) of Shakespeare’s plays. Believing that Shakespeare embedded actor clues into his early, unedited texts, some theaters, like Chicago Shakespeare, use the first Folio as their scripts.

**Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1998.** As “missionary” and inspiration to the “active Shakespeare” movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare’s language and its infinite possibilities.

**Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago, 1951.** A classic, post-war critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devoting a chapter to each play.

**Grun, Bernard. *The Timetables of History*. New York, 1991.** This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing, and his royal characters in an historical context.

**Hunt, Maurice, ed. *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet*. New York, 2000.** An excellent compendium of articles focused on the art of teaching Shakespeare, with an emphasis on modern criticism and teaching through performance.

 **Krueger, Ellen, and Mary T. Christel. *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH, 2001.** Providing the vocabulary of film analysis, this resource helps acquaint teachers with various ways to teach film adaptations as a cinematic text.

**McDonald, Russ. “*The Flaw in the Flaw*,” in *Shakespeare Set Free*. Peggy O’Brien, ed. New York, 1993.** The only article included in this list, McDonald’s essay offers an illuminating lens through which to read and revisit Shakespeare’s tragedies.

**Michaels, Wendy. *Playbuilding Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1996.** The former director of education at the Royal Shakespeare Company guides students through exploring elements of five of Shakespeare’s plays (including *Romeo and Juliet*) as performative pieces.

**Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. Chicago, 1988.** Mullaney examines the culture of popular drama in Elizabethan and Jacobean England by offering an original and historically grounded perspective on the emergence of popular theater.

 **Naremore, James. *Film Adaptation*. New Brunswick, NJ, 2000.** The opening chapters outline the strategies that filmmakers use in adapting literature into film, which include “cinema as digest” and issues of fidelity to the literary source.



indicates a focus on methods for teaching Shakespeare through film

**O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York, 1993.** The Folger Library's revamping of teaching practice, encapsulated in this three-volume set (*Romeo and Juliet* is included in the first of three books) has helped teachers approach Shakespeare as the performative script it was written to be.

 **Parsons, Keith and Mason, Pamela. *Shakespeare in Performance*. London, 1995.** A beautifully illustrated book detailing the performance history of Shakespeare's plays, both on the stage and in film.

**Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London, 2000.** Not for the prudish, Partridge's classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare's language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright's broad appeal on stage.

**Peacock, John. *Costume 1066–1990s*. London, 1994.** Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock's offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource (from our point of view) for every English classroom's study of Shakespeare.

 **Rosenthal, Daniel. *Shakespeare on Screen*. London, 2000.** This lavishly illustrated book traces the development of cinematic adaptation by focusing on plays that have been made into films several times. It is an excellent resource to locate different adaptations, and to gain insight into the filmmaking and adaptation process.

 **Salomone, Ronald E., and James E. Davis. *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-first Century*. Athens, 1997.** This collection of essays by high school teachers and college professors offers a wide range of strategies to teach Shakespeare, including several essays on the use of film and film adaptation in the classroom.

**Shakespeare, William. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*. Ed. Rex Gibson. Cambridge.** This unparalleled series, used extensively as a resource in CST's education program, includes most of Shakespeare's plays. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully thanks Cambridge University Press for permission to adapt some of the classroom activities annotated throughout its teaching materials.

 indicates a focus on methods for teaching Shakespeare through film

# Techno Shakespeare

## CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

### Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website

[www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com)

## COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

### William Shakespeare and the Internet

[shakespeare.palomar.edu/](http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/)

### Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E

*Website created and maintained by Basel University in Switzerland.*

[www.unibas.ch/shine/home](http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home)

### Touchstone Database

*Website database for researching Shakespeare, created and maintained by University of Birmingham in the UK.*

[www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html](http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html)

### Absolute Shakespeare

[absoluteshakespeare.com](http://absoluteshakespeare.com)

## TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

### The Folger Shakespeare Library

[www.folger.edu/index.cfm](http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm)

### Proper Elizabethan Accents

[www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html](http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html)

### The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials

*Multimedia tutorials about the English Renaissance, created and maintained by University of Pennsylvania.*

[sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.cfm](http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.cfm)

### The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider

[www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html](http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html)

## ROMEO AND JULIET

### **BBC's 60-second Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet***

[www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes\\_romeojuliet.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_romeojuliet.shtml)

### **BBC and RSC's Shakespeare Unlocked: *Romeo and Juliet***

*Shakespeare Unlocked* is aimed at teachers and young students of Shakespeare. It offers insights into character, dramatic devices and interpretative choices through performance.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01dtvpl/features/romeo>

### **West Side Story: Birth of a Classic**

This online exhibition created and maintained by The Library of Congress is about Bernstein's *West Side Story*. It features pictures of original scripts, letters, scene breakdowns, and other resources used to create this modern re-telling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. There is also a section about the legacy of the musical.

[www.loc.gov/exhibits/westsidestory/introduction/](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/westsidestory/introduction/)

### **Interactive Folio: *Romeo and Juliet***

This is an interactive online Folio version of *Romeo and Juliet* created and maintained by Canadian Shakespeare. While reading the script, you can select a word and read a lexicon definition, click on links for more information, or even watch relevant video clips. There is also a resources section that has a detailed dramatis personae, plot synopses, facts about the play, research about Shakespeare's sources for *Romeo and Juliet*, and interviews with experts about the play.

[www.canadianshakespeares.ca/folio/folio.html](http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/folio/folio.html)

### **A Teacher Guide to the Signet Edition: *Romeo and Juliet***

[www.us.penguinroup.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/romeojuliet.pdf](http://www.us.penguinroup.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/romeojuliet.pdf)

### **Life in Elizabethan England: Betrothal and Wedding**

[elizabethan.org/compendium/9.html](http://elizabethan.org/compendium/9.html)

### **Penguin Classics Teachers' Guides: *Romeo and Juliet***

[www.penguinclassics.co.uk/nf/shared/WebDisplay/0,,82537\\_1\\_10,00.html](http://www.penguinclassics.co.uk/nf/shared/WebDisplay/0,,82537_1_10,00.html)

### **Web English Teacher: *Romeo and Juliet***

[www.webenglishteacher.com/romeoandjuliet.html](http://www.webenglishteacher.com/romeoandjuliet.html)

### **Spark Notes: *Romeo and Juliet*\***

[www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/](http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/)

### **Shakespeare Resource Center: *Romeo and Juliet***

[www.bardweb.net/plays/romeo.html](http://www.bardweb.net/plays/romeo.html)

## SHAKESPEARE AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

### **The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**

[www.shakespeare.org.uk/](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/)

### **The Elizabethan Theatre**

[www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html](http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html)

### **Queen Elizabeth I**

[www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm](http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm)

**Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Shakespeare**

[search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html](http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html)

**Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend**

*Web-based exhibit acting as a companion to The Newberry Library's Queen Elizabeth exhibit in 2003/2004.*

[www.newberry.org/elizabeth/](http://www.newberry.org/elizabeth/)

**TEXTS AND EARLY EDITIONS****The Complete Works of William Shakespeare**

*This was the first online web edition of the complete works, created and maintained by Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

[the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html)

**Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto**

*A copy of the quartos, available to compare side-by-side, as well as background information. This website was created and is maintained by the British Library.*

[www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html](http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html)

**The Internet Shakespeare Editions**

*This website has transcriptions and high quality facsimiles of Shakespeare's folios and quartos, categorized by play with links to any articles written about the play that can be found on the website.*

[internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays.html](http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays.html)

**Furness Shakespeare Library**

*A collection of primary and secondary texts that illustrate the theater, literature, and history of Shakespeare, Shakespearean texts, theatrical production and criticism. It was created and is maintained by University of Pennsylvania.*

[dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/](http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/)

**What Is a Folio?**

*This page gives an easy to understand introduction to the Folio texts, part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's website "Hamlet on the Ramparts."*

[shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm](http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm)

**WORDS, WORDS, WORDS****Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary**

*Part of Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library and created by Alexander Schmidt.*

[www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079)

**Shakespeare's Words Glossary and Language Companion**

*Created by David Crystal and Ben Crystal, this is a free online companion to the best-selling glossary and language companion, Shakespeare's Words.*

[www.shakespeareswords.com](http://www.shakespeareswords.com)

**Words Shakespeare Invented**

*This list compiled by Amanda Mabillard has some of the many words Shakespeare created; when you click on the word it takes you to the play in which it first appeared.*

[shakespeare-online.com/biography/wordsinvented.html](http://shakespeare-online.com/biography/wordsinvented.html)

## SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

### **The Internet Broadway Database**

*This online database of Broadway plays is a great place to do a search for 'Shakespeare' and find out about some of the different productions of the Bard's works. (Note: This will only give you information about shows performed on Broadway.*  
[www.ibdb.com](http://www.ibdb.com)

### **The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare**

*Similar to IBDB, this is an online database of movies and is also a great place to do a search for 'Shakespeare' and find all the different cinematic versions of his plays that have been produced.*  
[www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare](http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare)

### **Shakespeare's Staging: Shakespeare's Performance and his Globe Theatre**

*This website surveys staging of Shakespeare's plays, from Shakespeare's lifetime through modern times.*  
[shakespeare.berkeley.edu//index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=134](http://shakespeare.berkeley.edu//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=134)

## SHAKESPEARE IN ART

### **Shakespeare Illustrated**

*Harry Rusche, English professor at Emory University, created this helpful website that explores nineteenth-century paintings, criticism and productions of Shakespeare's plays and their influences on one another. Most plays have at least two works of arts accompanying them; you can search for works of art by both play title and artist name.*  
[www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html)

### **Absolute Shakespeare**

*This website also has examples of paintings based on Shakespeare's works and features examples of text believed to have inspired the painting.*  
[absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare\\_pictures.htm](http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm)

### **The Faces of Elizabeth I**

[www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm](http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm)

### **Tudor England: Images**

[www.marileecody.com/images.html](http://www.marileecody.com/images.html)



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