

# Romeo and Juliet

## Resource Guide

### The Ubiquitous Shakespeare

"He's hard. He's boring. I can't read it. It's old. I don't care."

Those were things that I thought my very first time reading Shakespeare, and like many of your students, I didn't understand why it was important to still be reading this dead guy. **What did it matter?**

As I struggled through my first Shakespearean play (not surprisingly *Romeo and Juliet*) and subsequent plays, I realized that the words came easier, my understanding of the plays deepened, and what mattered the most was that I—yes I—was still reading his plays, some 400 years later. I was part of the larger ubiquitousness of Shakespeare. Partly out

of compulsory education, but partly out of learning to love him.

Shakespeare, as I've found, takes practice and a nurturing patience. No, it's not an easy read. It's not *Twilight*. Yet the parallels might be closer than students imagine between it and *Romeo and Juliet*. Like with most of Shakespeare's most famous lines and characters, they just keep popping up in various manifestations over the years.

So thank you for embarking upon what for many is their first experience with Shakespeare. Thank you for taking the time to nurture a deeper awakening of this dead guy's importance in our cultural heritage. And



Tuesdays with Morrie, PST 2010

thank you for preparing your students to see what many consider the "greatest love story of all time" by engaging them with activities in this study guide. We hope you find the guide useful and helpful. We also hope that, through our production, we can connect students with the powerful stories told by this one dude who lived a long time ago...

~Alyssa Herzog Melby  
Education Director

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Resource guide by  
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#### Did you know...

- **Prime Stage Theatre** has an online networking community for teachers and students? Check us out at:

<http://primestage.ning.com>

- **Prime Stage Theatre** wants to hear your thoughts about our production! Visit the Education page of our website, [www.primestage.com](http://www.primestage.com), to access our teacher and student feedback forms!

#### Check out what's inside!

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### Curriculum Connections Corner

Prime Stage Theatre is committed to directly correlating our programs to the PDE Academic Standards. *Romeo and Juliet* and this resource guide may be used to address the following curriculum content standards:

**Arts and Humanities:**  
9.1-9.4  
**Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Listening:**  
1.1-1.8  
**History:** 8.1, 8.4  
**Family & Consumer Science:** 11.2



# Before the Show

## Romeo and Juliet in 60 seconds...

The play opens with a brawl in the city of Verona between two rival families, the Capulets and the Montagues. The Prince breaks up the fight and threatens death for anyone “who disturbs our streets.”

The Capulets hold an extravagant party to which everyone in the town is invited, except the Montagues. They want to introduce their soon-to-be marriageable daughter, Juliet, to an influential young lord in the town, Paris. The Montague lads, Romeo; his cousin, Benvolio; and their friend Mercutio attend in disguise.

Romeo falls in love at first sight with Juliet. He woos her with sweet words. Though Juliet’s cousin Tybalt notices the enemies, Capulet heeds the warning of the authorities. The party comes to an end without a fight. Romeo sneaks back into the garden, where he hears Juliet talking to herself about the danger of loving an enemy. Their overwhelming attraction for one another results in the exchange of vows of love and a plan to marry in secret the very next day.

Romeo confesses his love to Father Lawrence and begs him to marry them. Father Lawrence consents when he considers that the marriage might end the feud between the families and bring peace to Verona. The two lovers are married and go their separate ways until they may be together in the secret of the night. However, in the meantime, Tybalt attempts to pick a fight with Romeo. Romeo refuses on the grounds of his secret love, but Mercutio takes up his sword to return Tybalt’s insult. Mercutio is killed and Romeo, enraged at the death of his friend, kills Tybalt and is banished by the Prince.

Romeo and Juliet have one night together before Romeo must flee the city. Their love for one another transcends the uncertain future, yet a shadow hovers over them.

Unaware of this secret marriage, the Capulets go ahead with their plans for Juliet to wed Paris. In a panic, Juliet goes to Father Lawrence for help. He gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear “as though dead” and assures her he will get word to Romeo of the trick. When she awakes, they will be reunited.

But the message goes astray; Romeo receives word of his young wife’s death through another source. Blinded by grief, Romeo returns to the town, determined to be with her in death. He meets Paris at her tomb and kills him. Then at the side of his love’s body, he drinks a fatal draught of poison. Juliet, upon awaking too late, sees her love dead beside her and, using his dagger, she takes her own life. Father Lawrence arrives at the scene, too late to divert the tragedy.

The two families are left with their double grief, but as the Prince points out, not until their pride and foolishness killed the “joys” of their households. ~By Michael Arendt (synopsis from [www.kingsmenshakespeare.org](http://www.kingsmenshakespeare.org))

### ...or less!

Two families—the Capulets and the Montagues—are fighting in the streets of their fair city, Verona, about something that no one can remember. When the Capulet’s prized daughter, Juliet, falls in love with the Montague’s passionate son, Romeo, their secret love and marriage is doomed to a tragic end. Only after the deaths of the young lovers do the families set aside their differences and reconcile.

## William Shakespeare

We only have a few facts about William Shakespeare that can be traced to the historical record:

- He was born in April 1564 and baptized on April 26th of that year in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England.
- He died on April 23rd, 1616.
- He is buried in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-Upon-Avon. His epitaph reads:

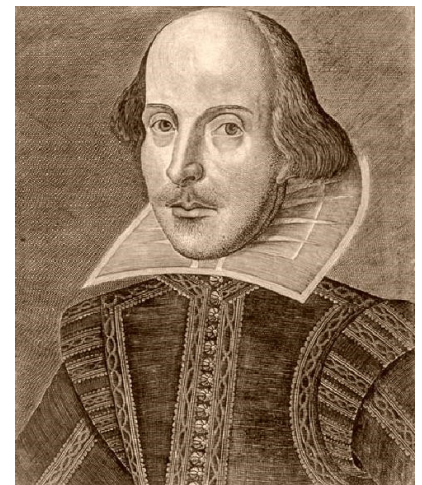
*Good friend for Jesus' sake forbear,  
To dig the dust enclosed here:  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.*

- During his life, he wrote 38 plays and 154 sonnets!
- He was an actor and shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, the theatre troupe he wrote for.

- He was married to Anne Hathaway, 8 years older than him and pregnant, in 1582. They had 3 children. In his will, he left her his “second best bed.”

Mostly everything else that we know about Shakespeare is speculation. Towards the end of his career, it is widely believed that he collaborated on plays with other playwrights, including John Fletcher and Thomas Middleton. Yet some conspiracy theories assert that “William Shakespeare” never existed at all and that his plays were written by other people, including Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley, and Miguel de Cervantes.

*PDE Academic Standard 8.4*



### Questions to ponder:

1. If we know so little about his life, how are there so many biographies of Shakespeare?
2. Why do you think he left his wife his “second best bed?”
3. Why do you think he chose the epitaph he did?

## Romeo and Juliet through the ages...

We know from the extant plays of Shakespeare that *he never set a play in his contemporary moment*. He always set his plays in the distant (and not-so-distant) past. This may be for many reasons, such as drawing historical parallels or averting the eyes of the Master of the Revels, the Royal overseer of arts and entertainment in England who oftentimes shut down plays for inappropriate language and content.

So Shakespeare turned to history and even his own popular culture. The story of Romeo and Juliet was extremely popular in England during his lifetime, but had been popular on the Continent for many years prior after its first publication in Masuccio Salernitano's *Il Novellino* in 1476. The story then takes many permutations until Shakespeare finally picked it up. Luigi da Porto's *Istoria novellamenta ritrovata di due Nobili Amanti* (1530) included the plot elements of the secret marriage, the rival suitor, Romeo's banishment for murder, the sleeping potion, and the sad ending (but no suicides). Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554) placed the story in Verona and named the characters and their respective families. Pierre Boaistuau's version (included in an anthology by Belleforest called *Histories Tragiques* in 1559) added the Nurse as a central character and introduced the now infamous rope ladder to Juliet's balcony. The most important adaptation and the first in the English language was Arthur Brooke's poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). Shakespeare seems to base his play on this poem alone which gave many suggestive clues about characters which Shakespeare then took and elaborated upon. Thus Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was built upon a long and rich history of storytelling.

Just like Shakespeare took and adapted from his sources, people have done the same with his play, setting it in different times, within different cultures, and in different genres. Some notable versions and adaptations include:

- 1830—Vincenzo Bellini's opera *I Capuleti and e I Montecchi*
  - 1869—Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem, *Romeo and Juliet*
  - 1936—Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*
  - 1957—Leonard Bernstein's musical *West Side Story*
  - 1968—Franco Zeffereilli's *Romeo and Juliet*
  - 1996—Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet*
  - 1998—John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love*
- PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.3, 8.4*



Marketing poster for Luhrmann's 1996 film

## Meet the People

Character: **Romeo Montague**

Actor: Jeremy Hois

Jeremy is a 16-year-old junior at Mt. Lebanon High School. At Prime Stage he has also been Ponyboy in *The Outsiders*, Jem in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Asher in *The Giver*, and he will be Romeo in April. In the fall, he was John Reed in PICT's *Jane Eyre*. His acting career started with the Chautauqua Theatre at age 7 where he continued to take on child roles through the summers. He has worked in over 20 commercials, videos, voice-overs, and print jobs for The Talent Group. Jeremy represents his high school's Forensics Team, and he plays oboe in the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra.



Character: **Juliet Capulet**

Actor: Jenna Lanz

Jenna is thrilled to be making her Prime Stage Theatre debut in their production of *Romeo and Juliet*. She recently performed in her first regional show in Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre's production of *Jane Eyre* as Child Jane. A proud member of Act One Theatre School, Jenna has performed in shows including *Honk*, *Seussical the Musical*, *Narnia*, *The Wiz*, *Godspell*, and most recently, *Oedipus Rex* as Jocasta. Other productions include *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Beauty and the Beast* at North Allegheny Senior High School, where she is a junior. She'd like to thank her supportive family and friends, Lora Oxenreiter for the wonderful opportunity, and the entire cast and crew of *Romeo and Juliet*.



## It's all in the Language!

Prime Stage's production will retain Shakespeare's original text. Below are exercises to help students delve into the language.

**Iambic pentameter:** *PDE Academic Standard 1.3* Shakespeare wrote his plays in two styles: prose and verse. Prose was typically used for lower-status characters. The verse style he used was most often blank verse, or unrhyming verse, in iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter refers to a “unstressed-**stressed**” or “U-**/**” syllable pattern (an iamb) for five “feet” (pentameter). One of the best examples of iambic pentameter can be found in *Romeo and Juliet*:

U     /   U     /     U     /   U     /   U     /  
*Romeo:* But **soft**, what **light** through **yonder** **window** **breaks**?

*Heartbeat of Shakespeare's Verse:* Have students put their hands to their heart and beat out the previous line slowly. Repeat 2 times, each time getting progressively faster and more natural sounding. Iambic pentameter feels and sounds like a heartbeat!

*The Verse Line:* Have 10 student volunteers stand in a line at the front of the classroom. Assign each student one syllable from the line and have them make a physicalized gesture for their word (creativity is encouraged!). Have them say the line and do their gestures in the following ways: equal volume on all words, loudly saying the unstressed words, and loudly saying the stressed words. Which time was it easiest to understand the meaning of the line—no stress, unstressed, or stressed?

*But That's Not an Iamb!* Once students begin to scan lines from the play, they may begin to see that not every line is in perfect iambic pentameter. Typically, these changes in rhythm give a clue to the actor about something that's happening to the character. Read and scan the rest of Romeo's monologue after “But soft, what light...” (see “Appendix—Select Passages”). What lines are “oddball” lines? Why do you think the rhythm has changed?

**Some words are more important than others!** *PDE Academic Standard 1.3* Even from Romeo's line above, one can begin to see that Shakespeare gives more weight to certain kinds of words than others. What words you might ask? Verbs, nouns, adjective, and adverbs (and in that order). These are the words that allow us to make the most sense of what is happening in a scene.

*Juliet's Confession:* Ask students to read Juliet's confession to Friar Lawrence from Act 4, Scene 1 (see “Appendix—Select Passages”). Have the students underline all the verbs in the passage and then read aloud to themselves only the verbs they've underlined. What was the tone of this passage that came through in the verbs? What meaning could still be derived from just these words?

### Don't forget the imagery!!

Shakespeare loved to use similes and metaphors in his plays to show heightened states of awareness from the characters and to paint images of situations and ideas in the audience's head. *PDE Academic Standard 1.3*

**Metaphor:** n. a figure of speech where two unlike objects are directly compared. (ie. The clouds are marshmallows today).

**Simile:** n. a figure of speech where two unlike objects are indirectly compared using “like” or “as” (ie. She is stubborn as a mule).

As you are reading *Romeo and Juliet*, track the metaphors and similes you find in journals or as a class on the board.

*Extension Activity:* Ask students to pick a metaphor or simile they have found and rewrite it as a modern metaphor or simile.

**Words,  
Words,  
& more  
Words**

Shakespeare is credited with adding over 5,000 words to the English language. And despite sounding “old,” the language he uses is not Old English, but Early Modern English—the director precursor to the English we speak today!

Have students record unfamiliar words as they encounter them in reading the book. Students should then look up definitions in a dictionary. Vocabulary activities could include a word wall, word ball, or new sentence generation.

Words created specifically for *Romeo and Juliet*:

Alligator  
Bump  
Denote  
Juiced  
Wild Goose Chase

See “Appendix—Extended Glossary” for more words from *Romeo and Juliet* and their definitions. *PDE Academic Standards 1.1, 1.7-1.8*

# The Big Picture: Themes in *Romeo and Juliet*

## LOVE

—Do you believe that love at first sight is possible?

—Despite growing up in a climate of hatred, Romeo and Juliet are able to overcome this. How do you think they overcome their hatred with love?

—Who else in the story shows the power of love? When, why, and how?

## FATE AND DESTINY

—How does the play affirm or contradict its own ideas of fate and destiny?

—How do human actions affect fate and human destiny?

## HATRED

—How does hatred fuel feuds?

—Who pays a price in order for the feud to end and how so?

—If Romeo loves Juliet (and by default her extended family), how can his murders of Tybalt and Paris be explained?

## TRADITION

—How does tradition play a role in the interactions of members within the families and between the two families?

—How do Romeo and Juliet uphold and break with certain traditions of love, marriage, and gender?

## SIGHT AND MASKING

—In what ways is the idea of seeing and sight explored in the story?

—How does the masque (and the masks that the characters wear) allow for the story to unfold?



*PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.3, 11.2*

Masquerades are a common feature in Shakespeare plays. Above is an image from *Much Ado About Nothing* produced at the Everyman Theatre (Baltimore, MD) in 2007.

*“If I profane with my unworhiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. “*

~Romeo to Juliet, Act 1, Scene 4

## Shakespeare’s Theatre

You’re outside with the mid-afternoon sun shining brightly down on the crowd. You’re standing on packed straw in a large pit. You’re being jostled by fellow playgoers as they’re booing at the players on stage and vying for the attention of the various concessioners in the playhouse. You turn around to spy on the nobility in the boxes at the back. The musicians have just finished playing the entrance of the king and his jester. You listen closely for the next punch line...



The stage & “heavens” of the new Globe Theatre.

### *Welcome to the Elizabethan Theatre!*

Set on the outskirts of the London metropolis due to the potentially “questionable” content of the plays and the potentially “questionable” integrity of its patrons, playhouses during Shakespeare’s time were a hub-bub of activity and entertainment—both onstage and off!

Each different theatre company had its own playhouse. Shakespeare’s company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, performed at the Globe Theatre. They would typically perform one play a day. If a play flopped, it would quickly be forgotten. But if it was well-received, it would be revived again and again in the company’s repertory.

*PDE Academic Standards 8.1, 8.4*



The original playhouse that Shakespeare worked in, the Globe Theatre, is no longer standing. However, a close replica based on 16th century sketches of English Renaissance playhouses was built. Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre was opened in 1997 on the South Bank of the Thames River in London, United Kingdom.

Here are a few other fun facts:

1. There were no female actresses. All the parts were played by boys and men!
2. Admission to the theatre for a “groundling” (standing in the pit) was one penny.
3. The stage had very few scenic pieces.
4. Live music and dancing were a part of every show!

## How to fight like...an actor? Fight Choreography

By Tonya Lynn, Fight Director for *Romeo and Juliet*

The conflict between characters frequently becomes physical, and this escalation to violence often leads up to some of the most crucial scenes and climactic events in a story. Some of the most important moments in the plot can occur at this instant when words are no longer enough to convey emotions or settle a conflict, the point at which Shakespeare's script simply states "*They fight.*" The challenge these scenes present for actors and directors is an important one: *How do we portray this important moment for our audience, while still keeping the actors safe?* These pivotal moments cannot be eliminated, and no one can be expected to truly get punched in the face or stabbed with a sword dozens of times over the course of rehearsals and performances!



This is where the role of a fight director comes in. Equal parts choreographer, teacher, movement technician, historian, and illusionist, it is the fight director's job to provide a safe, repeatable series of movements that support the play's text, ensures the physical safety of the actors, and contributes to the entertainment of the audience. Every move in every fight is planned as carefully as though it were a ballet, and thoroughly rehearsed and practiced—the fight happens exactly the same way, every time, with no dangerous improvising! This allows the fights to have an arc of "beginning—middle—end," and, just like the rest of the performance, each fight tells a story.

Additionally, the style and setting of the play are important factors which a fight director must consider. *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in a time where violence is commonplace, and how to fight with a sword is

common knowledge. Plays like *Romeo and Juliet* – in which the characters make many references to rapiers, daggers, and specific fighting movements – require attention be paid to the details of how these weapons were historically used. In the choreography of the fights in *Romeo and Juliet*, I have incorporated many techniques derived from historical rapier and dagger fighting which have been modified for safe usage in the theater. The actors have rehearsed not only the choreographed movement of the fights, but the more subtle, personal movement—common in the world presented in the show, but well out-of-place in modern society—that comes with wearing and using these weapons. My goal is to show the personalities of these characters through their respective fighting styles—as well as to present the conflicts between them in a believable, honest, and exciting context.



### Combat Clues

"Suit the action to the word and the word to the action" (*Hamlet*, 3.2). Have students examine the fight scene in Act 3, Scene 1 (see "Appendix—Select Passages" for the tail end of this scene). Read with the eye of a Fight Director—what clues does the text give you about how to stage the fight?

What is the sequence of events? *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.3, 1.7*

## Pre-Reading and Pre-Show Activities

Prime Stage’s mission, *bringing literature to life*, encompasses not only students’ interaction with a literary piece of theatre, but also with the text itself. Prime Stage encourages all teachers to incorporate our production’s text (in its original or dramatized form) into the curriculum. The activities below presume that students will read the text.

1. **Shakespearean Insults:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.3, 1.7* Copy off sheets of Shakespeare’s insults (see Appendix—“Shakespearean Insults”). Have students form two lines that face each other. Have them locate the person directly across from them (their partner). Distribute the worksheets to students. They will then choose one word from each column to hurl at their partner, beginning each insult with “Thou...”. Have one line go first, then the other. After the exercise, debrief with students about words they did not understand, the “best” insult they heard, and how they felt hurling insults at their peers.  
*Extension Activity:* *Romeo and Juliet* is riddled with insults between the Capulets and Montagues (and sometimes within families!). Have the students keep track in a journal of insults they find in the play.
2. **You can’t judge a book by its cover or a play by its title:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.3; 9.2, 9.4* Bring in numerous editions of *Romeo and Juliet*. Show the covers of the books to the students. Ask students to reflect upon the words on the cover, the images, and colors. What features do you think help sell more books? What function do the images and colors have? Why do some covers have a picture of young lovers and others William Shakespeare? Which one is more marketable? What words and phrases are included and how might they be used to sell the book? Next, have students think about the title—*Romeo and Juliet*. Brainstorm what they know about the story on a large piece of paper to post in the classroom. How is the title appropriate? Why didn’t Shakespeare name it *The Capulets and the Montagues* or *The Ancient Grudge* or *Mayhem in Verona*? The full title of the play is *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. How does this fuller title change your impression of the play? (adapted from the Acting Company study guide)  
*Extension Activity:* *PDE Academic Standards 1.4-1.5* Following the end of the book but before they see the show, have students create their own “book cover” for the play, thinking about marketability and reflecting the most important parts of the book.
3. **Three Civil Brawls:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* Ask students to do a close reading of Act 1, Scene 1 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Based on this scene, have the students write as a neutral bystander who witnessed the scene. This bystander is submitting an opinion page to *The Verona Times*. What did the bystander witness? How did they feel amidst this third civil brawl? What are the opinions of the bystander about the “ancient grudge” between the two families? How does the bystander think the two sides can be reconciled? The bystander should use quotes from the play about what they heard various people saying during the fight.  
*Extension Activity:* Conduct a role-play exercise where you, the teacher, are the Prince. Assign one third of the class to be Montagues, one third of the class Capulets, and the last third as the neutral bystanders. The prince is hearing testimonies about who started the third civil brawl and how to reconcile the factions. Ask the Montagues and Capulets to form defense arguments using information from the play. Call up witnesses to testify what happened and who is at fault. Based upon the families’ arguments and the bystanders’ information, determine fault and sentence accordingly.

**“Two households, both alike in dignity...”**  
~Prologue, *Romeo and Juliet*

## House rules (...and we don’t mean your mama’s house!)

It goes without saying that when most children today hear the word “theatre” they think “oh, MOVIE theatre.” And with that thought comes all of those things that we do at movie theatres: eat popcorn, drink noisily from soda cups, put feet on the seat, text message—and the list goes on from there. But live theatre is just that: it’s LIVE with LIVE HUMANS who react and respond to the audience, something that we at Prime Stage think is the beauty of the theatre experience. Because of this, live theatre requires a higher level of respect between the audience and performer in order for the experience to be a positive one.

Please review the following “house rules” with your students prior to attending *Romeo and Juliet*:

—Please stay together with your group and wait for the ushers to help you all find your seats.

—Please turn all cell phones and pagers **completely off** before the performance. If you are texting during the performance, you will be asked to leave.

—No photography or video taping.

—No eating, drinking, or chewing gum during the performance or inside the theatre house.

—While we encourage active listening and appropriate responses to the play such as laughing or clapping, please do not talk to your neighbors during the performance.

—Please stay in your seat until the intermission or the end of the show.

—Be polite and attentive. Show your appreciation by clapping—the actors love to see how much you enjoyed the show!

*PDE Academic Standards 1.6, 9.1*

## During reading activities

1. **“Two Hours Traffic:”** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* Prime Stage Theatre, like most theatre companies nowadays, made cuts to Shakespeare’s original script mainly in order to keep the time limit to “two hours traffic” to allow school groups to attend. But other theatre companies cut the script for different reasons, sometimes cutting characters or entire subplots of the story. As students are reading the play, ask them to think and reflect upon the following questions: What parts of the play would you cut? Which parts of the play are essential to telling the story? At what point does cutting the text change it so much from its original form that it becomes an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*? Next, assign a scene or act for the students to cut. Compare and contrast the different choices students made regarding cutting the script. If possible, read a few of the adaptations aloud to hear the differences.
2. **“Clothing makes the man:”** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1, 1.3; 9.1-9.4* Costumes in plays act in similar ways to the clothing choices we make every-day. They can tell us a person’s group (sports jerseys = a sports team), how much money a person has (Prada bags versus a knock-off at Wal-Mart), and a person’s lifestyle (Black leather jackets = associated with motorcyclists). Think about the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* and the families the characters belong to. Create your own costume designs for at least two (2) characters in the play using paper, pencils, and coloring utensils (markers, colored pencils, watercolors, etc.). Students have free reign as to where and in what time period they want to set the play in. Have students write “artist statements” that answer the following questions: How do you signify the different families in your costume choices? How do you show social status through their clothing? What other character traits from the individual characters inform your clothing choices?



*“A gloomy peace this morning with it brings...”*  
~Act 5, Scene 1, *Romeo and Juliet*

*I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an author is to be silent as to his works. An attack upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still even worse. ~author Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)*

**Read** the following questions before the show.

**Think** about the questions as you’re watching the show and write your answers in a notebook or journal during intermission or on the bus ride home.

**Write** a critique of the show based on your responses.

*PDE Academic Standards 9.1-9.4, 1.4-1.5*

1. **Actor choices**—How did they move and speak? Did they seem like people we know? How did they relate to other characters?
2. **Designer choices**—What design element captured your attention the most—the set, costumes, lights, or sound—and why? How did the design elements work together to support the entire production? What choices did the designers make in materials, colors, intensity, detail, etc.? Were the design elements more descriptive or suggestive? What symbols did you find in the design elements?
3. **Director choices**—What was the style, pace, and rhythm of the play? What stage pictures helped to tell the story? How did the director unify all the elements of the production?
4. **Interpretation**—Did the director make a statement about life now? How did the characters, design, and play make you feel? What did the play mean to you? What might it mean to others?
5. **Evaluation**—Why do you suppose the playwright wrote the play? Why was the play produced now? When were moments where the storytelling was very clear? When were moments you were confused about the story? Who would enjoy the play and why?
6. ***Romeo and Juliet* specific questions**—How were the two families differentiated in costumes and fighting? How did the fighting heighten your experience?

### Post Show Chat Session—come with questions!

After each matinee, audience members will be given an opportunity to chat with both select characters from *Romeo and Juliet* and with the actors themselves. Students should come prepared with questions, or they can submit them to the Education Director at [ahertzog@primestage.com](mailto:ahertzog@primestage.com). Please include first name and school in email.



## Post-Show Activities

1. **Who's at fault?** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* Establish a mock courtroom in your classroom. The case will explore the question of "Who's at fault?" for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Appoint a judge, select your jury, and assign roles to the key players: Montague, Lady Montague, Capulet, Lady Capulet, Friar Lawrence, Nurse, and their attorneys. Other witnesses (like Benvolio, the Prince, etc.) may be assigned depending upon the direction the case takes. Each person may be charged with an appropriate crime (negligence, murder, conspiracy, aiding and abetting illegal activities, providing drugs to a minor, assault, racketeering, etc.). Montague and Capulet should determine their defense positions with their respective attorneys, and each side may call up whatever witnesses/defendants they need to present their case. The jury must listen to all arguments and then decide who, if anyone, is at fault for the tragic deaths. The jury should deliberate and present their findings to the class. Lastly, the judge will determine the sentencing for those found guilty and explain his/her reasoning behind the sentences given. (adapted from the Guthrie Theatre study guide)
2. **R & J Rewind, Rewrite:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* Have students create their own version of *Romeo and Juliet*. They can update it to contemporary times (with contemporary names and language) or can transpose it to a different time or culture. Students should submit the following: a synopsis, a cast list, sample scene with dialogue and stage directions, costume and set design sketches and ideas, and an "artist statement" about what inspired their rewritten version of this classic. What was the original *Romeo and Juliet* lacking that that you added through your story? If time allows, share a few of the scenes with the entire class. (adapted from the Theatreworks USA study guide)
3. **2010 R & J Soundtrack:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6, 1.8; 9.1-9.4* Almost every other song on the radio is about love, and about half of these are about love gone wrong. Ask students to create a soundtrack of 5-8 different songs for the play. Students should think about what are the important moments in the play that should be underscored with music. They should also create "liner notes" for the soundtrack that outline why they chose certain songs for certain moments within the play. Students should turn in the lyrics to all the songs and, if possible, can burn their soundtracks onto CDs.
4. **Behind the Scenes:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* Have students write a scene between two characters that they think might have happened or should have happened during the course of the play that we did not see. For instance, a scene between Romeo and Paris or Juliet and Mercutio.
5. **Missing Letter:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.6* The letter from Friar Lawrence to Romeo gets lost in the delivery process, and the audience/reader never knows exactly what it says. Have students write this "missing letter." Then, have them write a new ending to the play that assumes that Romeo had received the letter. Do things still end happily for the couple? Does the feud still get reconciled in the end? (adapted from the Utah Shakespeare study guide)
6. **Animal Games:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.3, 1.6; 9.1* One technique that actors use to build a character is to think about what animal that character would be. The actor playing Tybalt has it easy in this case because Shakespeare provides the perfection animal description for Tybalt in the play: "the Prince of Cats." Have students consider what feline characteristics he has and if this is an accurate description of him. Next, have students assign an animal to the other characters based on their personality traits and behavior. They can then either draw the characters and incorporate these "animal traits" in their drawings or play a scene with the characters as their animals. What changes about the relationships between the characters when they behave like "animals?" (adapted from the Utah Shakespeare study guide)
7. **Role Reversal:** *PDE Academic Standards 1.1-1.3, 1.6; 9.1-9.4* Select scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* to assign to various groups of students. Some examples are the balcony scene and the Nurse and Juliet. The catch is: reverse the casting of all the roles, so boys are playing girls and girls are playing boys. Ask them to perform the scene pretending as if they are that character (and their gender). Rehearse and perform the scenes in class. Ask the students to discuss how changing the gender of the actors changed the dynamics and meaning of the scenes that they performed. How do our notions of gender determine the importance of some ideas over others in the play?

# Prime Stage Theatre

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## Discussion Questions

1. How did the older generation (Montague, Capulet) express their hatred for the opposing family? Compare their actions and words to their younger counterparts (Tybalt, Mercutio). How were they similar and different in their actions and words? What might account for these differences? Was either generation more effective than the other?
2. Our very first glimpse of Romeo is when he is head-over-heels in love with Rosaline, but within the span of one act he falls in love with Juliet. How are his feelings and his expression of those feelings for Juliet different from what he felt for Rosaline? How can you tell when you've met your one "true love?"
3. Neither Romeo nor Juliet ask their parents for help, but instead confide in other older people (Friar Laurence and the Nurse). Why do you think they made this choice? If they had told their parents, what do you think the outcome might have been?
4. The play's prologue immediately clues us into the idea of how fate seems to control the action in the play. Do you believe in fate, or do you think that we each control what happens to us? What choices did Romeo and Juliet make that led to their deaths, and what things happened over which they had no control? How did other people's actions influence their decisions? What other choices could they have made, and how might this have changed the outcome?
5. Consider other texts that feature protagonists in their adolescence (i.e., Ponyboy in *The Outsiders*). What parallels can you draw between *Romeo and Juliet* and these texts?  
*PDE Academic Standards 1.3, 1.6; 11.2*

## Resources for your Classroom

### BOOKS and RECOMMENDED READING

- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.
- David, James E. and Ronald E. Salomane, eds. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. National Council of Teachers of English: IL, 1993.
- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Kott, Jan. *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964.
- Malless, Stanley et. al. *Coined by Shakespeare*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1998.
- O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. Washington Square Press: New York, 1995.
- Rozett, Martha Tuck. *Talking Back to Shakespeare*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994.

### VIDEOS

- \*\*Videos can be found in the Carnegie Library system.\*\*
- Romeo + Juliet*. Baz Luhrmann, dir. 1996.
  - Romeo and Juliet*. Franco Zeffirelli, dir. 1968.
  - Romeo and Juliet: ballet in 3 acts*. Prokofiev, comp. 1968.
  - West Side Story*. Jerome Robbins, dir. 1961.

### CITED STUDY GUIDES

- "Romeo and Juliet" by the Guthrie Theatre, 2010. [www.guthrietheatre.org](http://www.guthrietheatre.org)
- "Romeo and Juliet" by Theatreworks USA, 2001. [www.theatreworksusa.org](http://www.theatreworksusa.org)
- "Romeo and Juliet" by the Acting Co., 2009. [www.theactingcompany.org](http://www.theactingcompany.org)
- "Romeo and Juliet" by Children's Theatre Co., 2008. [www.childrenstheatrecompany.org](http://www.childrenstheatrecompany.org)
- "Romeo and Juliet" by Utah Shakespeare, 2008. [www.bard.org](http://www.bard.org)

### SHAKESPEARE WEBSITES (lots of links!)

- "The Electronic Shakespeare"  
<http://www.wfu.edu/~tedforr/shakespeare/>
- "Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet"  
<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>
- "Online Shakespeare"  
<http://shakespeare-online.com>
- "Shakespeare's Globe"  
[www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)
- Folger Shakespeare Education  
[www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)

## Appendix —Shakespearean Insults

Choose one word from each column, prefaced by “Thou”

Column 1

artless  
bawdy  
beslubbering  
bootless  
churlish  
cockered  
clouted  
craven  
currish  
dankish  
dissembling  
droning  
errant  
fawning  
fobbing  
forward  
frothy  
gleeking  
goatish  
gorbellied  
impertinent  
infectious  
jarring  
loggerheaded  
lumpish  
mammering  
mangled  
mewling  
paunchy  
pribbling  
puking  
puny  
qualling  
rank  
reeky  
roguish  
ruttish  
saucy  
spleeny  
spongy  
surly  
tottering  
unmuzzled  
vain  
venomed  
villainous  
warped  
wayward  
weedy  
yeasty

Column 2

base-court  
bat-fowling  
beef-witted  
beetle-headed  
boil-brained  
clapper-clawed  
clay-brained  
common-kissing  
crook-pated  
dismal-dreaming  
dizzy-eyed  
doghearted  
dread-bolted  
earth-vexing  
elf-skinned  
fat-kidneyed  
fen-sucked  
flap-mouthed  
fly-bitten  
folly-fallen  
fool-born  
full-gorged  
guts-gripping  
half-faced  
hasty-witted  
hedge-born  
hell-hated  
idle-headed  
ill-breeding  
ill-nurtured  
knotty-pated  
milk-livered  
motley-minded  
onion-eyed  
plume-plucked  
pottle-deep  
pox-marked  
reeling-ripe  
rough-hewn  
rude-growing  
rump-fed  
shard-borne  
sheep-biting  
spur-galled  
swag-bellied  
tardy-gaited  
tickle-brained  
toad-spotted  
unchin-snouted  
weather-bitten

Column 3

apple-john  
baggage  
barnacle  
bladder  
boar-pig  
bugbear  
bum-bailey  
canker-blossom  
clack-dish  
clotpole  
coxcomb  
codpiece  
death-token  
dewberry  
flap-dragon  
flax-wench  
flirt-gill  
foot-licker  
fustilarian  
giglet  
gudgeon  
haggard  
harpy  
hedge-pig  
horn-beast  
hugger-mugger  
joithead  
lewdster  
lout  
maggot-pie  
malt-worm  
mammet  
measle  
minnow  
miscreant  
moldwarp  
mumble-news  
nut-hook  
pigeon-egg  
pignut  
puttock  
pumpion  
ratsbane  
scut  
skainsmate  
strumpet  
varlot  
vassal  
whey-face  
wagtail

*“Thou droning fat-kidneyed foot-licker!”*

*“Thou paunchy onion-eyed maggot-pie!”*

*“Thou lumpish common-kissing harpy!”*

*“Thou spongy idle-headed scut!”*

## Appendix —Extended Glossary

*Abroach*: to set a flow, unleash

*Adieu*: (French) Goodbye, farewell

*Alack*: an expression that indicates deep sorrow

*Ambiguities*: Uncertainties

*Anon*: soon

*Apothecary*: a pharmacist who prepares and sells drugs and medicines

*Aqua Vitae*: (Latin) “water of life,” aka alcohol, liquor, spirits

*Bier*: a platform where the dead are placed before burial

“*Bite My Thumb*”: an insulting gesture in Shakespeare’s time; like “flipping the bird”

*Bode*: sense of impending doom

*Canker*: malignant corrosion; to undermine

*Chaste/Chastity*: Of pure quality or nature; virginity

*Conjure*: 1. to call upon or entreat 2. to summon 3. to summon devil or spirit by incantation or oath

*Consort*: An associate in company

*Cupid*: the Roman mythological god of love

*Dian*: nickname for Diana, the Roman mythological goddess of the moon, hunting, and chastity

*Dissemblers*: a liar, cheat, fake

*Disparagement*: from verb “disparage,” belittling or demeaning comments

*Driveling*: foolish, doltish

*Ducats*: a value of coin formerly used in European countries

*Ensign*: a banner or sign

*Exile*: Enforced removal from one’s home country

*Fiddle-stick*: 1. a mild annoyance or disturbance 2. (sarcastically) a sword

*Garish*: extremely extravagant, gaudy, showy

*Grievance*: 1. a circumstance which causes one to protest 2. a complaint

*Humour*: a disposition, mood

*Idolatry*: 1. worship of idols, or false gods 2. blind or excessive adoration and love

## Appendix —Extended Glossary (continued)

*Inauspicious*: unfavorable

*Jocund*: cheery, sprightly, vibrant

*Lammas Eve*: a harvest holiday held in England, typically on the first of August

*Liege*: a lord or sovereign in feudal law

*Mantua*: a city-state in Italy that lies southwest of Verona

*Minstrels*: traveling Medieval musicians

*Penury*: destitution, poverty

*Perverse*: deviating from “right” or “good”

*Plait*: braids

*Poultice*: a healing compress

*Prorogue*: delay

*Purgatory*: in Catholicism, a place of perpetual suffering and remorse

*Queen Mab*: queen of the fairies

*Scourge*: 1. a whip used in punishment 2. inflicting vengeance 3. a widespread affliction, such as war

*Sepulchre*: grave, burial place, tomb

*Shrived*: to hear a confession and absolve, or forgive, sins of confessor

“*Soft*”: “wait a moment...”

*Surcease*: cease, stop

*Sweetmeats*: candied fruits

*Sycamore*: a European tree that looks like a Maple

*Transgressions*: violations of the law

*Trow*: trust, believe

*Vengeance*: act of punishing someone for wrongdoing or injury

*Verona*: a city-state in northern Italy, directly west of Venice

*Visage*: face or facial appearance

*Wot*: know

*Wretch*: a miserable, unfortunate person

## Appendix —Select Passages

### ROMEO

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she:

Be not her maid, since she is envious;

Her vestal livery is but sick and green

And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

It is my lady, O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?

~Act 2, Scene 2

### MERCUTIO

Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

### TYBALT

What wouldst thou have with me?

### MERCUTIO

Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives; that I mean to make bold withal, and as you shall use me hereafter, drybeat the rest of the eight. Will you pluck your sword out of his pitcher by the ears? make haste, lest mine be about your ears ere it be out.

### TYBALT

I am for you.

### ROMEO

Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

### MERCUTIO

Come, sir, your passado.

### ROMEO

Draw, Benvolio; beat down their weapons.  
Gentlemen, for shame, forbear this outrage!  
Tybalt, Mercutio, the prince expressly hath  
Forbidden bandying in Verona streets:  
Hold, Tybalt! good Mercutio!

### JULIET

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,  
From off the battlements of yonder tower;  
Or walk in thievish ways; or bid me lurk  
Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;  
Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,  
O'er-cover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,  
With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;  
Or bid me go into a new-made grave  
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;  
Things that, to hear them told, have made me  
tremble;  
And I will do it without fear or doubt,  
To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love.

~Act 4, Scene 1

### MERCUTIO

I am hurt.

A plague o' both your houses! I am sped.

Is he gone, and hath nothing?

### BENVOLIO

What, art thou hurt?

### MERCUTIO

Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch; marry, 'tis enough.

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

### ROMEO

Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

### MERCUTIO

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

### ROMEO

I thought all for the best.

### MERCUTIO

Help me into some house, Benvolio,

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

They have made worms' meat of me: I have it,

And soundly too: your houses!

~Act 3, Scene 1