

WILL POWER



EXPERIENCE GUIDE

EPISODE ONE

ROMEO AND JULIET

ROMEO AND JULIET - SUMMARY AND STAKES

Shakespeare's characters Romeo and Juliet have come to represent the very idea of young love. But the play itself is filled with more fighting and death than romance. It is a tragic story that warns of the life-or-death consequences that could happen when people allow petty grudges to guide their actions.

HOUSE OF CAPULET

CAPULET, head of the household, Juliet's dad

LADY CAPULET, Juliet's mom

JULIET, a thoughtful 13-year-old girl

TYBALT, Juliet's cousin

NURSE, Juliet's attendant

PETER, a servant to the Capulets

GREGORY, a servant to the Capulets

SAMPSON, a servant to the Capulets

ANTHONY, a servant to the Capulets

POTPAN, a servant to the Capulets

HOUSE OF MONTAGUE

MONTAGUE, head of the household, Romeo's dad

LADY MONTAGUE, Romeo's mom

ROMEO, an emotional 16-year-old boy

BENVOLIO, Romeo's cousin and friend

BALTHASAR, a servant to the Montagues

ABRAM, a servant to the Montagues

HOUSE OF ESCALUS

PRINCE ESCALUS, ruler of Verona

COUNT PARIS, kinsman of Escalus and wishes to marry Juliet

MERCUTIO, kinsman of Escalus and friend of Romeo

OTHER CHARACTERS

FRIAR LAURENCE, a Franciscan friar and Romeo's confidant

FRIAR JOHN, colleague of Friar Laurence

CHORUS, reads Act 1 and 2 Prologues

APOTHECARY, poor potion maker of Mantua

WATCHMEN, at the Capulet tomb

MUSICIANS

CITIZENS OF VERONA

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(April 23, 1564 - April 23, 1616)



William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright and actor, nicknamed "The Bard."

During his lifetime, Jamestown became the first British settlement in America.

He introduced over 3,000 words to the English language including "bedroom," "zany," "puking," "in a pickle," "eyeball," and "breaking the ice," "lackluster," and "one fell swoop."

Although he was one of the greatest writers of all time, his parents were illiterate, and he never attended a university.

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE The CHORUS delivers a 14-line sonnet that explains what will happen...

Two noble households in Verona are in a violent, long-standing feud. But their children, one from each household, will fall in love. Their love, destined in the stars, will end in death and finally bring an end to the fighting.

ACT ONE (Scene 1) Two Capulet servants, SAMPSON and GREGORY, are walking in Verona discussing their hatred for the Montagues. When ABRAM, a Montague servant walks by, Sampson starts a fight by biting his thumb at him (a very rude gesture!) The argument escalates and others begin to gather. BENVOLIO, a Montague, draws his sword to stop the fight. Then TYBALT, a hot-hotheaded Capulet draws his own sword. Even LORD MONTAGUE and LORD CAPULET threaten to attack each other. But their wives, LADY MONTAGUE and LADY CAPULET hold them back. Finally, PRINCE ESCALUS arrives. He declares the death sentence for anyone who fights again. Everyone leaves but the Montagues and Benvolio. The Montagues are concerned that their son, Romeo, has been too melancholy lately. When ROMEO approaches, Benvolio promises to find out what the problem is, and the Montagues exit. Romeo reveals to Benvolio that he is in love with Rosaline, but she is not in love with him. **(Scene 2)** Elsewhere in Verona, PARIS tells Capulet that he would like to marry his daughter Juliet. Capulet happily agrees, but says Juliet is only thirteen years old and Paris must wait two years. He invites Paris to attend a masquerade party at his home that night so he may woo Juliet himself. Capulet gives his servant, PETER, a list of people to invite. But after Capulet and Paris leave, Peter reveals he can't read! Romeo and Benvolio happen to pass, and Peter asks Romeo to read the list for him. Benvolio hatches a plan to crash the Capulet party so Romeo can meet other girls and get over Rosaline. **(Scene 3)** In the Capulet's house, JULIET and her NURSE are preparing for the party. Lady Capulet encourages Juliet to consider marrying Paris, and Juliet says she will see what she thinks of him at the party. **(Scene 4)** Romeo, Benvolio and their friend MERCUTIO are masked and waiting with other guests to sneak into the Capulet party. Romeo tells them he had a dream that this night would lead to a deathly act of fate. But Mercutio teases him and blames the dream on the fairy Queen Mab. **(Scene 5)** Inside, the party is popping! Romeo spots Juliet from across the room, instantly forgets Rosaline, and declares that he finally understands what love is. Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice and gets ready to attack him, but Capulet tells him not to start a fight at his feast. Tybalt backs down, but vows vengeance on Romeo. Meanwhile, Romeo has approached Juliet and they kiss. The Nurse tells Juliet that her mother wishes to speak with her. Romeo asks who Juliet's mother is and learns the devastating news that Juliet is a Capulet. Later, Juliet asks the Nurse to find out the names of the young men at the party and she learns that she is in love with a Montague.

ACT TWO (Prologue) The Chorus explains that although the hatred between the families is strong, the love between Romeo and Juliet gives them courage to overcome their obstacles. **(Scene 1)** After the party, Romeo decides he must see Juliet again. He leaves Benvolio and Mercutio (who assume he's still pining for Rosaline) and climbs the Capulet's garden wall. **(Scene 2)** Juliet appears at the window above Romeo, and from his hiding place, he compares her to the sun. He overhears her declare her love for him and her willingness to refuse her family name for his sake. Romeo steps from the shadows and declares his love for Juliet too. She is cautious about moving too fast, and they make plans to see each other the next day. **(Scene 3)** The next morning, Romeo visits FRIAR LAURENCE, tells him of his newfound love for Juliet, and asks him to marry them that day. The Friar comments on Romeo's fickle change of heart, but agrees to marry them anyway in the hopes that it might end the family feud. **(Scene 4)** Romeo returns home to find Mercutio and Benvolio speculating what had happened to him the night before (and saying some very mean things about Tybalt.) The Nurse interrupts, asking for Romeo. Mercutio and Benvolio hurl rude jokes at the Nurse and then leave. Romeo tells the Nurse to send Juliet to confession with Friar Laurence that afternoon, and there they will get married. **(Scene 5)** The Nurse returns to a very anxious Juliet and tells her the plan. **(Scene 6)** Later that afternoon, Juliet meets Romeo at Friar Laurence's cell, and they are married.

SYNOPSIS (CONT.)

ACT THREE (Scene 1) Benvolio and Mercutio are walking on a very hot day. They fear there could be a fight. Sure enough, Tybalt appears with other Capulets, and he and Mercutio begin exchanging insults. Romeo enters and Tybalt calls him a villain. But Romeo will not draw his sword, saying that he has reason to love Tybalt. Mercutio is annoyed that Romeo won't fight, so he steps in to fight Tybalt himself. Romeo steps between the two to stop the fight, but Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm. As Mercutio dies, he curses them, "A plague o'both your houses." Out of grief and anger at his friend's death, Romeo draws his sword and kills Tybalt. Romeo flees as onlookers gather. Benvolio tries to explain to the Prince that Romeo tried to stop the fight. But the Prince exiles Romeo from Verona. If he is seen within the city, he will be killed. **(Scene 2)** Juliet waits for Romeo to visit her on their wedding night. But the Nurse enters, dramatically recounting the deadly brawl. Juliet begs the Nurse to deliver a ring to Romeo's hiding place. **(Scene 3)** Romeo is hiding at Friar Laurence's cell. The nurse delivers the ring, and they all plan that Romeo will visit Juliet that night and flee before the sun rises. **(Scene 4)** Meanwhile, Lord and Lady Capulet talk with Paris and decide to speed up his marriage to Juliet. It is Monday and they plan to hold the wedding on Thursday. **(Scene 5)** Before the sun rises the next morning, Romeo and Juliet bid an emotional farewell before Romeo flees to Mantua. As he exits, Lady Capulet enters and tells Juliet that her wedding to Paris will take place on Thursday. Juliet refuses. Lord Capulet enters and threatens to disown her if she disobeys. After they leave, the Nurse suggests that Juliet should just marry Paris. Juliet feels betrayed and she hurries off to see if Friar Laurence will help her instead.

ACT FOUR (Scene 1) Paris is speaking with Friar Laurence about his upcoming marriage to Juliet. When Juliet enters, she treats Paris indifferently and says she must go to confession. After Paris leaves, Juliet tells the Friar that she would rather kill herself than marry Paris. The Friar tells Juliet to pretend to go along with the wedding, but the night before the wedding to take a potion that will make her appear dead. The family will place her in the tomb, then Romeo will return and take her back to Mantua with him. Juliet agrees with the plan **(Scene 2)** and returns home with the sleeping potion. She tells her parents that she will agree to marry Paris, and Capulet moves the wedding up one more day – to Wednesday. **(Scene 3)** Alone in her chamber, Juliet takes the sleeping potion. **(Scene 4-5)** Early the next morning, her family finds Juliet "dead" in the middle of their wedding preparations. The Friar consoles them, and they begin to plan a funeral instead.

ACT FIVE (Scene 1) The same morning, Romeo is in Mantua. Balthasar enters to tell him that Juliet has died. Romeo is distraught and tells Balthasar to go hire horses so he may return to Verona. Romeo goes to the apothecary to buy a vial of poison so he can join Juliet in death that night. **(Scene 2)** Friar Laurence is in his cell talking with FRIAR JOHN, whom he had sent to deliver a message to Romeo about Juliet's false death. But Friar John explains that he was unable to deliver the letter because he was quarantined due to an outbreak of the plague. Friar Laurence sends another letter to Romeo and plans to rescue Juliet from her tomb himself that night. **(Scene 3)** In the churchyard, Paris enters to offer flowers at Juliet's tomb. He hides as Romeo approaches but recognizes him as the one who had murdered Tybalt. Paris confronts him and although Romeo begs him to leave, they fight and Paris is mortally wounded. Before dying, Paris asks to be laid in the tomb near Juliet and Romeo agrees. Romeo brings Paris' dead body into the tomb and sees Juliet lying peacefully. He kisses her, then takes his poison and dies. Juliet wakes up and realizes that both Romeo and Paris are dead. She kisses Romeo to try to poison herself, but ultimately takes his dagger and stabs herself. In the churchyard, the families, townspeople and Prince arrive. The Friar reveals Romeo and Juliet's secret marriage. The families finally decide to end their rivalry and each family agrees to erect a golden statue in honor of the other's lost child. Prince Escalus proclaims, "For never was a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In Verona, Prince Escalus sees that the fighting between the Montagues and Capulets has become extremely dangerous for all the citizens in the city. The problem has become so serious that he declares the death sentence for anyone caught fighting. But the fighting has personal consequences as well as legal ones. Romeo and Juliet act desperately and foolishly because of all the obstacles the family fighting places in their way.



Imagine situations in today's world in which there might be long-standing bad feelings between individuals or groups in society.

What consequences still exist today when people or groups hold grudges and don't communicate with each other?

A TRAGEDY TOLD MANY WAYS

If you look up “list of films based on *Romeo and Juliet*” on [Wikipedia](#), you'll find a list of 45 “direct adaptations” of the play starting in 1908 and ending in 2021. There are also 113 “other adaptations,” including *Shakespeare in Love*, *Gnome & Juliet*, *West Side Story*, and *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride*.

How would you adapt *Romeo and Juliet* to a modern time and place?

Who might be the rival groups?

What obstacles would stand in the lovers' way?

Would you keep the tragic ending or make it a happy ending? Why?

Write a short summary of your adaptation idea. What new insights do you gain about the story when you think about how to retell it your own way?



W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.



WILL POWER TEAM:

Crystal Marie Stewart, Actor, video production, curriculum development

Christina Farrell, Curriculum development, stop motion animation

Rob Merritt, Video editing and production

Adam Knight, Riverside Theatre Producing Artistic Director

Irena Sarić, Riverside Theatre Managing Director

ACTORS:

Crystal Marie Stewart: Mercutio (Act 3.1), Juliet (Act 2.2)

Aaron Stonerook: Tybalt (Act 3.1), Romeo (Act 2.2)

Christina Sullivan: Benvolio (Act 3.1)

Ray Vanek: Romeo (Act 3.1)

Kevin Michael Moore, Fight Choreographer

Thank you to the **TCR Costume Department!**