



# Romeo and Juliet

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

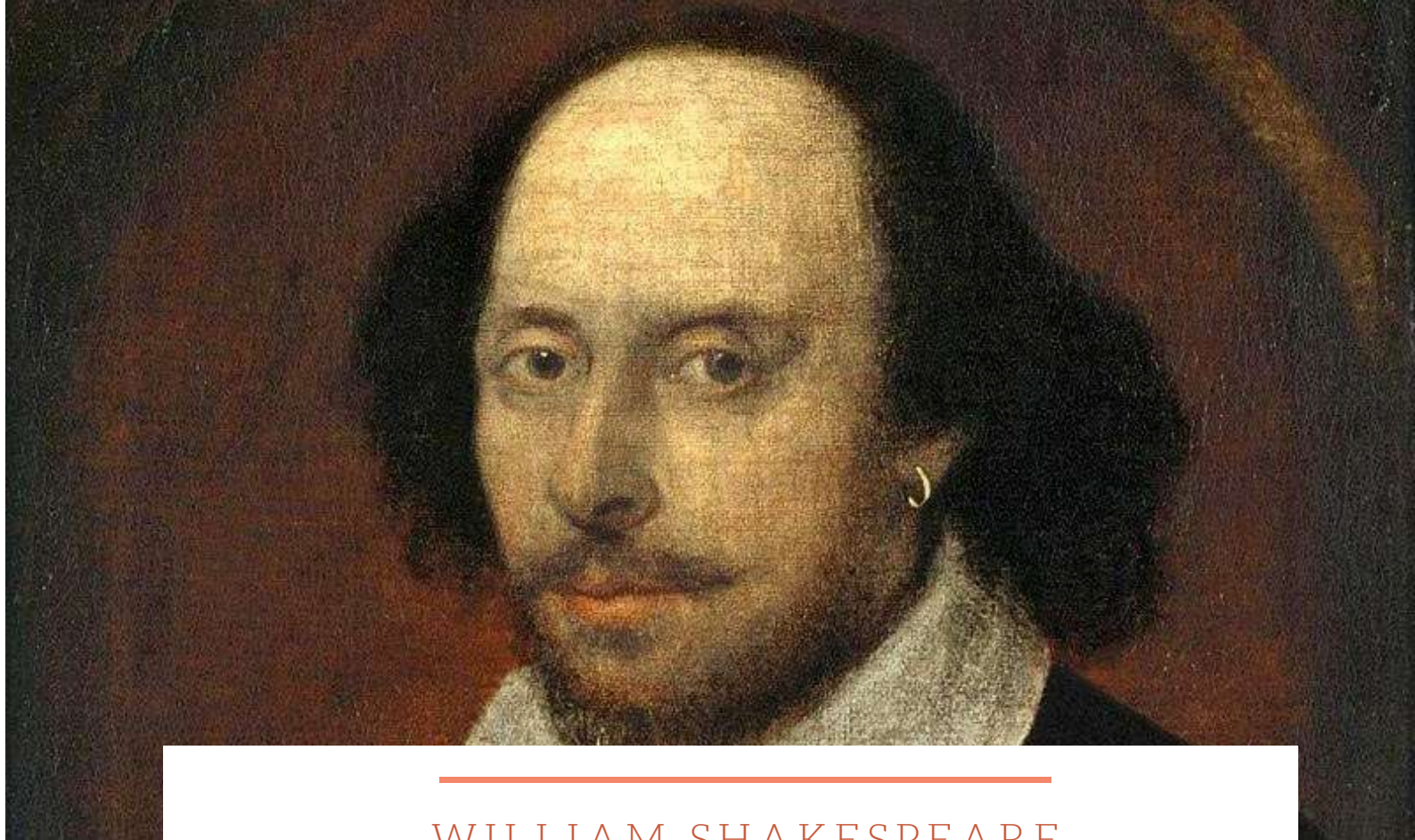
*Directed by Paul Stebbings*

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*Didactic Material*  
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## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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**William Shakespeare** (1564-1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was a successful local businessman and his mother was the daughter of a landowner. Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and nicknamed the Bard of Avon. He wrote about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, of which the authorship of some is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

There is no record of his birth, but his baptism was recorded by the church, thus his birthday is assumed to be the 23 of April. His father was a prominent and prosperous alderman in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, and was later granted a coat of arms by the College of Heralds. All that is known of Shakespeare's youth is that he presumably attended the Stratford Grammar School, and did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge.

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. She was eight years older than him. They had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith.

## Career

After his marriage there is very little information about his life. But he is thought to have spent most of his time in London writing and performing in his plays. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part-owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men.

Seven years later Shakespeare was recognized as an actor, poet, and playwright, when a rival playwright, Robert Greene, referred to him as “an upstart crow” in *A Groatworth of Wit*. A few years later he joined up with one of the most successful acting troupes in London called “The Lord Chamberlain's Men”. When, in 1599, the troupe lost the lease of the theatre where they performed (appropriately called “The Theatre”), they were wealthy enough to build their own theatre across the Thames, south of London, which they called “The Globe”. The new theatre opened in July of 1599, built from the timbers of “The Theatre”, with the motto “Totus mundus agit histrionem” (En. A whole world of players). When James I came to the throne (1603) the troupe was designated by the new king as the “King's Men” (or “King's Company”). The Letters Patent of the company specifically charged Shakespeare and eight others “freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Interludes, Morals, Pastorals, stage plays... as well for recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure.”



SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

## His Work

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories and these works remain regarded as some of the best work produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights. Shakespeare's plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Shakespeare entertained the King and the people for another ten years until June 19, 1613, when a cannon fired from the roof of the theatre for a gala performance of *Henry VIII* set fire to the thatched roof and burned the theatre to the ground. The audience ignored the smoke from the roof at first, being too absorbed in the play, until the flames caught the walls and the fabric of the curtains. Amazingly there were no casualties, and the next spring the company had the theatre “new builded in a far fairer manner than before.” Although Shakespeare invested in the rebuilding, he retired from the stage to the *Great House of New Place* in Statford that he had purchased in 1597, and some considerable land holdings, where he continued to write.

## Retirement and Death

Around 1613, at the age of 49, he retired to Stratford, where he died three years later. Few records of Shakespeare's private life survive. He died on 23 April 1616, at the age of 52. He died within a month of signing his will, a document which he begins by describing himself as being in “perfect health”. In his will, Shakespeare left the bulk of his large estate to his elder daughter Susanna.



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## SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

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### TRAGEDIES

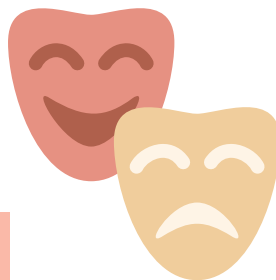
*Antony and Cleopatra*  
*Coriolanus*  
*Hamlet*  
*Julius Caesar*  
*King Lear*  
*Macbeth*  
*Othello*  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
*Timon of Athens*  
*Titus Andronicus*

### COMEDIES

*All's Well That Ends Well*  
*As You Like It*  
*The Comedy of Errors*  
*Cymbeline*  
*Love's Labour's Lost*  
*Measure for Measure*  
*The Merchant of Venice*  
*Merry Wives of Windsor*  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*Much Ado About Nothing*  
*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*  
*The Taming of the Shrew*  
*The Tempest*  
*Troilus and Cressida*  
*Twelfth Night*  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona*  
*The Winter's Tale*

### HISTORIES

*King Henry IV Part 1*  
*King Henry IV Part 2*  
*King Henry V*  
*King Henry VI Part 1*  
*King Henry VI Part 2*  
*King Henry VI Part 3*  
*King Henry VIII*  
*King John*  
*Richard II*  
*Richard III*



### POETRY

*A Lover's Complaint*  
*Sonnets 1-30*  
*Sonnets 121-154*  
*Sonnets 31-60*  
*Sonnets 61-90*  
*Sonnets 91-120*  
*The Passionate Pilgrim*  
*The Phoenix and the Turtle*  
*The Rape of Lucrece*  
*Venus and Adonis*

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

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*ROMEO AND JULIET* is neither a classical tragedy nor even a traditional romance. It is a play that has become a myth, and the myth obscures the play. Great ballets, musicals and films have transformed the original beyond recognition. In approaching this most famous fiction a director must take care not to dramatise what the audience think *ROMEO AND JULIET* should be, but what was written on the page two hundred years before Romanticism changed our culture.

First we might ask what the play is not. It is not a tragedy because the central characters do not suffer from “hubris”, the fatal flaw that Aristotle defined and Shakespeare elaborated. Neither Romeo nor Juliet suffer from Macbeth’s ambition or Lear’s selfish rage, let alone Othello’s jealousy or Hamlet’s moral indecision. Romeo kills Tybalt but only after failing to pacify him, and in revenge for the murder of his dear friend. Certainly no Elizabethan audience would call him guilty. Juliet only defies her father after she marries Romeo, when legally and morally Romeo has become her Lord. (Indeed the audience are told that she has the right to reject Paris in Act 1).

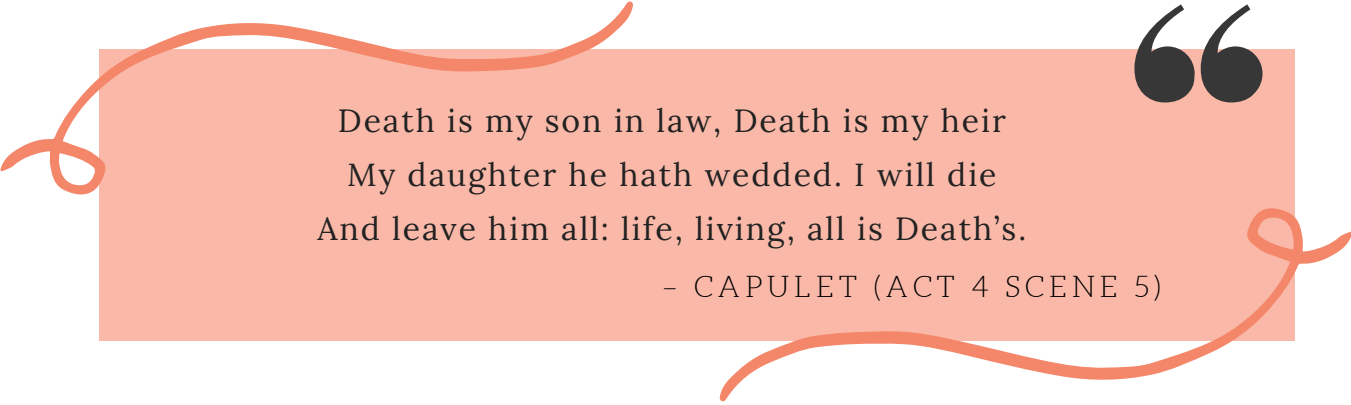
The play is often surprisingly unromantic, *ROMEO AND JULIET* have only two scenes in the entire long play when they are alive and alone. Love itself is parodied as much as worshipped, the fullest and most complex characters in the play – Mercutio and the Nurse – are both pragmatists who mock love or treat it as an adjunct of sex. The entire play might easily be a comedy, in fact it follows the pattern of classical and Shakespearian comedy right up until the death of Mercutio.

If it were not for the entirely (it seems) accidental plague that prevents the Friar’s letter reaching Mantua then there is no reason why Juliet should not live happily ever after with her Romeo.

We suggest that the proper answer to the problem of how to understand and therefore stage *ROMEO AND JULIET* lies in its poetic form. The entire play is constructed as a sonnet. The love sonnet was the publishing phenomenon of the 1590's. Shakespeare himself made his name as the author of sonnets.

This play explores the form and themes of both classical and Elizabethan sonnets. The play opens with a sonnet and Romeo and Juliet first speak within a sonnet. The text uses more rhyme than any other of his plays. The form of the sonnet is also a form where endings often contradict beginnings, and this is surely influences the structure of the play – which of course ends with a famous rhyme – just as every sonnet ends with an emphatic rhyming couplet.

Poetry allows us to approach the content of the play symbolically, rather than force it into a realistic mould. The plot has considerable weaknesses when viewed as realism (not just the accidental nondelivery of the letter but also the crucial failure of Juliet to simply go to Mantua to her Lord and husband rather than return to her family in Act 4 – she is already out of the house!). Poetry works through image and symbol. The key may be the third symbolic protagonist, unseen but ever present: Death.



“  
Death is my son in law, Death is my heir  
My daughter he hath wedded. I will die  
And leave him all: life, living, all is Death's.

- CAPULET (ACT 4 SCENE 5)



And Romeo's last despairing jealous call:

“Death has sucked the honey of they breath!”

Death is Juliet's last lover and both she and Romeo's last word is “die”.

If the plague in Mantua is not a dramatist's easy way out but a symbolic stroke of Death the play starts to make sense. Death is present from the first bloody street fight until the last graveyard scene. We have chosen to personify Death, to explore the conflict not between different clans or even races but between love and death, Eros and Thanatos. Death unites the different themes and conflicts within the play, and even Mercutio's “gallows humour” revels in death, at his own end he will become a “grave man”. But the play is no simple melodrama where Love and Death are good and evil. Death is seductive, a lover as well as an enemy. The poetry of the play allows the symbol to expand and create an image of all-consuming commitment and even erotic power. (“To die” is Elizabethan usage for orgasm – see Dowland's song above). Juliet captures this in perhaps the play's most startling image:

Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night

– JULIET (ACT 3 SCENE 2)

The intensity of Romeo and Juliet's love courts death and is sealed by it. Death freezes the Lover's impossible passion in its moment of perfect commitment, as Romeo notes the last time he sees his love alive:

“Come Death and welcome, Juliet wills it so”

Death's triumph is however hollow, the lover's deaths redeem their sinning fathers and indeed the entire city. Montague promises the lovers will rise as statues in pure gold. And here the poetic symbolism develops into the religious. Like Christ, Romeo and Juliet triumph over death by passing through it to a type of immortality, an immortality that brings forgiveness and peace. This is the symbolic greatness of the play, the culmination of its poetic form and the goal of our production:

“  
The which, if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall we miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

- ACT 1 PROLOGUE



ROMEO AND JULIET BY FORD MADOX BROWN (1821-1893)

## THE SONNET CRAZE AND *ROMEO AND JULIET* OR: ROCK&ROLL POETRY OF THE 16TH CENTURY

The sonnet was the most popular form of Elizabethan poetry and writing this style of poetry was where Shakespeare made his name before he was known as playwright.

The form and content of *ROMEO AND JULIET* is that of a typical sonnet. The Prologue to the play is a sonnet; the Prologue to Act 2 is a sonnet; and the first fourteen lines of the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet (beginning with Romeo's "If I profane with my unworhiest hand") are shared as a sonnet.

In addition, Romeo's love-longing for Rosaline seems to be borrowed directly from the eternally suffering lover portrayed over and over in sonnets. The Italian poet Petrarch was the supreme master of the Renaissance sonnet. Petrarch was hopelessly in love with a woman called Laura, who rejected his advances and sent him into creative despair. Shakespeare takes the rather outrageous risk of putting Petrarch into the play.

Mercutio's greets his love-sick friend Romeo:

Here comes Romeo... <...>

Without his roe, like a dried herring: O flesh,  
flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers  
that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was a  
kitchen-wench; marry, she had a better love to  
be-rhyme her; Dido a dowdy; Cleopatra a gipsy;

- MERCUTIO (ACT 2 SCENE 4)

Shakespeare via the master of wit and wordplay, Mercutio, is mocking Petrarch as someone who writes poetry by “numbers” because of the fixed rules of rhyme that define the sonnet: there should be ten lines of poetry. The first eight lines rhyme every second line and the last two lines (a couplet) rhyme with each other. Mercutio is also mocking Romeo for suffering for Rosaline as Petrarch suffers for Laura.

Romeo without his “roe” is “me O,” as in “O, me O, woe is me”; and a person who is wasting away looks as thin as a fish without roe (and a “dried herring” is the thinnest). The point is that Romeo’s forelorn love for Rosaline is killing him, body and soul. Mercutio’s next point is that Romeo is about to burst into love poetry (“numbers”) of the kind that Petrarch wrote about Laura. The reference to Petrarch is in effect a reference to the hundreds of sonnets which were popular in Shakespeare’s time, because Petrarch was considered to be the father of all sonnets.

The sonnet was the most popular kind love poetry of Shakespeare’s time, and love poetry in general was extremely popular. The craze for sonnets began in 1557, with publication by Richard Tottel of *SONGES AND SONNETTES*. Tottel sold all he printed, and issued another edition less than two months later. The book is mentioned by a character in Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was written at about the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*.

The star poet of Tottel’s book, the Earl of Surrey, created the English sonnet form by modifying Petrarch’s sonnet form. The form which Surrey created (three quatrains in alternate rhyme and a concluding couplet) is easier to write in English than the Italian form, which has a more complicated rhyme scheme.

Surrey also borrowed his subject-matter from Petrarch. Petrarch wrote sonnets about his eternal, helpless, hopeless love for Laura; Surrey translated some of Petrarch’s sonnets and wrote his own in the same vein. Following is one of Surrey’s sonnets. Romeo echoes these sentiments early on when he talks about his hopeless love for Rosalyn.

Below is one of the Earl of Surrey’s hot selling sonnets:



## A COMPLAINT BY NIGHT OF THE LOVER NOT BELOVED

Alas! so all things now do hold their peace!  
 Heaven and earth disturbed in no thing  
 The beasts, the air, the birds their song do cease,  
 The night's car the stars about do bring.  
 Calm is the sea. The waves work less and less:  
 So am not I, whom love, alas! doth wring,  
 Bringing before my face the great increase  
 Of my desires, whereat I weep and sing,  
 In joy and woe, as in a doubtful case.  
 For my sweet thoughts sometime do pleasure bring;  
 But by and by, the cause of my disease  
 Gives me a pang, that inwardly doth sting,  
 When that I think what grief it is again,  
 To live and lack the thing should rid my pain.

- HENRY HOWARD,  
 EARL OF SURREY

So great is my sorrow that all is silent  
 Nothing disturbs Heaven and earth  
 The beasts, the air, the birds are quiet  
 Even the moon does not move in the sky  
 The sea is calm. The waves roll less and less  
 Only I am not at peace, who love does torture  
 How can I face this great passion?  
 This rising desire for my true love?  
 I cry, I sing - caught between joy and sadness  
 Sometimes sweet thoughts bring pleasure to me  
 But soon the cause of my love-sickness returns  
 Giving me stinging pain, deep in my heart  
 When I think what sadness it is again  
 To live and be rejected by her who gives me pain.

- MODERN TRANSLATION  
 BY PAUL STEBBINGS

To return to the first conversation between Romeo and Juliet, the actual poetic structure follows that of the classic English sonnet: fourteen lines and ten syllables in each line.

The rhyme scheme is structured as follows:

The first eight lines - A-B-A-B-C-D-C-D;

The following four lines - E-F-E-F;

The final couplet - G-G.

In one sense the entire play is a long sonnet - ending in a couplet that reconciles the conflicts and pain that go before.

Now look at Romeo and Juliet's first dialogue at the ball:

“

**ROMEO**

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

**JULIET**

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
 Which mannerly devotion shows in **this**;  
 For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
 And palm to palm is holy palmers' **kiss**.

**ROMEO**

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

**JULIET**

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in **prayer**.

**ROMEO**

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;  
 They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to **despair**.

**JULIET**

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

**ROMEO**

Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.  
 Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is **purged**. [They kiss]

**JULIET**

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

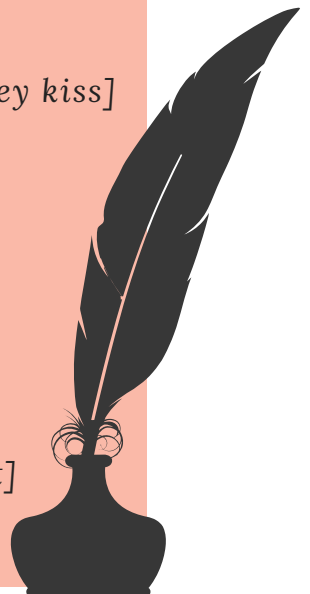
**ROMEO**

Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly **urged**!  
 [end of sonnet] Give me my sin again.

**JULIET**

You kiss by the book. [The kiss again – led by Juliet]

- ACT 1 SCENE 5



Here is the modern version translated by the director Paul Stebbings:

“

**ROMEO**

If I do not respect the holy hand of yours that now I touch  
My lips are ready, like a Pilgrim at a church  
To ask forgiveness for my rough hand  
With a gentle kiss.

**JULIET**

Good pilgrim you are unkind to your hand which is not rough  
Your hand may stay on mine to make the sign  
Of a prayer, palm to palm, as saints pray.

**ROMEO**

But Saints have lips as well as hands that pray

**JULIET**

Yes lips that move to say prayers

**ROMEO**

Then dear Saint. Let my lips do what holy hands do  
Let my lips meet yours or else I will lose my faith in love

**JULIET**

A saint would never lose their faith

**ROMEO**

Then let my faith be kept and my prayer be answered  
My sin can only be taken from my lips by your lips. *[They kiss.]*

**JULIET**

Now I have sinned, taking sin from your lips to mine.

**ROMEO**

Sin from my lips? That is a sweet crime. *[end of sonnet]*  
Give me my sin back and kiss again.

**JULIET**

You kiss by the rule book! *[the kiss again – led by Juliet].*

- ACT 1 SCENE 5

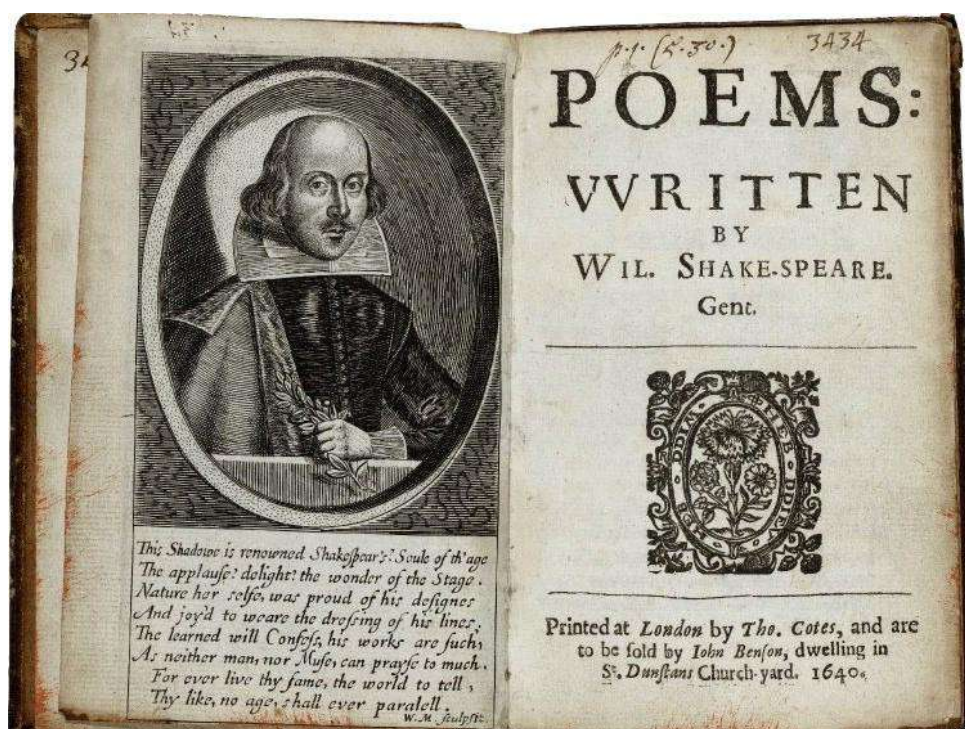
Palm = inside of the hand | Sin = crime against religion | Trespass = forbidden act  
Purged = taken away | Urged = persuaded.

This follows that of the classic English sonnet: fourteen lines and ten syllables in each line. In one sense the entire play *Romeo and Juliet*, is a long sonnet.

We might even compare it to the first “Rock Operas” by *the Who* or “Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” by *the Beatles* – where artists took popular short forms and made something new and original by expanding the popular short work of art into a longer piece with a linked storyline.

Remember that Shakespeare’s *ROMEO AND JULIET* was written when his main income was from ticket sales to a wide public. Later Royal patronage became important but at this time Shakespeare needed to pay the bills at the Globe (where he was a shareholder) by getting those pennies into the boxes, the box office – which the Globe created.

So sonnets were the *rock and roll* of the day. Just as young people in the 1960’s queued up to get the latest *Beatles* single off the press, so the young hipsters of 16th century London queued up to get the latest sonnets hot of the press. And being able to write sonnets was considered an important part of standard romance for anyone who could read. A sad ballad by Adele or Ed Sheeran are close to Shakespeare’s sonnets in their popularity and impact. Shakespeare is the most universal of artists and proves that we share a common humanity, where art and frustrated love go hand in hand through the ages.





## KEY QUOTES FOR THE CHARACTERS IN ROMEO AND JULIET

### ROMEO

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;  
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;  
Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears:  
What is it else? a madness most discreet,  
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.

“

Gall = vinegar  
Vex'd = angry  
Fume = flame



### JULIET

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.

“

### MERCUTIO

If love be rough with you, be rough with love;  
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.

“

→ love →

Kin = family  
Stock = reputation



### TYBALT

This, by his voice, should be a Montague.  
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,  
To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin.

“

“

**FRIAR LAURENCE**

Within the infant rind of this small flower  
 Poison hath residence and medicine power:  
 Two such opposed kings encamp them still  
 In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;



*Infant rind = young skin*  
*Encamp = find inside*  
*Rude will = violent passion*

“

*An you be = because you are*  
*Give you = marry you*

**CAPULET**

God's bread! it makes me mad:...  
 Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise:  
 An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;  
 And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets.

“

**NURSE**

I am a-weary, give me leave awhile:  
 Fie, how my bones ache! what a jaunt have I had!

**JULIET**

I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news:  
 Nay, come, I pray thee, speak; good, good nurse, speak.

**NURSE**

Jesu, what haste? Can you not stay awhile?  
 Do you not see that I am out of breath?

**JULIET**

How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath  
 To say to me that thou art out of breath?



*Weary = tired*  
*Jaunt = wild journey*  
*Stay awhile = wait a little*

## A NOTE ON SHAKESPEARE AND COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

The Italian comedy or *commedia dell'arte* was a powerful influence on Shakespeare – it is easy to forget how new the English theatre was in the late 1500's. It is best compared to the cinema of the 1920's than, for example, the English novel (which developed slowly).

The young Shakespeare might only have seen amateur religious drama and local folk plays. The only professional performance style he could have seen or been told about was *commedia dell'arte*. His early plays such as *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* or *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS* literally quote this Italian form (such as the naming of the foolish old lover as a “Pantolon” in *SHREW* – Pantalone being a stock character of *Commedia*). The serenading of a lover on her night time balcony was a standard scene in *commedia*, where there are two stock characters simply called “the Lovers”.

Mercutio is surely a type of Harlequin. The masked ball is the central event of the first half. The word “mask” is a central metaphor in the play. All Italian comedy was masked. Masks turn performers into symbols – but symbols with life – the masks in the play form a visual parallel to the heavy symbolism and overt poetry in the text. This symbolism is surely the key to *ROMEO AND JULIET* – the most formal of all Shakespeare's plays. Formal because it is constructed exactly like a sonnet. We have tried to explore *commedia dell'arte* within this play both to provide a sense of the Italian spirit, with its passion for pictures, statues and images and its marvellous stylised energy – a poetry in motion that is suited to this great poetic drama.



## HISTORICAL SETTINGS

Shakespeare was fascinated by History and of course divided his own works into histories, tragedies and comedies on his title pages. When he wishes, he can stay close to his favourite historical sources - Plutarch's Roman Lives and Holinshed's British Histories.

However, Shakespeare was writing theatre not dramatised documentaries, his use of history is poetic and dramatic - his best historical writing in, say, HENRY IV and MACBETH strays well away from documented fact. At the Globe this symbolic approach to the past was visually very much in evidence. Just as there was no specific scenery for any one production, so the costume store of the Globe would have been used by all productions; a piece of armour for Julius Caesar might double up as one for Hamlet's very contemporary ghost (Renaissance painting applies the same laxity to historical scenes).

It is curious that most modern settings for Shakespeare follow a pattern set during the late 19th century and fix the visual in a precise historical frame at the expense of symbolic and poetic impact. In our own production we aim for a mix of Elizabethan, later Baroque and contemporary music, masks and costumes in order to explore the dense imagery of the original. Just as Shakespeare's Verona is not a Verona that any traveller would recognise (no Arena for example!) but a gorgeous chaotic symbol of a world in one city - as Romeo says:

There is no world without Verona walls,  
But purgatory, torture, hell itself.

- ROMEO (ACT 3 SCENE 3)

This is clearly not Italy he is talking about! So our Italy, in this production, is the densest Italy we can conjure – the Italy of Casanova, Don Juan, Caravaggio, Bernini and Harlequino – but also an Italy perceived through the English imagination. We doubt that Shakespeare ever went to Italy – but it was the USA of his day, the cultural dream world.

Our English music sets this Italian Dream, just as that very music was rooted in Palestrina and the Italian composers who created the sound we call “classical”. As discussed above *Commedia dell’arte* freed Shakespeare and his contemporaries from the simplicities of the English religious drama they saw in their youth. But to return to our own production, we too cannot ignore the passing of time, our own image of classical Italy is not the “doublet and hose” of Elizabethan England but the flowing cloaks and masks of the Venetian Carnival (Venice by the way ruled Verona for three hundred years). The Baroque began in Italy, the statues and symbols that we turn to for inspiration are above all Italian – products of a Golden Age that lasted from the Florence of the Medici to French Revolution. Our Italy is an Italy of the imagination, we can only apologise to those who wish it were a real place.



SHAKESPEARE BEFORE SIR THOMAS LUCY IN THE HALL OF CHARLECOTE.  
OIL ON CANVAS BY THOMAS BROOKS, 1857.  
PICTURE RETRIEVED FROM: RSC THEATRE COLLECTION

## GAMES AND QUESTIONNAIRES

- 1** Link each character to the adjectives which correspond to her/his identity. The same adjective can be associated to more than one character.

ROMEO



JULIET



MERCUTIO



TYBALT



FRIAR LAURENCE



CAPULET



NURSE



naive

sly

relentless

charming

utmost

bumbling

practical

disenchanted

impartial

belligerent

intrepid

caring

romantic

rich

rebellious

clumsy

powerful

- 2** After reading the following quotes from *ROMEO AND JULIET* try to locate them in the play. Explain the meaning of each quote in its context and make sure you indicate which character pronounces these words in the play.

“

“My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words  
Of thy tongue’s uttering, yet I know the sound”

“

“A hall, a hall, give room, and foot it, girls!”

“

“Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone;  
We have a trifling foolish banquet towards”

“

“There’s no trust,  
No faith, no honesty in men; all perjured,  
All forsworn, all naught, all dissemblers”

“

“Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee  
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage  
To such a greeting. Villain am I none”

“

“O comfortable friar, where is my lord?  
I do remember well where I should be:  
And there I am. Where is my Romeo?”

**3** Complete the following quotes from the play **ROMEO AND JULIET**.

1. Two households, both alike in \_\_\_\_\_  
In fair \_\_\_\_\_, where we lay our scene...
2. “\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_! Wherefore art thou \_\_\_\_\_?”
3. “What’s in a name? A \_\_\_\_\_ by any name would smell as sweet”
4. “It is the east, and \_\_\_\_\_ is the sun”
5. “See, how she leans her \_\_\_\_\_ upon her hand!”
6. “O, swear not by the \_\_\_\_\_, th’inconstant \_\_\_\_\_,  
that monthly changes in her circled orb”
7. “Some shall be pardoned, and some punished;  
For never was a story of more woe  
Than this of \_\_\_\_\_ and her \_\_\_\_\_”

**4** You find below three extracts from the book “*Romeo and Juliet*” by *Cedric Watts*, *Wordsworth Classics*. Analyse them and explain if you agree or if you disagree with the content of each extract. State clearly your point of view.

“

“The hero and heroine of *Romeo and Juliet* are probably the most famous literary representatives of intense romantic love: consequently, many people know something of the play even if they haven’t read it. But if they actually read it, they may well have some surprises. *ROMEO AND JULIET* proves to be stronger, livelier, more radical and more paradoxical than its reputation suggests.”



“

“These days, most young people in the western world take it for granted that marriage should be based on the free choice of loving partners. Once, however, it was in the eyes of most “politically incorrect” people and a social disaster. Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet helped the modern view to triumph over the older view (...).”

“

“Consider the famous balcony scene, in which Romeo, standing in the garden, addresses Juliet at her window. Romeo attempts to offer the conventional rhetoric of the ardent love (...) Juliet is shrewdly critical of conventional lovers’ rhetoric; and it is criticism that Romeo needs. Although Romeo is probably older than Juliet, it is he who seems relatively immature and naïve.”



**5 TEST: Questions for students.**

1. What is the name of the woman Romeo is infatuated with before he meets Juliet?

a) Rosaline

b) Ophelia

2. Fill in the blank: “These violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die, like \_\_\_\_\_, / Which as they kiss consume.”

a) Fire and powder

b) Fire and water

3. To which city does Romeo flee after he is banished for killing Tybalt?

a) Padua

b) Mantua

4. How old is Juliet when the action of the play takes place?

a) 15

b) 13

5. In which of the following works of literature is the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues briefly mentioned?

a) Decameron

b) The Divine Comedy

6. Why are Romeo and Juliet called “Star-cross’d lovers”?

a) They have the same Zodiac sign

b) They are not destined to be a couple

7. What does Mercutio say about dreams?

a) Dreams mean nothing

b) Dreams can not become reality

8. Does the Friar accept responsibility for the tragedy?

a) He does

b) He tries to blame the Nurse

## **6** Questions for teachers to use in class.

1. In 'normal' tragedy the hero makes a mistake and suffers: do you think Romeo and Juliet make mistakes?
2. Who is the stronger character in the play, Romeo or Juliet? Which one do you like the most?
3. What do you think of the Friar's plan, is it foolish or clever, is he to blame for the tragic end?
4. What do you think of Lord Capulet's behaviour? Does he love his daughter, does he want the best for her or is he a bully and a bad father?
5. Cupid is the god of love in classical myth. What do you think he is doing in Shakespeare's play and is it a good idea that our production makes him more than a word but a character?
6. Love and death are big themes in the play. Are they in opposition or are they somehow linked? For example can Romeo and Juliet's extreme love survive normal life, or is it only possible because they die before they become bored with ordinary life? (Could their love survive Juliet washing Romeo's socks?).
7. Why do you think the Nurse and Mercutio are in the play? Do either of them believe in romantic love?
8. Is Mercutio to blame for Romeo's tragedy? Would Thybalt fight Romeo without Mercutio's provocation?
9. Is Mercutio jealous of Juliet? Can gang warfare be prevented if young men spent more time with women?
10. Does the Nurse want the best for Juliet, is she her second mother? If so why does she recommend Juliet marries Paris in the second half? Is that wise and practical or a betrayal?
11. Do you see any similarity between the Jesus story and the play? Juliet goes through death to find true love. But in this case she does not rise. The play is full of symbols from Christian and Roman stories. Can you see any others? Do you think it explains why the story is so romantic or poetic and not "sensible"?
12. When Juliet goes to see the Friar in the second half, she is already out of her Father's house and could just go to be with Romeo (now her husband) in Mantua but she goes back to her Father's house and doesn't get on a mule and escape! Why?
13. Why do you think *ROMEO AND JULIET* is the most popular play ever written? (Despite being hundreds of years old!).

7

Describe the following scenes identifying each character(s) and underlying their personality traits.



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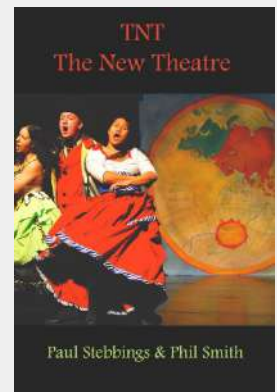


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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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The company was founded in 1980. Our first production was a manifesto piece: a *commedia dell'arte* life of the Russian director Meyerhold, who was murdered by Stalin. Meyerhold's ideas are still present in TNT's work. The company received UK Arts Council (government) funding for extensive tours of Britain for many years before shifting its focus to international touring. TNT's initial productions were all self-written and combined popular theatre forms with serious subjects. In 1983, we began integrating music into the productions on a complex level. In 1993, we began our collaboration ADG Europe and expanded our repertoire to include classical texts and radical stage interpretations of novels. TNT toured internationally from its first year and now tours annually to over thirty countries a year on three continents in four languages. We believe that theatre itself is a language, and can be understood by all - especially in this digital age - where live art is so essential.



OFFICIAL BOOK

“(…) The production focused on the funny and even raunchy elements of the Shakespearian classic. Through audience interaction, highlighted innuendos and musical interludes, the cast managed to get more than a few laughs from the enthusiastic audience. (...) Overall, ROMEO AND JULIET was driven by the talented actors and well executed.” - *Luxembourger Wort*, Theatre at Bourglinster -Luxembourg

“They searched, touched, felt, and entangled their hands until they gave in the hug. Even as her highest joy turned into the deepest mourning, when the love of death followed, the protagonists truly acted. No bird sounded, no sound came from the several hundred young spectators. Then Capulet and Montague dissolved their quarrelling, and cheers and applause sparked the jammed tension in the courtyard of the castle.” - *Solinger-Tageblatt.de* - Solingen, Germany

“Gripping and powerful... the company demonstrate show Shakespeare can remain relevant to a modern audience, even if their first language is not English.” - *JapanTimes*, Tokyo



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## CREDITS

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