ON STAGE AT PARK SQUARE THEATRE
Mar 23 – Apr 24, 2020

Romeo and Juliet

Written by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Directed by DAVID MANN

Study Guide
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The play opens in the streets of Verona, Italy, with the servants of two feuding families, the Capulets and Montagues, fighting. The servants are soon joined by Tybalt, a Capulet, who is eager to join the brawl, and Benvolio, a Montague, who tries to make peace. Prince Escalus threatens the death penalty to those who are responsible for any further fighting. As the crowd dissipates, Romeo, the Montague heir, confides in Benvolio his despair that a woman he loves, Rosaline, does not return his affection. Benvolio advises him to find someone else. Meanwhile, Capulet agrees to let Paris court his daughter Juliet, and the party that evening would be the perfect place to start. Romeo and Benvolio read the invitation list for the Capulet party, and they plan to go to compare other women to Rosaline. Back at the Capulet home, Juliet’s mother Lady Capulet and her Nurse discuss the possibility of Juliet marrying Paris. While she is not thrilled with the idea of marrying at 13, Juliet promises she will give Paris a chance. Later that evening on the way to the party, Romeo’s friends, Mercutio and Benvolio, attempt to cheer him up, but it is not until he sees Juliet that Romeo forgets about Rosaline. The two meet, kiss, and fall in love, even though they are aware that their families are mortal enemies. Tybalt recognizes Romeo and vows revenge.

Act II
Romeo sneaks back to the Capulet orchard to see Juliet despite the danger. The two proclaim their love for one another and plan to get married the following day. The next morning, Romeo meets with Friar Laurence who agrees to marry them in hopes that the marriage will end the feud between the families. Romeo catches up with his friends and hears of Tybalt’s challenge to him. Romeo also meets with the Nurse to plan his wedding to Juliet later that day. Juliet gets permission from her parents to go to church that afternoon, where she and Romeo are married.

Act III
Act III opens with Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin, meeting Benvolio and Mercutio in the town square as he searches for Romeo. Tybalt provokes Mercutio to fight, and Romeo joins them right after his marriage. Tybalt kills Mercutio, and Romeo avenges Mercutio’s death by killing Tybalt. Romeo flees. Prince Escalus, after hearing the whole story, punishes Romeo by banishing him from Verona. The Nurse brings the news to Juliet, who struggles between family loyalty and love for her husband. Romeo hears of his banishment from Friar Laurence, who persuades Romeo to spend the night with Juliet before escaping to Mantua. The Capulets, in an attempt to cheer up the grieving Juliet, decide that she should marry Paris on Thursday. When Juliet tells her parents she does not want to marry Paris, her father flies into a rage and threatens to disown her if she does not. Juliet turns to the Nurse for help, who suggests she marry Paris.
Plot Summary

CONTINUED

Act IV
Juliet, in desperation, goes to Friar Laurence for help. He comes up with a plan for her to drink a potion that will make her appear to be dead so that when she awakens in the family tomb, Romeo will be waiting for her, and they will be able to escape to Mantua together. As part of Friar Laurence’s plan, Juliet returns to her home and apologizes to her father for her disobedience. She drinks the potion later that evening. The next morning, the Nurse finds her lifeless in her bedroom, and the family changes wedding arrangements to funeral preparations.

Act V
Throughout Act IV, Romeo is hiding in Mantua, awaiting news from Verona. Balthasar, his servant, brings him news that Juliet is dead. Romeo visits an apothecary to buy poison for the purpose of killing himself, so he can be with Juliet once again. Back in Verona, Friar Laurence finds out that his message regarding Juliet’s fake death had not been delivered. He hurries to the Capulet family tomb to be there when Juliet wakes up. Romeo beats Friar Laurence to the tomb. He opens the tomb to see Juliet one more time, drinks the poison, and dies next to his love. Friar Laurence arrives as Juliet wakes up and tries to convince her to leave with him. She refuses. After he leaves, she sees the lifeless Romeo, kisses him, and kills herself with a dagger. The Prince, Capulets, and Montagues arrive and learn of the events of the evening. The Capulets and Montagues, both distraught over the deaths of their children, vow to end the feud.
Below is a chart that indicates each character’s relationship to Juliet or Romeo.
This startling epitaph of William Shakespeare both stirs curiosity about the world’s best-known playwright and also discourages exhumation and scientific investigation of his remains. Did he foresee a time of DNA testing and forensic examination?

According to popular belief, Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 and died on April 23, 1616 at the age of 52. During those years, Shakespeare wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, and 2 narrative poems that have survived. He is considered the greatest playwright in the English language, and unlike other great playwrights, Shakespeare excelled at both comedy and tragedy. His body of work includes not only famous tragedies such as Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, and Othello, but also wonderful comedies such as Taming of the Shrew, Twelfth Night, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Who was the mysterious man behind the work? Shakespeare was born and grew up in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon about 100 miles from London. The son of glove-maker John Shakespeare and his wife Mary Arden, William was the third of eight children. He received an excellent education in Stratford, but as far as we know, he never attended college. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582 at the age of 18. His first daughter, Susanna, was born in 1583, and twins, Judith and Hamnet, were born in 1585. Because so little is known about Shakespeare’s private life, some refer to the next few years as his “lost years.”

Shakespeare burst upon the London theater scene in 1590 and established himself as an actor and a playwright. He was a member of an acting company that often played before Queen Elizabeth I. During her reign, while Shakespeare was still in his twenties and thirties, he created historical plays such as History of Henry VI, popular comedies such as A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and the famous tragedy Romeo and Juliet. After King James came to the throne in 1603, Shakespeare wrote some of his greatest tragedies including Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. Even in his darkest tragedies, however, Shakespeare frequently included scenes of comic relief which allowed the audience to laugh in moments of high tension.

Shakespeare’s plays were often performed in the Globe Theater. This magnificent theater could hold several thousand people who either stood on the ground or sat in balconies surrounding the open courtyard.

A prolific and popular playwright, Shakespeare wrote and produced some of the most remarkable plays the world has ever known. He enjoyed royal patronage and was both artistically and financially successful during his own lifetime because his productions appealed to people from all walks of life, not just upper class or literary types. His plays have been translated into many languages and today are performed on stages throughout the world.

By Dr. Virginia McFerran
PERPICH CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION
Objective:
Students will find themselves immersed in a concert of sound, rhythm, and movement as they read the opening prologue aloud in a variety of ways. The goal for this lesson is simple—to get Shakespeare’s language flowing from the students’ mouths.

Reading the Prologue
Make each student a copy of the prologue to Act I, which you will find on page 9. Arrange the class in a large circle. Distribute the copies and have the students read the prologue several times following the directions described below.

Reading 1: Have the students read the prologue aloud in unison. After the reading, discuss and define together any words the students don’t recognize.

Reading 2: Going around the circle, have the students read the prologue one word at a time.

First student: “Two”  
Second student: “households”  
Third student: “both”  
And so on...

This reading will help students recognize the importance of the individual words. Ask them to read as if the words were all spoken by one voice, without lengthy pauses between readers and with some expression. Repeat this a few times to get the “one voice” effect. Another option is to have the students stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle.

Reading 3: For this reading, each student takes a half-line, reading to the pause in the line indicated by the spaces or to the line end. Again, the group should attempt to create a single voice. An ensemble effect may be added to this reading in several ways:

- Have the males read the first half of each line and the females read the second half.
- Double up voices on some of the lines.

Reading 4: Have the students take turns reading to the punctuation stops—semicolons and periods, not commas. Notice how this reading affects the clarity and the meaning of the passage. Does it allow for more natural stress?

Reading 5: Have the students walk and read the prologue, stamping one foot and changing direction on the final word before each full stop. This helps demonstrate how rhythm propels speech.

Discussion Questions:
- What do each of these different readings emphasize?
- What are some things you notice about the prologue? (This would be a good place to discuss what a sonnet is.)
- What words or ideas are repeated? Why?
- Why does Shakespeare give away the ending of the play right away at the beginning?

Two households, Both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
a pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents’ strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love
And the continuance of their parent’s rage,
Which, but their children’s end naught could remove,
Is now the two hours’ traffic of our stage;
The which, if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
Objective:
The purpose of this activity is to familiarize students with *Romeo and Juliet* by exposing them to lines spoken in the play. Based on these lines, students are to make predictions about the play’s characters and central conflicts and discuss these predictions. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing and hearing these lines acted out on stage. “Tossing Lines” serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.

Time Allotted: 20-30 minutes

Materials:
- Tennis ball or hackey-sack
- Slips of paper cut from Tossing Lines on the following page

Procedure:
Cut out the slips of paper printed on the following page and distribute them to volunteers. Give students a few minutes (or overnight, if appropriate) to practice or memorize their lines. When they’re ready, have these students form a circle and give one student the ball. After she speaks her line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his assigned line. Students toss the ball across the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out a variety of ways to perform the lines. If there is time, reassign lines within the group or to other students in the class for another round.

Optional:
Reassign lines within the group (or to other students in the classroom) and continue for another round.

Discussion:
1. What do you notice about these lines?
2. What do these lines tell us about the plot of the play? The characters? The conflict?
3. Which lines are clues to the end of the play? How do you know?

Adapted from Peggy O’Brien’s *Shakespeare Set Free* (1993)
Tossing Lines From *Romeo and Juliet*

A PRE-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY: QUOTES FROM THE PLAY

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word, as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.

I’ll look to like, if looking liking move.

Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

My only love sprung from my only hate!

But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.

These violent delights have violent ends.

O, I am fortune’s fool!

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!

Deny thy father and refuse thy name.

This but begins the woe others must end.

A plague o’ both your houses!

Thus with a kiss I die.

Not having that, which, having, makes them short.

Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.
Act III Scene V
The scene begins with Romeo and Juliet the morning after their wedding. Romeo quickly leaves for Mantua. Lady Capulet and Lord Capulet bring news to Juliet that they think will excite her. (Note: this scene is taken from the script of Park Square Theatre’s production. It varies slightly from the original.)

LADY CAPULET [Enter Lady Capulet] Why, how now, Juliet?

JULIET Madam, I am not well.

LADY CAPULET Evermore weeping for your cousin’s death? What, wilt thou wash him from his grave with tears? An if thou couldst, thou couldst not make him live; Therefore, have done: some grief shows much of love; But much of grief shows still some want of wit.

JULIET Yet let me weep for such a feeling loss.

LADY CAPULET Well, girl, thou weep’st not so much for his death, As that the villain lives which slaughter’d him.

JULIET What villain madam?

LADY CAPULET That same villain, Romeo.

JULIET God Pardon him! I do, with all my heart; And yet no man like he doth grieve my heart.

LADY CAPULET That is, because the traitor murderer lives.

JULIET Ay, madam, from the reach of these my hands: Would none but I might venge my cousin’s death!

LADY CAPULET We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not. But now I’ll tell thee joyful tidings, girl.

JULIET And joy comes well in such a needy time: What are they, I beseech your ladyship?

CONTINUED...
Scene to Read Aloud

CONTINUED

LADY CAPULET
Well, well, thou hast a careful father, child; One who, to put thee from thy heaviness, Hath sorted out a sudden day of joy, That thou expect’st not nor I look’d not for.

JULIET
Madam, in happy time, what day is that?

LADY CAPULET
Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn, The gallant, young and noble gentleman, The County Paris, at Saint Peter’s Church, Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride.

JULIET
Now, by Saint Peter’s Church and Peter too, He shall not make me there a joyful bride. I wonder at this haste; that I must wed Ere he, that should be husband, comes to woo. I pray you, tell my lord and father, madam, I will not marry yet; and, when I do, I swear, It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate, Rather than Paris. These are news indeed!

LADY CAPULET
Here comes your father; tell him so yourself, And see how he will take it at your hands.

[Enter CAPULET and NURSE]

CAPULET
How now! a conduit, girl? What, still in tears? Evermore showering? How now, wife! Have you deliver’d to her our decree?

LADY CAPULET
Ay, sir; but she will none, she gives you thanks. I would the fool were married to her grave!

CAPULET
Soft! Take me with you, take me with you, wife. How! Will she none? Doth she not give us thanks? Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blest, Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought So worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom?

JULIET
Not proud, you have; but thankful, that you have: Proud can I never be of what I hate; But thankful even for hate, that is meant love.

CAPULET
How now, how now, chopped logic? What is this?

CONTINUED...
‘Proud,’ and ‘I thank you,’ and ‘I thank you not;’
And yet ‘not proud’? Mistress minion, you,
Thank me no thankings, nor, proud me no prouds,
But fettle your fine joints ‘gainst Thursday next,
To go with Paris to Saint Peter’s Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!

LADY CAPULET
Fie, fie! What, are you mad?

JULIET
Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
Hear me with patience but to speak a word.

CAPULET
Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what: get thee to church o’ Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face:
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me;
My fingers itch. Wife, we scarce thought us blest
That God had lent us but this only child;
But now I see this one is one too much,
And that we have a curse in having her:
Out on her, hilding!

NURSE
God in heaven bless her!
You are to blame, my lord, to rate her so.

CAPULET
Peace, you mumbling fool!
Utter your gravity o’er a gossip’s bowl;
For here we need it not.

LADY CAPULET
You are too hot.

CAPULET
God’s bread! It makes me mad:
Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,
 Alone, in company, still my care hath been
To have her match’d: and having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly train’d,
Stuff’d, as they say, with honourable parts,
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
To answer ‘I’ll not wed; I cannot love,
I am too young; I pray you, pardon me.’

CONTINUED...
Scene to Read Aloud
CONTINUED

But, as you will not wed, I’ll pardon you:
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me.
Look to’t, think on’t, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise:
An you be mine, I’ll give you to my friend;
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For, by my soul, I’ll ne’er acknowledge thee,
Nor what is mine shall never do thee good.
Trust to’t, bethink you; I’ll not be forsworn.
[Exit]

JULIET

Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,
That sees into the bottom of my grief?
O, sweet my mother, cast me not away!

LADY CAPULET

Talk not to me, for I’ll not speak a word:
Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee.
[Exit]

JULIET

O God!—O Nurse, how shall this be prevented?
What say’st thou? Hast thou not a word of joy?
Some comfort, Nurse.

NURSE

Faith, here it is.
Romeo is banish’d; and all the world to nothing,
That he dares ne’er come back to challenge you;
Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
I think it best you married with the County.
O, he’s a lovely gentleman!
Romeo’s a dishclout to him: an eagle, madam,
Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye
As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart,
I think you are happy in this second match,
For it excels your first: or if it did not,
Your first is dead; or ‘twere as good he were,
As living here and you no use of him.

JULIET

Speakest thou from thy heart?

NURSE

And from my soul too;
Or else beshrew them both.

CONTINUED...
Scene to Read Aloud
CONTINUED

JULIET    Amen!

NURSE     What?

JULIET    Well, thou hast comforted me marvelous much.
           Go in: and tell my lady I am gone,
           Having displeased my father, to Laurence’ cell,
           To make confession and to be absolved.

NURSE     Marry, I will; and this is wisely done.
           [Exit]

JULIET    Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend!
           Go, counsellor;
           Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.
           I’l to the friar, to know his remedy:
           If all else fail, myself have power to die.
           [Exit]

Discussion Questions:

1. How do Juliet’s words to her mother at the beginning of this scene have two meanings? What does Juliet actually mean? What does her mother think she is saying?

2. Based on just this scene, what do you know about these characters? What are they like?

3. What does this scene show us about the relationships between Juliet and her parents? Between Juliet and the Nurse? Between Lord and Lady Capulet?

4. What do you think the characters’ actions would be as they say these lines?

5. What would be some alternatives to how the characters react at the end of the scene?

6. How do you think Juliet will solve her problem?

7. How could this be a turning point for Juliet?
Objective: To Make Sense of Shakespearean English.

Activity 1: The Use of Pronouns

Shakespeare’s use of personal pronouns is often what makes his plays so difficult to understand. A simple way to understanding pronouns of Early Modern English is that it, like other European languages today, had formal and informal ways of addressing others. For example, in Spanish tu is an informal way of saying you, whereas usted is a more respectful and formal way of addressing someone directly. The same was true for English. The casual form of addressing someone directly was thee and the formal way to address someone was you. When we speak in Modern English today, we have dropped the informal language and instead refer to everyone, even close friends and family, as you. Below is a chart that distinguishes some formal and informal personal pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Thee/Thou/Ye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
<td>Thy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yours</td>
<td>Thine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (plural)</td>
<td>Ye (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td>Thyself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is actually an excellent reason why Shakespeare works with these two different versions, and it adds another layer to understanding characters in his play. Formal language is the type of English someone would use to address a person of high regard like Prince Escalus in Romeo and Juliet. It is what a person uses to show honor and respect. Informal language suggests close relationships, as in friendships and marriages. When Shakespeare uses the informal version, he does so to show the intimacy between two characters, such as Romeo and Juliet. However, Shakespeare also uses informal language during scenes of fighting and arguing. For what other reason does Shakespeare use informal English?

Directions: For the following people listed below, determine which language, formal or informal, would be most appropriate. Mark an F for formal and I for informal.

1. Parents ______ 5. Teachers ______
2. Best Friends ______ 6. People who are younger ______
3. Older Siblings ______ 7. Server at a restaurant ______
4. Supervisor at work ______ 8. Someone you dislike ______
Many wonder if people really spoke the way they do in Shakespeare’s plays. The answer is yes and no. Yes, they spoke in the Early Modern English, but no, Shakespeare wrote the way he did for poetic and dramatic purposes. There are many reasons why he did this: to create a specific poetic rhythm, to emphasize a certain word, to give a character a specific speech pattern, etc. For example, Shakespeare would take the sentence, *I ate the sandwich*, and play with the order of the words, producing one of the following:

- *I the sandwich ate.*
- *Ate the sandwich I.*
- *Ate I the sandwich.*
- *The sandwich I ate.*
- *The sandwich ate I.*

**Directions:** For each sentence listed below, using all words and punctuation provided, rearrange the sentence to turn them from Early Modern English to Modern English. Do not add words or change punctuation.

*Example:* Early walking did I see your son.

*Answer:* I did see your son walking early.

1. Many a morning hath he there been seen.

2. Younger than she are happy mothers made.

3. What light through yonder window breaks?

4. With love’s light wings did I o’er-perch these walls.

5. In one respect I’ll thy assistant be.

6. Wash they his wounds with tears.

7. Hence from Verona art thou banished.
For the sake of his poetry, Shakespeare often left out letters, syllables, and whole words. These omissions really aren’t that much different from the way we speak today. We say:

“Been to class yet?”

“No. Heard teacher’s givin’ a test.”

“What’s up wi’that?”

We leave out words and parts of words to speed up our speech. If we were speaking complete sentences, we would say:

“Have you been to class yet?”

No, I have not been to class. I heard that Ms. Teacher is giving a test today.”

“What is up with that?”

A few examples of Shakespearean omissions/contractions follow; fill in the definitions:

| ‘tis: it is | ope: open | o’er: over |

Now you try:

1. ne’er
2. I’
3. e’er
4. oft
5. e’en

Title page of the first edition
Romeo and Juliet

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Understanding Shakespearean Language

ACTIVITY 4

Activity 4: Shakespearean Vocabulary

Words and word meanings that are unfamiliar to contemporary audiences but common to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* are listed in the chart below. Try to use each word in an original sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shakespearean Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 anon (adv.)</td>
<td>soon; shortly; in a minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bawd (n.)</td>
<td>pimp; a go-between a man and woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 beshrew (n.)</td>
<td>to curse; to blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 demence (n.)</td>
<td>territories; lands; dominions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 doth (v.)</td>
<td>does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 feign (v.)</td>
<td>imagine; make appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 forsooth (adv.)</td>
<td>in truth; certainly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 hast (v.)</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 hither (adv.)</td>
<td>here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 marry (int.)</td>
<td>to agree with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 naught (adj.)</td>
<td>worthless; improper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 naught (n.)</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 prithee (int.)</td>
<td>please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 soft (adv.)</td>
<td>wait a moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 twain (adj.)</td>
<td>estranged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 twain (n.)</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 wilt (v.)</td>
<td>will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Mari O’Meara
EDEN PRairie HIGH SCHOOL

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Activity 5: Putting It All Together

Directions:

With a partner, write a one to two page Shakespearean-style dialogue between two people. You should include (at minimum) and highlight in your dialogue:

- two elements of word arrangement
- five different common Shakespearean words
- two of the omitted words

Here is a list of potential dialogue scenarios:

- friends at lunch
- a first date
- dinner conversation between family members
- a telephone conversation

Shorter example dialogue (utilizing alternative Shakespearean words):

Teacher: Willy, quit dallying with Anne in thy hallway! Get thee to class that is English! Thy bell is struck upon the hour start!
Willy: Anon, anon thy naughty woman!
Anne: I prithee thee Willy! Get thee thither!
Willy: Class oft bores me.
Anne: But school only steads thee.
Willy: Marry! but I shall beshrew myself for parting with you.
Characters:
1. How do the actions of Friar Laurence, the Nurse, and the parents of Romeo and Juliet contribute to the “fate” of the young lovers?
2. Discuss the importance of the Nurse and Friar Laurence as parental characters in Romeo and Juliet. How are Romeo and Juliet reflections of each?
3. Think of a person you know who can be described either as fortunate or as unfortunate. Is his or her fortune, or lack of it, the result of fate or destiny? Or is it the result of the person’s character?
4. Did Mercutio need to die in order to allow the tragic focus of the play to emerge?
5. At the end of Romeo and Juliet, the Prince says, “Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished.” Whom do you think should be pardoned and whom punished? Why?
6. Which character is most to blame for the tragedy in Romeo and Juliet?

Imagery and Symbolism:
1. How does Mercutio’s Queen Mab speech perpetuate the motif of light and darkness?
2. In his opening lines of Act III, Scene i, Benvolio states, “The day is hot, the Capels are abroad [. . .]/For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.” Discuss the significance of the heat both physically and symbolically as a catalyst for tragic events of the play.
3. What metaphors are used in the way Romeo describes Juliet? What might these comparisons reveal to the audience about Romeo?
4. How could the poison Romeo procures from Friar Laurence act as a symbol within the play?
5. In what ways could light be considered a symbol throughout the play?

Interpretation:
1. Most audience members come to productions of Romeo and Juliet having read the play or seen one of the famous film versions. What were your expectations before you saw the play? Now, think about the production. How did the actors, set, costumes, and lighting design either meet or challenge those expectations?
2. Sometimes directors choose to cut one or more characters in Shakespeare’s plays. If you were directing a production of Romeo and Juliet, and you had to trim the cast list, which characters would you cut? What implications would your choices have on the story? What characters were left out of this production? How did that have an impact on the story?
Post-Play Discussion Questions

CONTINUED

Themes:

1. Discuss the relationships between parents and children in Romeo and Juliet. How do Romeo and Juliet interact with their parents? Are Romeo and Juliet rebellious? How do their parents feel about them?

2. Do Romeo and Juliet truly love one another? What other kinds of love are evident in the play?

3. Love and hate exist together throughout the play. How does one affect the other?

4. How has Romeo and Juliet influenced contemporary stories of young love?

5. How does Shakespeare treat death in Romeo and Juliet? Think about legal, moral, familial, and personal issues. Compare the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo and Mercutio, and Mercutio and Tybalt.

6. How does the idea of identity contribute to the story? Think about family affiliation, gender, social class, and age.

7. What “ancient grudges” exist in your community? What choices have you made in the past to perpetuate these grudges? What choices can you make to overcome these grudges? What could the Capulets and Montagues have done to end their feud?

Extension:

If time permits, watch the 1968 Franco Zefirelli and 1996 Baz Luhrmann movie versions of Romeo and Juliet. How do these two directors approach the same material?

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To Our Teachers,

Thank you for giving the gift of theatre to your students, and the gift of your students to our theatre.

Yours sincerely,
The Staff at Park Square Theatre