

## 1. Plot: 10 key scenes in the play

Act 1 Scene 1	Montague and Capulet <b>servants clash</b> in the street, <b>the Prince threatens dire punishment</b> if another such brawl should take place, and <b>Romeo tells his friend, Benvolio, of his obsession with Rosaline.</b>	Act 3 Scene 5	Romeo and Juliet <b>spend their wedding night together</b> . They are <b>immediately parted</b> though, as Romeo must leave for <b>banishment in Mantua</b> or die if he is found in Verona. Juliet's father tries to cheer Juliet by <b>arranging her immediate marriage to Paris</b> . He <b>threatens to disown</b> her when she refuses to agree to the marriage. <b>She runs to the Friar</b> for advice and help.
Act 1 Scene 4	Romeo is <b>persuaded to attend a masked party</b> at the Capulet household. Not knowing who she is, <b>he falls in love with Juliet the moment he sees her</b> and she, equally ignorant that he is a Montague, <b>falls just as instantly for him.</b>	Act 4 Scene 1	Juliet arrives at the Friar's. She is so <b>desperate</b> that she <b>threatens suicide</b> . The Friar instead suggests that she takes a <b>poison</b> that will make her appear to be <b>dead</b> . He promises to send a <b>message to Romeo</b> , asking him to return secretly and be with Juliet when she wakes.
Act 2 Scene 1	When everyone has left the party, <b>Romeo creeps into the Capulet garden</b> and sees <b>Juliet</b> on her <b>balcony</b> . They <b>reveal their mutual love</b> and Romeo leaves, promising to <b>arrange a secret marriage</b> and let Juliet's messenger, her old Nurse, have the details the following morning.	Act 5 Scene 1	Romeo's servant, Balthasar, reaches Mantua before the Friar's messenger and <b>tells Romeo that Juliet is dead</b> . Romeo <b>buys poison</b> and leaves for Verona, planning to <b>die alongside Juliet's body</b> .
Act 2 Scene 5	Juliet tells her parents she is going to make her confession to Friar Laurence, meets Romeo there and, despite some personal misgivings, <b>the friar marries them immediately.</b>	Act 5 Scene 3	Romeo <b>breaks into the Capulet crypt</b> and in the process <b>kills Paris</b> . He <b>drinks the poison, kisses his wife</b> for the last time <b>and dies</b> . The Friar comes to the crypt to be with Juliet when she wakes; but when she revives, he <b>cannot persuade her to leave</b> her dead husband and runs away in fear. Juliet <b>takes Romeo's knife and stabs herself to death with it.</b>
Act 3 Scene 1	Romeo meets Tybalt in the street, and is <b>challenged by him to a duel</b> . Romeo <b>refuses to fight</b> and his friend Mercutio is so <b>disgusted</b> by this 'cowardice' that he takes up the challenge instead. As Romeo tries to break up the fight, <b>Tybalt kills Mercutio</b> and, enraged, <b>Romeo then kills Tybalt</b> . The Prince arrives and, on hearing the full story, <b>banishes Romeo</b> rather than have him executed.	Act 5 Scene 3	The <b>watchmen discover the gruesome sight</b> and call the Prince, to whom <b>the Friar confesses everything</b> . Having heard the full story, <b>the Montagues and Capulets are reconciled</b> . <b>Peace has been achieved</b> , but the price has been the <b>lives of two innocent young lovers.</b>

## 3. Structure and form of a Shakespearean Tragedy

<b>Act 1:</b> Here, the audience learns the <b>setting</b> (Time/Place), <b>characters</b> are developed, and a <b>conflict</b> is introduced. Known as the <b>exposition</b> .	<b>Act 2:</b> The <b>rising action</b> of this act leads the audience to the climax. It is common <b>for complications to arise</b> , or for the <b>protagonist to encounter obstacles</b> .	<b>Act 3:</b> This is the <b>turning point</b> of the play. The <b>climax</b> is characterised by the highest amount of suspense. This is often referred to as the <b>peripeteia</b> .
<b>Act 4:</b> The opposite of <b>rising action</b> , in the <b>falling action</b> the story is coming to an end and any <b>unknown details or plot twists</b> are revealed and <b>wrapped up</b> .	<b>Act 5:</b> The <b>denouement</b> or the <b>resolution</b> of the play. Often leads to a <b>moment of self-revelation</b> for the <b>protagonist</b> , and a <b>moral lesson</b> or <b>catharsis</b> for the audience.	

## 2. The characters

<b>Lord Montague</b>	Romeo's father. Can be <b>drawn into conflict</b> , but also has <b>genuine concern</b> for his son and is <b>quietly dignified</b> .
<b>Lady Montague</b>	<b>Peace-loving</b> and <b>dislikes the violence</b> of the feud. She <b>dies of grief</b> when Romeo is banished.
<b>Romeo</b>	A typical <b>Petrarchan</b> lover, his love for Juliet is incredibly <b>romantic, impulsive and passionate</b> .
<b>Benvolio</b>	A <b>foil</b> to Romeo. <b>Cares</b> about his cousin Romeo and tries to <b>keep peace</b> between the families.
<b>Balthasar</b>	Romeo's kinsman who brings news of Juliet's death to Romeo.
<b>Friar Lawrence</b>	Romeo's <b>mentor</b> . A <b>trusted, kind</b> man of the <b>Church</b> who is <b>optimistic</b> about the possibility of <b>peace</b> .
<b>Lord Capulet</b>	Juliet's father. Shows <b>concern</b> for Juliet's welfare, but can be <b>aggressive</b> and <b>tyrannical when he is disobeyed</b> .
<b>Lady Capulet</b>	Juliet's mother. <b>Cold and distant</b> for most of the play, she expects Juliet to follow in her own footsteps.
<b>Juliet</b>	<b>Young and innocent</b> , not yet 14. Her love for Romeo matures her and makes her <b>bolder in her defiance</b> .
<b>Tybalt</b>	Juliet's <b>ruthless and vengeful</b> cousin. Has a <b>deep, violent hatred</b> of the Montagues and a strong sense of <b>honour and loyalty</b> . The <b>antagonist</b> .
<b>The Nurse</b>	Juliet's nursemaid, they have a <b>close relationship</b> . She acts as <b>confidante</b> and messenger for Romeo and Juliet.
<b>Prince Escalus</b>	The <b>symbol of law and order</b> in Verona, yet his <b>threats of punishment</b> are unable to bring an end to the conflict.
<b>Mercutio</b>	A relative of the Prince. Romeo's <b>loyal</b> best friend. Can be <b>volatile, provocative</b> and is often <b>bawdy about love and women</b> .
<b>County Paris</b>	A <b>rich and highly-regarded</b> young man, kinsman to the Prince, who is <b>determined to marry Juliet</b> .

## 4. Context of the play

A: Setting:	B: Religion	C: Patriarchal Society
<p><b>14th-century Verona</b>, Italy. A successful and cultured city which <b>suffered widespread violence</b> involving deadly battles over trivial issues (e.g. the rivalry between supporters of the emperor and supporters of the Pope). <b>The Montecchi and Capuleti</b> were real families fighting for power in Verona at this time.</p>	<p>The play is set in <b>Italy</b> which was a <b>Catholic</b> country. <b>Religion</b> was extremely <b>important</b>, and marriage vows were sacred – once made, they could not be broken. England was no longer a Catholic country, but <b>religion played an important part in everyday life</b> and the presence of religion in the text <b>reflects the domination of the Church</b>.</p>	<p>Elizabethan England and Medieval Italy were both <b>societies controlled by men</b>. <b>Women</b> were seen as <b>the weaker sex</b> and were expected to be <b>ruled over by men</b>. Women needed to be <b>meek and mild</b>, and most importantly, <b>obedient to their fathers</b> and later their husbands.</p>
D: Fate and Fortune	E: The Great Chain of Being	F: Courtly Love
<p>In both 14th-century Italy and Elizabethan England stars <b>linked to fate and fortune</b>, were believed to <b>predict and influence the course of human events</b>. Most people believed that their <b>fate was predestined by God</b> and fixed. Shakespeare explores a more <b>humanist</b> perspective – can individuals change the course of their own fate and <b>exercise free will</b>?</p>	<p>Elizabethans believed that God set out <b>an order for everything in the universe</b>. This was known as the <b>Great Chain of Being</b>. On Earth, God created a <b>social order</b> for everybody and chose where you belonged. The Elizabethans were very <b>superstitious</b>. They believed that if you disturbed this divine and social hierarchy, you threw things into uproar causing <b>chaos and tragedy</b>.</p>	<p>Courtly love, was a highly <b>conventionalised code</b> that prescribed the <b>behaviour of ladies and their lovers</b>. It had a <b>strict set of rules</b> that the lovers followed that were almost <b>like a game</b>. <b>Anne Boleyn</b> popularised it during the reign of Henry VIII, but it was typically viewed as an <b>out-moded and juvenile convention</b> during the reign of Elizabeth I.</p>
G: Duelling and Honour	H: Suicide	I: Arranged Marriages
<p>Honour was hugely important at the time, and maintaining <b>the honour of your family name</b> was crucial. If you were challenged to a duel and you refused, you would be <b>deemed a coward</b>, thus damaging your honour and the status of your family. Ironically, <b>duelling was banned under Elizabeth I</b> due to the increased violence seen on the street of London.</p>	<p>Suicide in Shakespeare's time was a <b>paradoxical</b> issue. On the one hand, Christian doctrine held <b>suicide to be a mortal sin</b>. Life was a gift from God and those who committed suicide <b>had despaired God's mercy</b>. Those who attempted or successfully committed suicide were <b>treated and charged like a criminal</b>. On the other hand, it was seen as a <b>noble and courageous act</b> in the growing Renaissance tradition of secular, gentlemanly honour.</p>	<p>Marriages amongst the wealthy were <b>arranged by parents</b>, and were <b>not about love</b>. Mostly the marriages were arranged for <b>the purposes of status and power</b>, and improving the social standings of families. Girls were considered <b>eligible at the age of 14</b> and had to give their consent to a marriage. They were <b>often required to marry a successful, older man</b>. Girls who did not marry, often were <b>sent to convents to become nuns or "brides of Christ."</b></p>

## 6. Themes and ideas

<p><b>Love and compassion:</b> romantic, sexual, superficial, paternal and platonic forms of love are present in the play. This love can be volatile, brutal, and oppressive- or the opposite: metaphysical, pure and transformative. Shakespeare explores the power of love and if it can make an impact in a violent and hostile world.</p>	<p><b>Hate and violence:</b> key driving forces in the play. The hateful feud results in tragic violence – violence opens the play in scene one and it also concludes the play with the deaths of the two lovers. We question what is stronger – love or hate?</p>	<p><b>Young and old:</b> the play depicts the different attitudes to love, marriage and honour between the generations. Romeo and Juliet's love defies the standards of an older generation who believe in family duty, obedience and reputation. It is rebellious and reckless as they struggle against anachronistic attitudes.</p>
<p><b>Fate and free will:</b> fate is a dominant theme presented in the Prologue. We know the lovers will die, but engage with their story and explore how their decisions and acts of free will contribute to their tragedy. Can they defy the stars? Is fate or free choice to blame for their death?</p>	<p><b>Men and women:</b> the play depicts a patriarchal society, where men are violent, assertive and controlling. In contrast, women are often objectified and controlled by them. Shakespeare explores the destructive side of masculinity and the innate sexism of the Elizabethan period.</p>	<p><b>Honour and disobedience:</b> characters like Tybalt place honour and reputation above all else. His rigid adherence to rules and form can be seen as just as destructive as the reckless love of Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare explores the impact of loyalty at all costs, rebelling against the status quo and the importance of the rule of law.</p>

## 5. Key Terminology

1	tragedy
2	Elizabethan
3	antithesis
4	oxymoron
5	allusion
6	imagery
7	prose
8	sonnet
9	iambic pentameter
10	rhyming couplet
11	protagonist
12	antagonist
13	foil
14	foreshadowing
15	simile
16	metaphor
17	soliloquy
18	dramatic irony
19	dialogue
20	hyperbole