

Romeo and Juliet Book Notes

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

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Contents

Romeo and Juliet Book Notes.....	1
Contents.....	2
Author/Context.....	4
Plot Summary.....	6
Major Characters.....	8
Objects/Places.....	10
Quotes.....	11
Topic Tracking: Fate.....	14
Topic Tracking: Misery.....	16
Topic Tracking: Love.....	18
Act 1, Prologue.....	20
Act 1, Scene 1.....	21
Act 1, Scene 2.....	22
Act 1, Scene 3.....	23
Act 1, Scene 4.....	24
Act 1, Scene 5.....	25
Act 2, Prologue.....	26
Act 2, Scene 1.....	27
Act 2, Scene 2.....	28
Act 2, Scene 3.....	29
Act 2, Scene 4.....	30
Act 2, Scene 5.....	31
Act 2, Scene 6.....	32
Act 3, Scene 1.....	33
Act 3, Scene 2.....	34



Act 3, Scene 3..... 35
Act 3, Scene 4..... 36
Act 3, Scene 5..... 37
Act 4, Scene 1..... 38
Act 4, Scene 2..... 39
Act 4, Scene 3..... 40
Act 4, Scene 4..... 41
Act 4, Scene 5..... 42
Act 5, Scene 1..... 43
Act 5, Scene 2..... 44
Act 5, Scene 3..... 45



Author/Context

Most scholars agree that the life of William Shakespeare is a hard one to piece together. There is not a lot of documentation that would traditionally lead to a biography of a person's life. There is very little documentation about Shakespeare. What scholars have been able to come up with is based on bits and pieces of his work (plays, poems, sonnets, critical essays, etc.). However, it must be noted that this information is what is believed by most scholars to be true about Shakespeare, and is not made up of hard facts.

William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564. Based on this date, many people believe that he was born on April 23. His father was John Shakespeare, from Stratford-upon-Avon, in England. John traded as a glover, dealt in wood, and lent money to earn interest. He also served as a town official. In 1557, he married Mary Arden. She was the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy land owner from whom John Shakespeare's father, Richard Shakespeare, had leased land. John and Mary had four sons and four daughters. William was the oldest son. William and his siblings grew up on Henley Street.

On November 28, 1582, William married Anne Hathaway. He was eighteen and she was twenty-six. They had three children: Susanna, and twins: Hamnet (a boy) and Judith.

Throughout the years that followed, Shakespeare achieved the status as the most renowned playwright of Elizabethan theater. In 1597, he bought a rather expensive home in Stratford, called New Place. His family would remain there, while he traveled to London to work. He was associated with a theater named the Globe. His name appeared as one of the owners in 1599. His acting company was known as the King's Men. In 1608 or early 1609, the King's Men purchased and refurbished the Blackfriars Theater, in London. In 1612, some type of financial situation caused Shakespeare to move back to Stratford and withdraw from the daily duties of his professional career. He moved back one year later and continued to work in the theater.

He spent the last few years of his life in Stratford, where it is noted that he finally died on April 23, 1616. He is buried in Holy Trinity Church, in Stratford-upon-Avon. On his tombstone, it says:

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

Throughout his life, William Shakespeare wrote 37 (or more) plays, more than 150 sonnets, two lengthy narrative poems and some shorter poems. His work is still recognized today as a great literary achievement. However, over the last one hundred years, the question of authorship has become an issue of interest to many literary scholars. The earliest noted claim that Shakespeare's plays could have been written by



someone else appeared in 1856. It was an article in the American journal *Putnam's Monthly*, written by Delia Bacon. Her article and later book entitled *Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* did not achieve great success. But once she proposed this idea of a hidden author, others started to wonder themselves. Still today, the controversy continues over whether or not Shakespeare wrote his own plays. Some people claim that he would not have had the education or training to write such brilliant plays. Still, others rely on a great deal of testimony from Shakespeare's time that says he was a widely respected playwright.

Romeo and Juliet, probably written sometime around 1594 or 1595, was, and still remains, one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. The play has inspired many different versions, both in the theater and on film. There are constant revivals done at high schools, colleges and theaters around the world. In regard to film productions, there are many. In 1916, a silent film version of the play was made. In 1936, an early sound version first appeared. A more recent film, a version of the story that achieved a tremendous amount of success, appeared in 1968, and was directed by Franco Zeffirelli. The most recent film production of *Romeo and Juliet* was made in 1996, directed by Baz Luhrmann, and starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes.

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Plot Summary

For many years, an on-going feud between two families has caused much disruption in the city of Verona, Italy. The Capulets and the Montagues cannot seem to get along, and there have been many deaths among the two families because of it. Prince Escalus of Verona warns the two families that if the feud does not stop, the punishment will be death.

The stage opens with servants of the Capulet and Montague families. They get into a minor argument. Romeo, a Montague, enters the stage. He has recently been denied the love of Rosaline. He is miserable over this. His friend and cousin, Benvolio, enters and decides that they will go to the Capulet feast, in disguises, so he can prove to Romeo that other pretty women exist. They all exit. At the feast, Romeo meets Juliet, the daughter of Capulet. Instantly, they fall in love. After the feast, Romeo sneaks into the Capulet orchard and visits Juliet. Here, they proclaim their love for each other. They decide to marry the next afternoon and they exit the stage. Romeo and his friend and confidant, Friar Laurence, enter. Romeo seeks the help of Friar Laurence, who agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet, in hopes that the marriage will end the feud between the two families. They exit.

Later that afternoon, Tybalt, a nephew of Lady Capulet, enters. He meets Romeo and starts a fight with him, as he is angry that Romeo was at the Capulet feast. Mercutio, a friend of Romeo's, is angered by Tybalt and challenges him to a duel. Tybalt kills Mercutio, and Romeo in response, kills Tybalt. He quickly flees the scene before he hears that the Prince has exiled him from Verona. All exit.

Romeo and the friar enter. Hiding in Friar Laurence's cell, Romeo tries to commit suicide. The friar will not allow Romeo to take his own life, and convinces him to go and see Juliet to say goodbye to her.

Capulet enters and arranges for Juliet to marry Paris in three days. She refuses, but her father says he will disown her if she does not comply. They exit and Juliet enters in the friar's cell. He gives her a potion that will make it appear as though she is dead. She exits. She reenters the stage (now at home) and agrees to marry Paris. Her father is so delighted with her obedience that he decides to move the wedding up one day, to the very next day (Wednesday). All exit. The next morning, Nurse enters and finds Juliet in her bed, apparently dead. The Capulets all enter with Paris and decide to have a funeral. All exit. Romeo, who is in Mantua, enters. His servant Balthasar enters and tells Romeo that Juliet is dead. Balthasar exits. Romeo doesn't know that it is a fake death because he never gets the message from the friar. He buys a vial of poison from an apothecary and returns to Verona.

Romeo enters at the Capulet tomb and sees Juliet (apparently) dead. Paris, who had entered previously, but had been hiding, recognizes Romeo as a Montague and challenges him. Romeo kills him, drinks the poison he bought, and dies. Just as Juliet wakes up from the potion the friar gave her, the friar enters the tomb. He hears noises

and tries to persuade Juliet to leave with him. She refuses, sees Romeo dead next to her, stabs herself with Romeo's sword, and dies. The Capulets, Montagues, and the Prince of Verona all enter the tomb and wonder what went on. Friar Laurence explains the story, and the Capulets and Montagues agree to end their family feud.



Major Characters

Capulet: The head of one of the major families in Verona, and also Juliet's father. They are in a feud with the Montague family. He is very demanding and wants Juliet to do what he says; Capulet tries to make her marry Paris, against her wishes.

Montague: The head of one of the major families in Verona, and also Romeo's father. They are in a feud with the Capulet family.

Benvolio: A member of the Montague family. He is a nephew, and he is also Romeo's best friend. He tries to help Romeo get over his infatuation with Rosaline by bringing him to the Capulet feast to see other pretty women.

Tybalt: A member of the Capulet family. He is hot-tempered and hates the Montagues. He is angered when he learns that Romeo showed up at the Capulet feast. He sends Romeo a letter and challenges him. After insulting Romeo in the public square, Mercutio responds by challenging him to a duel. Tybalt kills Mercutio, but then is killed by Romeo as a consequence.

Prince Escalus: The prince of Verona. He tries to keep order among the Capulets and Montagues. He threatens death if the two families do not stop the on-going feud that has caused much of the civil disorder in Verona.

Montague's wife: The wife of Montague and Romeo's mother. She is affected by the feud with the Capulets and grieves deeply when she learns her son is exiled. Her grief is so deep that she dies at the end of the play.

Romeo: Romeo is a Montague. He grieves for the love of Rosaline, but falls in love with Juliet, Capulet's daughter, at the Capulet feast. Romeo is quick to love and acts impulsively by killing himself by drinking poison when he thinks Juliet is dead.

Paris : A friend of the Prince. He is betrothed to Juliet, but is killed by Romeo in Juliet's tomb. Romeo feels guilty for the murder, so he answered Paris' dying wish and lies his body next to Juliet's.

Juliet: Juliet is a Capulet. She falls in love with Romeo and is willing to do anything to be with him, even though her family is in a feud with his family. She feigns death so she does not have to marry Paris, but only to awaken to find Romeo actually dead right next to her. She takes his sword and kills herself because she does not want to live without her Romeo.

Capulet's wife: The wife of Capulet and Juliet's mother. She supports her husband and tries to make Juliet marry Paris, even though Juliet refuses. She is also protective of her family and is very angry when she learns that Tybalt has been killed. She demands Romeo be killed, but instead, the Prince simply exiles him.



Nurse: Juliet's nurse, who has taken care of Juliet since she was a baby. Juliet is extremely fond of her nurse. The nurse tries to help Juliet by bringing messages to Romeo, who is eventually banished from Verona to Mantua.

Mercutio: A friend of the Prince and Romeo. He likes to fight and cause trouble with his mouth, such as when he angers the Nurse. He challenges Tybalt to a duel after Tybalt insults his good friend, Romeo. He is killed by Tybalt in this duel.

Friar Laurence: Romeo's friend and confidant. He agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet in hopes that their marriage will end the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. He also watches out for Romeo. For instance, after Romeo kills Tybalt, Friar Laurence tells him to go to Mantua, where he will be safe. At the end of the play, he blames himself for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, but the Prince frees him of any fault, because his intentions were honest and noble.

Minor Characters

Sampson: Servant to the Capulet family. He opens the play in a conversation with Gregory.

Gregory: Servant to the Capulet family. He opens the play in a conversation with Sampson.

Abram: Servant to the Montague family. He is seen in the first scene of the play in a conversation with Sampson and Gregory. They get in a minor argument, as Abram is a servant of the Montague family.

Balthasar: Servant to the Montague family. He informs Romeo in Mantua that Juliet is dead.

Peter: Illiterate servant to the Capulet family. For the most part, he is the Nurse's servant. He is ordered to find the people on the list of guests for the feast, which Romeo and Benvolio read.

Anthony: Servant to the Capulet family. He is called to help with setting up the Capulet feast.

Potpan: Servant to the Capulet family. He is called to help with setting up the Capulet feast.

Apothecary: A shopkeeper knowledgeable about plants and herbs, he sells Romeo poison in Mantua. Although the sale of poison is illegal in Mantua, the Apothecary is very poor and accepts Romeo's money.

Friar John: He is supposed to deliver Friar Laurence's message to Romeo that says that Juliet is not really dead. He never makes it to Romeo, who is in Mantua, and Romeo thinks that Juliet is really dead.



Objects/Places

Verona: City in Italy where the play takes place. The Capulets and the Montagues reside here. Escalus is the prince of Verona.

Capulet orchard: After the feast at the Capulet estate, Romeo runs here to hide from Benvolio and Mercutio, who make fun of his misery over Rosaline. This orchard is where Romeo and Juliet first proclaim their love for each other. He is in the orchard while she is on her balcony above him.

Mantua: City in Italy where Romeo flees after saying his last goodbye to Juliet. He hides here, and waits to hear from the friar. It is here that he learns that Juliet is supposedly dead. Then, on his way to go and see her, he buys poison from an apothecary on the street.



Quotes

Quote 1: "...Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
Three civil brawls bred of an airy word
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave-beseeming ornaments
To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate.
If ever you disturb our streets again
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace..." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 86-96

Quote 2: "One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun/
Ne'er saw her match since first
the world begun." Act 1, Scene 2, lines 94-95

Quote 3: "...Some consequence yet hanging in the stars/
Shall bitterly begin his fearful
date/
With this night's revels, and expire the term/
Of a despised life clos'd in my breast/
By some vile forfeit of untimely death." Act 1, Scene 4, lines 107-111

Quote 4: "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till
this night." Act 1, Scene 5, lines 53-54

Quote 5: "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?/
Deny thy father and refuse
thy name./
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love/
And I'll no longer be a Capulet." Act
2, Scene 2, lines 33-6

Quote 6: "'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot
Nor arm nor face nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O be some other name.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 38-44

Quote 7: "These violent delights have violent ends/
And in their triumph die, like fire and
powder,
Which as they kiss consume." Act 2, Scene 5, lines 9-11

Quote 8: "A plague o' both your houses!" Act 3, Scene 1, line 90

Quote 9: "This day's black fate on more days doth depend/
This but begins the woe
others must end." Act 3, Scene 1, lines 118-119

Quote 10: "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,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love
But not possess'd it, and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 21-28

Quote 11: "Romeo is banished,/ There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,/ In that
word's death. No words can that woe sound." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 124-126

Quote 12: "'Tis torture, and not mercy. Heaven is here/ Where Juliet lives, and every cat
and dog/ And little mouse, every unworthy thing,/ Live here in heaven and may look on
her,/ But Romeo may not." Act 3, Scene 3, lines 29-33

Quote 13: "Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,/ As one dead in the bottom of a
tomb." Act 3, Scene 5, lines 55-56

Quote 14: "Is there no pity sitting in the clouds
That sees into the bottom of my grief?
O sweet my mother, cast me not away!
Delay this marriage for a month, a week,
Or if you do not, make the bridal bed
In that dim monument where Tybalt lies." Act 3, Scene 5, lines 198-203

Quote 15: "Or bid me go into a new-made grave,
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud -
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble -
And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 84-88

Quote 16: "O woe! O woeful, woeful, woeful day!
Most lamentable day. Most woeful day
That ever, ever I did yet behold!
O day, O day, O day! O hateful day!
Never was seen so black a day as this.
O woeful day! O woeful day!" Act 4, Scene 5, lines 49-54

Quote 17: "I dreamt my lady came and found me dead..." Act 5, Scene 1, line 6

Quote 18: "Then I defy you, stars!" Act 5, Scene 1, line 24

Quote 19: "O my love, my wife!/ Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath/ Hath
had no power yet upon thy beauty." Act 5, Scene 3, lines 91-93

Quote 20: "A greater power than we can contradict/ Hath thwarted our intents." Act 5,
Scene 3, lines 153-154



Quote 21: "For never was a story of more woe/
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo." Act
5, Scene 3, lines 309-310



Topic Tracking: Fate

Fate 1: The Prologue points out that Romeo and Juliet have fate against them. It says that their love is "death-marked," and they have no control over what happens. It is their misfortune that leads to the sorrowful and tragic ending of the play.

Fate 2: Peter runs into Romeo and Benvolio on the street. It is this encounter that enables Romeo to read the list of names of guests for the Capulet feast. Had Romeo not run into Peter, he would have never gone to the feast, and hence, never even met Juliet. It is fate that makes this encounter possible.

Fate 3: Before Romeo enters the house of the Capulets, he speaks about an unknown danger "hanging in the stars." This notion of events expected to occur being written in the stars explains how life is predetermined by fate. Romeo senses that something bad may occur, based on his fate.

Fate 4: Here, the friar warns Romeo that people who act impulsively often have very negative and destructive consequences. This warning reminds the audience that Romeo's fate is already predetermined, and that there will, in fact, be negative consequences to his actions.

Fate 5: Mercutio yells out in anger. These words are a reminder to the tragedy that is fated to occur. Romeo and Juliet have very little to do with what happens to them at the end of the play. It is sheer misfortune and fate that lead to the tragic ending.

Fate 6: Romeo himself realizes that fate has much to do with the events that have taken place. He knows that something else is fated to occur, something that will end the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues.

Fate 7: Juliet tells Romeo of her vision of him dead at the bottom of a tomb. This is foreshadowing to the already destined event these two lovers will soon face - death.

Fate 8: Romeo has a dream that Juliet finds him dead. This is foreshadowing to the already destined event these two lovers will soon face - death. This is yet another example where fate has a role in the lives of Romeo and Juliet; it is something that they cannot control.

Fate 9: Romeo learns that Juliet is dead. He says that he defies fate, by saying that he defies what is written in the stars. He refuses to accept that Juliet is dead. What Romeo does not realize is that he has no control over his destiny. No matter how angry or motivated he is to change what is written in the stars, he cannot. It is already predetermined.

Fate 10: Friar John explains to Friar Laurence that he never made it to Mantua to give the letter to Romeo. Because Romeo never receives this letter, he buys poison with the intention to kill himself upon seeing her dead in her tomb. It is fate that did not allow the



friar to reach Romeo in Mantua. And thus, it is also fate that Romeo buys the poison and eventually kills himself by Juliet's side.

Fate 11: Juliet wakes up from the sleeping potion and asks the friar where Romeo is. The friar responds by saying that some higher power has changed their original plans. This higher power is what people have no control over - fate. Through fate, the friar does not make it to Juliet's tomb on time. Romeo kills himself before the friar can tell him that Juliet is not really dead. This is not the friar's fault. Rather, it is fate that he did not get there on time.



Topic Tracking: Misery

Misery 1: Romeo mourns for the love of Rosaline. His love for her is unrequited and he is miserable. He makes his room appear as though it is night, for light to him, represents love, and he has no love in his life. This misery is in sharp contrast to the love that he feels throughout the play.

Misery 2: Romeo explains to Benvolio his feelings for Rosaline. He says that he is sick in love with her. This love, which is unrequited, makes him miserable, unable to do anything else but pine away for her.

Misery 3: Romeo tells Mercutio that love hurts. He tells him all about his love for Rosaline, but Mercutio ridicules Romeo. Still, Romeo suffers and will be satisfied by simply being able to watch Rosaline from a distance. While this suffering is similar to the suffering Romeo will later feel for Juliet, it is not the same. His misery over Juliet is characterized by true love, while his misery over Rosaline is just an obsession.

Misery 4: Juliet learns that Romeo is a Montague, a family feuding with hers. Heartbroken, she tries to understand why the two families fight, and why her family would hate a boy with the name Montague. She says his name is her enemy, not him as a person.

Misery 5: Juliet finds out that Romeo has been banished from Verona. She is grief-stricken, and associates his banishment with death. To her, without Romeo around, he might as well be dead. Juliet's misery is in sharp contrast to the love that she feels for Romeo throughout the play.

Misery 6: Romeo learns of his own banishment from Verona from the friar. He is horrified at the thought of not being able to see Juliet. Similar to Juliet, Romeo also says his banishment is equal to death. It is torture to not be able to see her. There is this strong dichotomy between misery and love throughout the play.

Misery 7: Juliet is anguished at the thought of having to marry Paris, like her father wants her to do. She pleads with her mother to delay the wedding. She says that if her mother does not delay the wedding, then she might as well make the wedding in the Capulet tomb, for she would rather die than marry Paris.

Misery 8: The Nurse comes into Juliet's chamber to wake her up and prepare her for the wedding. She discovers that Juliet is (apparently) dead. Everyone enters, and they all weep and mourn for the loss of Juliet, the Capulet's only child. They weep that it is a hateful and black day, and that with Juliet dead, all of their joys are dead too.

Misery 9: Paris enters the Capulet tomb to bring sweet water and flowers to Juliet. He weeps for her and says that he will come to her tomb every night with flowers and sweet water and weep. Paris' misery over Juliet is similar to the misery that Romeo felt over Rosaline. It is not characterized by true love, rather an obsessive passion.



Misery 10: Lady Montague's grief over Romeo being exiled from Verona is so strong that she dies of this grief. It is more misery than she can bear. Misery is once again related to death. While Romeo and Juliet often say that they are so grief-stricken, they could just die, Lady Montague actually does die from her misery.



Topic Tracking: Love

Love 1: This is the first notion of love that is mentioned throughout the play. Romeo's love for Rosaline is quick, impulsive, and unfortunately, unrequited. She does not return the love he has for her, and is therefore forced to grieve over her. More importantly though, Romeo is not really in love with Rosaline. He is in love with the idea of being in love. This love is in sharp contrast to the love that Romeo will later feel for Juliet - true love.

Love 2: Mercutio makes fun of Romeo's sorrow over his love for Rosaline. He finds it humorous that Romeo is so sick in love with her. His love for her, says Mercutio, is based on a weak foundation, much like how dreams do not hold strong ground.

Love 3: Romeo sees Juliet at the Capulet feast and falls instantly in love with her. Rosaline is simply a long-lost memory at this point. Even Romeo admits that he never really saw what true beauty or love was until this night, that he beholds Juliet. It is at this point that Romeo himself realizes the difference in the love he thought he felt for Rosaline and the love he now feels for Juliet.

Love 4: Juliet, from her balcony, proclaims her love for Romeo, who is below in the Capulet orchard. She is so in love with Romeo that she tells him she is willing to denounce her name, and no longer be a Capulet. This notion of what Juliet is willing to do for love is brought to a head at the end of the play, when she performs the most dramatic act of love throughout the play by killing herself.

Love 5: Friar Laurence is shocked when Romeo comes to tell him of his new love for Juliet. He finds it funny that Romeo can love so impulsively, and forget about Rosaline so quickly, when all he used to do was speak of Rosaline. He says that men love with their eyes, and not what they should love with, their hearts. This deals directly with two different kinds of love being presented: obsessive, passionate love (the kind Romeo feels for Rosaline), and true love (what Romeo and Juliet feel for each other).

Love 6: While Juliet is waiting for Romeo to arrive at her bed chamber, she speaks about her love for him. She says that he will be the stars in the night sky, and that all of the world will be in love with night, if this is so. She also is impatiently waiting to consummate her new marriage with Romeo.

Love 7: Juliet meets with the friar to discuss the issue of having to marry Paris. Her love for Romeo is so strong that she would rather kill herself than have to marry Paris, and thus, betray Romeo and their marriage together. This notion of what Juliet is willing to do for love comes up again here, as it did before, when she said she would denounce her name as a Capulet. The threat that she will kill herself if she has to marry Paris is foreshadowing the actual death to come at the end of the play.



Love 8: The friar gives Juliet a sleeping potion that will make it look as if she is dead. She knows that this will be a difficult plan to carry out, but she looks to her love for Romeo to give her the strength to make it through.

Love 9: Romeo learns that Juliet is dead, and leaves for Verona immediately. He buys poison along the way, intending to kill himself when he gets to Juliet in the Capulet tomb. He would rather kill himself than have to live without Juliet, his wife. This notion of love and death also appears over and over again. Just like Romeo would rather kill himself than have to live without the love of Juliet, she too says the exact same thing earlier in the play.

Love 10: Romeo gets to the tomb and sees Juliet. He gives a brief speech about his love for her. He promises that he will remain beside her forever, even if it is in death. He drinks the poison, and dies. This is the ultimate act of love - killing oneself for love. Love and death are inseparable here. Throughout the play, there is a lot of talk about love and death, but it is here at the climax and end of the play that they finally come together.

Act 1, Prologue

The chorus enters and the play is introduced to the audience. Two young lovers have fate against them. Because of their lineage, their love and lives are destined to end in tragedy. The chorus exits.

Topic Tracking: Fate 1



Act 1, Scene 1

Two servingmen of the Capulet family, Sampson and Gregory, enter the stage and begin the play in a conversation. They are in the city of Verona in Italy. Shortly, two other servingmen from the Montague family, Abram and Balthasar, enter and engage in the discussion with Sampson and Gregory.

Benvolio, a member of the Montague family and Tybalt, a member of the Capulet family, arrive. Tybalt and Benvolio fight with their swords, but the arrival of Prince Escalus stops them. He warns them that if the two families do not stop fighting, they will pay with their lives:

*" . . . Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave beseeming ornaments
To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
Cankered with peace, to part your cankered hate.
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace . . ." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 86-96*

Montague and Montague's wife talk to Benvolio about where their son, Romeo is. Romeo has been pining for the love of Rosaline. It seems that she does not love him in the helpless way that he loves her.

Topic Tracking: Misery 1

Montague and his wife leave and Romeo arrives. He and Benvolio talk about how he is desperately in love with Rosaline. Romeo says that he is sick with love for Rosaline, and Benvolio promises to make him forget her. All exit.

Topic Tracking: Misery 2

Topic Tracking: Love 1



Act 1, Scene 2

Capulet and Paris enter and talk about Paris marrying Capulet's daughter, Juliet. Capulet thinks that Juliet, at the age of 13, is too young for marriage. Capulet tells Paris that he is having a feast that night and he should come and try to win over the heart of Juliet. If he can win her heart, then he might agree to Paris' request.

Capulet's servant Peter enters and he gives him a list of all of the guests that are to attend the feast that night. He orders him to go out and find the names of all of the people. He leaves with Paris.

Peter enters again and runs into Romeo and Benvolio on the street and asks them for help with reading the list of names (as he cannot read).

Topic Tracking: Fate 2

Romeo sees that Rosaline is on the list of names and Benvolio gets an idea to attend the feast that night (even though it is at the house of the Capulets, the family feuding with his family, the Montagues). He hopes that Romeo will see there are many other beautiful women in this world, and that Rosaline is not the only pretty girl in Verona. Romeo denies that this could be true: "One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun/ Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun." Act 1, Scene 2, lines 94-95 Romeo agrees to go along anyway. All exit.

Act 1, Scene 3

Capulet's wife enters with her daughter, Juliet, and Juliet's Nurse. She tells her about Paris' request to marry her. Juliet is not thrilled with Paris, but says she will listen to her parents' wishes. She will see him that night at the feast. Juliet's Nurse laughs and reminisces about raising Juliet since she was a baby. All exit.



Act 1, Scene 4

Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio enter at the feast at the Capulet house. They are wearing masks so they will not be noticed. Mercutio, cousin to the Prince, speaks with Romeo about his despair for Rosaline. Romeo tells Mercutio that he is miserable and that love hurts.

Topic Tracking: Misery 3

Topic Tracking: Love 2

Mercutio gives a speech about Queen Mab, a fairy queen who supposedly brings dreams to humans. They end their talk and prepare to enter the house. Romeo speaks of danger to come: ". . . Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,/ Shall bitterly begin his fearful date/ With this night's revels and expire the term/ Of a despised life, closed in my breast,/ By some vile forfeit of untimely death." Act 1, Scene 4, lines 107-111

Topic Tracking: Fate 3



Act 1, Scene 5

Anthony, Potpan, and some other servingmen enter. They are called to help with the feast. They leave.

Romeo and Juliet enter. Romeo sees Juliet and falls instantly in love with her: "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night." Act 1, Scene 5, lines 53-4

Topic Tracking: Love 3

Tybalt enters. He is a Capulet and recognizes Romeo's voice and knows instantly that he is from the Montague family. He is outraged and tells Capulet, who enters. Capulet tells him to ignore Romeo, and this makes Tybalt even angrier. They exit.

Romeo and Juliet enter again and exchange words for the first time. They speak about love. Romeo refers to his lips as "two blushing pilgrims" wanting to be kissed, and Juliet responds by saying that pressing their hands together should be enough for them. They kiss on the lips twice, and then Juliet is called away by her Nurse, who tells Romeo that Juliet is a Capulet. He is pulled away by Benvolio. Capulet then calls the feast to an end.

Juliet asks her Nurse to find out the name of the boy she was talking to. She then learns that his name is Romeo, and he is a Montague. All exit.

Act 2, Prologue

The chorus enters again. The love that Romeo once had for Rosaline is now being replaced with his love for Juliet. However, because they are from opposing families, they must meet in secrecy. This bit of danger adds a sweet excitement to their affair.



Act 2, Scene 1

Romeo enters and speaks of his love for Juliet. He jumps over a Capulet wall, hoping to see her. Benvolio and Mercutio enter as Romeo leaves. Benvolio tells Mercutio to call for Romeo and he does so by giving a speech that mocks Romeo's feelings for the forgotten Rosaline. After a while of poking fun at Romeo, Benvolio suggests that they leave and go look for him.



Act 2, Scene 2

Romeo is in the Capulet orchard and sees Juliet come out onto her balcony. He watches her and starts to speak with her. They proclaim their love for each other here. Juliet is willing to denounce her family name to be with him: "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?/ Deny thy father and refuse thy name;/ Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,/ And I'll no longer be a Capulet." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 33-6

Topic Tracking: Love 4

They go into a long discourse about names and how they are nothing more than words. The fact that she is a Capulet by name and he is a Montague by name should not affect their love for each other like it does.

*"Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, thou not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet."* Act 2, Scene 2, lines 38-44

Topic Tracking: Misery 4

Romeo and Juliet quickly agree to marry the next day at nine o'clock. The Nurse calls for Juliet and she has to go. They say goodbye to each other for the night and exit.



Act 2, Scene 3

Friar Laurence enters. He is gathering herbs and talking to himself about medicine and poison. Romeo arrives and the friar asks why Romeo is awake so early. He tells the friar all that has happened--that he is in love with Juliet and that he wants the friar to marry them. The friar makes fun of Romeo for his characteristic to fall in love so impulsively.

Topic Tracking: Love 5

The friar agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet in hopes that it will end the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues. They exit.

Act 2, Scene 4

Benvolio and Mercutio enter. They speak about where Romeo is and where he went the night before, after the feast. Mercutio makes fun of Romeo for pining over Rosaline. Benvolio informs Mercutio that Tybalt has sent Romeo a challenge to a duel. Romeo arrives and argues with Mercutio over where he's been. The Nurse arrives with Peter looking for Romeo. Mercutio and Benvolio leave. Romeo tells the Nurse to tell Juliet to meet him this afternoon at Friar Laurence's cell; they will be married there today. He offers her money for delivering the message to Juliet, but she refuses. He tells the Nurse that she should later hide behind the abbey wall, where Romeo will send her a rope ladder so he can climb up to Juliet's bedchamber.

Act 2, Scene 5

Juliet enters waiting impatiently for the Nurse to return with news from Romeo. Finally, the Nurse and Peter return. The Nurse sends Peter away and Juliet begs the Nurse to tell her the message Romeo sent. The Nurse delays giving Juliet the message and instead whines of aching bones and an aching back. She finally tells Juliet that she is to go to Friar Laurence's cell immediately. She also tells Juliet that she must go to get the ladder that Romeo will use later to climb up to Juliet's chamber. Juliet hurries off in excitement.



Act 2, Scene 6

Friar Laurence and Romeo enter waiting in the friar's cell for Juliet to arrive. He warns Romeo about acting impulsively: "These violent delights have violent ends/ And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,/ Which, as they kiss, consume." Act 2, Scene 6, lines 9-11

Topic Tracking: Fate 4

Juliet arrives and she and Romeo again proclaim their love for each other. The friar leads them away to marry them.



Act 3, Scene 1

Mercutio and Benvolio enter talking in the public square. Tybalt arrives looking for Romeo. Romeo arrives and Tybalt instigates trouble by calling him a villain. Romeo responds by saying that he loves Tybalt (for now they are cousins through marriage). Mercutio interferes with their arguing and picks a fight with Tybalt. Romeo and Benvolio try to break up the fight, but Mercutio ends up getting stabbed by Tybalt. Benvolio helps Mercutio to a nearby house. Mercutio keeps yelling: "A plague o' both your houses!" Act 3, Scene 1, line 90

Topic Tracking: Fate 5

Benvolio returns and tells Romeo that Mercutio is dead. Romeo is outraged: "This day's black fate on more days doth depend;/ This but begins the woe others must end." Act 3, Scene 1, lines 118-19

Topic Tracking: Fate 6

Romeo and Tybalt then fight. Romeo kills Tybalt and then flees, as Benvolio informs him that the citizens of Verona are awake. If the Prince finds Romeo, he will be put to death. Soon, the Prince, Capulet, his wife, Montague, and his wife, arrive on the scene and question what has happened there. Benvolio informs them of all that took place. The Prince exiles Romeo, and if he is found, he will be put to death. All exit.



Act 3, Scene 2

Juliet enters her bed chamber impatiently waiting to hear news from her Nurse about Romeo. She talks about how she loves Romeo so much, and how she is waiting to consummate their marriage.

*"Give me my Romeo; and, when I 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
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possessed it; and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoyed."* Act 3, Scene 2, lines 21-8

Topic Tracking: Love 6

The Nurse arrives and tells Juliet that Tybalt has been killed. Juliet mistakenly believes that Romeo has been killed. Once she learns that it is Tybalt that has been killed, she is happier, but only until she learns that Romeo has been banished from Verona for killing Tybalt. Juliet is in horrified and grief-stricken just thinking about Romeo being banished: "'Romeo is banished' - / There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,/ In that word's death; no words can that woe sound." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 124-6

Topic Tracking: Misery 5

The Nurse informs Juliet that Romeo is hidden at Friar Laurence's cell. She tells Juliet that she will go and find him for her. Juliet gives Nurse a ring to take to Romeo and asks her to bring Romeo back to her so she can say her last goodbye. They exit.



Act 3, Scene 3

Romeo enters hiding in Friar Laurence's cell. The friar comes in and informs Romeo that the Prince has banished him from Verona. Romeo does not take this very well, for he considers banishment equal to death. He grieves over the thought of not being able to see Juliet: "'Tis torture, and not mercy. Heaven is here,/ Where Juliet lives; and every cat and dog/ And little mouse, every unworthy thing,/ Live here in heaven and may look on her;/ But Romeo may not." Act 3, Scene 3, lines 29-33

Topic Tracking: Misery 6

Nurse arrives and tells Romeo that Juliet is miserable over the fact that he is banished from Verona. Romeo too is miserable, and tries to kill himself. The friar dissuades him from killing himself. He tells Romeo to go and see Juliet and comfort her. He also tells Romeo to leave before dawn, and make for the city of Mantua, where he will stay until all things in Verona have been settled. Romeo agrees and leaves to see Juliet. All exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

It is Monday. Capulet and his wife enter with Paris. They are discussing the issue of marriage with Paris. At first, they deny his request to marry Juliet, for Tybalt's death has gotten in the way of thinking about other things. Capulet finally agrees to allow Paris to marry Juliet. The marriage will take place on Thursday. Originally, he had said it will take place on Wednesday, but considering that it is only Monday, Wednesday is too soon. Thus, he decides to make the wedding on Thursday. Paris leaves and Capulet tells his wife to prepare Juliet for the wedding. All exit.



Act 3, Scene 5

Romeo and Juliet enter in her bed chamber. They say their last goodbyes. Juliet argues that she hears the nightingale, the bird of the night, and that it is not time yet for Romeo to leave. He argues that it is the lark, the bird of the morning, and that he must leave, so he will not be put to death. Juliet asks if they will ever meet again. She says that she has an image of Romeo dead: "Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,/ As one dead in the bottom of a tomb." Act 3, Scene 5, lines 55-6 They say goodbye and Romeo leaves.

Topic Tracking: Fate 7

Juliet's mother enters her bed chamber. They talk about their grief over the dead Tybalt. Her mother tells Juliet of her father's plans to make her feel better - to have her marry Paris on Thursday. Juliet refuses this idea. Her father enters her bed chamber and says that he feels unappreciated by Juliet. He threatens to disown her if she does not obey his wishes to have her marry Paris on Thursday. Juliet pleads with him, but he is very angry. Nurse tries to stick up for Juliet, but Capulet silences her. Juliet is anguished by all of this.

*"Is there no pity sitting in the clouds
That sees into the bottom of my grief?
O sweet my mother, cast me not away!
Delay this marriage for a month, a week,
Or if you do not, make the bridal bed
In that dim monument where Tybalt lies."* Act 3, Scene 5, lines 198- 203

Topic Tracking: Misery 7

Capulet and his wife leave, and Juliet turns to her Nurse for comfort. She suggests that Juliet marry Paris, as he is a good and noble man. Juliet tells Nurse to tell her mother that she is going to Friar Laurence's cell to confess her sins and be absolved. Nurse leaves. Juliet is determined to seek help from the friar, and if he cannot help her, she says she will die. She exits.



Act 4, Scene 1

Paris and Friar Laurence enter in the friar's cell discussing the wedding plans for Thursday. Paris tells the friar that Capulet hopes to alleviate some of Juliet's grief over Tybalt's death by having the wedding at such short notice.

Juliet arrives and makes small talk with Paris. She says that she has come to confess to the friar. He dismisses Paris, and then Juliet begins to tell the friar what she really is there for. She says that death is her only answer to this horrible situation that has arisen.

She would rather kill herself than be untrue to her Romeo.

*"Or bid me go into a new-made grave
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud -
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble -
And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live an unstained wife to my sweet love."* Act 4, Scene 1, lines 84-8

Topic Tracking: Love 7

The friar dissuades her from committing suicide and suggests something else. He gives her a vial of special herbs and tells her to go home and agree to marry Paris. Then, drink the herbs tomorrow (Wednesday) night, the night before the wedding is to take place. They will make her appear as though she is dead for forty-two hours. Her family, thinking she is dead, will place her in the family vault. The friar will send word, via a letter, to Romeo in Mantua telling him of all that is to take place. He and the friar will then meet up at the Capulet vault and watch as Juliet awakens from the fake death.

Juliet agrees to take the vial and looks to love for strength to carry out the plans. They exit.

Topic Tracking: Love 8



Act 4, Scene 2

Capulet, his wife, and the Nurse enter preparing for the wedding. Capulet asks where Juliet is, and within seconds, she arrives. She says that she has repented her sin of disobedience and asks for her father's forgiveness. He accepts her apologies, and says that he is going to tell Paris of the news. Juliet tells her father that she saw him in Friar Laurence's cell, and was very kind to him. Capulet is so pleased that he decides to move the wedding up one day, to Wednesday, the very next day. His wife says that there will not be enough time to get Juliet ready, but he says that he will stay up all night preparing. All exit.



Act 4, Scene 3

Juliet enters in her bed chamber with Nurse, who is helping her pick out her wedding clothes for the next day. She tells the Nurse that she wants to be left alone for the night, so that she can pray. Juliet's mother comes in and asks if they need any help. Juliet says no, and asks her to leave and to take the Nurse with her. They leave and Juliet is left in her chamber to contemplate her scheme.

She worries that the potion will not work. She comes up with a back-up plan, a dagger. She will stab herself if the potion fails to work. Then, she wonders if the potion is really poison that the friar gave her so that he could get out of the mess that he made by marrying her and Romeo. She also starts to envision all sorts of horrifying things, like suffocating in the tomb, and waking up only to realize she is surrounded with all of the rotting corpses of her dead family members. Juliet even thinks she sees Tybalt's ghost trying to avenge his death by going after Romeo. With this, she drinks the potion and falls onto her bed.



Act 4, Scene 4

Capulet's wife and Nurse enter speaking about the wedding. Capulet enters and the Nurse tries to tell him to go and get some sleep. He refuses, and his wife and the Nurse leave. Capulet orders some servants to do some more setup for the wedding. He thinks he hears Paris arrive (according to the music that is playing, which Paris said he would bring). He calls the Nurse and orders her to awaken Juliet and prepare her for the wedding. Meanwhile, he will go and greet Paris. All exit.



Act 4, Scene 5

It is Wednesday morning. The Nurse enters Juliet's chamber to wake her up and she discovers, after many attempts to wake her, that Juliet is dead (supposedly). She calls Capulet and his wife to come and see. They enter and they all weep. The County Paris (with his musicians) and Friar Laurence soon enter to learn about the dreadful news. Everyone weeps and mourns for Juliet. The Nurse mourns:

*"O woe! O woeful, woeful, woeful day!
Most lamentable day, most woeful day
That ever ever I did yet behold!
O day, O day, O day! O hateful day!
Never was seen so black a day as this.
O woeful day! O woeful day!"* Act 4, Scene 5, lines 49-54

Topic Tracking: Misery 8

The friar tries to calm everyone by saying that death is a part of nature and that now Juliet is in heaven. Capulet says that now his wedding plans have turned into funeral plans. The friar tells everyone to leave to go and prepare for the funeral. At the end of the scene, Peter and the musicians get into an argument over what music to play. All exit.



Act 5, Scene 1

Romeo enters. He is in Mantua waiting to hear news from the friar. He speaks about a dream that he had in which Juliet came and found him dead: "I dreamt my lady came and found me dead . . ." Act 5, Scene 1, line 6

Topic Tracking: Fate 8

Balthasar, Romeo's servant, enters and informs Romeo that Juliet is dead. Romeo is outraged and speaks against fate: "Then I defy you, stars!" Act 5, Scene 1, line 24
Balthasar leaves.

Topic Tracking: Fate 9

Romeo recalls an Apothecary that lives nearby. He decides that he will go and buy poison from this man.

Topic Tracking: Love 9

The Apothecary enters. Romeo asks him for the poison. He offers him forty ducats for the poison, but at first the Apothecary refuses to sell it to him, for it is illegal to sell such drugs in Mantua. Romeo tries to persuade him by suggesting that the Apothecary needs the money, considering how poor he is. Finally, the Apothecary accepts the money and sells Romeo the poison. He leaves to make his way back to Verona to Juliet's grave.



Act 5, Scene 2

Friar John enters Friar Laurence's cell. He tells him that he never made it to Mantua to deliver the friar's letter (intending to inform Romeo that Juliet is not really dead) because he was suspected of having the plague. He was therefore not allowed to leave Verona. Hence, Romeo never received the letter. Friar Laurence is horrified at this misfortune. He decides to write another letter and send it to Mantua (hoping it will reach Romeo), and then goes to get Juliet, who will soon be waking up from the potion. All exit.

Topic Tracking: Fate 10



Act 5, Scene 3

Paris and his servant, who is carrying flowers, sweet water, and a torch, enter Juliet's tomb. The flowers and sweet water are strewn about her tomb. His servant leaves and Paris mourns for Juliet.

Topic Tracking: Misery 9

Paris hears his servant warn him (by whistling) that someone is coming. Paris hides and Romeo and Romeo's servant Balthasar, who is carrying a pickaxe, a crow of iron, and a torch, enter the tomb. Romeo gives Balthasar a letter to give to Romeo's father. He tells Balthasar not to pay attention to what he is about to do and then bids him to leave. Romeo says that he must open Juliet's tomb to retrieve a ring. This is a diversion so that Balthasar does not question what Romeo really intends to do. He really intends to climb into the tomb with Juliet, so that he may die there with her. He gives Balthasar some money and Balthasar hides, for he wants to see what Romeo will do.

Romeo begins to open to the tomb. Paris recognizes that Romeo is a Montague; he comes out of hiding and tries to stop Romeo. Paris threatens Romeo and says that he is going to apprehend him and that he must die. Romeo does not obey his orders and they fight. Paris' servant calls for help, and while he is gone, Romeo kills Paris. While dying, Paris asks Romeo to lay him in the tomb with Juliet. Romeo quickly realizes that the man he has just killed is Paris, Juliet's supposed suitor. He feels so guilty that he decides to fulfill Paris' wishes by placing him in the tomb with Juliet.

When he sees Juliet, he is overcome by her beauty. He says that death may have taken her breath, but it has not taken her beauty: "O my love! my wife!/ Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,/ Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty." Act 5, Scene 3, lines 91-3 He promises that he will not leave her ever again, and sleep beside her forever in death. He drinks the poison and dies.

Topic Tracking: Love 10

Friar Laurence enters and sees the blood and swords that Romeo and Paris fought with. He discovers their dead bodies. Juliet awakens and asks the friar where her Romeo is, with a fully conscious memory of what her and the friar's original plans were. The friar tells her that, by some higher power, their plans have been changed: "A greater power than we can contradict/ Hath thwarted our intents." Act 5, Scene 3, lines 153-4

Topic Tracking: Fate 11

He hears noises within the tomb, and begs for Juliet to get up and leave with him. He tells her that Romeo and Paris are dead. She refuses to go with him and he leaves alone. She sees that Romeo drank some type of poison, and kisses his lips to try and get some of the remaining poison for herself. This does not work, and so she takes his sword, stabs herself, and dies.



Paris' servant and a watchman enter and find Paris, Juliet, and Romeo all dead. The watchman tells the servant to get the Prince, the Capulets, and the Montagues. Two more watchmen find Balthasar and Friar Laurence; they are to be held until the Prince arrives. The Prince enters and Capulet and his wife enter also. They see what has happened and grieve greatly over their dead daughter, who is covered with blood. Montague soon enters and says that his wife has died over Romeo being exiled from Verona.

Topic Tracking: Misery 10

The Prince orders that the tomb be sealed up until the series of events that took place can be understood. The friar comes forward and explains everything that took place, leading up to the dreadful deaths of Romeo and Juliet. He explains that he did what he did because he wanted to end the age-old fight between the two families. The Prince releases him of any fault because the friar has always been known to be a holy man. Romeo's letter that he gave to Balthasar to give to his father proves that the friar is telling the truth. The Prince is angered at the Capulets and Montagues for allowing their feud to get so out of hand that their children are now dead. The two families agree to end their fight and decide to erect statues of gold. The Capulets will erect a statue of Romeo and the Montagues will erect one of Juliet. The Prince makes his parting words: "For never was a story of more woe/ Than this of Juliet and her Romeo." Act 5, Scene 3, lines 309-310 All exit.