

Romeo and Juliet

ORIGIN

- *Romeo and Juliet* is among the **early plays** of William Shakespeare, written somewhere between **1594 and 1596**.
- Shakespeare did not invent the story of Romeo and Juliet. The concept of this play is taken from a **long narrative poem** by **Arthur Brooke**, published in 1562 as “The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet”.
- Brooke’s poem itself was based on even **older Italian stories**, so Shakespeare’s play could be considered **an adaptation of adaptations** that stretched across nearly a hundred years and two languages.

- Some differences between the poem and Shakespeare's play:
 - 1. Shakespeare created the original character of **Mercutio**.
 - 2. The play takes place in **5 days** compared to **nine months** in the poem.
 - 3. Another difference is the language; Shakespeare wrote the play mostly in **blank verse**.

CONCEPT OF FATE

- Romeo and Juliet, a young man and a nearly 14 year old girl, fall in love at first sight.
- Shakespeare presents the couple as “star-crossed lovers”, doomed to disaster by Fate.
- Most people of Shakespeare’s time believed in astrology; they believed that the course of their lives was partly determined by “the star” under which they were born.

- Shakespeare, however, may **NOT** have shared this belief. He does not completely make Romeo and Juliet **victims of Fate** because of the following:
 - 1. Romeo and Juliet make decisions that lead to their disaster.
 - 2. Other characters make decisions that lead to play's tragic ending.

CHARACTERS

- Two colorful and unforgettable characters in this story are **Mercutio** and **the Nurse**.
- Shakespeare uses both of these characters to create a **dramatic foil**: a character who highlights or brings out the personality traits of another character. The contrast helps to emphasize the other character's traits.
- Mercutio is **Romeo's** dramatic foil, while the Nurse is **Juliet's**.

- Other characters in the play:
- Tybalt = a raging bully
- Benvolio = best friend
- Lord Capulet = fussy, loving but domineering father
- Friar Laurence = holy man who acts as mentor to R&J and marries them in secret

THEMES= Main ideas to look for in the story

- 1. **The power and force of LOVE**: Love is an overpowering force that surpasses all
- 2. **Individual versus society**: Romeo and Juliet against the world
- 3. **FATE & CHOICE**: How fate controls some events that happen to Romeo and Juliet, yet the choices they make are just as important to the outcome of the story
- 4. **Importance of TIME**: The play occurs in less than 5 days

LANGUAGE

- *Romeo and Juliet* is written in both prose and poetry.
- Prose: spoken by the common people and sometimes by Mercutio when he is joking
- Poetry: spoken by the higher society characters, in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter...BLANK means NO RHYME)

- In addition, **couplets** (two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme) are often used to **punctuate** a character's exit or signal the end of a scene.
- When reading the language aloud, take note of **punctuation**. It will help the speaker to catch his/her breath and deliver the line correctly.
- Lines of this poetry are either **end-stopped** lines or **run-on lines**.

- End-stopped line: has punctuation at the end

- *Example:*

- *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.*

- Run-on line: has no punctuation at the end, meaning that the thought will be completed in the lines that follow
- *Example:*
 - *The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars*
 - *As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven*
 - *Would through the airy region stream so bright*
 - *That birds would sing and think it were not night.*