

8D: Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet

In this unit, students read five excerpts from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The purpose of these lessons is to introduce students to Shakespearean English through a close and engaging reading of these famous scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*. After students have finished the unit, they will have learned how to spot and follow an extended metaphor, discovered how to put Shakespeare into their own words to better understand his meaning, and become curious about—and more prepared for—reading the play in its entirety someday.

Students practice memorizing and reciting lines from the play's famous Prologue over the course of the unit. The lessons also provide multiple opportunities for students to stage their own performances and recitations and to “translate” Shakespeare's words into more contemporary language. In several lessons, students focus on the form of Shakespeare's language, particularly the Shakespearean sonnet. At the end of the unit, students write an essay arguing whether the forces of love or hate are responsible for Romeo's death.

Note: *Romeo and Juliet* depicts the story of two young people whose lives end tragically when, caught up in grief, they decide to take their own lives. Students may be upset by these events and may want to talk about their feelings. It is important to note that Shakespeare makes it clear that Romeo and Juliet make a tragic choice that only brings more sadness.

Core texts your student will read:

- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

What my student will do/learn:

- Students memorize and perform the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Students read, translate, and discuss scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, performing scenes themselves and comparing and contrasting film versions with their own interpretation of the text.
- Students analyze Shakespeare's use of form and figurative language, creating metaphors that Romeo might use to praise Juliet.
- Students consider how Shakespeare uses a sonnet and figurative language in Romeo and Juliet's first meeting to demonstrate how in sync this young couple is right from the start.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.

- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Did the power of love contribute more to Romeo's death or were the forces of hatred more of an influence on Romeo's death, or both?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. How does Shakespeare use form and figurative language to communicate the flirtation between Romeo and Juliet? Are Romeo's moves any good? In today's world, in what ways would flirtation look the same? How would it look different?
2. How does the feud between the Capulets and Montagues add to Romeo and Juliet's problems? What could the families have done differently to avoid tragedy? What could Romeo and Juliet have done differently?
3. Will the Capulet and Montague families learn from their tragedy and keep the peace? Why or why not? What message might today's readers take from the events and conclusion of this play?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you use quotes where both Juliet and Romeo are talking about praying, and then describe that they both know that 'praying' actually refers to kissing which shows they make a good couple.")
5. The end of the play includes the tragic loss of life. Does Romeo die because of the intensity of his love? Or does Romeo die because of the hatred between the Capulets and the Montagues?