



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

Romeo and Juliet

STUDY GUIDE
GRADES 9-12

MERRY-GO-ROUND YOUTH THEATRE HAS REBRANDED TO:



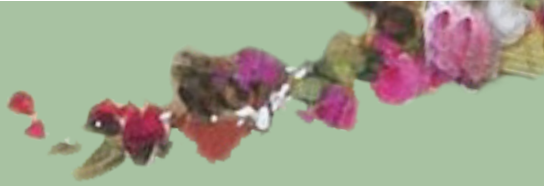
Over the past decade, our organization has seen significant programmatic expansion in our education division, increased attendance in our professional musical theatre division, sophistication of our products and deliverables and bold implementation of new innovative engagement and enrichment programs. Our steady growth has resulted in an organizational transformation. As such, it became evident that our many programs and outreach efforts were not being represented cohesively by our existing brand. Our existing brand names (The Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival and Merry-Go-Round Youth Theatre) housed within the parent company title, Merry Go Round Playhouse, Inc., were confusing, fractured and creating great challenges to all facets of our identity. As such, it was clear that a rebranding effort was critical.

Fall of 2019, after eighteen months of intense strategic planning, we officially re-branded as **The REV Theatre Company**. **THE REV** is short for many words but for us, not one in particular. It is not a symbol or an acronym. **THE REV** references our creation and infusion of energy into Auburn and the Finger Lakes region; **THE REV** references the original carousel that once revolved in our flagship venue, and **THE REV** stands for our reverence for our 60-year legacy and our incredible community.

While we have changed our overall brand name, all of our programs have remained the same. We still provide the same professional arts education through the Sequential Dramatics Program to your school.

Thank you for being our partner in education.

Synopsis



We open in Verona, Italy. The Capulets and Montagues, two prestigious families, have been feuding violently for many years. Lord Capulet is hosting a costume party and has shared his guest list with a young man named Paris. Paris happens to be in love with Lord Capulet's daughter, Juliet. Capulet tasks his servant, Peter, with offering their home to anyone on Lord Capulet's guest list. Peter, however, cannot read. He enlists the help of two young men named Romeo and Mercutio. Romeo and Mercutio agree to hide their Montague identities and attend the feast.

At the party, Romeo spies Juliet and falls in love with her instantly. Tybalt (Juliet's cousin) recognizes Romeo's voice and becomes angry. Lord Capulet warns him to keep his temper—he will not tolerate any violence at his party. Tybalt storms off bitterly, and Romeo and Juliet share their first kiss. Shortly thereafter, the Nurse delivers the bad news: They are members of warring households.

Later that night, Romeo steals away to Juliet's balcony. The two profess their love for each other, and Juliet says she will send her nurse to Romeo tomorrow at nine; if he truly loves her, he may send back word that he is ready to marry her.

The next morning, Romeo giddily spills the news of their plan to Friar Laurence. Laurence hopes their marriage will end the age-old feud between their families. Juliet is eagerly awaiting news from her Nurse, who finally reveals that Romeo is indeed waiting for her. The Nurse advises her to go to Laurence's cell, using confession as an excuse. Juliet arrives, and she and Romeo are married.

That day, Romeo and Mercutio are walking about town. Tybalt arrives, and a quarrel between he and Mercutio escalates into a duel. As Romeo tries to stop the fight, Mercutio incurs a mortal wound at Tybalt's hand. Romeo slays Tybalt in retaliation. Terrified of the consequences, he returns to Friar Laurence. The Friar shelters him and delivers word of his sentencing by the Prince: Romeo is to be banished from Verona.

Romeo is distraught and ready to take his own life. The Friar says he will try and appeal to the Prince on Romeo's behalf, and to reconcile the Capulets and the Montagues once and for all. He suggests that Romeo leave for Mantua early the next morning. Emboldened by their new plan, Romeo and Juliet secretly reunite at the Capulet home.

Continued →



Synopsis Continued

Seeking to comfort his grieving daughter over the death of her cousin, Lord Capulet delivers what he believes will be joyful news: he has arranged for her to marry Paris on Thursday! He is puzzled and angered by her tearful response, and gives her an ultimatum: she will marry Paris or he will disown her. Juliet runs to Friar Laurence, seeking his council. There she encounters Paris, who is making arrangements for their wedding. Again using the excuse of needing to confess, she is able to meet with the Friar in secret. He sends her home with a potion that will make her appear dead and tells her to take it the night before her supposed wedding. He promises to send a letter to Romeo, telling him to meet her in the Capulet burial chamber. The potion works and Juliet is assumed dead by everyone.

Friar Lawrence's letter does not reach Romeo. Instead, he is greeted by Peter, who reports Juliet's "death." Romeo and Paris fight at her tomb. Paris is slain. Looking to end his crushing grief, Romeo drinks a vial of deadly poison. Juliet wakes, expecting a reunion with her husband. Instead she finds his cold, lifeless body. Unable to cope, she takes Romeo's dagger and ends her life. When the Capulet and Montague families learn what has happened, they acknowledge that their collective actions cost Romeo and Juliet their lives. Finally, the parents agree to go forward in the spirit of change and reconciliation.



Adapting Shakespeare

Today's production of *Romeo and Juliet* clocks in at just under an hour—perfect for a high school bell schedule. According to the prologue, the staged play elapses over “a couple hours passage on our stage.” The 1968 adaptation by Franco Zeffirelli is 2 ½ hours long, while Baz Luhrmann's 1996 rendition is 20 minutes shorter. Directors take many things into consideration when crafting a Shakespeare adaptation. Their own artistic preferences, the taste of the intended audience, and the performance venue all factor into the final product that is presented.

Shakespearean Grammar

Many authors employ a literary device called poetic license, which is the practice of “breaking” traditional rules of speech and grammar in service of creating a certain effect. William Shakespeare was the master of this technique! As the English language has evolved quite a bit since the 16th century, your students may find the following tips helpful when studying his work:

Iambic Pentameter

Your students may be familiar with the famous line “But soft! What light from yonder window breaks?” What they may not know is that this is the perfect example of **iambic pentameter**. In a typical **iamb**, an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable, and each unrhymed sentence contained five (penta) iambs. Using our example above, each bracket is an iamb and each stressed syllable is bolded: {But **soft!**} {What **light**} {through **yon**-} {der **win**-} - {dow **breaks?**} To achieve this, Shakespeare sometimes rearranged the order of **subjects**, **verbs** and **objects** within a sentence. Therefore, “Today I **ate** a **burger** in the park” could become “Today a **burger** in the park I **ate**” or “A **burger** in the park I **ate** today.” Knowing this may help your students to decode any lines that are giving them trouble.

Thou and You

Contrary to popular belief, “thou” and “you” are not interchangeable. “Thou” is reserved for persons who are familiar to or of a lower status than the person speaking; “You” is used when a speaker addresses someone with whom they are only recently acquainted, or someone of a higher rank. (Students who have studied Romance languages may already be familiar with this structure. In Spanish, “tu” is for informal use and “usted” is used in formal situations. The Italian “tu” and “Lei” follow the same format.) A student speaking to a teacher would therefore use “you,” whereas the teacher would call the student “thou.” Challenge your students to take note of which pronouns the characters use when addressing each other. It will give them clues about the dynamics of the characters’ relationships.

Magic Words

Shakespeare is believed to have invented about 1,700 of the words we commonly use today. Some scholars argue that he was merely the first to have written some of these words down. Regardless, it is widely acknowledged that his vocabulary far exceeded those of his peers. *Dwindle*, *madcap*, *zany*, *fashionable*, *bump*, and *eyeball* are only a few of his words that have endured. *Heart of gold*, *break the ice*, *cruel to be kind*, *lie low*, *love is blind*, *off with his head*, and *it’s all Greek to me* are a few phrases owed to the Bard.



Student Learning Objectives: *Romeo and Juliet*

60 minute performance

Students Will Be Able To:

- Relate the objectives, obstacles, motivations, and tactics of the characters in the play to situations in their own lives, thereby developing empathy and tolerance
- Recognize each character's arc, or how the characters change from the beginning of the play to the end
- Describe major themes and extract meaning from a work of theatre
- Respond to discussion questions provided in the REV's Study Guide

NYS Learning Standards met with *Romeo and Juliet*

The Arts

- Standard 1: Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts
- Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
- Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

English Language Arts

- Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding
- Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression
- Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation

Additional Resources

Books

- [The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare](#) – Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells (Editors)
- [Shakespeare-Lexicon](#) – Alexander Schmidt (Author) and Gregor Sarrazin (Editor)

Video

- [William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet](#) – 1996 film starring: Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, John Leguizamo, & Harold Perrineau. Directed by: Baz Luhrmann.
- [Romeo and Juliet](#) – 1968 film starring: Leonard Whiting, Olivia Hussey, John McEnery, & Milo O'Shea. Directed by: Franco Zeffirelli.
- [West Side Story](#) – 1961 film starring: Natalie Wood, George Chakiris, Richard Beymer, & Russ Tamblyn. Directed by: Jerome Robbins.
- [Romeo and Juliet](#) – 1966 Royal Ballet performance starring: Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev. Directed by: Paul Czinner.

Discussion Prompts

A STORY IN MOTION

Once your students have read the original text, introduce them to some modern retellings of *Romeo and Juliet*—the 1968 and 1996 films, as well as the *West Side Story* live and movie musicals, are all good choices. Discuss how transferring a piece of art to a different medium changes the storytelling needs. What are the advantages of film? How might the musicals' creators have decided which moments were the best opportunities for songs? Which popular dance styles today might be incorporated to breathe new life into the important points in the story?

MODERN TIMES

When creating *West Side Story*, book writer Arthur Laurents incorporated a new element into the story: conflict between people of different ethnic backgrounds. In an earlier draft called *East Side Story*, the two groups at odds (one Irish Catholic family and one Jewish family) were fighting over religious issues. Do you think that the incorporation of modern issues helps contemporary audiences to understand an older piece of theatre? Are there issues today that could be served by inclusion in a *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation?

SAY WHAT?

Many people today find Shakespearean language difficult to follow. In Elizabethan England, however, an average audience would have been composed of a largely illiterate populace. Ask your students which words or phrases from today's popular culture they have had to "translate" for their parents or grandparents. Task them with researching key phrases from the 1920s on. Do they know if "cat's pajamas," "jive" and "gnarly" are compliments or insults? What are the origin points for the phrases on their list, and how did they spread? (Bonus question – How many of the things we say today are owed to the rise of the Internet?)



For more information on this production, including specific grade level standards and a downloadable Activity Page, please visit our website:
www.TheRevTheatre.com

Accessing Digital Programming

For the 2021-2022 school year, you have access to our programming digitally.

To access, contact Erin Katzker, Educational Theatre Manager, at revtour@therevtheatre.com or 315-255-1305.



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