**Romeo and Juliet**

**Shakespeare**

Shakespeare’s plays help us find out about life and relationships. In Romeo and Juliet, we see friendship and loyalty between men and women, men and men, women and women, between masters and servants. We also see love between young lovers and between members of one family. In the play, Juliet has married Romeo secretly because her parents and his are enemies. Unfortunately their married happiness has been cut short because Romeo has been banished for killing Juliet’s cousin in a duel. Also, Juliet’s parents, Lord and Lady Capulet, have found a suitable husband for her – the Count Paris. They want to cheer her up for the death of her cousin and so have arranged the marriage to take place in three days’ time, to Juliet’s horror. Romeo and Juliet shows us a lesson that the families and friends of Romeo and Juliet learned the hard way. Can the love of two people mend generations of family conflict?

**Prologue**

Consider the following situation:

* Scene*:* The school football field just prior to a scheduled soccer practices.
* Characters: Trevor, Andy, Mark, Lucien, several other students, coach.
* Action: Trevor and Andy are best friends, as are Mark and Lucien. Trevor and Andy have a long-standing grudge against Mark and Lucien. The four meet on the school football field and a loud, shoving match provoked by Trevor and Andy begins. Suddenly other students join in the disagreement, taking one side or the other. When the coach arrives, his attempts to find out who started it fail as each side blames the other. The coach then gives the two sides a warning about what will happen if they fight in the future. How do you think it might sound? What happens when people disagree?

A disagreement of a similar nature happens at the beginning of the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, because of a long-standing feud between the Capulets and the Montagues, two old families of Verona, Italy.

The play begins with a prologue, in which a single actor comes onto the stage and speaks to the audience. This prologue gives an outline of the play.

**Using the sheet provided, cut out the seven pairs of lines, and see if you can arrange them into the correct order. Work with a partner to complete this task.**

Prediction: Write a paragraph responding to the following prompt.

What is going to happen in this play? What key words or phrases in the prologue are particularly important to your understanding? Be as specific as you can.

**Act One**

* You are a young woman or man very much in love with your boy/girlfriend. You are confident that one day you will marry each other but your family does not approve of your boy/girlfriend or his/her family. Do you obey your family or follow your heart?
* Listen to the synopses and script excerpt.
* In a group of four, read aloud the Prince’s speech (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 72-94) Each person is to speak only one line, then the next person reads the next line. Read it a second time the same way, except this time, say only one word from your line (the word that you think is most important). Think about the words you have chosen and the tone in which the Prince speaks.
* Listen and read again Romeo’s speech in Scene 5. What motivated Romeo to say “O, she does teach the torches to burn bright” Romeo loves Juliet from the moment he sees her and Juliet falls instantly in love with him. Do you believe in love at first sight?
* **Line 43 is an example of hyperbole – exaggerated language. Create a “pick up” line in a similar style!**
* View the opening scenes of the movie version of Romeo and Juliet. As we watch, identify the main events and important characters on the graphic organizer.

**Reflecting on Act One**

Choose one of the activities from Part A to demonstrate your comprehension of the play so far.

Part A

* Imagine you are an editor for a newspaper. Your job is to write brief, memorable headlines for each of the five scenes of Act I. Make your **five headlines** as accurate as possible using words similar to those Shakespeare might have used or those that you might see in a contemporary paper (or tabloid)
* Imagine that you are Lady Capulet. Write **a party invitation** for the feast held in your home in Act I. Describe the food, the dancing, and the other activities in such a way as to make your invited guests look forward to the party

Choose one of the activities from Part B to demonstrate your initial understandings of the major themes of this play. You must demonstrate some form of planning for Part B.

* Assume that you are Romeo or Juliet at the end of Act I. Write **a personal letter** to the other person you have met at the feast. Be sure to express your feelings about the other person as well as your hopes and fears for the future
* Play the role of an advice columnist to whom Romeo has written for help with his troubles in love. He has described his initial love for Rosaline, who felt no love for him, as well as his new love for Juliet, who returns his love but is the daughter of his father’s enemy. He asks, “What should I do?” What advice would you have for Romeo? Write an **advice column** including Romeo’s letter and your response
* Shakespeare refers to several characters from traditional narratives in Act I. Choose one of these and research the legend behind it: Queen Mab, a fairy queen of English and Welsh legend; Diana, the Roman goddess of chastity and the hunt; or Cupid, the Roman god of love. Prepare a **brief report** to explain what you learned about the character you choose. You may want to include visuals that depict your character

Your assessment of the “*Reflecting On”* activitiesis as follows:

**Holistic Rubric for Written Response**

**Level 5: The writing is original and insightful.**

The composition demonstrates an effective and confident command over the elements of writing. The topic is addressed in an original and insightful manner and is appropriate for the audience and purpose. The composition is well-crafted, consistently and fully developed, and the elements enhance one another. Any errors in mechanics are likely the result of risk taking. Demonstrates thorough and insightful understanding of idea, information, concepts, and/or themes in text.

**Level 4: The writing is clear and thoughtful.**

The composition demonstrates good control over the elements of writing. The topic is addressed in a focused and consistent manner and is in keeping with the audience and purpose. The composition is clearly and adequately planned and developed. Errors in more complex or unusual constructions do not unduly impede understanding. Demonstrates clear understanding of ideas, information, concepts, and/or themes in text.

**Level 3: The writing is adequate.**

The composition demonstrates adequate control over most of the elements of writing. The topic is addressed and the details are relevant to and supportive of the main idea(s). The composition shows evidence of some planning but is unsophisticated. Some errors in mechanics may impede understanding. Demonstrates some understanding of ideas, information, concepts, and/or themes in text.

**Level 2: The writing is limited or overgeneralized.**

The composition demonstrates uneven/uncertain control over the elements of writing. The purpose of the composition is sometimes not clear. The topic has a limited focus and the key ideas and their development are inadequate. The lack of planning makes the focus and development sketchy or inconsistent. Frequent errors in mechanics are common but the paper is readable. Demonstrates limited understanding of ideas, information, concepts, and/or themes in text.

**Level 1: The writing is unclear and unfocused.**

The composition demonstrates an uncertain grasp of the basic elements of writing relative to the purpose. The purpose is unclear. The supporting details are minimal, unclear, unrelated, disorganized, or missing. Many errors in mechanics, a limited vocabulary, or inappropriate usage make the paper difficult to understand. Demonstrates insufficient evidence of understanding of ideas, information, concepts and/or themes in text.

**Act Two**

* Review synopsis of Act II
* Consider the balcony scene (Act II, Scene ii, lines 1-124)
  + Probably one of the best known scenes in English literature
  + Romeo and Juliet declare their love for each other; however, as the scene begins with Juliet on her balcony and Romeo in the shrubs beneath the balcony, Juliet is unaware of his presence and speaks aloud to herself as if she is alone
  + What does Romeo’s initial reluctance to let Juliet know he is there suggest to you about him? In what ways are their feelings for one another similar and different?
* View Act II. Fill in the graphic organizer as we watch.

**Reflecting on Act II**

Choose one of the options below

* Imagine that you are Juliet. Write **a diary entry** that she might have written after the balcony scene in Act II, Scene II.
* Friar Laurence goes against the wishes of the Capulets and Montagues in marrying Romeo and Juliet, and helps deceive the families as well, in order to accomplish what he believes is a worthy goal. Does “the end justify the means”? Do you agree? In a **paragraph**, explain.
* **Rewrite the dialogue** between Romeo and Juliet in Act II, Scene II, lines 2-60 in modern language, as you would use to speak to a peer. Practise reading it aloud. Which version is more dramatic? The original or yours? Why?
* Imagine that you are going to stage the balcony scene from Act II in a contemporary theatre. Make plans for the set design for the scene. Create **a written description and a drawing** of the stage set (including what might be painted on the backdrops). What objects might be placed on the stage and what lighting effects might the scene require?

**Act Three**

* Read the synopsis silently for Act III
* Read Scene I, lines 30-128. Describe the fight in your own words and consider who caused the fight. How do they think the Capulet family will respond? How will this influence the parents’ reaction to news of the wedding? How might the story have differed if Tybalt were killed instead of Mercutio?
* In groups of four, assign the parts of Benvolio, Mercutio, Tybalt, and Romeo.
* Read through lines 30-65 to gain a feeling of what’s happening. Next, each person speaks only the words that are intended to avoid or provoke a quarrel. Change parts and repeat the activity to see if the same words are chosen. How do the words we choose tend to start a fight or avoid it?
* Finally, consider Romeo’s line 127, “O, I am fortune’s fool” — What does he mean?
* In a very few lines (often the first four), Shakespeare sets the mood for each scene in this act. Read aloud the first lines of each scene. What mood is set by these lines and the words that they contain? What are the differences between the language of each?
* View a video of Act III. Fill in the graphic organizer and viewing guide as we watch.

**Viewing Guide**

Scene II: How does the Nurse demonstrate her love and loyalty to Juliet?

Scene III: Friar Laurence brings news to Romeo that he is banished for killing Tybalt and Romeo talks of suicide (lines 1-106). What advice would you give Romeo? How does this compare with the advice that Friar Laurence does give? What is the Friar’s plan?

Scene IV: The scene is full of dramatic irony. The audience knows something the character does not know. As Capulet plans Juliet’s marriage she is eagerly awaiting her husband Romeo in her bedroom. Identify two examples of dramatic irony in the scene and suggest what makes each ironic.

Scene V: How do the Capulets respond? What does the arranged marriage suggest to you about male-female relationships in Verona? If you are female, what would you do if you were suddenly told that your father had arranged a marriage for you to a man you barely know? If you are male, do you think fathers should decide who their daughters should marry?

What should Juliet do? If Juliet were a friend of yours today, what advice would you give her at this point?

**Reflecting on Act III:**

Choose one option from the list below.

* Imagine you are a reporter for *The Verona Mail* (or make up a newspaper title). Write an **article**, reporting on the action of the events in Scene I.
* Imagine that you are Benvolio, Romeo’s best friend. Write **a letter** to Juliet, describing what has happened and assuring her that Romeo has behaved honourably.
* Were Romeo and Juliet wise to get married so quickly? Did they think enough about how their parents would react? In **two paragraphs,** explain your point.
* What arguments does Capulet use to suggest that Juliet should obey him? How have generational conflicts changed in 500 years? How have they stayed the same? In **two paragraphs**, explain your point.
* With which character do you identify in Act III and why? With which character do you least identify with and why? In **two paragraphs**, explain.
* If you were to choose five sites, somewhere in or around the school, where the five scenes of Act III could most suitably be staged, where would they be and why? Sketch the five sites and explain on the back of each sketch why you chose this site.

**Act IV**

* Juliet’s father announces that she will wed Paris. How must she feel? What can she do? Review the synopsis of Act IV
* View or listen to Act IV, Scene I and consider, in groups of three to five, lines 77-86 in Scene I. Juliet says she is prepared to do at least six things rather than marry Paris. What are they and what are some of the things you would rather do than marry someone you didn’t choose?
* In Scene II, Juliet deceives her father. Talk about whether you think it’s right to lie to your parents. When might you deceive your parents?
* Explain why you think the Friar’s and Juliet’s actions were wise or foolish. What alternate plan might you have suggested if you were Juliet’s friend?
* Read Act IV, Scene III. Consider the “Pause and Think” question. When an actor makes a speech alone on the stage, s/he uses a soliloquy. How does this technique help the audience feel Juliet’s situation at the end of Act IV, Scene III?
* Fill in the graphic organizer below to explore how characters’ statements reveal about them.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Quotation**  (Select one or more quotes that express each character’s grief upon finding Juliet “dead”.) | **Interpretation** (explain what each of the quotes reveals about the speaker and his or her feelings for Juliet) |
| The Nurse |  |  |
| Lord Capulet |  |  |
| Lady Capulet |  |  |
| Paris |  |  |

**Reflecting on Act IV**

Choose one of the activities below.

* Assume the role of Friar Laurence and write **a personal letter** to Romeo, explaining the plan to free Juliet from marriage to Paris.
* Imagine that you are Paris, overcome with grief at the “death” of your fiancée, Juliet. Write **a prose eulogy or a poem** about your love for her and your feelings about her death, to be read at her funeral
* Imagine that you are preparing a step-by-step procedure for a stranger to implement Friar Laurence’s plan in Act IV, Scene I, lines 90-125. Write the plan, making sure that your **instructions** are clear and in the appropriate order.

**Act V**

* The play comes to an end in Act V. In Scene I, Romeo is informed that Juliet is dead and has been placed in the Capulet monument. He is determined to join her in death and convinces an apothecary to sell him poison. In Scene II, Friar Laurence is worried about the consequences of the undelivered letter and again writes to Romeo. Consider Romeo’s line, “Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight” (line 34). Is Romeo brave or foolish or…? Does he really have any alternative?
* In Scene III, the play ends. Read the summary of Act V and the synopsis and the excerpt from Scene III. What happens and who does the prince hold responsible for the tragedy?
* View Act V and fill out the graphic organizer as we watch

***Final Thoughts***

What do you think of the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*? How has Romeo’s understanding of love matured from when he first spoke of his love for Rosaline? How is Romeo’s more mature understanding of love contrasted with Paris’ idealistic view of love (V, III, 1-21)? How could Shakespeare have ended this story differently?

***Reflecting on Act V and the Play as a Whole***

**Part A – Choose one option**

Who do you feel is to blame for the tragic fate of Romeo and Juliet? Consider how each of the main characters in *Romeo and Juliet* contributes to the tragic end. Write **an essay** to support your argument

What personality characteristics do Romeo and Juliet both have that help bring about the tragedy? What characteristics do their parents have that contribute to the tragedy? What roles do Tybalt and Benvolio play in the tragedy? What parts do the Nurse and the Friar play? Write **an essay** to support your argument.

**Part B – Choose one option**

How do you think Friar Laurence feels at the end of the play? Does he feel responsible for the deaths? Does he blame the Montagues and the Capulets?

Compose **a letter** that Friar Laurence might have written to either Romeo’s or Juliet’s family, expressing his feelings.

Recall a time when your own good intentions went awry and you unintentionally caused a bad outcome. What might have averted that bad outcome? What could you have done differently? Recount in **a paragraph** the experience and the outcomes.

Write **an epitaph** to be used on a tomb or written in commemoration of Romeo, Juliet, Paris, or Lady Montague.