RSC
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY
FIRST ENCOUNTERS
SHAKESPEARE FOR YOUNGER AUDIENCES
THE PERFECT INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE
ROMEO
+JULIET
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
EDITED BY ROBIN BELFIELD
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ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2024 First Encounters production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Phillip J Morris. The production goes on tour from January 2024 and opens at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon on the 21 March.

The activities provided in this pack are specifically designed to support primary students attending the performance and studying *Romeo and Juliet* in school but all activities can be adapted for learners of different ages and abilities. These activities aim to help students explore some important features of the text and production using the RSC's rehearsal processes. There are some secondary school alternatives and extensions included at the end of some activities.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:

READ
Notes from the production, background info or extracts

ACTIVITY
A practical or open space activity

WRITE
A classroom writing or discussion activity

LINKS
Useful web addresses and research tasks

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

This 2024 touring version of *Romeo and Juliet* is one of our First Encounters productions and sets the star-crossed lovers in a modern, recognisable world. The key theme is **impulsiveness**: decisions made in the moment by all characters, young and old, and how tragedy can arise from finding permanent solutions to temporary problems. Directed by Phillip J Morris and edited by Robin Belfield, it is an interpretation for our time, closely examining the nature and behaviour of young people and the pressures they face in a fast-moving culture. The links below offer guidance on some of the more serious issues involved in this production and pack.

- https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/
- https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/supporting-others/
- https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/a-letter-to-anyone-feeling-suicidal/
- https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/mental-health/suicide/
- https://www.papyrus-uk.org/

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In this pack you will find a selection of classroom activities to help you work with students in exploring the story, characters and themes of *Romeo and Juliet* through the lens of our 2024 production.

EXPLORING THE STORY

SYNOPSIS

‘A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life.'

WARRING FAMILIES

In Verona, Italy, there is an ongoing hate campaign between two noble families: the Capulets and the Montagues. In the city street, a Capulet bites his thumb at a Montague, a big insult. A fight breaks out but the Prince Escalus, who rules over Verona, has had enough. He declares that the next person to start a fight will be killed. We meet Romeo, who is lovesick over a girl called Rosaline. Rosaline is invited to the Capulets' party that night and Romeo decides to crash the party. Meanwhile, Lord Capulet is visited by another nobleman called Paris. Paris wants to marry Capulet’s daughter, Juliet, who is thirteen. The Capulets decide it’s a good match and Juliet is told by her mother that she will marry Paris soon.

LOVE THY ENEMY

Romeo and his friends, Benvolio and Mercutio, crash the Capulets' party. Amused by his lovesick friend, Mercutio tells Romeo of Queen Mab, the queen of sleep and dreams. But as soon as Romeo sees Juliet, all thoughts of Rosaline are forgotten. The two teenagers speak briefly and fall instantly in love. Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin, is angry that Romeo is there but Lord Capulet forbids him to fight. Juliet is told by her Nurse that Romeo is a Montague. Benvolio and Mercutio search for Romeo but he gives them the slip and climbs into Juliet’s garden. She appears on her balcony and starts to speak about Romeo. Romeo emerges from the shadows and they confess their love for each other. They kiss and plan to get married the next day. Full of the joys of first love, Juliet talks about nothing but Romeo and gets teased by her Nurse. With the help of two adults, the Nurse and Friar Lawrence, Romeo and Juliet get married in secret.

BANISHMENT

Tybalt searches for Romeo, wanting a fight. Mercutio challenges Tybalt who ends up killing Mercutio. In anger, Romeo kills Tybalt and gets banished from Verona. Juliet is horrified by the news and Romeo comes to visit her to spend their wedding night together before he flees. Meanwhile Lord and Lady Capulet tell Juliet she will marry Paris or be thrown out of the house. Desperate, Juliet goes to Friar Laurence for help. The Friar wants to help the young lovers and gives Juliet a potion to drink that will make her look as if she’s dead. She will be laid out in the family's burial tomb and, when she wakes up, Friar Laurence will help them run away together as man and wife. Alone, Juliet drinks the potion and falls asleep.

TRAGEDY

Friar Laurence writes to Romeo to tell him of the plan but the letter does not reach him. Juliet is laid to rest and Romeo is told that Juliet has died. He buys poison to kill himself and goes to see her body. Paris is at the tomb and challenges Romeo, who kills him, then drinks the poison. Friar Laurence arrives but it is too late, Juliet wakes up and sees Romeo's dead body. Heartbroken, she kisses his poisoned lips then takes his knife and kills herself. Both families see the bodies and regret their fighting, knowing it has cost these young innocent lives. They vow to end their feud.

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Explore the story of *Romeo and Juliet* in more detail with our Shakespeare Learning Zone.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

Actions speak louder than words.

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?"

- Abraham, Act 1 Scene 1

Our First Encounters production has been given a brand-new edit by Robin Belfield. During his editing process, Robin made many cuts and changes to the play. These included:

- **Creating audience participation by giving some of the Prince's lines to a Council of Young People. This Council will be played by local students, giving the youth in each area an active voice.**
- **Characters involving the audience directly, such as Lord Capulet giving an audience member a guest list to his party, so they feel constantly involved in the action.**
- **Writing detailed stage directions so the action and decision making of the characters is clear.**
- **Making some of the speeches shorter so the action flows more quickly.**

ACTIVITY 1: NEWS FLASH

"A key word for this play is 'impulsiveness'. The fact that decisions that are made quickly, suddenly become permanent. This is a world in which young people's innocence is taken away from them so quickly, before they even have a choice."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This performance activity allows students to examine the events of the story by identifying major plot points that help create the tragedy. They can then challenge and change these plot points in performance. *(It's best suited to a hall but can be done in a classroom. You will need pens, paper, a whiteboard and Resource A: News Flash). There is a Secondary School version below.*

- Organise your students into groups of 3 or 4 and hand each group paper, pens and one News Flash from Resource A (groups may use the same point or you might leave some out depending on class size).
- Explain that each of these News Flashes is an important point in the play. They will have a couple of minutes to read their News Flash within their group and decide what they think is going on and what the most important things are.
- Invite each group in order to report back with their findings to the whole group. Encourage the listening groups to ask questions about how the News Flashes link up and what might happen in-between them.
- Now give each group 5 minutes to practice acting out their News Flash so they can perform it to the others. Ask them to consider:

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    - *Who will play the narrator? How will they cast the other parts? Will people need to play more than one character?*
    - *Will this be a news story for the television? How will they show the action to the audience? Will they act it out or interview any witnesses?*
    - *Do they need to add any more action or write any more lines?*
- Give your groups some extra time to rehearse their News Flash for performance, then invite your groups to perform their News Flashes in order of how they appear in the play.
- As a whole group, discuss the meaning of the word 'tragedy'. *Is it unstoppable? Where are the moments in the story where things go wrong? What things happen to create the tragedy? How many moments can they spot where bad decisions are made?*
- On a whiteboard, make a list of the people in the story who are most responsible for the tragedy and why. Can they create a top 5? Examples might be:
    - Tybalt - for starting the fight that kills Mercutio
    - Romeo - for killing Tybalt
    - Lord Capulet - for arranging a marriage for Juliet to a man she doesn't love
    - Friar Lawrence - for giving Juliet the sleeping potion
    - Friar John - for not delivering the letter to Romeo

Secondary School Version:

- Organise your students into 6 groups and hand each group paper, pens and one News Flash from Resource A (groups may use the same point or you might leave some out depending on class size).
- Explain that they have 5 minutes to read their News Flash within their group and write down anything else that happens in this part of the play that they can remember.
- Invite them to create a full News Bulletin from the lines they have been given including:
    - Rewriting the reporter's lines to make them sufficiently newsworthy and to match the tone of the action.
    - Any eyewitness statements or found footage of the events.
    - Any additional action they feel is suitable to their bulletin.
- Invite your students to perform their News Bulletins in order.
- As a whole group, discuss the moments of tragedy in the plot. *What things happen that make things worse? How could they have happened differently? Could this tragedy have been stopped at any point? How many points can they spot where tragedy could have been prevented?*
- On a whiteboard, make a list of the people in the story who are most responsible for the tragedy*. Can they create a top 5?*

Reflection Point:

Ask your group to think of any other love or friendship stories they know of that go wrong. *Are there any common themes? Do some of them manage to have happy endings?* Examples might be: Snape and Lily in Harry Potter, *Charlotte's Web, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Shrek.* Discuss as a group:

- *Are there any things that link these stories? Themes? Baddies? Motives?*
- *Why do we like these types of stories? Why are they popular?*
- *Why did Shakespeare write Romeo and Juliet? Why is it so popular 400 years later?*

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ACTIVITY 2: Cartoon Strips.

"The younger me thought I had to do things really quickly and achieve things really fast. As time goes on, you realise the importance of having a moment. In our production, we suspend and fast forward time in certain moments. When Romeo and Juliet first meet, time seems frozen yet neither party is afforded time to stop and think before they act. Hopefully our audience will understand the pace of our story and why, after 24 hours of meeting, they mimic adult behaviour and get married instead of spending time on courtship or uniting their parents."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This creative writing activity allows students to use their own voice and decision-making to change the events of the story. By examining key moments where a decision is made, they can step into the role of playwright and create their own alternate action. *(You will need coloured pens or markers, A3 paper, Resource A 'News Flash')*

- Keeping the groups from Activity 1, hand out paper and markers and ask them to list the main events that happen in their News Flash.
- Ask them to draw the same numbers of squares on their paper as they have on their list. (If they have list of 3 things, they draw 3 squares and so on.)
- Now invite them to draw the first event in their first square. It can be a simple sketch representing the main character with written words as explanation.
- When this is done, ask them to fill in the rest of the squares until they have a complete cartoon version of their News Flash.
- Give them some time in their group to discuss this story and identify moments where a better choice could be made by one or other of the characters.
- Now explain that they are going to create another storyboard or cartoon but this time, they are going to change the story and draw their own version of events, including these new choices.
- Invite them to start with the same first image and give them time to re-draw their cartoon, including these new choices. Encourage them to decide what happens in the next square as a group. Encourage them to create as many squares as they need to complete their new story.
- Invite each group, in order, to hold up their cartoons and explain their new plot to the whole group. After each cartoon is presented, discuss the following together:
    - *Which changes have been made and why?*
    - *How would these changes affect the rest of the play?*
    - *What do we think of these new choices?*

Secondary School Extension:

- Follow the points above until the last one. Instead of explaining their new plot to the whole group, give each group 10 minutes to rehearse this new part of the story, in turn.
- Explain that this time, they are to present it as a piece of drama and not as a news bulletin and encourage them to use whatever theatrical form they wish, such as: tableaus and still images, mime, movement, improvisation, narration or choral speaking.
- Add that they must include the following:
    - A clear beginning, middle and end.
    - An example of their own iambic pentameter for at least 2 of the lines of new dialogue.
- Invite each group to perform their new plot point in order and discuss the results.

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- *Which changes have been made and why?*
- *How would these changes affect the rest of the play?*
- *What do we think of these new choices?*

Reflection Point:

- Discuss with your students what they understand by 'Permanent solutions to temporary problems.' *Can they think of any other examples of this - either from real life or from stories they know well?*
- On a whiteboard or large paper, draw 4 columns. In column 1, list their examples and in column 2, list the possible reasons the permanent solution might have been made. Examples might be:
    - Getting a permanent tattoo - to boost your confidence / be accepted by a gang / show you support or like something
    - Defacing or breaking someone's property - in revenge / as a dare / for fun
    - Attacking another country - to get more land / to destroy an enemy / in revenge
- *Can they see any repetitions in the reasons as they make this list? Eg: Revenge? Confidence?*
- Now in column 3, ask the students to list the dangers of these permanent solutions.
    - Eg: you may change your mind, someone might take further revenge on you and make the problem worse, you might get in trouble, you could lose more confidence.
- Ask your students to look at column 2 and to find some positive solutions to the temporary problems.
- Discuss as a group why people might choose permanent solutions that make the situation worse. *What stops us making the choices in column 4?*

PRODUCTION NOTES:

The Story of a Sword…

"These violent delights have violent ends" - Friar, Act 2, Scene 6

There is a lot of violence in *Romeo and Juliet.* The play opens with a fight and six people die in the play including the main two characters. **A production decision was made early on to limit the weapons to one sword only. This bold decision was made for a number of reasons:**

- **To emphasise that the world of the play has violence thrust into it and not everyone has one.**
- **Holding the sword is a choice made by a character - they can throw it down, pick it up, hand it to someone. This shows that violence is a choice, a decision or an impulse.**
- **The director wanted an old fashioned symbol of violence, something that stuck out and wasn't a modern domestic symbol. This helps the cast and characters distance themselves a little from the violence, helping them to see it clearly.**
- **Having the sword onstage throughout the play helps the audience follow its story so the use of violence or decision not to use it was never a shock and always clear.**
- **Having only one sword emphasised the violence in other moments where words or actions are used as weapons.**

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EXPLORING THE CHARACTERS

"I felt responsible that we don't glorify weaponry or desensitise the use of them. I wanted to subvert that. This is a world where there is fighting but it's not often fatal. Having one sword shows the ferocity of that weapon, everything can be fatal so quickly. Also, a sword feels less violent than a dagger. I didn't want to trigger and re-traumatise young people, especially in the times we're living in, where it's becoming the norm to hear about tragic things happening in your local area."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

ACTIVITY 3: Fighting Talk

This physical activity in 3 parts allows students to explore the world of the play and step into the shoes of the Montagues and Capulets, exploring the tension between the two families. *(It is best suited to a hall. You will need Resource B - 'Words as Weapons' cut into text scraps, Resource C - 'Opening Fight' and Resource D 'The Prince')*

PART A) BOXING MATCH

- Ask your students to get into pairs and to find a space in the room, face to face.
- Explain that they are going to have a boxing match with no physical contact. They must make the blows using only the following 'plosive' sounds:
    - 'b' is a punch with the right fist
    - 'd' is a punch with the left fist
    - 'g' is a punch to the gut
- Add that they are allowed to react to the blows as if they really have been boxed by making the appropriate sounds.
- After a minute or so of this, discuss how it felt to give or receive the blows in this way.
- Now ask your students to come out of their pairs and walk around the room together, filling all the empty spaces but making no eye contact with anyone.
- Explain that when you say the word 'ENGAGE' they are to make eye contact with someone for one second and then move on.
- After a minute of this, explain that when you next say 'ENGAGE' they are to make eye contact with someone and not break it.
- After a few minutes of this, ask them to get into pairs and discuss what this was like, then feed their thoughts back to the group. *How did it make them feel? Uncomfortable? Anxious? Friendly? Comical? Was it a relief to break eye contact or not? When can eye contact be uncomfortable? Why might this be?*

PART B) WORDS AS WEAPONS

- Hand out Resource B cut into text scraps, so each student has one word or phrase. Explain that this word or phrase is their own personal weapon to learn and use as they wish.
- Ask them to walk around the room as before and this time, when you say 'ENGAGE', they are to make eye contact with someone and say their word to that person.

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- After a minute or so, explain that this time when you say 'ENGAGE', they are to try using their word weapon in different ways: Eg. saying it to someone's face, behind someone's back, saying it as they are walking away, mouthing it.
- Now ask them to find a gesture to replace their word weapon and repeat the step above but include the gesture to replace their word or emphasise it.
- After a minute or so of this, ask them to stop and 'DISARM' by shaking each hand and foot 8 times in turn, then 4 times, then twice, then once.
- Discuss how this activity felt as a group. *Which ways of delivering the insults were the most and the least effective and why? Were the insults better when they were just gestures?*

PART C) BITING THUMBS

- Organise your students into pairs and hand out copies of the Resource C 'Opening Fight'. Explain that this dialogue happens at the start of the play between the two warring families. They have been fighting so long, they have forgotten what started it.
- Ask the pairs to cast themselves as A and B and to say the scene between them, pointing to themselves when they say 'I' and 'us' and at their partner when they say 'you'.
- Now ask them to read the scene again but this time, to find other gestures to replace the pointing.
- After a short time exploring this, challenge them to do the scene again but finding gestures for every line and using no words at all.
- Give every pair a number and ask everybody to walk around the room. When they hear their number, they are to find each other and act out the scene in gestures only. (Try saying one or two numbers at first, then build to more).
- Now ask them to repeat the exercise but using all the words and as many gestures as they want. Explain that at some point, you are going to enter the space as the Prince and speak to them. When a large number of pairs are fighting, enter the space and deliver Resource D to stop the fight.
- Discuss the activity as a whole group. *How did it feel to be arguing when others weren't? How did it feel to be walking around when others are fighting? What type of world does this play start in? What is Shakespeare telling the audience about the two families?*

Secondary School Version:

(This can be done instead of or in addition to the above activities. You will need music and speakers if possible for part A, copies of Resource B - Words as Weapons, Resource E: The Fight, prop daggers or swords if you have them.)

PART A) GANG LANGUAGE

- Organise your students into 2 big groups. Explain that you are going to play some music and teach the group the following physical actions to the following instructions you will give:
    - LEFT HAND - they must place their left hand to the floor
    - RIGHT HAND - they place their right to the floor
    - HIGH FIVE - they must high five one other person
    - SWAP PLACES - they must cross arms and hold hands with one other person, then fling each other to the right to swap places, then let go. (Access alternative: find a partner and swap places in the space without the fling).
    - GATHER - They must gather into one big group in the centre of the space

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- SPLIT - they must divide into their 2 gangs, facing each other on either side of the room. Then without choosing, one member of each gang (leader) must step out and walk the length of 'no mans land' (the space between the two gangs), giving the rival leader eye contact at all times. The rest of their gang must support their leader vocally.

- Play some suitable high energy music and go through these actions for a few minutes until the energy is up.
- Now hand out word scraps from Resource B and teach them some new instructions:
    - YOU - they must point to a person in their gang and say 'YOU'
    - THOU - they must point to a member of the rival gang and say 'THOU'
    - ENGAGE - they must use their Word Weapon to insult a rival gang member.
- Start the music and after a few minutes of this, ask the students to get into pairs and discuss what they liked about this activity and what they found challenging. Invite volunteers to share their findings to the whole group.

PART B) THE FIGHT

- Organise your students into groups of 4 and hand out copies of Resource E. (Uneven numbers can have an extra member to be the director / fight choreographer or to share roles).
- Explain that they are going to have 10 minutes to stage this scene but in different ways. Give each group one of the following:
    - To perform the scene as it is written with weapons (they can mime these or you can use prop versions if you have them)
    - To perform the scene without any weapons (they can use the Word Weapons here if they wish or find another way to fulfil the story).
    - To perform the scene without any Shakespeare lines at all. (They can rewrite the scene or improvise it in their own language)
    - To mime the scene using only gestures and actions, no words at all.
- Challenge the groups to make sure all the beats in the story are included and clear, whatever version they are creating.
- Invite the groups to perform their fight scene and discuss the results as a whole group. *Which versions were the most violent? Surprising? Theatrical? Realistic?*

<u>Reflection Point:</u>

- Following the above activities, discuss the gestures that were used in the room. *Which of them are recognisable as violent or threatening? When can gestures and words hurt the most?*
- Where else have we seen such gestures:
    - *In the playground?*
    - *In TV programmes or films?*
    - *On the news?*
- *What is it like to get caught up in a fight and not want to be there? What can cause a fight to get worse? Impulsivity? Peer Pressure? Knee jerk reactions?*
- On a white board, list as many different ways of diffusing or avoiding an argument as possible*. Can any of these ways be just as useful in the playground as in a global war? What does this tell us about people and can we make a big difference even if we don't run a country?*

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ACTIVITY 4: DIARY ENTRIES

"We developed areas onstage where the Montagues and Capulets 'hang'. Gangs have occupied patches and fight over 'turf. When Benvolio and Mercutio enter, they find Tybalt waiting in their assumed space, so it's clear he's come to cause havoc. It's a nod to the postcode thing, where gangs 'own' certain roads."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This writing activity allows students to explore the responses of the young characters to the conflict in the play. It will also encourage them to develop their own language to reflect their character's inner feelings. (*You will need Resource F: Character Study, paper & pens.)*

- Organise your students into pairs and hand each pair one character from Resource F & pens. Ask the pair to read the information given about their character and work together to list everything they know about their character from the play. (They do not need to answer the 3 questions yet).
- Now ask them to make up as much extra information about their character as they can in 5 minutes. Prompt questions might be:
    - *Where were they born?*
    - *Who are they closest to?*
    - *What do they most fear?*
    - *What is their greatest desire?*
- Now ask them to use this information to answer the 3 questions.
- Invite your students to work individually and to imagine they are the character. Ask them to write a short paragraph, describing what it was like being in the fight or watching it happen. *Were they scared? Excited? Angry?* Students can draw or illustrate this reaction if they would prefer.
- Now ask your pairs to get together again and create a frozen image of their character between them. *Can they make this image a positive one? Showing their character's best qualities?*
- Invite each pair to read their paragraphs or show their drawings and their character image.
- Discuss the results as a group. *Did the words of their character match the images or were they different? Why do we sometimes behave differently to how we feel?*

<u>Reflection Point:</u>

- Discuss the meaning of 'fight, flight or freeze' in the face of danger. *What are examples of fight, flight or freeze animals? Can any of them imagine a situation that would make them react in this way?*
- Discuss the reactions of the characters in the play. *Who are examples of fight, flight or freeze?*
- *Why might Benvolio have frozen during the fight? How might he feel afterwards? Ashamed? Relieved? Guilty?*
- *Can they think of any examples when they have been drawn into an argument or fight against their will? Or walked away? Or even stopped an argument or fight? How did they feel?*

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PRODUCTION NOTES:

Young People Council

Our production contains audience participation in the form of a 'council of young people who accompany the Prince'. This decision was made for several reasons:

- **A principal actor will work closely with the young groups we will work with, to feel they are part of one mechanism, one power and are represented in this world.**
- **To give young people a voice in a play that features very young people in a world dominated by adults.**
- **Before the Prince speaks, he turns to the young people to get their opinions, showing that it is possible for an adult to listen and take advice from the youth they are meant to represent and guide. He is informed by them.**
- **The Council appear at the very start and end of the play, showing the reason and intelligence young people can possess as a positive force. It is the first thing we are presented with and the last thing we are left with.**

EXPLORING THE THEMES

Theme 1: FAMILY

ACTIVITY 5: Party Crashers

"In this imagined Verona, young people are present and are watching everything and making positive, right decisions. Hopefully it will speak for School Youth Councils and Youth Boards, showing that young people are the future and they can make really powerful decisions."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This physical activity allows students to explore the party scene from the perspective of both families. It will help them get an insight into both the tension and the pointlessness of the fight. (*You will need: a large, clear space, access to Spotify and speakers.)*

- Organise your students into groups of 6 or 7 and explain that each group is a gang of friends from Verona who are going to crash a big party.
- As a group, ask them to create their Ultimate Party Checklist:
    - Their favourite piece of music
    - Some dance moves that they all know

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    - Their favourite party food
    - What they will wear
    - A simple call and response that only their gang use
- Ask each gang to give you their favourite music and download it on Spotify ready to play over a speaker. (Add one or two random party tunes to this list that don't belong to the gangs).
- Now explain that they are all at the same party and shouldn't be there. Ask them to walk around the room to one of the random songs, mixing in and filling all the spaces. When they hear their gang's song, they are to come together and celebrate in their own way (using their moves and their call and response).
- Encourage them to explore their group response in the moment. Maybe they don't want to be noticed, maybe they really want to be seen.
- Drop each gang's music at random (with other music in-between so they don't know what's coming next).
- After each group has come together at least once, stop the music and ask them to get into pairs and discuss the party crashing, then feed back to the whole group: *How did it feel to be on your own at first? What was it like hearing your music and finding your gang? Did you enjoy being seen? Was it fun or were you a reluctant participant?*

Secondary School Version: **Hakas**

- Ask your students if anyone knows what a Haka is and can they explain or demonstrate it. If you have the facility, play them an example. (The Haka is a Māori group dance, with intimidating movements, stamping and choral shouting, made famous by the All Blacks rugby team.)
- Explain that they are going to create their own gangs to rule Verona by choosing the following:
    - A gang leader
    - A gang name
    - 3 reasons why their gang is the best
    - A gang haka to show the others as they enter the city square
- Organise your students into 3 or 4 big groups (ideally of 6-8 students) and allocate them a corner of the room.
- Explain that the centre of the room is the city square where the gangs meet to establish who is the most intimidating and the best by announcing their leader, name and 3 reasons after / during / or before performing their Haka.
- Encourage the gangs to keep their Hakas simple, repeating three or four key movements or gestures, together with sounds, that they can all learn and repeat. Advise them to appoint a choreographer to help decide on an teach this movement.
- Use the following as prompts:
    - Decide on a formation to enter the square
    - Will they be led by their leader or present their leader?
    - Who says what? Will they speak chorally or in turn?
    - How do they leave the square again? Will they give a final gesture? Turn and swagger off? Stay and intimidate?
- Invite each gang to enter in turn and perform their Haka.

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Reflection Point:

- Ask your students to think of examples of gangs or groups of people who are non-threatening or threatening to society. These might be from things they have seen on TV or in their own society or from any stories they know. Examples might be:
    - Criminal gangs
    - School cliques
    - Political protesters
    - Terrorist groups
    - Community Support groups
    - Football fans

- From what they have explored, what kind of people might be part of these groups. Examples might be:
    - *People who have no family or friends?*
    - *Strong willed people who like having followers?*
    - *People who have been forced to join?*
    - *Those who like others who think and feel the same?*
    - *People who don't have strong opinions themselves?*
- Organise your students into small groups of 3 or 4 ask them to discuss the benefits and dangers of such gangs or groups?
- Invite the groups to feed back their thoughts to the whole class.

ACTIVITY 6: Broken Family.

"Romeo and Juliet don't have enough trust in their parents to have a conversation and their parents are not receptive to having a conversation about this union existing. From a mental health perspective, it can feel like there's no way out. I'm interested in highlighting the responsibility that both adults have as well as young people taking autonomy to speak up."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This writing activity, in two parts, gives students an opportunity to explore the power and dynamics within the Capulet family. *(It's best suited to a large hall or clear classroom. You will need: copies of Resource G: The Capulets, paper & pens.)*

- Organise your students into a big circle, seated, and hand out copies of Resource G. Ask them to read the scene, taking a line each around the circle. As they read, ask them to listen out for the moments of drama in the scene.

- When the scene is read, go through each speech character by character and identify the following:

    - *Any violent language or sounds?*

    - *Any threats of violence or moments where violence could happen?*

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        - *What Juliet might be doing in this scene?*

- Discuss whether they think Lord Capulet behaves like this often or if it is the first time. *What is it like for Juliet (who is 13) to hear all this? What is like for the Nurse to see it? How does Shakespeare want his audience to feel during and after this scene?*

- Organise your students into pairs and ask them to cast themselves as Capulet, Juliet and the Nurse. Ask them to spend 5 minutes deciding the following:

        - *Is the Nurse much older?*

        - *How long has she looked after Juliet?*

        - *How close are they? Do they confide in each other?*

        - *Does she have children herself?*

        - *What does she think of Juliet's father? What does he think of the Nurse?*

        - *What power do they both have in this household?*

- Now explain that they have another 5 minutes to imagine what Juliet and the Nurse say and do at the end of the scene when Capulet has left. Encourage them to improvise the moment he has just left and explore what happens. Ask the student playing Capulet to jot down any good lines and ideas.

- Give them time to write this down as a small scene together. *Does Juliet cry or scream? How does the Nurse calm her down? Maybe the Nurse cries? Or tries to warn her or does the Nurse agree with Lord Capulet?*

- Invite pairs to read or even perform their written scene from the very beginning when Capulet tells Juliet she is going to get married and discuss the results. *Which new endings were the most believable? Or Powerful? Or tragic? Or hopeful?*

<u>Reflection Point:</u>

- *What are the examples of good family relationships in this play? Is it surprising that Shakespeare hasn't shown any good parent / child relationships?*

- Discuss the relationships between Benvolio and Romeo (who are cousins) and Juliet and her Nurse. *Can you think of any close friendships you have with people who are not your parents or siblings? Such as uncles or aunts, cousins or other friends who feel like family? What makes these relationships strong?*

- Discuss any examples when parents or other adults have embarrassed them in public or at a family gathering. *Are there any examples of them not listening? How does it feel and why do they do it? Why might adults make wrong choices for us? Why might they not listen to our voices and not value our opinions? How can we help adults to listen more?*

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Theme 2: LOVE

ACTIVITY 7: Love and Despair

"The power of passion can lead to two people running away together or taking their own lives. The results can be so devastatingly fatal. I've developed that thought with the sleeping potion. Juliet takes it, thinking she'll wake up and everything will be ok. I'm interested in a sequence that introduces a reality that she thinks is going to happen but doesn't."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

The following physical activity in 2 parts, allows students to explore the emotions that Romeo and Juliet feel during the play and examines what drives them to take such extreme action. *(It is best suited to a large hall or clear classroom. You will need Resource H: 'Romeo & Juliet Gallery', access to some music and speakers if possible.)*

PART A) WORD SEARCH

- Organise your students into a big circle sitting down and hand out Resource H, placing the pages face down on the floor. Explain that on the page, there are 2 speeches about love. On your word, they will turn the pages over and look for any word that interests them - it doesn't matter if they know what the words means or not. Then, on 'pages down', they must turn their pages over again.
- After this, invite students to share the words they found. When they share their word, ask them to create a gesture to go with this word and ask everyone to repeat both the word and gesture together.
- After this, ask the group: *Are these obvious words about love? How do they think this person is feeling right now? Which character might it be and what part of the play is this - beginning, middle, end?*
- Pull out any words that are difficult and discuss what they might mean.
- Now explain that speech 1 is spoken by Romeo about Juliet when he first meets her and falls instantly in love*. Do the words and images make more sense? Are they well chosen? Has he ever felt this way before? Do you believe in love at first sight?*
- Next, explain that speech 2 is spoken by Juliet when she hears Romeo, who she loves, had killed her cousin and is banished. *Do the words and images she uses make more sense? Are they well chosen? How is she feeling right now? What is it like to feel two very different emotions at once? Can you love someone and have negative thoughts about them?*

PART B) IMAGE GALLERY

- Now divide the group into 2 halves - Romeo and Juliet - and ask everyone to find their own space in the room to stand. Explain that they have a few minutes to choose ONE line from their speech and create a series of images or a short mime to bring the line to life as they say it.
- Challenge them to imagine they are their character and to make this movement match the words and images as much as possible.
- Then ask everyone to find their own place in the room that suits their character. It could be centre stage, in the corner, sitting or standing. Let them build their environment - *is it public or private? A bedroom or big party?*

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- Give them an extra minute to practice their line and movement together so they know it really well. (This is where you could use music to inspire the group - classical music or a film soundtrack or something you feel suitable.)
- Now explain that you are going to get everyone to perform their line together as you turn an imaginary dial from 1 to 5. 1 is the lowest setting and 5 is the highest and they must adjust the size and volume of their performance as you turn it up and down. Challenge them to put emotion into their bodies, faces and voices and make the gestures as clear and big as possible on full 5.
- Now ask your Juliets to stand to one side and explain that they are going to visit the gallery of Romeos. When a Juliet stands in front of a Romeo, she 'activates' him and he must perform his line, together with his movement until she moves on. Encourage the Juliets to visit all the Romeos. Add that they might be performing to a group of Juliets which is fine.
- After a few minutes of this, ask the groups to swap so that the Romeos have a chance to visit all of the Juliets.
- Come together as a group and discuss. *Which movements and lines stood out and why? How did they feel seeing and hearing the feelings of the person they love?*

Reflection Point: IMPULSIVENESS

- Discuss what we mean by 'acting impulsively' or a 'knee jerk reaction'. *What other examples of this behaviour are there in Romeo and Juliet? Is it something only the young characters do?*
- *Can they remember a time in their lives when they, or someone close to them, acted impulsively or had a knee jerk reaction to something? Was it a positive experience? Was it connected to any other emotions? Did you understand why you or they had this response? If you played the moment over again like in a video, would they behave or react in the same way?*
- Invite volunteers to share these stories or to draw them if appropriate.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

A MOVEABLE SET

As our set has to fit into every space we visit, it needs to be adaptable, make a big impact and also fit into the back of a van. It also must help make the story clear in terms of plot, character and location. There are many design decisions that needed to be made. These included:

- **Establishing two different families in two different colours.**
- **Creating movable blocks, so the characters are literally carrying and building their own future, creating and changing the world around them.**
- **Designing a larger multi-use piece of set to represent a door, chapel, bed, tomb and even the balcony. An adaptable piece like this helps to keep the audience surprised and engaged as it changes function before their eyes.**
- **Cubes that open up and contain props for easy access. One cube has the sword stuck into it so the weapon is always visible and accessible. This cube also opens to reveal the portion and poison.**
- **Each school will be asked to create one aspect of the set, from table cloths to flower curtains. This will feature in the performance so their creativity is literally part of the show.**

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ACTIVITY 8: Magic Time Switch

"Adults can feel a decision is helping but it's just escalating a lot more problems. The Friar falls into the trap of trying to do everything quickly to make things work. I'm hoping this productions also speaks to teachers who can often assume they are making the right decisions for young people, that they really understand and connect when they're still missing the mark."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

This writing activity, in 2 parts, allows students to explore a more positive ending to the play. The first part allows them to examine bad advice given by people we love and trust. The second part gives them an opportunity to use love and forgiveness to repair the relationships between the younger and older characters. *(You will need Resource I: 'The Friar', pens, paper and a whiteboard.)*

PART A) THE FRIAR'S ADVICE

- Organise your students into a large circle and hand out copies of Resource I. Briefly explain the context: *Romeo has been banished after killing Tybalt and Juliet is being forced to marry Paris, a man she doesn't love. In desperation, she ran to the Friar for advice and help.*
- Ask the group to read out the scene, taking a line each, including stage directions. When finished, discuss what they know about what happens next: *Juliet drinks the potion, the Friar's letter doesn't reach Romeo who thinks she's dead and kills himself. Juliet wakes, sees his body and kills herself.* The exact opposite of that they wanted happens. *Why? Who is responsible for this?*
- Ask them to list the things the Friar does 'to help' in the play. These include:
    - He helps Romeo and Juliet marry secretly
    - He gives Juliet a sleeping potion to trick her parents into thinking she's dead
    - He tells Juliet's grieving parents to move her 'body' to the family tomb
    - He fails to get his letter, explaining the plan, to Romeo
- *Does the Friars advice really help? Why do Romeo and Juliet trust the Friar so much? How do we feel when an adult we love and trust gives us bad advice?*
- Now ask the group to imagine they are the Friar. Tell them they each have a magic time switch and can rewind the play to the stage direction: 'A plan in his head, he begins searching for something.'
- Challenge them to think of a better plan to help Juliet in this moment, one that is less dangerous and less likely to end in tragedy. Invite volunteers to share their ideas. Possible solutions might be:
    - To speak to her parents
    - To help her escape from Verona
    - To hide her for a while
    - To find another wife for Paris
- List these ideas on a whiteboard and take a vote for the favourite. The chosen idea will now create a better ending in Part B) below.

PART B) ADVICE FROM THE YOUNG

"I'm interested in indoctrination. Learned behaviours can indoctrinate young people, such as political ideologies and prejudices. Informed information from adults, parents and influencers in popular culture like

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Andrew Tate can have a lot of power over young people. I want to highlight how adults really need to be careful with that."

- Phillip J Morris, Director, Romeo and Juliet, RSC 2024

- Organise your students into pairs and hand out paper and pens. Explain that thanks to their vote and the Friar's magic time switch, Romeo and Juliet have survived the play, have escaped and are living happily married away from Verona and all the fighting.
- Ask the pairs to imagine they are either Romeo or Juliet writing a letter to their parents. Explain that in this letter, they are going to mention three things:
    - The family feud
    - Their love for each other
    - What they wish for their family in the future
- Give the pairs 5 minutes to discuss how Romeo or Juliet feels about these 3 things and what they want to say about them to their parents.
- Some prompt questions: *Will they try to explain their actions? Will they talk about how the feud and the violence affected them? Will they give their parents any advice for the future? Will they reassure them about their love for each other? Offer any forgiveness?*
- When the letters are finished, ask one pair to swap letters with another pair and say the following words: 'This is a letter from your lost son, Romeo' or 'This is letter for your lost daughter, Juliet.'
- Invite the new pair to imagine they are either Romeo or Juliet's parents receiving the letter and to read the letter they have received out loud. They can take turns reading lines or one of them can read it out to the other.
- When the letter has been read, ask the pair how they feel as the parents, receiving this letter and what they think about it. Invite other pairs to swap letters and repeat the exercise.
- When they have all been read, compare the contents of all the letters. *Were there any common points? Did the letters contain any emotion? Guilt or blame? Were they positive or negative? What was it like for an adult getting advice or forgiveness from a child?*

<u>Reflection Point:</u>

- Discuss again, the meaning of the word 'tragedy': *Something that is unstoppable? Something that cannot be undone or corrected?*
- *What makes Romeo and Juliet a tragedy and not just a love story? What is Shakespeare trying to tell us by making a love story so tragic? Can we learn something from this play that was written 400 years ago?*
- *What could we add to this play to make it mean even more to young people or adults today?*

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RESOURCES

Resource A (edited text): **News Flash**

1. STREET FIGHTING

REPORTER The Montagues and Capulets were caught fighting again today!
This video was taken on the streets of Verona.

MONTAGUE *(enters)* Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

CAPULET No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I
bite my thumb, sir.

MONTAGUE Draw, if you be men! *(they fight)*

REPORTER The families have been fighting for so long, they've forgotten why they started it!

PRINCE *(enters)* Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace!
On pain of death, all men depart!

2. LOVE BETWEEN ENEMIES

REPORTER A gang of Montague's crash Lord Capulet's house party!
Juliet and Romeo meet for the first time!

ROMEO *(enters and sees Juliet)* I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

NURSE His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of your great enemy.

JULIET My only love sprung from my only hate!

REPORTER The star crossed lovers marry in secret with the help of
Juliet's nurse and Friar Lawrence!

3. A FIGHT ENDS IN TRAGEDY

REPORTER More violence breaks out in Verona. Romeo tries to stop the fight
but Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, kills his friend Mercutio!

ROMEO Now, Tybalt, take the 'villain 'back again!

TYBALT Thou, wretched boy

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(Romeo fights Tybalt, Tybalt dies)

REPORTER Newsflash! Romeo kills Tybalt in revenge for Mercutio's death! Romeo is exiled at once!

ROMEO O, I am fortune's fool! *(runs away)*

4. ARRANGED MARRIAGE

REPORTER Back at the Capulets house, Juliet's parents want her to marry a family friend called Paris.

JULIET Good father, I beseech you on my knees -

LORD CAPULET Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch!
go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither. *(he exits)*

NURSE I think it best you married with the county.
O, he's a lovely gentleman!

JULIET Ancient damnation!
I'll to the friar, to know his remedy:
If all else fail, myself have power to die!

5. THE FRIAR'S PLOT

FRIAR Hold, daughter: I do spy a kind of hope
And if thou dar'st, I'll give thee remedy. *(gives her a potion)*

REPORTER Friar Lawrence gives Juliet a sleeping potion to trick everyone into thinking she's dead. Then she can meet Romeo and escape!

JULIET Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee. *(drinks potion and falls asleep)*

FRIAR In the mean time,
Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift! *(exits)*

6. FAMILY TRAGEDY

REPORTER But Romeo does not get Friar Lawrence's letter! He thinks Juliet is really dead and poisons himself. Juliet wakes up and finds his body,

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taking his dagger to end her life. The adults are devastated.

PRINCE Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate

CAPULET O brother Montague, give me thy hand

PRINCE For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

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Resource B: Words as Weapons

bite

beasts

sir

tyrant

villain

boy

devil

rat-catcher

king of cats

wretched

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Resource C: **Opening Fight (edited)**

A Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

B I do bite my thumb, sir.

A Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

B No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

A Do you quarrel, sir?

B Quarrel sir? No, sir.

A If you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

B No better?

A Well, sir.

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Resource D: **The Prince, Act 1, Scene 1 (edited)**

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
Profaners of this neighbour-stainèd steel—
Will they not hear?—
What, ho! You men, you beasts!
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,
And hear the sentence of your movèd prince.
Three civil broils, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets.
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

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Resource E: **The Fight (edited text)**

TYBALT *(enters with dagger, drawn)* Romeo, thou art a villain.

ROMEO Villain am I none; Therefore farewell.

MERCUTIO *(Interrupting)* Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?

TYBALT What wouldst thou have with me?

MERCUTIO Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives.

TYBALT I am for you.

ROMEO Gentle Mercutio.

Tybalt and Mercutio fight.

ROMEO Hold, Tybalt! Good Mercutio!

Romeo tries to part them. Tybalt stabs Mercutio, drops the dagger and runs off.

MERCUTIO A plague o'both the houses! I was hurt under your arm.

ROMEO I thought all for the best.

Mercutio dies. Tybalt returns.

BENVOLIO O Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio is dead!

Romeo picks up the dagger.

ROMEO Now, Tybalt, take the 'villain 'back again!

TYBALT Thou, wretched boy

They fight. Tybalt dies.

BENVOLIO Romeo, away, begone!
Stand not amazed: the Prince will doom thee death.

ROMEO O, I am fortune's fool! *(He flees)*

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Resource F: **Character Profile**

ROMEO **"Tybalt, Mercutio, the prince expressly hath**
Forbidden bandying in Verona streets"

Romeo lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets. He is a romantic soul who does not like to fight but is willing to defend his friends. He tries to stop Tybalt and Mercutio fighting but when Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo attacks Tybalt, killing him. Romeo is banished as a result.

What does Romeo think of fighting?_____

How does he feel about Mercutio's death?_____

How does he feel after killing Tybalt? _____

TYBALT **"Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford**
No better term than this: thou art a villain."

Tybalt is Juliet's cousin and hates Romeo. He is very hotheaded and enjoys the fighting between the Montagues and his family. He ignores Romeo's call for peace and fights him but kills Mercutio instead. Tybalt returns to the scene of the killing and is killed by Romeo.

What does Tybalt think of fighting?_____

Why does Tybalt hate Romeo so much? _____

Why does Tybalt return to the scene after killing Mercutio?_____

BENVOLIO **"The day is hot, the Capulets abroad,**
And if we meet, we shall not scape a brawl"

Benvolio is Romeo's good friend. He wants to avoid fighting. He is cautious and careful (his name in Italian means 'good will'). He is used as a go-between, taking messages to the other gang.

What does Benvolio think of fighting?_____

How does he feel seeing Mercutio die? _____

How does he feel seeing Romeo killing Tybalt?_____

MERCUTIO **"I am hurt.**
A plague o'both the houses!"

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Mercutio is a friend to Romeo. He is witty, funny and passionate. Unlike Romeo, Mercutio does not believe in the idea of true love. He is loyal to Romeo and fights Tybalt on his behalf but is injured by Tybalt and regrets fighting as he dies.

What does Mercutio think of fighting?_____

Why does Mercutio fight Tybalt? _____

How does he feel when he realises he's dying? _____

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Resource G: **The Capulets - Act 3, Scene 5 (edited)**

CAPULET Marry, my child, early next Thursday morn,
The County Paris, at Saint Peter's Church,
Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride.

JULIET Now, by Saint Peter's Church and Peter too,
He shall not make me there a joyful bride.

CAPULET Do you not give us thanks?
Are you not proud? Do you not count you blest,

JULIET Not proud you have, but thankful that you have:
Proud can I never be of what I hate

CAPULET Go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.

JULIET Good father, I beseech you on my knees -

CAPULET Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me:
My fingers itch.

NURSE God in heaven bless her!
You are to blame, my lord, to rate her so.

CAPULET Hold your tongue, you mumbling fool!

NURSE You are too hot.

CAPULET God's bread, it makes me mad!
An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend,
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
Nor what is mine shall never do thee good *(he exits)*

JULIET O God! — O nurse, how shall this be prevented?
Comfort me, counsel me.
What say'st thou? Hast thou not a word of joy?

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Resource H: **Romeo and Juliet Gallery (edited text)**

1. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And touching hers, make blessèd my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight,
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

2. O, God! Did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?
O serpent heart, hid with a flow'ring face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Was ever book containing such vile matter
So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace!

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Resource I: **The Friar (edited text)**

JULIET O, shut the door, and when thou hast done so,
Come weep with me, past hope, past care, past help!

F.LAURENCE O, Juliet, I already know thy grief,
It strains me past the compass of my wits:

JULIET Tell me not, friar, that thou hearest of this,
Unless thou tell me how I may prevent it:
If in thy wisdom thou canst give no help,
Do thou but call my resolution wise,
And with this knife I'll help it presently.

Reveals a dagger.

God joined my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands,
Therefore, out of thy long-experienced time,
Give me some present counsel, or, behold…

F. LAURENCE Hold, daughter: I do spy a kind of hope,
Which craves as desp'rate an execution
As that is desperate which we would prevent.
And if thou dar'st, I'll give thee remedy.

A plan in his head, he begins searching for something.

JULIET O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
From off the battlements of any tower,
And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live an unstained wife to my sweet love.

Friar produces a small vial of liquid and smiles – he's found it! He hurriedly ushers Juliet off.

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