

GCSE – Romeo and Juliet – English Knowledge Organiser

Expectations and content

What is this unit about and why do we teach it?

- This play has influenced writers for generations and its central themes of love versus hatred, youth versus age and fate versus freewill are as relevant to our students today as it was to Shakespeare. Students will build on their understanding of the plot, themes and ideas introduced in Year 9 with more in-depth analysis in preparation for the Literature exam.

Key Vocabulary taught:

- Patriarchy
- Society
- Tragedy
- Fate
- Prologue
- Dishonour

Key terminology taught:

- Analytical paragraph
- Sonnet
- Soliloquy
- Dramatic Irony
- Iambic pentameter
- Religious imagery
- Juxtaposition
- Stage direction
- Iambic pentameter
- Verse
- Prose
- Symbolism
- Foreshadowing
- Foil

If your child needs support

Suggested activities to help:

- Re-read the play with your child. The version they have been given at school has a 'modern translation' section which is useful!
- Re-read key scenes from the play, you could practise these together taking on roles.
- Watch one of the many film adaptations, live performances or recorded performance of this play. The Globe YouTube channel sometimes runs these.
- There is a breadth of knowledge online about the Elizabethan age - research the context and how it influenced the play.
- Shakespeare is a world famous poet and playwright - research his work, his craft and his style. Find out what inspired him to write about the ideas and themes in Romeo and Juliet.
- Storyboard the events of each act to learn the order of events, what happens and which characters appear in each act so you can trace their development.
- Create a fact file for each character including key scenes, key quotations and their involvement in the play. Who is responsible for the tragic outcome?
- Use the revision booklets given to you for your homework.

If your child needs extension

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Why might passionate love make people impulsive and even reckless?
- At what point in the play do things start to go wrong for Romeo and Juliet?
- Who or what do you think Shakespeare was trying to criticise through the themes of this play?

Challenging activities to complete:

- Compare and contrast the characters of Tybalt and Mercutio - why does Shakespeare kill them both in Act Three?
- Research reactions to the play at the time and the challenges Shakespeare faced producing his plays on stage.
- How does Juliet compare to other famous Shakespearean women?

Suggested further reading:

Each of these books below are wonderful resources on the play; enjoy the challenge!

1. **Bloom, Harold: William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet** - This volume of essays explores Romeo and Juliet from a variety of angles
2. **Van Doren, Mark. Shakespeare** – Critic Mark Van Doren considers Shakespeare's life and work as a whole, and His reading of Romeo and Juliet is extremely influential.
3. **Seward, James H. Tragic Vision in Romeo and Juliet** - Seward considers Elizabethan attitudes to love, and draws some startling conclusions, among them that Shakespeare's audiences would have been unlikely to approve of Romeo's "lust."