

Plot Summary

1	Prologue	Sets up main themes of the play. Provides an overview of the action.
2	Act 1	Montagues and Capulets brawl. Romeo depressed about Rosaline. Paris wants to marry Capulet's young daughter Juliet. Juliet's mother and Nurse encourage Juliet to marry Paris. Romeo attends Capulet party, sees Juliet and falls in love.
3	Act 2	Balcony Scene – R&J decide to get married. Romeo asks Friar Lawrence to conduct ceremony. Friar Lawrence hopes marriage will end feud. Nurse visits Romeo to check his commitment. Friar Lawrence marries R&J.
4	Act 3	Romeo refuses to fight Tybalt. Mercutio killed by Tybalt and Tybalt by Romeo. Romeo is banished. Juliet told she is to be married to Paris. Capulet flies into a rage after Juliet refuses.
5	Act 4	Juliet asks Friar Lawrence for help. Friar Lawrence supplies a potion and a plan. Juliet agrees to marry Paris. Wedding plans are underway but Juliet found 'dead' by the Nurse.
6	Act 5	Romeo thinks Juliet is dead. He returns to Verona with a poison. Friar Lawrence discovers Romeo did not get his letter. Romeo kills Paris at Juliet's tomb, takes poison and dies. Juliet wakes and finds Romeo, stabs herself. The feud is over.

Characters

1	Romeo Montague	Initially a typical Petrarchan lover, his love for Juliet is incredibly romantic, impulsive and passionate.	6	Lady Capulet	Juliet's mother. Cold and distant for most of the play, she expects Juliet to follow in her own footsteps.
2	Juliet Capulet	Young and innocent, not yet 14. Her love for Romeo matures her and makes her bolder in her defiance.	7	Nurse	Juliet's nursemaid, they have a close relationship. She acts as confidante and messenger for Romeo and Juliet.
3	Lord Capulet	Juliet's father. Shows concern for Juliet's welfare, but can be aggressive and tyrannical when disobeyed.	8	Tybalt	Juliet's ruthless, hot-tempered and vengeful cousin. Has a deep, violent hatred of the Montagues.
4	Mercutio	A relative of the Prince and a high-ranking man. Mixes well with both families and is Romeo's loyal best friend.	9	Benvolio	Cares about his cousin Romeo and tries to keep peace between the families.
5	Paris	A rich and highly-regarded young man, kinsman to the Prince, who is determined to marry Juliet.	10	Friar Lawrence	A caring, trusted, kind man of the Church who is optimistic about the possibility of peace.

Themes

1	Love	Romantic, sexual, superficial and platonic forms of love are present in the play.
2	Death	The certainty, fear, acceptance and welcoming of death is portrayed in the play.
3	Fate versus Free Will	This is the idea of an inevitable destiny that cannot be escaped.
4	Honour and loyalty	The importance of family & friendship.
5	Masculinity and femininity	The play explores traditional views of masculinity and the role of women: Juliet chooses to control her own destiny.

Context

1	Queen Elizabeth	Reigned from 1558-1603. Her reign saw England prosper and become a major player in Europe. She chose not to marry, defying the expectations of a patriarchal society.
2	Astrology	In both 14th-century Italy and Elizabethan England stars linked to fate and fortune, were believed to predict and influence the course of human events.
3	The role of women	Society was ' patriarchal ' (led by men). Women were said to be lower than men in The Great Chain of Being. Women were expected to marry, to bear children and be subservient to men.

Key Vocabulary

1	Foreshadowing	R&J's deaths are hinted at throughout the play, creating suspense for the audience.
2	Hamartia	Both protagonists can be considered to be tragic heroes: high status, sympathetic characters whose fatal flaws (their impulsiveness) contribute to their inevitable deaths
4	Sonnet	A poem of 14 lines with a strict rhyme scheme, usually associated with love and romance. R&J speak in a shared sonnet when they first meet.
5	Dramatic Irony	Some things are revealed to the audience before the characters, increasing tension.
6	Juxtaposition	Opposites that are placed next to each other. Each idea is being emphasised.
7	Motif	Image, sound, action or other figure that has symbolic significance. Some motifs in R&J include light + dark and poison.