

# ROMEO AND JULIET

## HERE'S A HANDY GUIDE TO BLUFFING YOUR WAY THROUGH

### SPEED READ

#### *Romeo And Juliet in a heartbeat*



Romeo is in love. Moody, broody, lovesick love. He's mooning around, like the sun shines out of Rosaline, while his family (the Montagues) feud with the Capulets.

When the Capulets throw a party and Rosaline is invited, Romeo spies the opportunity he's been waiting for: a chance to woo his love. But didn't the Prince outlaw public brawling? On pain of death? Will Romeo really put peace at jeopardy to party with the Capulets? Oh, yes. Romeo and his kinsmen go behind enemy lines where Romeo suffers a direct hit from cupid's arrow: Romeo meets his Juliet.

Later that night, Romeo risks life and limb to visit Juliet on her balcony, and the lovers swear loyalty to one another. The next day, they marry in secret.

Tybalt, however, is less enamored. A Capulet, Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel - but our hero is loved up, and won't take up swords. Not until Tybalt kills Romeo's friend Mercutio. Then Romeo is incensed and he kills Tybalt in rage. Romeo is banished by the Prince as punishment.

Juliet, meanwhile, is about to be betrothed again; this time against her will. Her father has arranged for her to marry Count Paris in three days' time and so Juliet sees the Friar to seek a holy escape.

Die, says the Friar. At least, pretend to. He gives her a potion that makes her appear dead and she is laid to rest in the Capulet crypt. In exile, Romeo misses the memo and, thinking Juliet has really perished, he races back to Verona to die alongside his love. At the tomb, Romeo bumps into Paris, a stoush ensues and Paris is slain.

Romeo drinks a poison and dies beside Juliet. Moments later, Juliet awakens to the sight of her dead lover, and kills herself with Romeo's dagger. The Friar arrives too late to intervene. He breaks the news to the Montagues and the Capulets, and their hate is buried along with their children.

### FAMILY FEUD

#### *Romeo And Juliet character lowdown*

**Juliet** Teenage daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. Bright, obedient and innocent. But there's a sparkle in her eye...

**Romeo** Teenage son and heir of the Montague family. Passionate, idealistic and headstrong. A lover not a fighter.

**Mercutio** Romeo's buddy is a party animal who is neither Capulet nor Montague. A fighter not a lover.

**Tybalt Capulet** Too cool for school, Tybalt hates the Montagues and has a short fuse. He's also a fighter not a lover. This isn't going to end well is it?

**Benvolio** Romeo's cousin tries to keep a calm head when all around him are losing theirs.

**The Nurse** Juliet's closest confidante has cared for her from the cradle. Pragmatic, mumsy, with a knack for being inappropriate.

**Montague and Lady Montague** Romeo's parents are the power couple of the Montague clan, and sworn enemies of the Capulets.

**Capulet and Lady Capulet** Juliet's parents head up the Capulet clan, and despise the Montagues. They think they know what is best for their daughter.

**Count Paris** A goodie-two-shoes who has the hots for Juliet.

**Friar Lawrence** Longs for peace between Verona's warring families. Does a nice sideline in herbal remedies.

**Apothecary** A dodgy geezer. Lacks morals, loves money. Does a nice sideline in deadly poisons.

**Prince Escalus** Fed up to the back teeth with the Capulets and Montagues squabbling in his fiefdom, Verona.

# ROMEO AND JULIET



## IN LOVE WITH NIGHT

A darkened theatre is the perfect setting to watch *Romeo And Juliet* because Shakespeare timed the romantic fireworks in the play to go off at night. While the young lovers are shackled to overbearing parents and peer pressure during the daytime, Romeo and Juliet create a world of their own after sunset.

It's love at first sight when Romeo and Juliet clap eyes on one another at the Capulet ball. Immediately the two of them launch into a shared sonnet that still – after more than 400 years – sets hearts fluttering. A few hours after this, under cover of darkness, Romeo creeps in to the Capulet garden for the famous balcony scene. Later in the play, the lovers share one precious night of passion before Romeo flees at dawn. And they die alongside each other, after nightfall, in the tear-jerking tomb scene.

## SAY WHAT?

*Post-show conversation starters to make you look smart*

### Mythbusters

Shakespeare's original play contains no mention of a balcony or a balcony scene. It's believed that the playwright Thomas Otway added a balcony in his reinterpretation of the play, more than 80 years after Shakespeare died.

Subsequent writers have found it hard to resist altering the play's tragic ending. David Garrick had Juliet wake while Romeo was dying, so the two could share some final words. And Sergei Prokofiev's original ballet version united the lovers for a happy ending (though Soviet censors insisted on a tragic ending instead).

Even though Romeo and Juliet meet, woo and die in Verona, it's unlikely that Shakespeare himself ever set foot in the city.

## “QUOTE – UNQUOTE”

*Romeo And Juliet* is packed with lines and phrases that you probably recognise, including:

'Wild-geese chase'

'Parting is such sweet sorrow'

'You kiss by the book'

'Star-crossed lovers'

'O, I am fortune's fool'

'What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other word would smell as sweet'

'A plague on both your houses'

'What must be, shall be'

'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'

## Whodathunkit?

In the past decade alone, *Romeo And Juliet* has been performed across all five continents, and in the following languages: English, German, Spanish, Korean, French, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Finnish, Russian, Dutch, Estonian, Czech, Hebrew, Ukrainian and Romanian.

What's in a name? One of the earliest versions of Shakespeare's play was published under the less catchy title *The Most Excellent And Lamentable Tragedy Of Romeo And Juliet*.

Some dubious casting decisions have been made for Romeo and Juliet over the years. In 1744 a British actor, Theophilus Cibber, played Romeo opposite his daughter, Jenny, as Juliet. While in 1845 in America, sisters Charlotte and Susan Cushman took the lead roles. Talk about keeping it in the family.