

## Warmer – impossible love

A. Read the first text, and talk about the questions with a partner.

Imagine that you have just met the most fabulous and wonderful person and, incredibly, fallen in love. You are absolutely sure that they are the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. The only problem is that their family is at war with your family and your parents would never allow you to see each other.

What would you do and why?

- stop seeing this person so you don't upset your family
- tell your family about the situation and hope they understand
- see the person in secret
- marry the person in secret
- move away to another place with the person

Is there anything else you could do?

B. Now read about Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*.

### The world's favourite love story

*Romeo and Juliet* is probably the most famous romantic story in the world. There have been thousands of productions of the play and many different versions of the film. In the story, the two families of Capulet and Montague are at war with each other in the city of Verona in Italy. A Montague boy called Romeo and a Capulet girl called Juliet meet and fall in love – even though their families hate each other. The story is a tragedy and although Romeo and Juliet get married they do not live happily, after a bloody and complex story, they each take their own lives.

Right: Romeo climbs on to Juliet's balcony  
Painting by Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893)  
Delaware Art Museum, USA



**Task 1 – The main characters in *Romeo and Juliet***

*Put the phrases in order to make descriptions of the main characters.*

1. who is / a young / Montague man / distracted by love. / Romeo is
2. who falls / Capulet girl / Juliet is a / in love / wrong person. / with the
3. is / Mercutio / Romeo's / he is / the Capulets. / friend and / killed by
4. Friar Lawrence / in secret. / marries / Romeo and Juliet / is a priest who
5. marry / Juliet / Count Paris / wants to / love him. / but she / doesn't
6. The Montagues / at war / with / the Capulets. / are
7. don't want / Juliet / a Montague boy. / The Capulets / to marry



Romeo and Juliet at their wedding, with Friar Lawrence. Painting by Henry William Bunbury (1750-1811)



Romeo and Juliet lie dead, the Montagues and Capulets agree to end the fighting. Painting by Frederick Leighton (1830-1896)

**Task 2 – Props and themes in *Romeo and Juliet***

**A. Match the things to their descriptions.**

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1. a balcony   | a. you could use this to stop someone recognising you         |
| 2. a dagger    | b. you could write a message on this                          |
| 3. a letter    | c. you could use this to stab someone                         |
| 4. a rope      | d. you could look out over the city from this                 |
| 5. some poison | e. you could use this to climb up a wall                      |
| 6. a disguise  | f. you could use this to get married                          |
| 7. a ring      | g. you want this if someone does something bad to you         |
| 8. revenge     | h. you could kill someone with this liquid                    |
| 9. passion     | i. you feel this when you love someone or something very much |

**B.** Why do you think the things in (a) might be important in the story of Romeo and Juliet? Talk to your partner about what might happen with each of the objects. Look at the pictures on these pages to help you.

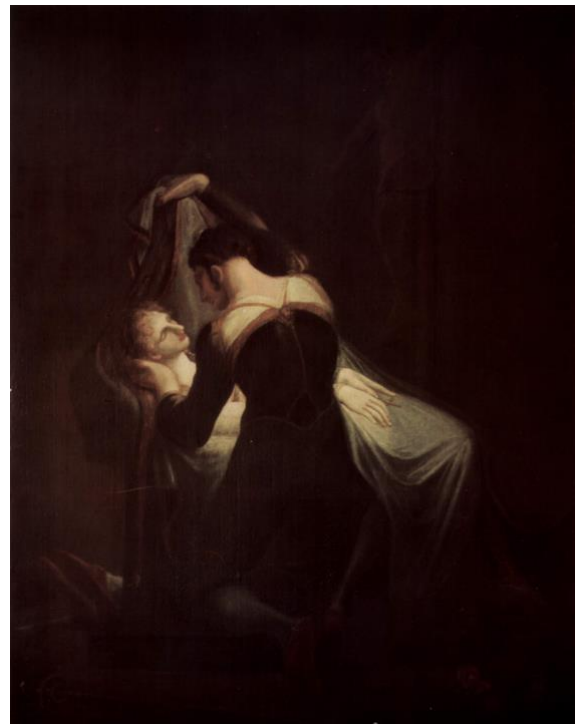
### Task 3 – Prediction: sequencing the main events in Romeo and Juliet

Read the list of events that happen in Romeo and Juliet. With your partner decide which order they happened in. The first one has been done for you.

- a. Romeo falls in love with Juliet as soon as he sees her.
- b. Juliet refuses to marry Count Paris.
- c. Juliet kills herself.
- d. Romeo kills himself.
- e. The Capulets and Montagues make peace.
- f. Juliet takes a drug that makes her look dead.
- g. Romeo goes to a Capulet party in disguise.
- h. The Prince of Verona rules that anyone caught fighting will be executed. (1)
- i. Romeo and Juliet get married.



The death of Romeo's friend Mercutio.  
Painting by Edwin Ausin Abbey (1852-1911)



Romeo believes Juliet to be dead  
Painting by Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741-1825)

#### Task 4 – Reading and sequencing the main events in *Romeo and Juliet*

Now read the text on the following page, and check your answers to Task 3.

##### The plot of *Romeo and Juliet*

*Romeo and Juliet* begins with a street fight in Verona between the servants the Capulet family and the Montague family. The fighting between them has become quite bad. The Prince of Verona orders that anyone found fighting between the Montagues and the Capulets will be put to death.

That evening the Capulet family is going to have a ball. It's an important event and all the leading family members will be there. Young Juliet, Lord Capulet's daughter, will also be there as will the man who wants to be her husband, Count Paris. Juliet's father has asked Paris to wait two years before he marries the girl, even though Juliet is not interested in Paris.

Romeo, who is Lord Montague's son, decides to go to the Capulet ball to see a girl he thinks he's in love with. He goes in disguise so that nobody will know who is. At the party, when he sees Juliet for the first time, he immediately falls in love with her. As a Montague, Romeo shouldn't even be there. He gets caught and the Capulets want to kill him but his murder is stopped by Juliet's father, who won't have blood spilled in his house.

Now that he is desperately in love with Juliet, Romeo calls up to her at her window in the night in what is known as 'the balcony scene'. Romeo uses a rope to climb up to her room. They promise to love each other despite the war between their two families. They are married the next day in secret by Friar Lawrence.

The next day after the party, Romeo is confronted by Capulets from the night before, as they are still angry about his presence at a party. After a fight, Romeo's friend Mercutio is killed and to avenge him, Romeo kills a Capulet man.

As punishment for killing the man, Romeo is now exiled from Verona, but he secretly visits Juliet and spends the night in her room, where they consummate their marriage.

Meanwhile, Juliet's father, Lord Capulet, agrees to marry her to Count Paris. In a passionate speech, Juliet says that she will not.

Juliet now visits Friar Laurence for help. He gives her a special drug that will put her to sleep for two days and make her look as if she is dead. In this way, she can escape Verona. The Friar promises to send a messenger to inform Romeo and tell him about the plan. Juliet takes the drug and appears to die. Her body is put in the tomb.

The letter from the Friar never reaches Romeo, and instead he discovers that Juliet is dead through his friends. Romeo rushes to the tomb to see Juliet's body, not knowing about the Friar's plan. There, Romeo meets Count Paris and the two fight. Romeo kills Paris. Then, believing Juliet to be dead, he drinks poison and himself dies. Juliet then wakes and finds Romeo dead next to her. Full of grief, she stabs herself with his dagger.

The two warring families of Capulet and Montague as well as the Prince of Verona, meet at the tomb to find all three dead. They have each lost one of their children and they all agree to stop fighting each other. As the Friar says: '...never was a story of more woe / than this of Juliet and her Romeo'.



**Task 5 – Understanding the characters' motivations in *Romeo and Juliet***

Work with a partner or a small group. What was the motivation for each character to do the things they did? Discuss the answers to the following questions.

1. Why does the Prince of Verona order all the fighting between the Montagues and Capulets to stop?
2. Why does Romeo sneak into the ball?
3. Why don't the Capulets kill Romeo when they discover him at their party?
4. Why does Friar Lawrence agree marry Romeo and Juliet?
5. Why does Juliet want to leave Verona?
6. Why does Juliet take a drug to make it look as if she is dead?
7. Why does Romeo kill himself?
8. Why does Juliet kill herself?



*Romeo and Juliet*  
Painting by James Northcote (1746-1831)

**Task 6 – Discussion**

1. 'Romeo and Juliet were stupid kids; they shouldn't have fallen in love with each other because they knew it was wrong.' Do you agree with this?
2. Would you have acted differently if *you* were Romeo or Juliet?
3. Do you think modern audiences would like watching *Romeo and Juliet*? Does the play have anything to say in the modern world?
4. Do you think love is more important than anything else?