

Romeo and Juliet

Schools' synopsis by Rebecca Lenkiewicz

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

In Verona there is an ancient and ongoing hate campaign between the Capulets and the Montagues. In the street a Capulet bites his thumb at a Montague, an insult. A fight breaks out. Lord and Lady Capulet and Lord and Lady Montague appear. The Lords want to fight each other. But the Prince Escalus, the ruling Prince of Verona, declares that the next man to incite a brawl will be killed. Lady Montague is relieved that her son Romeo was not involved and asks Benvolio if he has seen his cousin who is depressed.

Romeo tells Benvolio how much he loves Rosaline, the niece of Lord Capulet. She has rejected Romeo and he is desperately unhappy:

'Tut, I have lost myself; I am nothing, / This is not Romeo, he's some other where.'

An illiterate servant asks Romeo to read an invitation for him. Rosaline is invited to the Capulets' party that night. Benvolio challenges Romeo to go there and to see that the other girls at the party are just as lovely as her.

Paris, a nobleman, wants to marry Juliet, the daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet. Paris approaches Lord Capulet who likes him but he is reluctant. Juliet is only thirteen. Lady Capulet is keener and talks to Juliet about marrying Paris soon.

Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio go to the Capulets' party. Mercutio talks about Queen Mab who is the queen of sleep and dreams. Romeo has a strange feeling of doom about the evening. As soon as Romeo sees Juliet there he is struck. He asks who she is. He watches her:

'Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! / For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.'

Tybalt, the nephew of Lady Capulet, spots Romeo and he prepares for a fight. Tybalt tells Lord Capulet that Romeo Montague is there. Lord Capulet has heard the boy has a good reputation. He forbids Tybalt to fight.

Romeo approaches Juliet. They talk briefly and in moments they completely fall for each other. Juliet is called away. Romeo asks Juliet's Nurse who is she? A fine Capulet. Juliet also quizzes her Nurse, who is the young man who is leaving now... Romeo Montague: 'My only love sprung from my only hate.'

Benvolio and Mercutio search for Romeo but he gives them the slip. He climbs over the high wall of the orchard to be near Juliet. She comes out of her room and stands on her balcony. She starts to speak. About Romeo. How a name is simply a label, meaningless in itself:

'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'

Romeo comes out of the shadows and they confess their love to each other and kiss. Juliet will send for him tomorrow. They'll get married. She'll give up her name to be with him. They are completely in love.

With the help of her Nurse Juliet is married to Romeo the next day by Friar Laurence, a local franciscan Friar and a confidant to Romeo. Tybalt approaches Mercutio, he wants to find Romeo who appears now. Mercutio challenges Tybalt who draws his sword and kills Mercutio. Romeo is enraged and kills Tybalt. Romeo is sent into exile. Romeo spends one wedding night with Juliet. Then he runs away to Mantua.

Meanwhile Lord and Lady Capulet are set on Juliet marrying Paris. Juliet is terrified and goes to Friar Laurence for help. He has a plan. Juliet must drink a potion that makes her look as though she has died. She will be laid out in the family's burial vault. But she will revive. Then Friar Laurence will reunite her with Romeo and they can run far away and be together as man and wife.

Juliet is fearful but agrees. She panics about the potion. What if it misfires? What if she really dies? And how will it be waking up amongst graves? But she takes it and goes into a death like faint.

Friar Laurence writes to Romeo to tell him of the plan but the letter does not reach him. Juliet is laid to rest. Romeo is told that Juliet has died. He buys poison to kill himself and goes to Verona to see her body. Paris is at the grave and challenges Romeo who kills him. Romeo sees Juliet's lifeless body. He drinks the poison. Friar Laurence arrives but it is too late. Juliet wakes up from her stupor and sees Romeo's dead body. Inconsolable she joins him. She kisses his poisoned lips then takes his dagger and kills herself.

The families see the bodies entwined together and feel remorse and regret at their hate campaign having taken these young innocent lives. They vow to end their feud.

PRINCE:

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