

Romeo and Juliet - Play Review

Post-Show Activity for Grades 6-12

Goals

- Students will analyze and reflect on the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Students will express understanding through discussion and/or written response.
- Students will write a structured play review, incorporating analysis of theatrical elements and personal response.

NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). TEKS can be found at the end of this document. [Artful Thinking](#) activities are referenced throughout to encourage critical thinking.

Materials Needed

- Paper and pen or laptops/tablets for writing.
- Whiteboard or digital board for group discussion.
- Story Web (Characters and Themes), included in this file.
- Sample play review (a Houston Press review of *Twelfth Night* is included in this file).

Step 1 | Warm Up: Two Truths and a Lie

- **Introduce the game.** Share three statements about *Romeo and Juliet*. Students identify which statement is the lie:
 - At the start of the play, the feud between the Capulets and Montagues is new (False).
 - Juliet was betrothed to Paris (True).
 - Romeo killed Tybalt (True).
- **Invite initial reactions.** After revealing the lie, ask:
 - What was your initial reaction to the play?
 - What rating would you give it (stars, thumbs up/down, 1-10, etc.)?

Notes for UDL alignment: Encourage students to share in pairs, small groups, or through written reflection to offer varied ways of participating or give students who need it some additional processing time.

Step 2 | Examine a Sample Review

- **Identify the structure.** Present the sample play review and point out its introduction, spoiler-free summary, analysis of acting, directing and design, and personal opinion.
- **Name the theatrical elements.** Discuss what critics analyze, including acting, directing, set, costumes, sound, lighting, and pacing.

- **Compare analysis and opinion.** Explain how a review balances objective observations with the writer's subjective response.

Step 3 | Analyze the Production in Groups

- **Assign a focus.** Divide students into small groups and give each group one aspect of the production to analyze:
 - Acting (e.g. Romeo, Juliet, Tybalt, Mercutio, Friar Laurence, Nurse, etc).
 - Set and costume design (Verona, Italy during the Renaissance).
 - Use of sound and lighting to create environment and tone (sound effects and music).
 - Themes (love vs hate, fate vs free will, family loyalty vs personal choice, youth and impulsive decisions, secrecy and failed communication).
- **Prepare to share.** Have groups brainstorm observations and choose their strongest points to share with the class.
- **Build a thesis.** Facilitate a whole-class discussion to craft effective thesis statements for reviews. For example: "The production uses moments of humor and tenderness to make the tragic consequences of the families' feud feel even more devastating."

Notes for UDL alignment: To provide multiple ways of expressing understanding, consider letting students act or physicalize their responses. You can also utilize Think-Pair-Share to provide additional solo and partner processing time. Bridge student vocabulary with grade-level terminology.

Step 4 | Write an Independent Review

- **Set the writing task.** Ask students to draft a 500-word review of the Romeo and Juliet performance using the guided questions and their group's observations:
 - What was the play about? (brief summary without spoilers)
 - Which performances stood out and why?
 - How did the set, costumes, and technical elements enhance the story?
 - How did the play make you feel? Did it surprise or engage you?
 - What themes or messages did the play explore?
 - Would you recommend this play? Why or why not?
- **Offer sentence starters.** Use prompts such as:
 - "The play *Romeo and Juliet* tells the story of..."
 - "One of the most powerful performances was..."
 - "The use of lighting and sound helped build the world of the play by..."
 - "The play explores themes such as..."
 - "Overall, I would rate this play..."
- **Reinforce evidence and vocabulary.** Encourage students to use theatre terminology and specific examples from the script or performance. Bridge language from student expression as needed.

- **Optional extension.** Invite students to create a visual companion piece, such as a poster or digital presentation, that highlights key points from their review.

Notes for UDL alignment: Students can record their reviews or present them as short videos. You can also allow alternative formats for students needing support: oral reviews, storyboards, or graphic organizers.

Step 5 | Reflect with Headlines

- **Create a headline.** Ask students to write or brainstorm a headline that captures the essence of their review.
- **Share.** Students present their headlines to a partner or small group.
- **Discuss.** Invite students to identify which headline best captures the core of the play and explain why.

Notes for UDL alignment: Encourage students to share in pairs, small groups, or through written reflection to offer varied ways of participating.

TEKS

Fine Arts- Theatre, Middle School 6-8, High School Levels I-IV

- (5) Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

English Language Arts and Reading, Middle School 6-8

- 6(H): respond orally or in writing with appropriate register, vocabulary, tone, and voice;

English Language Arts and Reading, High School- English I-IV

- 5(C): use text evidence and original commentary to support a response;
- 5(H): respond orally or in writing with appropriate register, vocabulary, tone, and voice;

Romeo and Juliet - Play Review Example

Fanciful *Twelfth Night* Prances Across the Alley Stage

NATALIE DE LA GARZA

OCTOBER 11, 2018



Elizabeth Bunch as Olivia and Kim Blanck as Viola in the Alley Theatre's production of *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare. Credit: Photo by Lynn Lane

If you've ever thought the only thing missing from most productions of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is a man in a bear costume who plays the piano, the Alley Theatre has some good news for you.

But first, for anyone who's yet to read or catch a production of the oft-produced play, Shakespeare's comedic tale of mistaken identity begins when a woman, Viola, shipwrecked in an unknown land and believing her brother dead, decides to pass as a boy. As "Cesario," Viola becomes a page for a duke, Orsino, and finds herself dropped in the middle of Orsino's relentless pursuit of Olivia, a woman uninterested in love as she mourns for her recently deceased father and brother. Orsino decides to have "Cesario" act as his *Cyrano de Bergerac*, but problems arise when not only does Viola fall for Orsino, but Olivia falls for "Cesario."

As this triangle takes shape, Olivia's uncle, the drunkard Sir Toby Belch, along with his partners in crime – Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Fabian, Maria and Feste – decide to cause problems of the let's-get-him-committed type for Malvolio, a man putting a definite cramp in their freewheeling, freeloading lifestyle. Oh, and Sebastian, Viola's presumed dead brother, is very much alive and arrives in town leading to – you guessed it – even more wacky hijinks.

The Jonathan Moscone-directed production opens in dramatic fashion, with lightning and rain falling from the sky. Here, Lighting Designer Christopher Akerlind, Scenic Designer Todd Rosenthal and Sound Designers Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen are well deserving of the delighted, impressed gasps they garnered from the audience. But don't let it fool you; the opening scene quickly gives way to a tub rising from beneath the stage, complete with Orsino mid-bubble bath. This production offers much in the way of whimsy (see: man in bear suit playing the piano), and its playful silliness is what makes up for a lack of stylistic and thematic cohesion.

It appears Moscone took a light touch to world-building, which means that despite Akerlind's effective lighting designs, Rosenthal's effortless evocation of different locations on the primary set (itself encircled by a moat of sorts and set against a textured, abstract background), and Katherine Roth's skillfully put together costumes, the universe Moscone attempts to establish remains vague, never fully taking shape.

That loose-handed approach can probably also explain the heavy, seemingly aimless first act, which starts to lose steam and drag between gags at different points. But if there's one thing you can count on, it's that the actors at the Alley can act, and that's what saves the day in this production of *Twelfth Night*.



Mark Ivy, Dylan Godwin as Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Michael Manuel as Sir Toby Belch in the Alley Theatre's production of *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare. Credit: Photo by Lynn Lane

When Kim Blanck's Viola first appears, washed up on the shores of Illyria, she's distraught at her circumstances and belief that her brother has perished in the ocean. Soon, however, she's settled into life in Illyria, where she's in turns earnest, sometimes unsure, and obviously smitten with her new employer, Chris Hutchison's commanding and irreverent Orsino.

Blanck's Viola is the anchor in a sea of of eccentric characters cheekily winking at the audience throughout the show: Michael Manuel's drunken, slovenly Sir Toby Belch; Dylan Godwin's foppish (and limber) Sir Andrew Aguecheek; Jay Sullivan's crooning fool Feste; Melissa Pritchett's conniving Maria; and Mark Ivy's sometimes bearsuit-clad Fabian. And then there's Todd Waite's severe, Karl Lagerfeld-esque Malvolio, who's coerced "descent into madness" garners some of the production's biggest laughs.

Elizabeth Bunch's Olivia is especially funny, in particular when she's acting out the letter the gang is using to trick Malvolio, and both Bunch and David Huynh, who plays the role of Sebastian, have some reaction shots worthy of *The Office*. Jason E. Carmichael also stands out, first thanklessly delivering a little exposition as the Sea Captain, and then later earning some big laughs as the Priest.

You're probably wondering why you're not hearing more about the high level whimsy in this production, but the truth is you should be surprised. Though I will say that once you see that the stage is surrounded by water, you're just waiting for someone to fall in. And yes, it is worth it.

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Romeo and Juliet – Play Outline

Use this outline as a guide to help you remember the play as you do the activity.

Basic Play Information

- A. Title: *Romeo and Juliet*
- B. Playwright: William Shakespeare
- C. Genre: Tragedy
- D. Setting: Verona, Italy in the Renaissance
- E. Central Points of View: Romeo and Juliet

Major Themes

- A. Love and Conflict
- B. Family Loyalty and Individual Choice
- C. Fate and Free Will
- D. Youth and Impulsive Decisions
- E. Secrecy and Failed Communication

Key Moments / Ideas

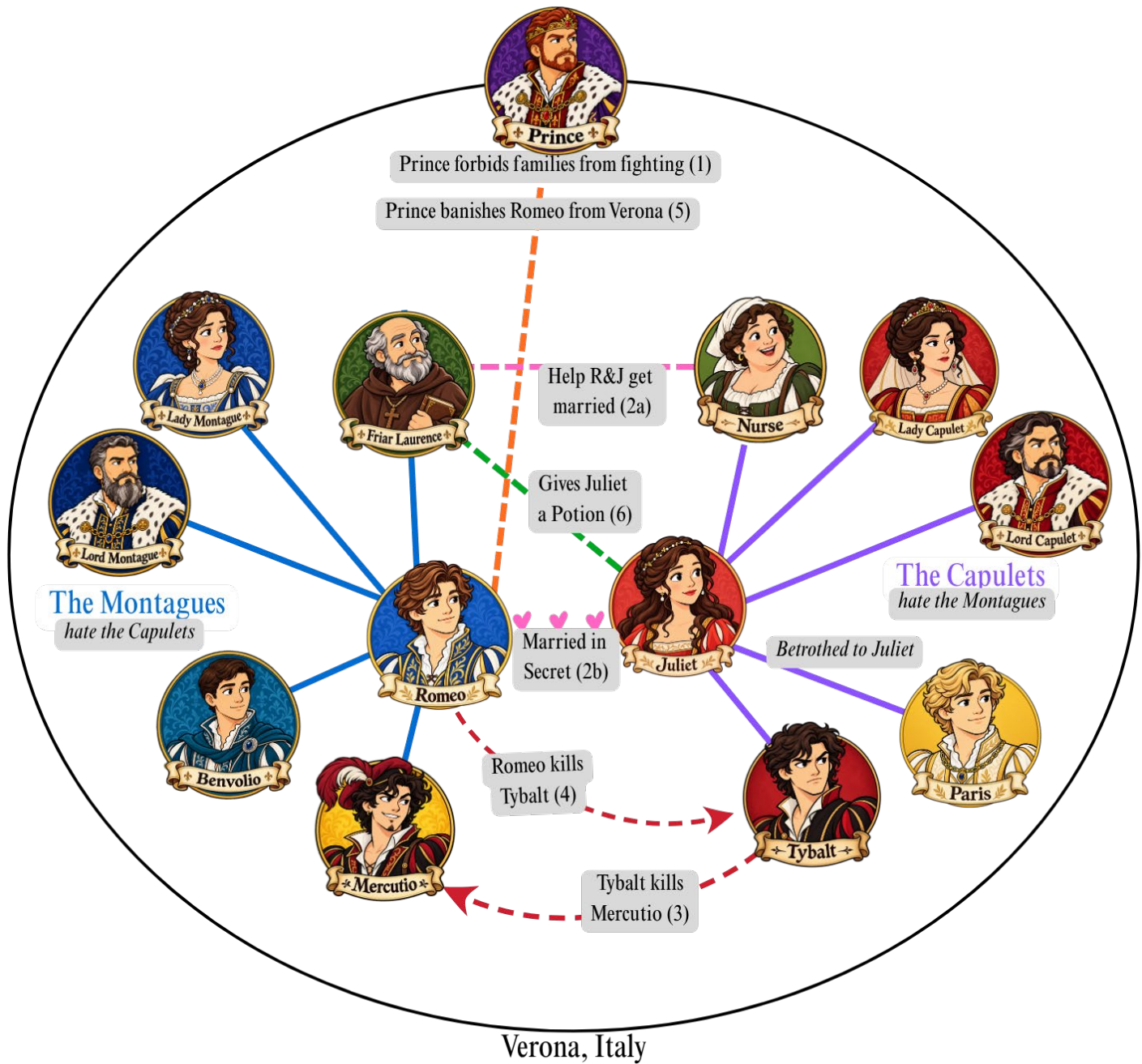
- A. A fight reveals the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. The Prince threatens death if the families disturb Verona again.
- B. Romeo and Juliet meet at the Capulets' celebration, fall in love, and are secretly married by Friar Laurence.
- C. Tybalt kills Mercutio. Romeo kills Tybalt in revenge and is banished from Verona.
- D. Ordered to marry Paris, Juliet drinks a potion that makes her appear dead. Friar Laurence's message explaining the plan never reaches Romeo.
- E. Believing Juliet is dead, Romeo takes poison. Juliet awakens, finds Romeo's body, and kills herself. Their deaths finally end the families' feud.

Overall Impact

- A. The play shows how hatred, secrecy, and impulsive choices can turn love into tragedy
- B. Romeo and Juliet's deaths bring peace to Verona, but only after an irreversible loss.

Romeo and Juliet – Story Web

Use this story web as a guide to help you remember the play as you do the activity. Some notes are numbered to reflect the order in which they happen in the story.



Who's Who: The Cast and Character's of Alley Theatre's *Romeo and Juliet*



Rob B. Kellogg
Romeo Montague

Romeo Montague

Romeo is the son of the Montague family. Passionate and impulsive, he falls deeply in love with Juliet despite the feud between their families. Romeo is driven by emotion and often acts quickly, following his heart without fully considering the consequences. His intense devotion to Juliet shapes the course of the play.

Key Traits:

- Romantic
- Impulsive
- Passionate
- Loyal

"With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls."



Melissa Molano
Juliet Capulet

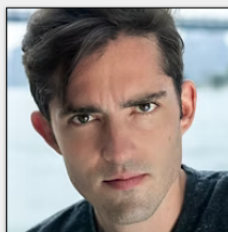
Juliet Capulet

Juliet is the daughter of the Capulet family. Intelligent and courageous, she defies her family's expectations to follow her heart. Though young, Juliet matures quickly as she faces difficult choices about love, loyalty, and independence.

Key Traits:

- Brave
- Intelligent
- Determined
- Compassionate

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep."



Matthew Amendt
Mercutio

Mercutio

Mercutio is Romeo's close friend and one of the play's most energetic characters. Quick-witted and humorous, he enjoys teasing others and challenges the idea of romantic love. Despite his playful nature, his temper and loyalty to his friends can lead him into dangerous situations.

Key Traits:

- Witty
- Energetic
- Loyal
- Reckless

"A plague o' both your houses!"



Chris Hutchison
Tybalt Capulet

Tybalt Capulet

Tybalt is Juliet's cousin and a fierce defender of the Capulet family honor. He is quick to anger and eager to confront the Montagues whenever possible. His aggressive nature helps fuel the conflict at the center of the play.

Key Traits:

- Hot-tempered
- Proud
- Aggressive
- Loyal

"What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word."

Who's Who: Continued



Christopher Salazar
Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence

Friar Laurence is a trusted religious figure and mentor to Romeo. Believing he can help end the feud between the families, he agrees to secretly marry Romeo and Juliet. His good intentions often clash with the complicated reality of the situation.

Key Traits:

- Wise
- Hopeful
- Caring
- Idealistic

"These violent delights have violent ends."



Michelle Elaine
Nurse

Nurse

Nurse has cared for Juliet since childhood and serves as her closest confidant. Warm, funny, and talkative, she genuinely loves Juliet and wants what she believes is best for her. Her practical outlook sometimes differs from Juliet's romantic ideals.

Key Traits:

- Caring
- Humorous
- Loyal
- Practical

"Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days."



Dylan Godwin
Benvolio Montague

Benvolio Montague

Benvolio is Romeo's cousin and a voice of reason throughout the play. He often tries to keep the peace and prevent violence between the rival families. His calm nature makes him one of the most level-headed characters in Verona.

Key Traits:

- Peaceful
- Honest
- Thoughtful
- Reliable

"I do but keep the peace."



David Rainey
Lord Capulet

Lord Capulet

Lord Capulet is Juliet's father and head of the Capulet household. He wants what he believes is best for his daughter but expects complete obedience. His love for Juliet is often overshadowed by his desire for authority and control.

Key Traits:

- Authoritative
- Proud
- Protective
- Demanding

"Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch!"

Who's Who: Continued



Elizabeth Bunch
Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet is Juliet's mother. Concerned with social status and family reputation, she encourages Juliet to make a respectable marriage. She has a more distant relationship with her daughter than the Nurse does.

Key Traits:

- Formal
- Status-conscious
- Reserved
- Traditional

"Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face."



Brandon Hearnberger
Paris

Paris

Paris is a wealthy nobleman who hopes to marry Juliet. He is respectful and sincere but fails to understand Juliet's feelings. His pursuit of Juliet reflects the social expectations surrounding marriage in Verona.

Key Traits:

- Respectable
- Persistent
- Noble
- Well-Meaning

"Thy face is mine, and thou hast slandered it."



Orlando Arriaga
Lord Montague

Lord Montague

Lord Montague is Romeo's father and the patriarch of the Montague family. Concerned for his son's well-being, he is caught in the long-standing feud with the Capulets. His love for Romeo is clear, though he struggles to understand him.

Key Traits:

- Caring
- Concerned
- Proud
- Traditional

"Many a morning hath he there been seen."



Allison Pistorius
Lady Montague

Lady Montague

Lady Montague is Romeo's mother. She deeply cares for her son and worries about the dangers created by the family feud. Though she appears only briefly, her love for Romeo is evident.

Key Traits:

- Loving
- Concerned
- Gentle
- Supportive

"O, where is Romeo? Saw you him today?"