



Cambridge School  
Shakespeare

# ROMEO AND JULIET







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**CAMBRIDGE  
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# Contents

Introduction	iv
Photo gallery	v
<b><i>Romeo and Juliet</i></b>	
<b>List of characters</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Prologue</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Act 1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Act 2</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Act 3</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Act 4</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Act 5</b>	<b>171</b>
The story of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	202
Characters	204
Perspectives and themes	209
Why did Romeo and Juliet die?	212
The language of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	214
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> in performance	220
Writing about Shakespeare	230
Writing about <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	232
Timeline	234
Acknowledgements	235



# Introduction

This *Romeo and Juliet* is part of the **Cambridge School Shakespeare** series. Like every other play in the series, it has been specially prepared to help all students in schools and colleges.

The **Cambridge School Shakespeare** *Romeo and Juliet* aims to be different. It invites you to lift the words from the page and to bring the play to life in your classroom, hall or drama studio. Through enjoyable and focused activities, you will increase your understanding of the play. Actors have created their different interpretations of the play over the centuries. Similarly, you are invited to make up your own mind about *Romeo and Juliet*, rather than having someone else's interpretation handed down to you.

**Cambridge School Shakespeare** does not offer you a cut-down or simplified version of the play. This is Shakespeare's language, filled with imaginative possibilities. You will find on every left-hand page: a summary of the action, an explanation of unfamiliar words, and a choice of activities on Shakespeare's stagecraft, characters, themes and language.

Between each act, and in the pages at the end of the play, you will find notes, illustrations and activities. These will help to encourage reflection after every act and give you insights into the background and context of the play as a whole.

This edition will be of value to you whether you are studying for an examination, reading for pleasure or thinking of putting on the play to entertain others. You can work on the activities on your own or in groups. Many of the activities suggest a particular group size, but don't be afraid to make up larger or smaller groups to suit your own purposes. Please don't think you have to do every activity: choose those that will help you most.

Although you are invited to treat *Romeo and Juliet* as a play, you don't need special dramatic or theatrical skills to do the activities. By choosing your activities, and by exploring and experimenting, you can make your own interpretations of Shakespeare's language, characters and stories.

Whatever you do, remember that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be acted, watched and enjoyed.

## **Rex Gibson**

Founding editor

This new edition contains more photographs, more diversity and more supporting material than previous editions, whilst remaining true to Rex's original vision. Specifically, it contains more activities and commentary on stagecraft and writing about Shakespeare, to reflect contemporary interest. The glossary has been enlarged, too. Finally, this edition aims to reflect the best teaching and learning possible, and to represent not only Shakespeare through the ages, but also the relevance and excitement of Shakespeare today.

## **Richard Andrews and Vicki Wienand**

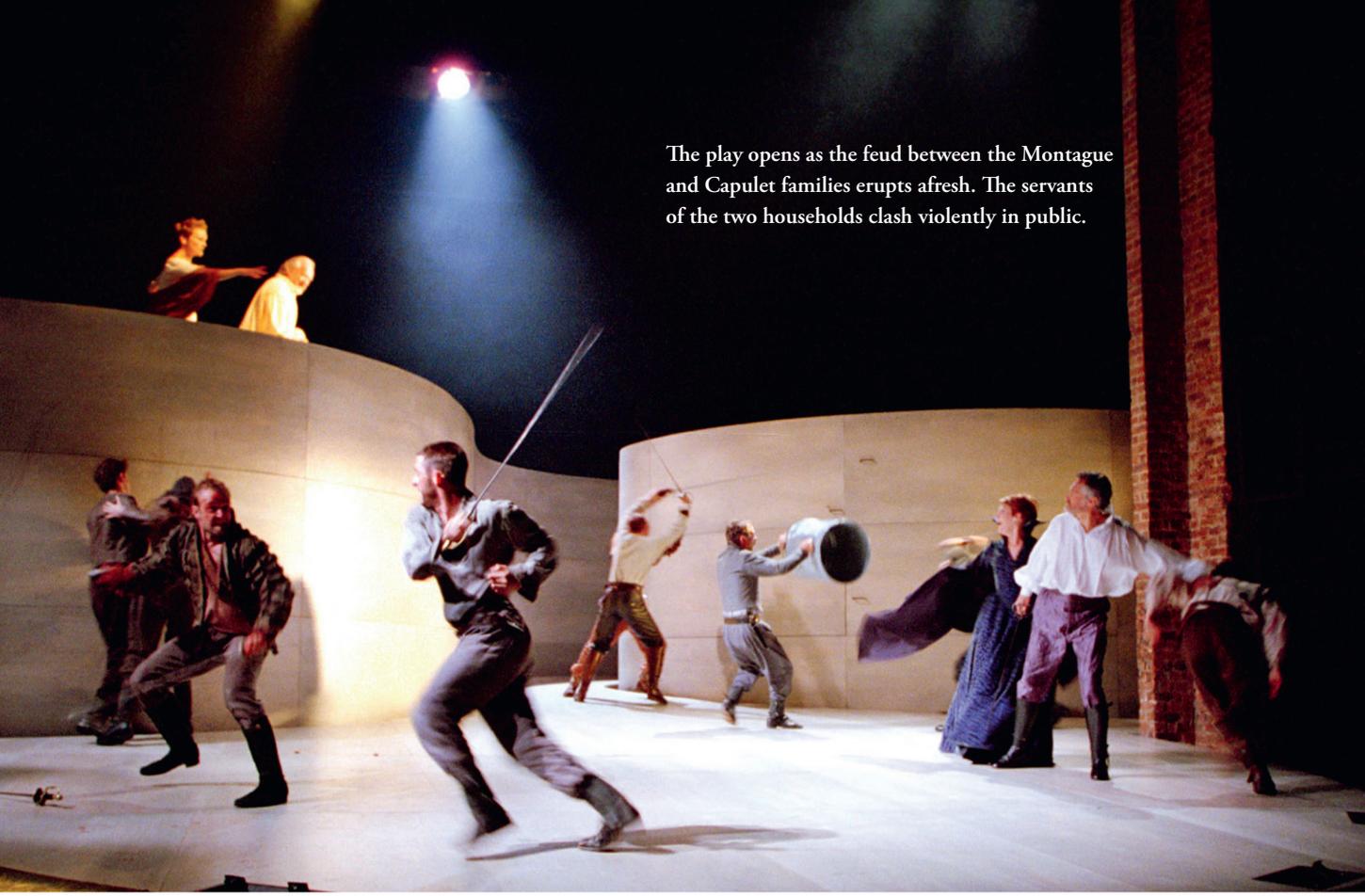
Series editors

This edition of *Romeo and Juliet* uses the text of the play established by G. Blakemore Evans in **The New Cambridge Shakespeare**.

'Star-crossed lovers'. *Romeo and Juliet* dramatises the story of two young people who fall deeply in love. But their families are locked in an age-old bitter feud. As Romeo (a Montague) and Juliet (a Capulet) seek happiness, the hatred between their families, together with misfortune and accident, makes everything go wrong. They kill themselves rather than be separated from each other.



The play opens as the feud between the Montague and Capulet families erupts afresh. The servants of the two households clash violently in public.



Later, after order has been restored, Lord Capulet arranges a lavish party. His guests dance in celebration.





A forlorn Romeo has riskily gatecrashed Capulet's party. Disguised behind a mask, and at first unrecognised, he falls in love with Juliet, not yet knowing that she is the daughter of Lord Capulet. They kiss for the first time.



'What light through yonder window breaks?' After the party, Romeo catches sight of Juliet while she thinks of him. Shakespeare never mentions a balcony, but all productions strive to find an inventive way of staging Act 2 Scene 2 – the 'balcony' scene.



◀ ‘Parting is such sweet sorrow’.  
Juliet agrees to marry Romeo  
the following day and bids him  
a reluctant farewell.

▼ ‘Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you  
walk?’ Mercutio (right), Romeo’s  
close friend, is disgusted by Romeo’s  
refusal to fight Tybalt (a Capulet).  
Mercutio challenges Tybalt to a duel.





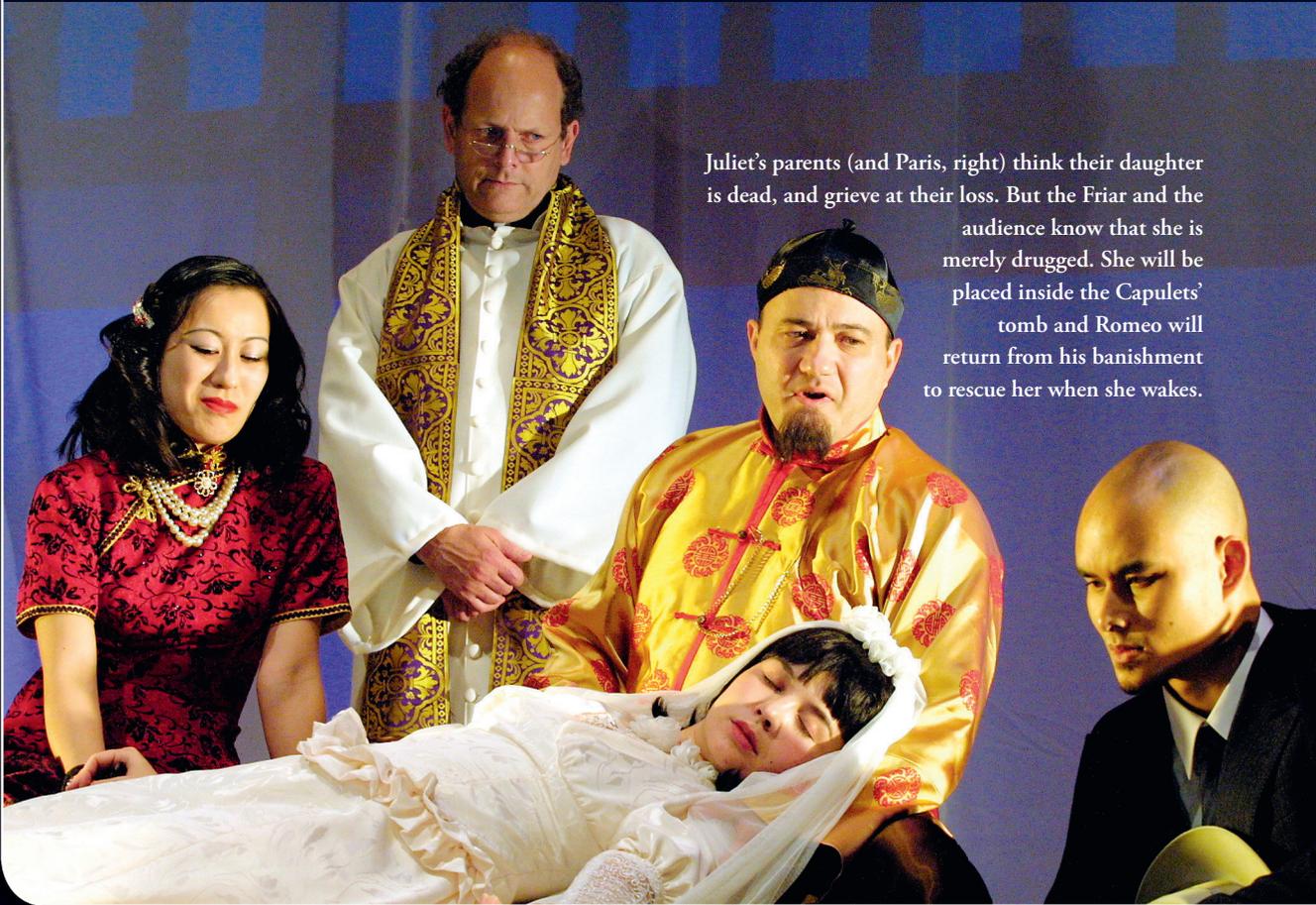
▲ Romeo tries to stop the duel, but Tybalt fatally wounds Mercutio (centre). Romeo, furious about Mercutio's death, kills Tybalt in revenge and is banished from Verona.

▼ Friar Lawrence has secretly married Romeo and Juliet. Juliet refuses to marry Paris, her father's choice. She seeks advice from the troubled Friar about what she can do. Paris continues to promote his own qualities as Juliet's husband-to-be. Friar Lawrence proposes a hazardous plan, in which Juliet will drink a potion that will send her into a death-like sleep.



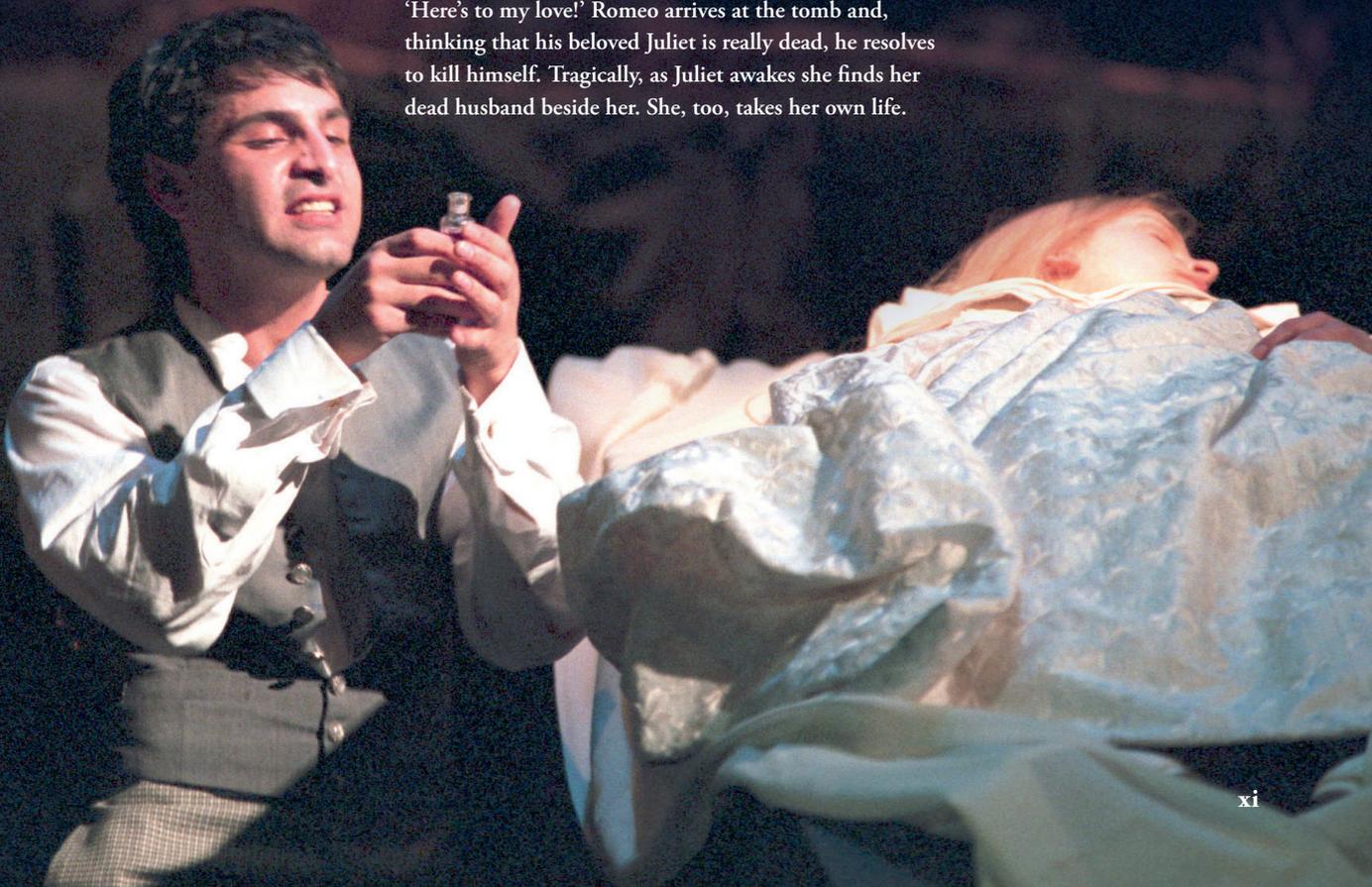
'What if this mixture do not work at all?' Juliet fears that the Friar's 'poison' may not act, and she will have to obey her father's commands and marry Paris. But in spite of her misgivings, and her dread of the horrors that may await her in the Capulets' tomb, she finally drinks the potion.





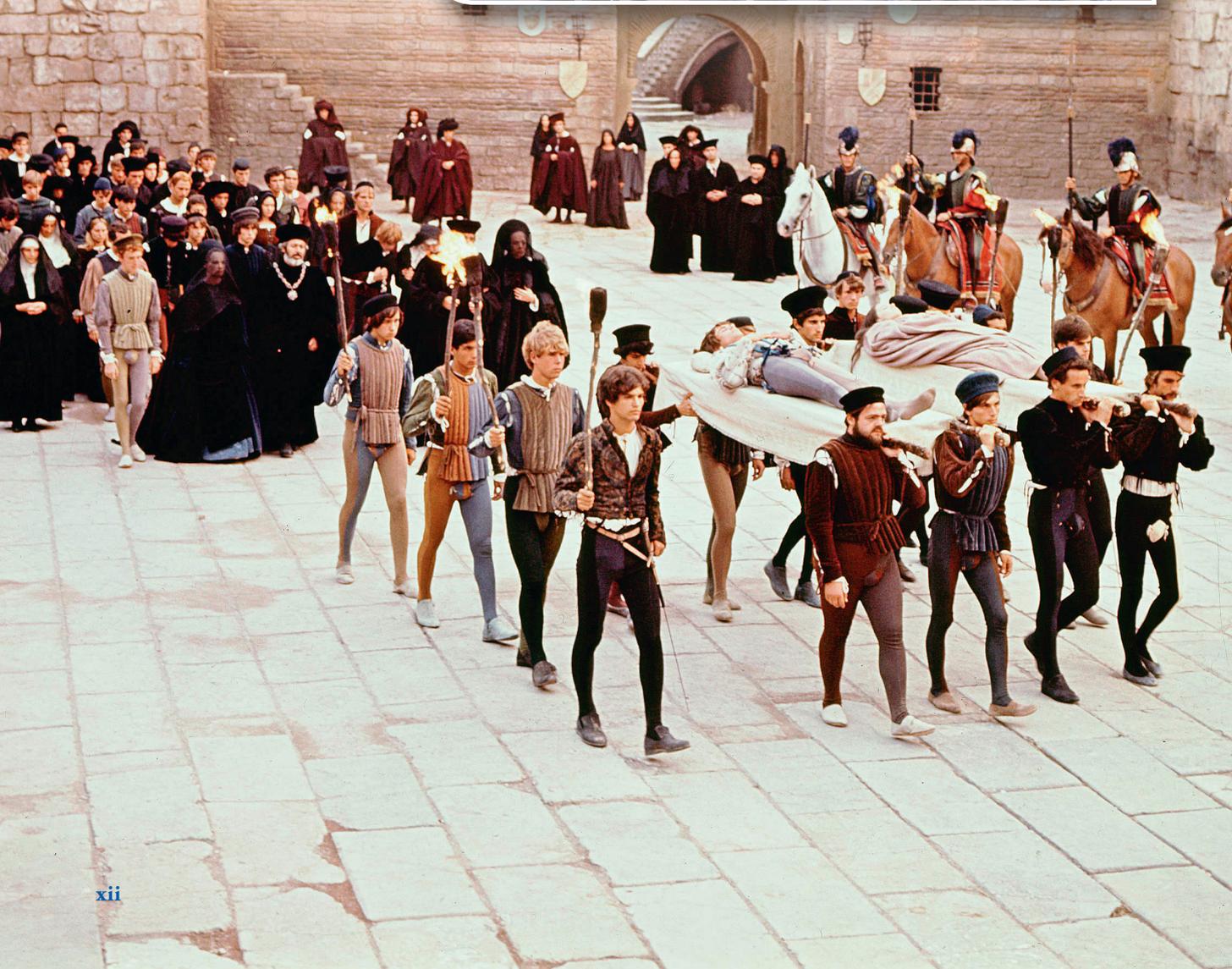
Juliet's parents (and Paris, right) think their daughter is dead, and grieve at their loss. But the Friar and the audience know that she is merely drugged. She will be placed inside the Capulets' tomb and Romeo will return from his banishment to rescue her when she wakes.

'Here's to my love!' Romeo arrives at the tomb and, thinking that his beloved Juliet is really dead, he resolves to kill himself. Tragically, as Juliet awakes she finds her dead husband beside her. She, too, takes her own life.



► Lords Montague and Capulet are reconciled in their grief as they mourn Romeo and Juliet.

▼ 'For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo'. Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 movie set the play in Renaissance Italy and used outdoor locations in Tuscany and Umbria (but not in Verona). The film ended with the funeral procession of Romeo and Juliet.



# List of characters

## CHORUS

### The house of Capulet

JULIET  
 CAPULET her father  
 LADY CAPULET her mother  
 TYBALT her cousin  
 NURSE to Juliet  
 PETER the Nurse's servant  
 COUSIN CAPULET Juliet's kinsman  
 SAMPSON servant to Capulet  
 GREGORY servant to Capulet  
 CLOWN servant to Capulet  
 PETRUCHIO Tybalt's friend

### The house of Montague

ROMEO  
 MONTAGUE his father  
 LADY MONTAGUE his mother  
 BENVOLIO his friend  
 BALTHASAR his servant  
 ABRAM Montague's servant

### The Court

ESCALES Prince of Verona  
 MERCUTIO his kinsman, Romeo's friend  
 PARIS his kinsman, suitor to Juliet  
 PAGE to Paris

### The Church

FRIAR LAWRENCE Franciscan priest  
 FRIAR JOHN Franciscan priest

### The City

Musicians, Gentlemen and Gentlewomen, Maskers, Torch-bearers,  
 Citizens and Officers of the Watch, Captain of the Watch

### Mantua

An apothecary

The Play is set in Verona and Mantua



Chorus (a narrator) gives a preview of the play: the bitter quarrels of the Montagues and Capulets are ended only by the death of their children, Romeo and Juliet.

## 1 Chorus speaks the Prologue (in threes)

The role of the Chorus originated in classical Greek drama over two thousand years ago. Back then, the Chorus was a group of characters who took no actual part in the play, but who introduced it and commented on the action as it developed. Deciding how to play the Chorus can be a challenge for directors of *Romeo and Juliet*, as the main elements and outcomes of the plot are clearly explained before the play even begins.



In the production pictured here, the actor playing Prince Escalus delivered the Chorus's lines, giving him the first and last words in the play. In another production, the Prologue was delivered collaboratively by the whole cast.

- In groups of three, talk about how well you think these ideas would work and then come up with some other ideas for staging the Prologue. After the discussion, offer your most unusual suggestion to the class.

**alike in dignity** equal in high status

**ancient grudge**

long-standing quarrel or dispute

**civil blood ... unclean**

the blood of the people dirties the hands of their fellows

**From forth ... foes** conceived by deadly enemies

**star-crossed** ill-fated

**take their life** are born

**misadventured ... overthrows**

unlucky tragic accidents

**fearful passage** tragic unfolding

**nought** nothing

**traffic** business, performance

**shall miss** is missed out

**toil** efforts

**mend** make up for

## Language in the play

### Antithesis (in pairs)

The Prologue is written in the form of a fourteen-line **sonnet** (see p. 216). A key feature of such poems – and of this play – is the use of **antithesis** (see p. 215), or oppositions, especially in the type of language Shakespeare uses. Here, Montagues are set against Capulets ('Two households'), and in line 3 'ancient' is set against 'new'. The remaining eleven lines contain several other antitheses.

- Take turns reading aloud lines 1–14. As one person reads, the other listens out for examples of antithesis and writes them down. Swap roles and compare notes.
- Start a Language file and give one of the sections the heading 'Antithesis'. Collect examples and add to this list as you read on.

# The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

## The Prologue

*Enter* CHORUS.

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona (where we lay our scene),  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes 5  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage, 10  
Which but their children's end nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. [Exit]



Capulet's servants, Sampson and Gregory, joke together and boast that they are superior to the Montagues. Suddenly two of Montague's servants appear. Sampson urges Gregory to pick a quarrel with them.

## 1 Servants' banter (in pairs)

The play begins with Capulet's servants, Gregory and Sampson, joking about sex and women.

- a Read lines 1–36 aloud together several times, changing roles. Try to emphasise all Sampson's and Gregory's wordplay – their **puns** (words that sound the same but have different meanings, see p. 218) and double meanings. For example, in lines 3–4 Sampson's 'we be in choler; we'll draw' means 'being angry, we'll draw our swords'. But Gregory's reply, 'draw your neck out of collar', turns the meaning into 'pull your head out of the hangman's noose' ('choler' = anger; 'collar' = noose). In addition, 'stand', 'thrust', 'maidenheads', 'tool' and 'weapon' all have crude double meanings.
- b Talk together about why you think Shakespeare chose to begin the play with this kind of dramatic episode. Write a paragraph each, summarising your thoughts. Afterwards, swap your writing with another pair to read and comment on.

### Stagecraft

#### Set the scene

At the beginning of each scene, a location is given (here it is 'Verona A public place'). But in Shakespeare's theatre the action took place on a bare stage, with little or no scenery.

- a Look at the illustration in the 'Romeo and Juliet in performance' section on page 220, showing the interior of Shakespeare's Globe. Suggest two or three simple ways in which you could convey to the audience that the scene in the script opposite takes place in the open air in Verona. Then think about where you might set this scene in a modern production. For example, Baz Luhrmann's movie version places the action in Verona Beach, a mythical modern Hispanic-American city. One modern theatre production was set on a volcanic fault line that constantly generated fire and steam 'to represent the ever-present threat of violence'.
- b As you read on, look out for and make notes on the way in which Shakespeare alternates scenes that are played out in public arenas and those that have intimate domestic settings.

**bucklers** small round shields

**carry coals** suffer insults, do dirty work

**colliers** coal-carriers (or a term of abuse)

**and** if

**take the wall** not be near the gutter

**thrust to the wall** cowardly, dominated

**The quarrel ... men** the dispute is just between men (no women are involved)

**fish** woman or prostitute (slang)

**poor-John** dried hake, cheap food that Elizabethans linked with lack of sex-drive

**two other SERVINGMEN** Abram and, probably, Balthasar

**naked weapon** sword

# Act 1 Scene 1

## Verona A public place

*Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, with swords and bucklers.*

SAMPSON Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.  
GREGORY No, for then we should be colliers.  
SAMPSON I mean, and we be in choler, we'll draw.  
GREGORY Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.  
SAMPSON I strike quickly, being moved. 5  
GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.  
SAMPSON A dog of the house of Montague moves me.  
GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand: therefore  
if thou art moved thou runn'st away.  
SAMPSON A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take the 10  
wall of any man or maid of Montague's.  
GREGORY That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the  
wall.  
SAMPSON 'Tis true, and therefore women being the weaker vessels are 15  
ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from  
the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.  
GREGORY The quarrel is between our masters, and us their men.  
SAMPSON 'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought  
with the men, I will be civil with the maids; I will cut off their  
heads. 20  
GREGORY The heads of the maids?  
SAMPSON Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads, take it in  
what sense thou wilt.  
GREGORY They must take it in sense that feel it.  
SAMPSON Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known 25  
I am a pretty piece of flesh.  
GREGORY 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been  
poor-John. Draw thy tool, here comes of the house of Montagues.

*Enter two other SERVINGMEN, [one being ABRAM].*

SAMPSON My naked weapon is out. Quarrel, I will back thee.  
GREGORY How, turn thy back and run? 30



Sampson and Gregory begin a quarrel with the Montagues. Benvolio (a Montague) tries to make peace, but Tybalt (a Capulet) adds flames to the fire, seizing the opportunity to fight.



## Stagecraft

### Stage fight (in pairs)

Would you make the street fight ritualised and symbolic (as above) or brutally realistic (for example, one production had a servant's bloodied head smashed against a wall of the set; it remained evident throughout the performance)? Weigh up the merits of both approaches. Which do you think would have the greater impact in the theatre? Why? In your pairs, come up with some alternative ways of staging this fight.

## Themes

### Love versus hate (in small groups)

Shakespeare's plays contain many themes (key ideas or concepts that run throughout the script). Often these are presented in the form of tensions or oppositions, one set against another. *Romeo and Juliet* is famous for being a great love story, but in this first scene the Montague and Capulet servants engage in a violent fight.

- Suggest two or three reasons why Shakespeare might have decided to begin the play with a scene of hatred and anger rather than love.

## 1 Benvolio versus Tybalt (in pairs)

Benvolio's first words in the play ("Part, fools!") are an attempt to halt the riot that has developed between the Montagues and the Capulets. Tybalt seeks only to inflame it (his second line threatens death to Benvolio).

- Take parts as the two men and read aloud lines 54–63, emphasising their contrasting attitudes. Then perform the parts, adding actions that fit the language. Afterwards, in role as Benvolio and Tybalt, write down your thoughts about each other's behaviour:

**Fear me not** don't worry about my support

**marry** indeed (a mild oath based on a corruption of 'Virgin Mary')

**as they list** as they wish

**bite my thumb** a rude gesture in Elizabethan times

**sir** (repeatedly spoken contemptuously)

**kinsmen** relatives

**washing** slashing

**hinds** young female deer; Tybalt is punning on 'heart' (hart = a male deer), mocking Benvolio for fighting with servants (see p. 218)

**manage** handle

**Have at thee** here I come



SAMPSON Fear me not.  
 GREGORY No, marry, I fear thee!  
 SAMPSON Let us take the law of our sides, let them begin.  
 GREGORY I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.  
 SAMPSON Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is 35  
 disgrace to them if they bear it.  
 ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?  
 SAMPSON I do bite my thumb, sir.  
 ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?  
 SAMPSON [*Aside to Gregory*] Is the law of our side if I say ay? 40  
 GREGORY [*Aside to Sampson*] No.  
 SAMPSON No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my  
 thumb, sir.  
 GREGORY Do you quarrel, sir?  
 ABRAM Quarrel, sir? No, sir. 45  
 SAMPSON But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as  
 you.  
 ABRAM No better.  
 SAMPSON Well, sir.

*Enter* BENVOLIO.

GREGORY [*Aside to Sampson*] Say 'better', here comes one of my 50  
 master's kinsmen.  
 SAMPSON Yes, better, sir.  
 ABRAM You lie.  
 SAMPSON Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy washing blow.  
*They fight.*  
 BENVOLIO Part, fools! 55  
 Put up your swords, you know not what you do.  
 [*Beats down their swords.*]

*Enter* TYBALT.

TYBALT What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?  
 Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.  
 BENVOLIO I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,  
 Or manage it to part these men with me. 60  
 TYBALT What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word,  
 As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.  
 Have at thee, coward.  
 [*They fight.*]



A furious riot develops. Capulet and Montague join in. Prince Escalus, angry and exasperated, stops the fight. He rebukes Montague and Capulet, and threatens death if they fight in public again.

## 1 A snapshot at the height of the riot (in large groups)

Each group member takes a part. There are at least eleven speaking characters so far. You can add as many other servants and officers as you wish. Use the hall or drama studio if you can, but this activity will work just as well in the classroom if you clear some space.

- Each group prepares and presents a tableau (a 'human sculpture', like a still photograph) showing the height of the riot at line 72, 'Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace'. Your tableau should show precisely what each character is doing at that moment. This means thinking carefully about what your character has said so far, then 'freezing' as that person at this moment in the riot. Remember, each character is doing something in relation to other characters, so try to show those relationships. For example, both Lady Capulet and Lady Montague seem to rebuke and mock their husbands. It will take time to think out, experiment with and then present the most dramatic picture.
- Hold your tableau for at least sixty seconds – with no movement at all. The other groups spend that time working out exactly who is who.

### Language in the play

#### The all-powerful Prince (in fours)

The Prince is a figure of absolute power and authority. His language is suitably elaborate and impressive (e.g. bloodstained swords are 'neighbour-stained steel').

- Identify other examples of the Prince's striking way of speaking, then compare his language style with the way the servants speak at the start of the scene. What differences do you notice?
- Write notes advising an actor playing the Prince how to speak the different sections of his speech opposite.



#### Clubs, bills, and partisans

weapons: bills are long-handled pikes, partisans are long, broad-headed spears

**in his gown** in his dressing-gown (i.e. he's just been woken up)

**in spite of me** in order to spite me

**train** attendants to the Prince

**Profaners** abusers (because they stain their swords with their neighbours' blood)

**pernicious** wicked

**mistempered** disorderly or badly made

**movèd** angry

**airy** empty, hollow

**Cast by** throw aside

**grave beseeching ornaments** marks of respect, staffs of office (or aids for the elderly)

**Cankered ... cankered** rusted ... diseased



*Enter [several of both houses, who join the fray, and] three or four  
Citizens [as OFFICERS of the Watch,] with clubs or partisans.*

OFFICERS Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!  
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues! 65

*Enter old CAPULET in his gown, and his wife [LADY CAPULET].*

CAPULET What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET A crutch, a crutch! why call you for a sword?

CAPULET My sword, I say! old Montague is come,  
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

*Enter old MONTAGUE and his wife [LADY MONTAGUE].*

MONTAGUE Thou villain Capulet! – Hold me not, let me go. 70

LADY MONTAGUE Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

*Enter PRINCE ESCALES with his train.*

PRINCE Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,  
Profaners of this neighbour-stainèd steel –  
Will they not hear? – What ho, you men, you beasts!  
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage 75

With purple fountains issuing from your veins:

On pain of torture, from those bloody hands

Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,

And hear the sentence of your movèd prince.

Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word, 80

By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,

Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets,

And made Verona's ancient citizens

Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments

To wield old partisans, in hands as old, 85

Cankered with peace, to part your cankered hate;

If ever you disturb our streets again,

Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.

For this time all the rest depart away:

You, Capulet, shall go along with me, 90

And, Montague, come you this afternoon,

To know our farther pleasure in this case,

To old Free-town, our common judgement-place.

Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

*Exeunt [all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio]*