



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

ROMEO AND JULIET

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research I****Objective:** Researching the author**Activity**

Research the life of William Shakespeare and write a short biography of him. Explain why most scholars consider him to be the greatest playwright who ever wrote in English. Write at least four paragraphs.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Characterization****Objective:** Recognizing character traits**Activity**

Reading a play like *Romeo and Juliet* is exciting, but, unfortunately, one element is missing: physical descriptions of the characters. Drama is designed to be watched—not read. Viewers may see for themselves the physical details of characters in a play, so the printed form need not contain descriptions common to standard literature.

When reading drama, one must pay close attention in order to mentally complete the character details. Much of the detail is secondary; we read what one character says or thinks about another character. We also gain character information by observing the actions of characters.

Complete the **Character Chart** to reveal your assessment of the characters in the first Act. When you are finished with the chart, review the characters that you designated as “major characters.” Select the two most similar characters and write one paragraph comparing them. Next, select the two least similar characters and write another paragraph, this time contrasting them.

You may not yet have the information to fill in some of the blocks. When this occurs, write “NI” in the appropriate space.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II

Outlining

Objective: Writing an outline

Activity

Imagine that you are a Hollywood screenwriter who must convert the theatrical *Romeo and Juliet* to movie format. Each scene will be filmed separately, and the actors and crew will need help remembering the details of each scene. Outline each act by scenes and assign a title to each one. Give a brief description of the events in each scene. The title should reflect the content of the respective act or scene.

When you finish the outline, think of three alternate titles for *Romeo and Juliet: the Movie*.

Example:

- I. Act I: The feuding families
 - A. Scene I: The first fight
 1. Capulet servants fight with Montague servants
 2. Prince of Verona scolds the fighting parties
 3. Romeo revealed to be lovesick
 - B. Scene II: Capulet plans a feast
 1. Paris asks to marry Juliet
 2. Romeo mistakenly invited to the party
 - C. Scene III: Lady Capulet reveals the marriage plan
 - D. Scene IV: Toward the Capulet masquerade
 1. Mercutio explains the source of dreams
 2. Romeo reveals uneasiness for the future
 - E. Scene V: At the masque
 1. Tybalt identifies Romeo as a Montague
 2. Capulet demands that Romeo be treated well
 3. Romeo meets Juliet
 4. They are revealed as enemies of each other's family

II. Act II:

Continue the outline as you complete each Act.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II**Simile****Objective:** Recognizing a simile**Activity**

Shakespeare's drama often includes the use of simile; however, we might not easily recognize the objects that he uses for comparison due to the evolution of language. In Act III, Scene One, Mercutio asserts that Benvolio's head "hath been beaten as addle as an egg." Today, in an equivalent simile, we would probably say that Benvolio's head "has been scrambled like an egg."

In Act II, identify six instances of simile. List them on the **Simile Chart** that follows and then interpret them. For each interpretation, try to include a modern simile that carries the same message as the original.

The first example, from Act I, has been completed for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III**Alliteration****Objective:** Recognizing alliteration**Activity**

Alliteration may occur in numerous words in succession; however, many cases of alliteration in poetry involve only two successive words, and sometimes there may be a word separating the two alliterative words.

Alliteration is one of the several poetic devices that Shakespeare includes in his drama. In the prologue we find "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes."

Read through Act III carefully and identify as many instances of alliteration as you can (at least ten). List each instance and cite the scene in which it appears. When you finish, write ten of your own alliterative phrases.

Examples:

- Act I, Scene I "hartless hinds"
- Act II, Prologue "desire doth in his deathbed lie"
- Act II, Scene II "So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world"

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act IV**Communicating**

Objectives: Writing a speech
Speaking effectively

Activity

Not even the penalty of death halts the violent feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. In an effort to prevent fighting in the streets of Verona, all citizens, both young and old, must constantly monitor the feuding families and intervene as necessary. The Prince of Verona knows that the citizens, many of whom are elderly, are concerned about the recent brawls and killings.

Each group will act as the Prince's staff, including chief advisors and speechwriters. Consult the text and each other to come up with the topics that the Prince will need to address when he speaks to the people. Have one person list these topics. Using the list, each group should prepare a short speech for the Prince (no more than three minutes).

While compiling the speech, remember to address the major problems of Verona according to the play. Also, ensure that the speech reflects the Prince's personality.

When the speeches are complete, each group should have a volunteer stand up and read the speech to the class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act V**Interviewing**

Objective: Interviewing a main character

Activity

Both Friar Laurence and the Nurse know about the secret marriage, but only Laurence knows the details of the plan of Juliet's false death. Laurence is, in effect, the leading witness to the ongoing tragedy. For the purpose of this exercise, assume that Friar Laurence is allowed to continue his career, unpunished for his involvement in the tragedy.

You are a news-radio host popular for your ability to extract the memories of witnesses to historic events. Your interviewing skill often helps your guests to reveal new details to popular events. You now have the chance to interview Friar Laurence (after the tragedy) on your talk-radio show. It will be an open mike show, and you will be taking calls from listeners.

Before the interview, you will want to research the story of Romeo and Juliet a little in order to know what types of questions you'll be able to ask.

Remember, you are a talk-radio host. It is your job to pry the most interesting information from your guest so that listeners will continue to support you. Do not be afraid to unearth debatable issues that will draw phone calls. The public is still shocked by what it knows about the tragedy, and it wants to know how and why it happened.

Each group will work together to produce a list of questions to ask Friar Laurence. The first question has been written for you.

- Why did you agree to wed Romeo to Juliet?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Creative Writing and Drawing****Objective:** Identifying major themes and events in a drama**Activity**

The old adage, “don’t judge a book by its cover,” is excellent advice; unfortunately, in modern culture, it is often the cover that first attracts potential customers to a book. *Romeo and Juliet* was first published in the late sixteenth century, a time when books hardly required glossy, high-resolution graphics on the front and reviews from several major newspapers on the back in order to sell. Today, there are so many books on store shelves that flashy covers are necessary to seize attention long enough to capture readers’ curiosity.

Imagine that *Romeo and Juliet* has just been written and that you work for Shakespeare’s publisher. In order to catch the eye of consumers, the published play will need an effective jacket. It should command attention and at the same time truthfully portray the content of the play.

Within each group are two teams with the task of producing a new cover for *Romeo and Juliet*. The illustrators in the groups will draw or compile pictures for the front cover of the book. The cover art must include depictions of the story as well as the title and the author’s name. The writers in the groups will write a review for the back cover that addresses the following questions:

1. What is the most interesting incident in the story? (Be careful not to give the story away.)
2. What are the themes of the play?
3. What does the story teach?
4. Why do you recommend this drama to other students?
5. Why is this a good drama for the classroom?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Acting**

Objective: Understanding drama through performance

Activity

Plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* are written for the stage. Reading a play without watching it sometimes omits elements that only a physical performance would introduce.

Each group should select a single scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to act out for the class. The groups should first discuss the chosen scenes and settle on the details that the scene will require (voice, stage positions, mood, volume, etc.).

Members of each group will assign themselves roles. The members of the group should divide the scene to accommodate everyone; for example, two people will act the first half of the scene, and the others will act the second half.

Groups may also choose soliloquies, but no one in the group should do the same soliloquy. In addition, the group should still discuss the dramatic details of the chosen material.

If scheduling permits, students should memorize the material to be performed. When the groups are ready, perform the scenes for the rest of the class. Conduct a brief discussion after each scene to determine whether the class feels that the scene was performed so that the meaning is apparent.