

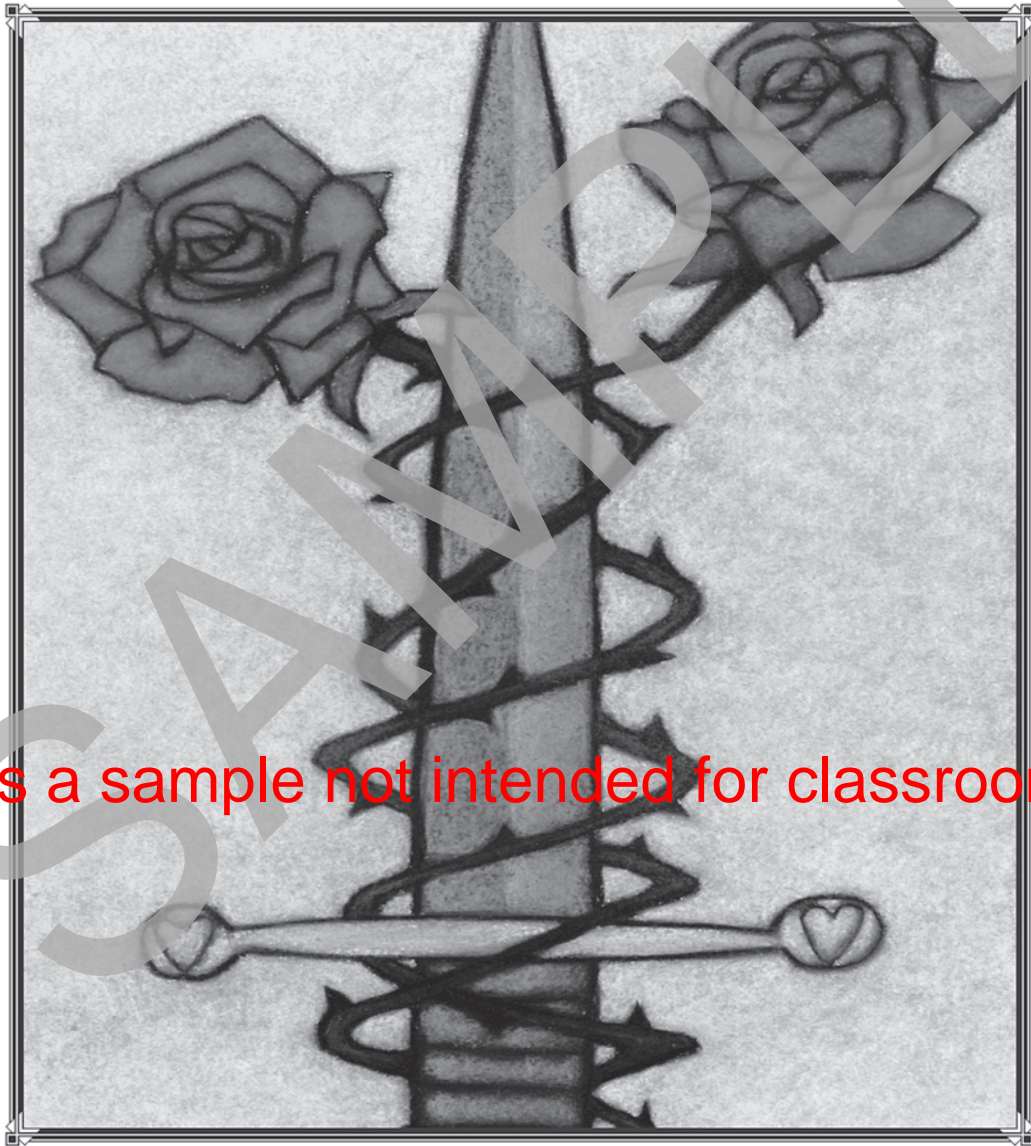


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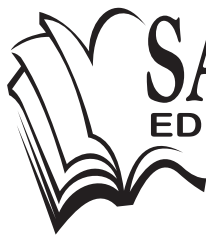
SHAKESPEARE

MADE EASY

Romeo and Juliet



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To the Teacher

As any teacher or student who has read Shakespeare knows, his plays are not easy. They are thought-provoking and complex texts that abound with romance, deceit, tragedy, comedy, revenge, and humanity shown at its very worst as well as its very best. In short, to read Shakespeare is to explore the depths and heights of humanity.

The *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are designed by teachers for teachers to help students navigate this journey. Each guide is broken into six sections of four activities and one review. At the end of each guide is a final test, a variety of culminating activities, and an answer key. The activities are meant to aid textual comprehension, provide creative

opportunities for the reader to make personal connections with the text, and help busy teachers gain quick access to classroom-tested and age-appropriate activities that make the teaching of Shakespeare an easier task.

Each regular activity, as well as each culminating activity, can be modified to be an individual or a group task, and the reviews and tests can be used as quick comprehension checks or formally scored assessments. The guides may be used in conjunction with the Barron's *Shakespeare Made Easy* texts or alone. Ultimately, the *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are intended to assist teachers and students in gaining an increased understanding of and appreciation for the reading of Shakespeare.

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Introduction to the Play

Background to *Romeo and Juliet*

The story of Romeo and Juliet was known throughout Europe and England before Shakespeare wrote his version for the stage in about 1597. The main source for the play was the poem by Arthur Brooke entitled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. Brooke's version, printed about 30 years before Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, emphasizes that Romeus and Juliet are ill-fated lovers and shows the contrast between their love and the hate between their parents. The legend behind his poem came from other literature in France and Italy. These earlier versions may also have influenced Shakespeare. One Italian version of the story is from 1530 by Luigi Da Porto. In his version, the young lovers are called Romeo and Guilietta. As in Shakespeare's play, Da Porto's story is set in Verona, Italy, and the young lovers are children of feuding parents, the Montagues and Capulets.

Even earlier, a similar story came from the Italian writer Masuccio of Salerno. In this account, two lovers are married by a friar in secret. The boy, Mariotto, kills someone in a quarrel and is banished. His lover, Gianozza, takes a sleeping potion from the friar and is entombed in order to avoid marriage with someone her father wishes her to marry. After she takes the potion and is presumed dead, the friar frees her from the tomb so he can take her

to her lover. Mariotto does not hear about the plan, however, because pirates capture the messenger sent from the friar. Mariotto arrives at Gianozza's tomb, is recognized, and is killed. Gianozza joins a convent and dies of grief.

Shakespeare was not afraid of using familiar material in his plays. However, Shakespeare made some interesting adjustments to the plot to give his play more passion and drama. Shakespeare took the action that occurs in Brooke's poem over nine months and compresses it into a few days. For example, in Brooke's poem, many days pass between the ball and Romeo and Juliet's meeting in the garden, instead of everything occurring on the same night. In Brooke's version, Romeo and Juliet are married for about two months, and each night Romeo visits Juliet by climbing up a rope ladder to her room. In Shakespeare's version, Romeo and Juliet only have one night together as man and wife. This collapsing of time makes the events of the play more tragic and emotional.

Due to the strong love story and the memorable characters, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* quickly became one of Shakespeare's most popular works. Even today, *Romeo and Juliet* remains a favorite because of the passion and sadness of the love story and the beauty of the poetry in the play.

Shakespeare and Stage Directions

The plays of Shakespeare are so well written that they seem to leap off the page and come to life. However, the plays themselves have very few stage directions. Perhaps this is because Shakespeare's plays were performed in large amphitheaters that were very simple.

This was a time before electric lights, so the plays needed to take place during the day to utilize the natural light. The average time for a performance was between noon and two in the afternoon. Theater historians report that there were typically no intermissions; plays ran from beginning to end without a break and took about two hours.

The set might be painted canvas to illustrate whether the play was occurring in a forest or a town, for example. Sometimes the background was accompanied by a sign that indicated the place as well. Props were few and large: a table, a chariot, gallows, a bed, or a throne.

However, the audience in Shakespeare's plays expected a spectacle for the price of admission. Therefore, there were many devices to produce a gasp from the audience. For example, a device in the loft of the theater could raise and lower actors so that they could play gods, ghosts, or other unusual characters. Additionally, a trapdoor in the stage offered a chance for a quick appearance or disappearance. The actors could suggest a beheading or hanging with various illusions on the stage. Sound effects suggesting thunder, horses, or war were common. Music was important, and drums and horns were often played.

Most important to the sense of spectacle were the costumes worn by the actors. These were elaborate, colorful, and very expensive. Therefore, they often purchased these outfits from servants who had inherited the clothes from their masters or from hangmen, who received the clothes of their victims as payment for their services.

Though Shakespeare's stage directions are sparse, definition of a few key terms will be helpful for the reader. The following is a brief glossary of stage directions commonly found in Shakespeare's plays.

Selected Glossary of Stage Directions in Shakespeare's Plays

Above: an indication that the actor speaking from above is on a higher balcony or other scaffold that is higher than the other actors

Alarum: a stage signal, which calls the soldiers to battle; usually trumpets, drums, and shouts

Aside: words spoken by the actor so the audience overhears but the other actors on the stage do not. An aside may also be spoken to one other actor so that the others on stage do not overhear.

Call: within a voice of stage that calls to a character on the stage

Curtains: Curtains were fabrics draped around a bed that could be opened or closed for privacy.

Draw: Actors pull their swords from their sheathes.

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Enter: a direction for a character to enter the stage. This can be from the audience's right (stage right) or the audience's left (stage left).

Enter Chorus: a direction for an actor to come to the center of the stage and offer some introductory comments, usually in blank verse or rhyming couplets. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the Chorus delivers a sonnet, a form of poetry associated with love.

Exeunt: All characters leave the stage, or those characters named leave the stage.

Exit: One character leaves the stage.

Flourish: A group of trumpets or other horn instruments play a brief melody.

Have at: Characters begin to fight, usually with swords.

Pageant: a show or spectacle of actors in unusual costumes, usually without words

Prologue: an introduction spoken by the Chorus that gives an overview to the audience and invites them into the play or scene

Retires: A character slips away.

Sennet: a series of notes sounded on brass instruments to announce the approach or departure of a procession

Singing: a signal for the actor to sing the following lines as a tune

Within: voices or sounds occurring off stage but heard by the audience

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Introduction to Shakespeare

A Brief Biography of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His birthday is celebrated on April 23. This is memorable because April 23 is also the day Shakespeare died in 1616.

Shakespeare was the eldest of nine children in his family, six of whom survived to adulthood.

William Shakespeare's father worked with leather and became a successful merchant early in his career. He held some relatively important government offices. However, when William was in his early teens, his father's financial position began to slide due to growing debt. After many years, John Shakespeare's fortunes and respect were restored, but records indicate that the years of debt and lawsuits were very stressful.

Historians assume that young Will went to school and took a rigorous course of study including Latin, history, and biblical study. In 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, who was three months pregnant. Studies of Elizabethan family life indicate that Anne's situation was not unusual since it was accepted that the engagement period was as legally binding as the marriage. The couple had a daughter, Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Not much is known about Shakespeare during the next seven years, but his name is listed as an actor in London by 1592. This was a difficult time for the theater

because measures to prevent the spread of the plague regularly closed the theaters.

Between 1594 and 1595, Shakespeare joined the Chamberlain's Men as a playwright and an actor. The acting company featured actor Richard Burbage, and they were a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I. During this time, Shakespeare was writing such plays as *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even though Shakespeare was enjoying great success by the time he was 32, it was dampened by the death of his son, Hamnet, in 1596. Soon after, Shakespeare refocused on his home in Stratford where he bought an estate called New Place, with gardens, orchards, and barns in addition to the main home. He still maintained a home in London near the theater.

In 1599, Shakespeare wrote *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, and *As You Like It*. The Globe Playhouse was up and running, with Shakespeare a 10 percent owner. This means that he was able to earn 10 percent of any show's profits. This business position helped him solidify his wealth.

In 1603, Shakespeare's reputation earned his acting troop the sponsorship of James I, who requested one play performance per month. Their name changed to the King's Men. By this time, Shakespeare had written and performed in almost all of his comedies and histories. He was proclaimed the finest playwright in London.



ACTIVITY 1

Current Events in Meter

The Prologue

Background The prologue is a 14-line poem called a sonnet. Each line has 10 syllables. The rhyme scheme is as follows:

ABAB CDCD	(first eight lines)
EFEF	(next four lines)
GG	(last two lines)

Directions Look at a current newspaper and find a story describing a conflict of some sort (country versus country, person versus law, person versus person, and so forth). After reading the article, write your own sonnet based on the newspaper account. Look at the prologue as you write, using it as your guide for rhythm and rhyme. See the example below for an idea of how to start. Write your sonnet in the space below.

Example: Two women, quite unlike in every way,
 In a parking lot (where this all occurred),
 Were arguing—it turned into a fray
 For miles around, their screams and shouts were heard.

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ACTIVITY 2

Three Civil Brawls

Act one, Scene 1

Background In this scene, Prince Escalus scolds the citizens for fighting as a result of the feud between Capulet and Montague. According to the prince, this is the third time that the fighting has disrupted the peace of Verona.

Directions Imagine that you are a law enforcement officer in Verona during this time. Write three brief police reports (two to four paragraphs each) detailing the three civil (citizens versus citizens) fights. Cover the one you read in this scene last, making sure to include Prince Escalus's declared punishment for even one more fight (reread the passage if you didn't catch it). You know exactly what occurred during this fight, but you will have to use your imagination and what you know about the two families so far in order to describe what occurred during the first two fights. Write your police reports below. You may need to use another sheet of paper.

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ACTIVITY 3

Love Is in the Air

Act one

Background William Shakespeare has many characters talking about love in this act, perhaps to foreshadow how the characters will react to the events that are to come.

Directions After rereading the following lines that each character speaks, write a few sentences that tell what these lines show about how the character thinks of or regards love.

Romeo (Scene 1, lines 170–178, 180–189):

Benvolio (Scene 1, lines 220–222; Scene 2, lines 46–51):

Juliet (Scene 3, lines 67–99):

Mercutio (Scene 4, lines 17–18, 23–24, 27–32):

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ACTIVITY 4

*Gossip Columnist at the Ball*Act one, Scene 5

Background The fact that a Montague slipped into a Capulet party would have been big news for a gossip columnist considering that both families were wealthy and well-known. Several important things happen in this scene that should interest the people of Verona.

Directions Imagine that you are a gossip columnist for the *Verona Daily Times*, and you have sneaked into the Capulets' masquerade ball. When people have their identities hidden, they are more likely to be free in their actions and words. Write a rough draft of the story you will run in the next edition of your paper. Be sure to include details of people who attended, any fights that occurred, and, of course, what goes on between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet at this fateful party. Write your story below. Use an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.

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ACTIVITY 5

Review

Directions Answer the following. Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided. For 4, 7, and 10, write true (T) or false (F) in the space provided.

- ___ 1. In Prince Escalus's speech, we are told that the Capulets and Montagues have had how many fights?
- two
 - three
 - four
 - five
- ___ 2. The play takes place in what country?
- Great Britain
 - France
 - Italy
 - Spain
- ___ 3. Who attempts to calm down the feuding servants and keep the peace?
- Mercutio
 - Tybalt
 - Romeo
 - Benvolio
- ___ 4. True or false: Romeo has been acting melancholy lately because he loves Juliet, but she is a Capulet and therefore forbidden to him.
- ___ 5. What advice does Benvolio give to Romeo about his troubles with love?
- send his love flowers
 - look at other girls
 - talk to his [Romeo's] parents about it
 - talk to his love's father to try and get his approval
- ___ 6. How old is Juliet?
- 12
 - 13
 - 14
 - 16
- ___ 7. True or false: Juliet is completely against being paired with Paris.
- ___ 8. How does Romeo accidentally find out about the Capulet party?
- He reads the guest list for an illiterate servant.
 - He finds an invitation on the street.
 - He overhears Capulet speaking to a friend.
 - none of the above
- ___ 9. Why is Tybalt so angry at the party?
- He wants to dance with Rosaline, but she doesn't want to dance with him.
 - He hates parties, but he was forced to go.
 - He finds out that Romeo is there but can't fight him.
 - He thinks Juliet is too young to be set up with Paris.
- ___ 10. True or false: As Romeo and Juliet are "falling in love" at the ball, they already know that their relationship will be forbidden because of who their parents are.

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