

Shakespeare • *Romeo and Juliet*

THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

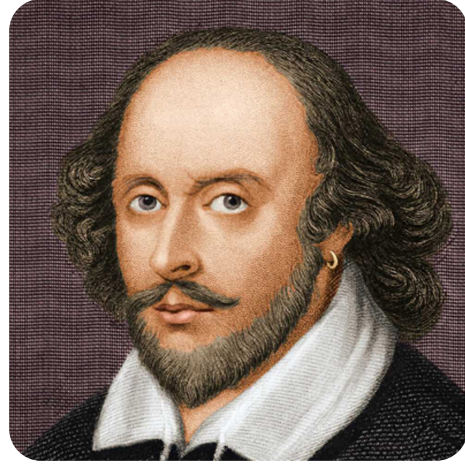
William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He was born on 23 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was a successful local businessman and his mother was the daughter of a landowner. Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and nicknamed the Bard of Avon. He wrote about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, of which the authorship of some is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. His early plays were mostly comedies and histories, he then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

playwright: *drammaturgo*

landowner: *proprietario terriero*

nicknamed: *soprannominato*

pre-eminent: *preminente*



Many of his plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy during his lifetime. In 1623, John Heminges and Henry Condell, two friends and fellow actors of Shakespeare, published the *First Folio*, a collected edition of his dramatic works that included all but two of the plays now recognised as Shakespeare's. This collection was prefaced with a poem by Ben Jonson, in which Shakespeare is addressed as a playwright not of an age, but for all time. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

THE PLAY**ROMEO AND JULIET**

An ongoing **feud** between the Capulets and the Montagues breaks out again on the streets of Verona. Both sides are warned by Prince Escalus, the ruler of Verona, who attempts to prevent any further conflict between the families by declaring death for any individual who disturbs the peace in the future.

Romeo, the son of Montague, confides to his cousin Benvolio that he is in love with Rosaline. They know of a party being held by the Capulets and decide to go there masked to see her.

Meanwhile, Paris, a relative of the Prince, asks for Juliet's hand in marriage. Her father Capulet, though happy at the match, asks Paris to wait for two years, since Juliet is not yet even fourteen.

Once inside the party, Romeo sees Juliet from a distance and instantly falls in love with her. Romeo speaks to Juliet, and the two experience a profound attraction. They kiss, not even knowing each other's names.

When Mercutio and Benvolio leave the Capulets' house, Romeo jumps over the **orchard** wall into the garden and from his hiding place he sees Juliet at a window and hears her speak his name. He calls out to her, and they



exchange promises of love. Romeo turns to his old friend Friar Lawrence and tells him of his intention to marry the daughter of his family's enemy. The friar agrees to marry the young couple, and that afternoon Romeo and Juliet are secretly married in Friar Lawrence's cell. Romeo **sneaks** into Juliet's room that night, and they consummate their marriage and love. Morning comes, and the lovers say goodbye, unsure when they will see each other again. In the middle of a fight between Mercutio (his cousin) and Tybalt (Juliet's cousin), Romeo tries to be a peacemaker and puts a stop to the fighting, but Mercutio is mortally injured. Romeo, furious, challenges Tybalt and kills him. The situation is now desperate, and Romeo is banished to Mantua. When Juliet learns her father has anticipated her marriage to Paris in three days' time, she runs to Friar Lawrence, who offers her a mixture that will give her the appearance of death for two days. He will inform Romeo about it. She agrees to the plan and takes the potion before going to bed. Juliet's nurse finds her apparently dead the next morning. Romeo hears of Juliet's reported death, but the messenger from Friar Lawrence never arrives to tell him the truth. Devastated by sorrow, he purchases some poison and rushes back to Verona and the tomb. Here, Romeo finds his wife apparently dead, drinks the poison, and dies by her side. When Juliet awakes, she sees her dead husband and attempts to join him by drinking the poison he brought but, finding the **vial** empty, kills herself with his **dagger**. The families of Montecchi and Capulets arrive at the tomb and there they discover the truth from the Friar. Finally, the two families find peace after the tragic death of their two heirs.

feud: *faida*
kinsman: *parente*
orchard: *frutteto*
to sneak: *entrare di nascosto*
vial: *fiala*

THE TEXT

ROMEO & JULIET: Act II Scene II - Capulet's orchard

At the end of the party, Romeo climbs over the high wall that leads to the garden of the Capulets' house where Juliet's room is. Hidden under the trees and plants in the garden, Romeo, undisturbed, can observe Juliet who, at that moment is on the balcony. She talks to herself aloud, making her thoughts known.

[Enter ROMEO]

ROMEO. He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

[JULIET appears above at a window]

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her maid art far more fair than she:

Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
It is my lady,
O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!
[...]

ROMEO. [Aside] She speaks.
O, speak again, bright angel! For thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
Unto the white, upturnèd, wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-puffing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

[Entra ROMEO]

ROMEO. Ride delle cicatrici altrui chi non ebbe a soffrir mai ferita.

[JULIET appare al balcone]

Oh, quale luce vedo sprigionarsi lassù, dal vano di quella finestra?

È l'oriente, lassù, e Giulietta è il sole!
Sorgi, bel sole, e l'invidiosa luna
già pallida di rabbia ed ammalata spegni,
perché tu, che sei sua ancella, sei di gran lunga di lei più splendente.

Non restare sua ancella, se invidiosa essa è di te;
la verginale sua veste s'è fatta ormai d'un color verde scialbo e non l'indossano altre che le sciocche. Gettala via!
Oh, sì, è la mia donna,
l'amore mio.

Ah, s'ella lo sapesse!

Ella parla, senza dir parola. Come mai?

È il suo occhio che parla, ed io a lui risponderò.

Oh, ma che sto dicendo... Presuntuoso ch'io sono! Non è a me, che parla.

Due luminose stelle, tra le più fulgide del firmamento avendo da sbrigar qualcosa altrove, si son partite dalle loro sfere e han pregato i suoi occhi di brillarvi fino al loro ritorno. E se quegli occhi fossero invece al posto delle stelle, e quelle stelle infisse alla sua fronte?

Allora sì, la luce del suo viso farebbe impallidire quelle stelle, come il sole la luce d'una lampada; e tanto brillerebbero i suoi occhi su pei campi del cielo, che gli uccelli si metterebbero tutti a cantare credendo finita la notte.

Guarda com'ella poggia la sua gota a quella mano!

Un quanto vorrei essere, su quella mano,
e toccar quella guancia!

[...]

ROMEO. [tra sé] Lei parla. Oh, parla di nuovo, angelo luminoso. Sei glorioso come un angelo stasera. Brilli sopra di me, come un messaggero alato dal cielo che fa cadere sulla schiena uomini mortali per guardare il cielo, guardando l'angelo che cammina sulle nuvole e naviga nell'aria.

JULIET. O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO. [*Aside*] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET. 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

[...]

JULIET. How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO. With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;

For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;

Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

JULIET. If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO. Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

GIULIETTA. *Romeo, Romeo! Perché sei tu Romeo?*

*Ah, rinnega tuo padre! Ricusa il tuo casato!
O, se proprio non vuoi, giurami amore,
ed io non sarò più una Capuleti.*

ROMEO. [*tra sé*] *Che faccio, resto zitto ad ascoltarla, oppure le rispondo?...*

GIULIETTA. *Il tuo nome soltanto m'è nemico; ma tu saresti tu, sempre Romeo per me, quand'anche non fosti un Montecchi.*

Che è infatti Montecchi? Non è una mano, né un piede, né un braccio, né una faccia, né nessun'altra parte che possa dirsi appartenere a un uomo. Ah, perché tu non porti un altro nome! Ma poi, che cos'è un nome? Forse che quella che chiamiamo rosa cesserebbe d'avere il suo profumo se la chiamassimo con altro nome?

Così s'anche Romeo non si dovesse più chiamar Romeo, chi può dire che non conserverebbe la cara perfezione ch'è la sua? Rinuncia dunque, Romeo, al tuo nome, che non è parte della tua persona, e in cambio prenditi tutta la mia.

[...]

GIULIETTA. *Ma come hai fatto a penetrar qui dentro? Dimmi come, e perché.*

Erti e scoscesi sono i muri dell'orto da scalare, e se alcuno dei miei ti sorprendesse, sapendo chi sei, t'ucciderebbe.

ROMEO. *Ho scavalcato il muro sopra l'ali leggere dell'amore;*

amor non teme ostacoli di pietra, e tutto quello che amore può fare trova sempre l'ardire di tentare.

Perciò i parenti tuoi non rappresentano per me un ostacolo.

GIULIETTA. *Ma se ti trovano qui, ti uccideranno!*

ROMEO. *Ahimè, c'è più pericolo per me negli occhi tuoi che in cento loro spade: basta che tu mi guardi con dolcezza, perch'io mi senta come corazzato contro l'odio di tutti i tuoi parenti.*

COMPREHENSION

- 1  Choose T if the sentence corresponds to the content of the passage, F if it doesn't. Indicate the lines in the text that make it correct.


1. The scene takes place at night-time.
2. Juliet is sitting on a chair.
3. In Romeo's eyes, Juliet is the moon.
4. Romeo is not sure whether to speak to Juliet or not.
5. The qualities of a rose would be the same even if it were not called that.
6. The walls of Juliet's courtyard are easy to climb over.
7. Juliet is worried that Romeo may be discovered by her family.
8. According to Romeo, Juliet's eyes are more dangerous than many swords.

T	F
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- 2  Answer the questions.

1. Where does the scene take place?
2. How does Romeo describe Juliet's eyes?
3. What is Juliet doing in the scene?
4. What does Juliet ask Romeo, believing she is not heard?
5. Why should Romeo give up his name?
6. How does Romeo say he climbed over the high wall of her orchard?
7. What is Juliet worried about?

ANALYSIS

- 3  Shakespeare uses many figures of speech. Read the following sentences carefully again and say what rhetorical figures they represent. Then, explain their meaning.

1. But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
 a. metaphor b. hyperbole c. simile
2. Be not her maid, since she is envious; Her vestal livery is but sick and green And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.
 a. metaphor b. personification c. simile
3. Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
 a. metaphor b. personification c. simile
4. Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, Having some business, do entreat her eyes To twinkle in their spheres till they return
 a. personification b. simile c. metaphor
5. The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars, As daylight doth a lamp;
 a. metaphor b. hyperbole c. simile
6. O, that I were a glove upon that hand
 a. simile b. metaphor c. personification
7. For thou art As glorious to this night, being o'er my head, As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
 a. metaphor b. hyperbole c. simile
8. With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls
 a. metaphor b. hyperbole c. personification
9. ...there lies more peril in thine eye Than twenty of their swords.
 a. simile b. personification c. hyperbole


- 4  In the above scene, night is very important. If the dialogue between Romeo and Juliet had taken place during the day, most of their words would have had to be changed. Identify at least three passages in the text that talk about night and explain why you think this presence is evoked.

DISCUSSION

- 5  Look at this ad and analyse it, filling the grid.



Type of media	
Type of product or service	
Format	
Setting (background and location)	
Characters (protagonists, their appearance and facial expressions)	
Design (what elements are present and how they are arranged)	
Action (what the pictures convey in terms of narration or representation)	
Language (what style, words, and expressions are used)	
Typeface	
Possible target	
Possible explanation of the ad	

- 6  **GROUP WORK** Think about other products which this play – and this scene in particular – could be used to advertise and discuss them with your classmates.