First Folio Curriculum Guide
Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this Curriculum Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend Romeo & Juliet.

This curriculum guide provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. It contains material about the playwright, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the play in the classroom before and after the performance.

We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

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A brawl breaks out in the streets of Verona between the feuding houses of Montague and Capulet. The Prince breaks up the fight, announcing that he will punish another such disturbance with death. Romeo, Lord Montague’s love-sick son, arrives to tell his cousin Benvolio of his infatuation for the beautiful Rosaline.

Lord Capulet discusses a marriage between his young daughter Juliet and a gentleman named Paris. Capulet invites Paris to a party he is throwing that evening and sends his servant with a list of guests to invite. The illiterate servant asks Romeo for help reading the list, and Romeo decides to attend the party in disguise when he learns that Rosaline will be there. When he arrives, however, Romeo sees Juliet and falls in love with her. Only later do they learn that they are the children of rival families.

On the way home, Romeo slips away from his friends to search for Juliet. When Juliet comes to her window, she and Romeo confess their love for each other and make plans for a secret marriage. Romeo begs his confidant Friar Lawrence to perform the ceremony, and the Friar agrees in the hope of unifying the families.

After marrying, Romeo and Juliet depart separately to conceal their union. On Romeo’s way home, Juliet’s cousin Tybalt challenges him to a duel; Romeo refuses to fight but cannot yet tell Tybalt why. Romeo’s friend Mercutio takes Tybalt’s challenge, and when Romeo tries to step between them, Tybalt fatally wounds Mercutio. Enraged, Romeo kills Tybalt. Romeo flees the scene in horror, only to be banished by the Prince in absentia. Juliet’s nurse tells her of Tybalt’s death and Romeo’s banishment but agrees to facilitate a meeting for the newlyweds that night.

After spending the night together, Romeo and Juliet part. Because of Tybalt’s sudden death, Juliet’s parents hasten her marriage to Paris. Distraught, she hatches a frantic plan with Friar Lawrence to stop her marriage to Paris. The Friar gives Juliet a potion that will put her into a death-like sleep. Thinking her dead, her family will put her body into the Capulet tomb. In the meantime, Friar Lawrence will send word to Romeo to return and take Juliet away.

The next morning, the nurse finds Juliet’s seemingly lifeless body. The guests arriving for Juliet’s marriage to Paris instead mourn her death as she is prepared for burial.

Romeo, now in exile in Mantua, hears of Juliet’s death but does not receive the Friar’s letter detailing the plot. Romeo buys a deadly poison and arrives at Juliet’s tomb, where he finds Paris mourning her loss. Paris provokes Romeo and dies in the ensuing fight. Romeo goes to Juliet’s side, drinks the poison and dies. Juliet wakes to find Romeo dead beside her and refuses a horrified Friar Lawrence’s offer of escape. The Friar flees as Juliet stabs herself with Romeo’s dagger.

After discovering the bodies, Capulet and Montague agree to end their bloody feud and erect statues in honor of their children.
Who’s Who in *Romeo & Juliet*

VERONA

- **Capulets**
  - CAPULET
  - LADY CAPULET
  - COUSIN CAPULET
  - GREGORY
  - SAMPSON

- **Montagues**
  - LADY MONTAGUE
  - MONTAGUE
  - BALTHASAR

- **Clergy**
  - FRIAR LAURENCE
  - FRAIR JOHN

- **Nobles**
  - PRINCE ESCALUS
  - PARIS
  - MERCUTIO

- **Other**
  - TYBALT
  - NURSE
  - PETER
  - ABRAM
  - BENVOLIO
  - FRIAR LAURENCE
  - FRAIR JOHN

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Romeo and Juliet Character Map by The/Bill/Shakespeare Project is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on a work at http://thebillshakespeareproject.com/2015/10/romeo-and-juliet-character-map.com
Shakespeare's Language

William Shakespeare was writing scripts for specific actors in his own acting company when he created his plays. He purposely wrote lines in two different ways to communicate information about the characters to his actors. Additionally, he wanted characters to sound different from one another and to adapt their language to new situations, the way people do in real life. The two ways he writes are called **prose** and **verse**.

PROSE
The ordinary form of written or spoken language, without metrical structure. Prose can be very descriptive, but it follows the rules of grammar. Essays, news articles and novels are examples of written prose.

If a character’s lines are written in **PROSE** we assume the following information:
* The character is most likely from the lower class and not very wealthy
* The character is most likely uneducated

For example, in the opening scene of *Romeo & Juliet*, the group of characters who begin the brawl in the streets are all servants to the Capulet’s or Montague’s. They include Sampson, Gregory and Abram. All of these characters lines are written in prose to reflect their social status.

**How can I tell if it’s prose?** You can tell when lines are written in prose because they look like a regular paragraph. Here’s an example:

**NURSE:** (Act II, Scene 4)
Now, afore God, I am so vexed that every part about me quivers. Scurvy knave! Pray you, sir, a word. And, as I told you, my young lady bid me inquire you out. What she bid me say, I will keep to myself. But first let me tell you, if you should lead her in a fool’s paradise, as they say, it were a very gross kind of behavior, as they say. For the gentelwoman is young; and therefore, if you should deal double with her, truly it were an ill thing to be offered to any gentlewoman, and very weak dealing.

VERSE
Another word for poetry. It’s writing that has a rhythmic structure. We refer to the rhythm as meter.

**Meter:** a recognizable rhythm in a line of verse consisting of a pattern of regularly recurring unstressed and stressed syllables.

**Iambic Pentameter:** the name of the rhythm Shakespeare uses.

If a character’s lines are written in **VERSE** we assume the following information:
* The character is most likely from the upper class and/or nobility and very wealthy
* The character is most likely formally educated
* The character may be experiencing a strong emotion like love or jealousy and needs to use poetry

For example, in *Romeo & Juliet* all of the upper class characters’ lines are written in verse.

**How can I tell if it’s verse?** You can tell when lines are written in verse because every line begins with a capital letter and the lines are all different lengths on the page. This is because each line is written with a metrical structure. Here’s an example:

**Juliet:** (Act II, Scene 2)
O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore are 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. Tis but thy name that is my enemy. Thou art theyself, 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!
### Shakespeare’s Language

#### When and Why do Shakespeare’s characters switch from verse to prose?

| **Public = Verse** | Noble characters in public situations must present their most formal self and speak in verse as a means to do so. Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Part 1* speaks prose when he’s hanging out with his fellow soldiers at the pub, but uses verse at court and when speaking to his father, the King. |
| **Private = Prose** | Upper-class characters use verse in public settings, but may use prose in private settings when they are talking to family or close friends. |
| **Love = Verse** | Shakespeare always uses verse when characters fall in love, regardless of their status. For example, in *As You Like It*, Silvius and Phoebe are both shepherds who live in the forest of Arden. However, even though they are lower class, both of these characters are in love and they express it through verse. |
| **Respect = Verse** | Upper-class characters use verse as a form of respect. To use prose with a King or Duke or parent would be disrespectful. For example, Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, has very eloquent verse for his soliloquies. But because he is angry at his mother Gertrude and his uncle Claudius, the new king, Hamlet often speaks to them in prose. |
| **Disguise = Prose** | Upper-class characters use prose as part of their disguises, when pretending to be someone else. They are usually disguised as a lower-class character. King Henry V disguises himself as a common foot soldier the night before the battle of Agincourt to find out the true thoughts and feelings of his men. In disguise he speaks in prose, the language of the common men. |
| **Madness = Prose** | If a character descends into madness, then they have literally “lost their wits” and no longer have the capacity to speak in verse. Both Lady Macbeth and Ophelia speak in verse until they go mad. Once madness sets in, all their lines are in prose. |

#### Classroom Activity

Follow the character of the Nurse through the play. Make note of when she switches from verse to prose and discuss why she shifts.

Key scenes: Act I, Scene 3 and Act II, Scenes 4 & 5

### SUMMARY VS. PARAPHRASE

Paraphrasing is an important tool that actors use to understand what their lines mean and how their character feels. Using this passage, explore the difference between summarizing and paraphrasing:

**Summarizing**—Concisely stating what a passage says. A summary is usually stated in third person.

**Paraphrasing**—Restating each line in your own words. Paraphrasing should be done in first person.

**Summary**

*Romeo is saying that he's not afraid of the Capulet’s finding him in the orchard and that he’s not afraid of dying for her love.*

**Paraphrase**

*You’re eyes are more dangerous to my heart Then twenty of their swords. If you love me Than I am armed against their hatred. I have the night to hide me, And if you don’t love me, let them find me, I’d rather die than go on living with out your love.*
Shakespeare’s Language

Iambic Pentameter

Iambic pentameter is the main rhythmic structure of Shakespeare’s verse, meaning the majority of Shakespeare’s verse is written in this rhythm. One line of iambic pentameter has 10 syllables, which we divide up into five units of meter called feet. Each foot of the verse contains two syllables. Illustrate this on the board:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A foot = 2 syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentameter = a line with 10 syllables which we divide into 5 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But soft! / What light / through yon / der win / dow breaks?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Iambic refers to the rhythm of the line. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed, as in the word Hello, it is called an iamb. *iambic* means push, persistency or determination. The prefix *penta* means five, as in pentagon, a five sided shape. Therefore, *iambic pentameter is one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.*

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>iambic = unstressed stressed rhythm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying the rhythm of a line is called <em>scansion</em>. Actors <em>scan</em> their lines so we know how Shakespeare wanted us to say them. We mark unstressed syllables with this symbol ~/ and stressed syllables with a slash /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~/ ~/ ~/ ~/ ~/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

When learning iambic pentameter, many students make the mistake of unstressing & stressing every other word instead of every other syllable. To address this, you need to get the students saying all of the lines out loud, with energy and feeling the rhythm. You can explore having them say their names out loud and figure out what syllable is stressed. You can also explore saying the lines giving every syllable the same stress so they discover how slow & robotic it feels or have them say it with the opposite rhythm to see how unnatural it feels. Have students say this rhythm out loud several times. They should clap lightly on da and clap harder on DUM.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clap the rhythm of iambic pentameter. Without specific words, the rhythm of iambic pentameter is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

The rhythm of iambic pentameter is similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop, or the beat underneath a piece of music. Iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare’s verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that imitates natural speech patterns.

**SCANSION**

Actors scan the verse for a few different reasons. First, we want to see if it’s a regular line of iambic pentameter. (Sometimes, Shakespeare writes in different rhythms.) Second, we want to make sure we are pronouncing the words correctly. Third, we want to determine which words Shakespeare wants emphasize. To *scan* a piece of text mark the unstressed syllables with a ~/ symbol and the stressed syllables with a / symbol. Here are examples of regular iambic pentameter from *Romeo & Juliet* that you can do together as a class.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O teach me how I should forget to think! – Romeo, I.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the east and Juliet is the sun. - Romeo, II.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My only love sprung from my only hate! – Juliet, I. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O serpent heart hid with a flowering face! – Juliet, III.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Shakespeare's Language

OPERATIVE WORDS
Operative words are the words the audience needs to hear to understand the story. They are the words that communicate images and emotions. Usually they are the classic who-what-where-when-why-how words—nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Actors give extra emphasis to operative words when they perform.

PROLOGUE:
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
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
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.

MERCUTIO:
O then I see Queen Mab hath been with you:
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomi
Over men's noses as they lie asleep.
Her wagon spokes made by long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love,
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on cur'sies straight,
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit.
Sometimes she driveth over a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats.
Of breaches, ambuscades, Spanish blades,
Drums in his ears, at which he starts and wakes
And, being thus frighted, swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab

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

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.
'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 word would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.
Modern day plays have a director. A director’s job is to oversee the whole production and make sure all the elements of the production, including the acting, costumes, set, sound and lighting, work together cohesively to tell the story. Part of this job includes directing the blocking on stage. **Blocking** is all of the actor's movement on stage.

Modern day plays often have **stage directions** as well. Stage directions are blocking instructions or design instructions written by the playwright.

The job of a director did not exist in Shakespeare’s lifetime and there are almost no stage directions explicitly written in Shakespeare’s plays. Instead, Shakespeare directed the actors movement through the dialogue he wrote. This device is called **internal stage directions** because the blocking is embedded in the dialogue. For example, when characters say things like, “Let me go!” or “On my knees I beg,” the actors on stage know they have to hold onto someone or be on their knees for the line to make sense.

**Classroom Activity**

1) Give each student and line with an internal stage direction from the list below.
2) Give everyone a chance to rehearse saying the line and doing the blocking.
3) Have students perform for the class.
   *(note: some lines may require a scene partner)*

**Internal Stage Direction Lines from Romeo & Juliet**

No sir, sir, I do not bite my thumb at your, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death.

Throw your misteampered weapons to the ground

Give me a torch. I am not for this ambling. Being but heavy I will bear the light.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

I am aweary. Give me leave awhile. Fie, how my bones ache!

Do you not see that I am out of breath?

Lord how my head aches! What a head have I! It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.

Draw, Benvolio, beat down their weapons.

Stand up, stand up. Stand and you be a man. For Juliet’s sake, for her sake rise and stand.

Ha, let me see her! Out, alas, she’s cold. Her blood is settled and her joints are stiff.

O, I am slain!

Here’s to my love. O true apothecary, they drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

O happy dagger, this is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die.

**Scene Study Activity**

1. Work in small groups to read a scene from *Romeo & Juliet*.
   Recommended scenes: Act I scene 1, Act I scene 5, Act II scene 5, Act III scene 1, Act V scene 3
2. Underline all the clues for physical action.
3. Stage the scene with as much physical action as possible.
No man’s life has been the subject of more speculation than William Shakespeare’s. For all his fame and celebration, Shakespeare’s personal history remains a mystery. There are two primary sources for information on the Bard—his works and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in this information and much room for conjecture.

We know a man named William Shakespeare was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, and that he died on his birthday—April 23, 1616. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to grammar school, since his father was first a member of the Stratford Council and later high bailiff (the equivalent of town mayor). A grammar school education would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin rhetoric, logic and literature.

In 1575, John Shakespeare suddenly disappears from Stratford’s political records. Some believe that his removal from office necessitated his son’s quitting school and taking a position as a butcher’s apprentice. Church records tell us that on November 27, 1582 a marriage license was granted to 18-year-old William and 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple six months later. We know that twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born soon after and that the twins were baptized. We also know that Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. We don’t know how the young Shakespeare came to travel to London or how he first came to the stage. One theory holds that young Will was arrested as a poacher (one who hunts illegally on someone else’s property) and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford. Another holds that he left home to work in the city as a school teacher. Neither is corroborated by contemporary testimony or public record. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that in the years between 1582 and 1592, William Shakespeare did become involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright with one of several repertory companies.

By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, one of the most popular acting companies in London. He was a member of this company for the rest of his career, which lasted until approximately 1611. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he issued a royal license to Shakespeare and his fellow players, inviting them to call themselves the King’s Men. In 1608, the King’s Men leased the Blackfriar’s Theatre in London. This theatre, which had artificial lighting and was probably heated, served as their winter playhouse. The famous Globe Theatre was their summer performance space.

In 1616 Shakespeare’s daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of a neighbor in Stratford. Her father revised his will six weeks later; within a month he had died. The revised version of William Shakespeare’s will bequeathed his house and all the goods therein to his daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr. John Hall, leaving Judith and Thomas only a small sum of money; his wife, who survived him, received the couple’s second best bed.

In the years since Shakespeare’s death, he has risen to the position of patron saint of English literature and drama. In the 1800s especially, his plays were so popular that many refused to believe that an actor from Stratford had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward Devere, the Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While most people are content to believe that genius can spring up in any social class or rural setting, the gap between the known facts and the myths that surround Shakespeare’s life leaves ample room for speculation.
The age of Shakespeare was a great time in English history. During the reign of **Elizabeth I (1558—1603)**, England emerged as the leading naval and commercial power of the Western world, consolidating this position with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Elizabeth I firmly established the Church of England (begun by her father Henry VIII after a dispute with the Pope) during this time. London in the 16th century underwent a dramatic transformation. It was quickly becoming a world center for trade and business of all kinds, and so people flocked to the city from the countryside. The population grew 400% between 1500 and 1600, swelling to nearly 200,000 people in the city proper and outlying region by the time William Shakespeare came arrived in London. That meant that the streets were always busy, and suddenly crime and disease became major issues.

England also experienced a tremendous cultural revival during this time. **The English Renaissance** found expression in architecture, music, literature and drama. A rising merchant middle class was also carving out a productive livelihood, and the economy was booming. With it, language was also booming, as more and more people were learning to read. This caused the trade of book-making to flourish during the period as public education fueled the appetite for great works in print.

All of these new city-dwellers needed things to do in their leisure time. So a massive entertainment industry grew up on the outskirts of London, mostly on the south bank of the Thames river. This area was called Southwark and it included taverns, firing ranges, public bear baiting pits, brothels, and of course theatres. Shakespeare’s theatre company, **The Lord Chamberlain’s Men**, erected **The Globe theatre** in Southwark in 1599. Popular entertainment during the 16th century tended to be boisterous and often violent. Many men, women and children attended public executions of criminals regularly, and persons of all social classes and genders attended theatre performances. Shakespeare both drew inspiration from and enhanced the popular culture of the English Renaissance.

During the years 1590-1593, England suffered from an outbreak of terrible proportions; the bubonic plague or “Black Death” claimed so many lives that English society stood on the verge of collapse. Many businesses, including theatres, closed, in part to keep people from spreading the disease and in part due to labor shortages from illness and death. Once the epidemic subsided, the theatres re-opened.

This explosion of commerce and culture lasted throughout Elizabeth’s reign and into that of her successor, James I. James’ rule brought many changes to English life; the two most pivotal were a bankrupt economy and an intense dissatisfaction from a minority religious group—the Puritans. In September 1642, the Puritan Parliament issued an edict that forbade all stage plays and closed the theatres, an act that effectively brought to a close the Elizabethan Renaissance. Theatres rapidly fell into disrepair and neglect until the Restoration in 1660.

In writing his plays and sonnets, William Shakespeare drew ideas from many different sources. His perceptive understanding of human nature and mastery of the English language enabled him to create some of the most enduring works of drama and poetry ever produced. But his work also provides an insightful commentary on 16th-century English values, life, history and thought.
Shakespeare’s Genres

When Shakespeare’s plays were published in The First Folio in 1623, they were categorized under “Comedies,” “Histories” and “Tragedies.” Drawing distinctions between Shakespeare’s plays by categorizing his works has been a focus of scholars for hundreds of years, and the criteria used to differentiate the plays into genres has changed over time.

When Shakespeare was writing, writers conformed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle’s definition of tragedy. A great tragedy had to be a probable tale of the demise of a great man or woman. The plot needed to be a clearly constructed cause and effect chain of actions that were driven by the protagonist’s choices. The character’s downfall should come as a result of a great mistake or frailty in their character, which Aristotle called the tragic flaw. Shakespeare demonstrated his mastery of this form with plays like Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth and Othello.

Comedy, which focused on love, domestic troubles and family affairs, was defined by the end of the story. If the play ended with a marriage it was a comedy. Aristotle speculated that comic characters were usually middle to low class characters, or if noble, they were of low moral character. For example, Shakespearean characters like Falstaff in Henry IV Part 1 & 2 and Sir Toby Belch in Twelfth Night, although well-born, are pompous, self-important and self preserving instead of being truly noble. Comedic protagonists are frequently underdogs, young men or women from humble or disadvantaged backgrounds who prove their real worth—in effect their “natural nobility”—through various tests of character over the course of a story or play.

Shakespeare’s histories chronicle the lives of English Kings. Shakespeare is world renowned for being able to dramatize the lives of royalty in human terms. Some of Shakespeare’s history plays, like Richard II and Richard III, seem more like tragedies because the main characters lose their power and eventually their lives. Other plays, like Henry IV, have comedic subplots. This interweaving of genres is one of Shakespeare’s stylistic signatures.

Several plays, written late in Shakespeare’s career, do not easily fit into any of these categories. The recognition of these plays has led scholars to add an additional genre, the “romances,” to classify these works. The romances have darker elements intermingled with comedy and involve fairy tale or legendary plots, with mystical characters and events. Romances include The Tempest, The Winter’s Tale, Pericles and Cymbeline. These plays do not have a clear comic resolution with a marriage at the end. It’s important to note that romance, in this context, does not mean love story. For example, even though Romeo & Juliet is Shakespeare’s best known love story, it is categorized as a tragedy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Performed</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1590-91</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1590-91</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part III</td>
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<td>Richard III</td>
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<td>1592-93</td>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>1593-9</td>
<td>Titus Andronicus</td>
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<td>1593-9</td>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>Love's Labour's Lost</td>
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<td>1594-95</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
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<tr>
<td>1595-96</td>
<td>Richard II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1595-96</td>
<td>A Midsummer Night's Dream</td>
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<tr>
<td>1596-97</td>
<td>King John</td>
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<td>1596-97</td>
<td>The Merchant of Venice</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
<td>Henry IV, Part I</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
<td>Henry IV, Part II</td>
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<tr>
<td>1598-99</td>
<td>Much Ado About Nothing</td>
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<tr>
<td>1598-99</td>
<td>Henry V</td>
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<tr>
<td>1599-1600</td>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
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<tr>
<td>1599-1600</td>
<td>As You Like It</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
<td>Twelfth Night</td>
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<td>1601-02</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
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<td>1602-03</td>
<td>All's Well That Ends Well</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604-05</td>
<td>Measure for Measure</td>
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<td>1604-05</td>
<td>Othello</td>
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<td>1605-06</td>
<td>King Lear</td>
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<td>1605-06</td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
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<td>1606-07</td>
<td>Antony and Cleopatra</td>
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<td>1607-08</td>
<td>Coriolanus</td>
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<td>1607-08</td>
<td>Timon of Athens</td>
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<td>1608-09</td>
<td>Pericles</td>
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<td>1610-11</td>
<td>The Winter's Tale</td>
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<td>1611-12</td>
<td>The Tempest</td>
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<td>1612-13</td>
<td>Henry VIII</td>
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<td>1612-13</td>
<td>The Two Noble Kinsmen</td>
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Based on the descriptions above, what genre is Romeo & Juliet?
Family Feud: Montagues vs. Capulets

A feud is an ongoing cycle of violence between two groups of people that continues because of acts of retaliation and vengeance. In order for a feud to end completely, both sides must agree to stop the violence. The desire to avoid appearing weak and to maintain honor kept most ancient feuds, like the one featured in Romeo & Juliet, going strong. Prince Escalus, who threatens both the Capulets and the Montagues with death at the beginning of the play (“If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace”), is not in a position to end the feud because, although it disrupts the life of his city, he is not a member of either opposing family. We know few details about this particular feud, except that it is “ancient” and that both families are of similar social status (“both alike in dignity”).

An interesting aspect of the Montague-Capulet feud is the extension of the resentment and hostility between the families that gets passed on to their servants. The action of the play begins with a brawl between Gregory and Sampson, servants of the Capulets, and Abram, a Montague servant. The fierce loyalty to their masters gives an indication of how strongly servants were linked to the families they worked for in this society.

The feud ends only with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, making it easy to wonder whether the feud would have ceased with their marriage. Capulet and Montague exchange words that signal the peaceful end of the vendetta, brought about by their shared grief at the deaths of their children: “O brother Montague, give me thy hand,” a statement that would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the play.

Can you think of any examples of modern-day feuds similar to the one found in Romeo & Juliet?

How does the feud impact the entire city of Verona, including those citizens not directly involved in it?

Based on evidence from the text, do you think that the feud could have ended peacefully if Romeo and Juliet were to come forward with their proposed marriage? Why or why not?

Look closely at Act I, Scene 5 and analyze Capulet’s response to Tybalt when he informs him that Romeo is at the banquet. How does he respond? Who wants Romeo out?

In modern adaptations of Romeo & Juliet, such as the musical West Side Story or the Baz Luhrmann film Romeo + Juliet, how is the feud presented? Compare and contrast the different ways in which these directors represent the feud. What weapons do they use? What is the setting of the banquet? How does the crowd respond?

Historical Family Feuds

Unfortunately, examples of feuding families are commonplace throughout history. These cycles of rivalry, violence and retaliation have killed countless men and women across the centuries. Called ‘blood feuds’, these hostile relationships can last generations. Research some of the famous family feuds below and identify the parallels to the Montague and Capulet feud.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Feud</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Boyces vs. The Sneedses</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1911-1912</td>
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<td>The Percys vs. The Nevilles</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>1440-1454</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Tairas vs The Minamotos</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1150-1192</td>
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<td>The Punti vs The Hakka</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>1857-1869</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hatfields vs The McCoys</td>
<td>Appalachia</td>
<td>1880s-1890s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Campbells vs The MacGregors</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1562-1570</td>
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</table>
Killing Joys: Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet*

Excerpted from the full essay by Courtney Lehmann

“For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.” act 3, scene 1

Revivals of *Romeo & Juliet* always strike us as timely because in many respects Shakespeare takes youth culture for theme. The play speaks to younger audiences, representing not only the vicissitudes of teenage angst but also adolescent idealism and fantasies of revolt against the older generation’s more socially conservative ways. Rebels with a cause, Romeo and Juliet are conscientious objectors to their parents’ war as well as to the feudal institution of arranged marriage. For the nobility, marriage was purely a business transaction designed to optimize prestige and profit. Romeo and Juliet’s decision to elope against their families’ wishes is a rejection of the couple’s rights to their lineage, land and lucrative patrimony as well as an act of defiance against the strictures of social class. After all, only the poor could choose their own partners and marry for love, and Romeo and Juliet, in denying their fathers and refusing their names, enter into willful poverty as dreamers intent on occupying a more just society. Romeo’s easily overlooked speech to the impoverished apothecary is a powerful example of the political outrage that Shakespeare’s play at once harbors and incites. Resonating with the youth-galvanizing sentiments of the Bernie Sanders campaign, Romeo rejects money as society’s central organizing principle:

> There is thy gold, worse poison to men’s souls
> Doing more murder in this loathsome world,
> Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell. act 5, scene 1

Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 blockbuster film, *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*—popularly known as the “MTV Romeo & Juliet”—translates feudal values into corporate ventures, as the Montagues and the Capulets are reimagined as rival business moguls. Shot in Mexico City against a skyline populated with high-rise buildings and imposing Jesus and Mary statues, Luhrmann’s film seamlessly transposes Shakespeare’s play into a corporate endgame in which greed, commodities, mergers and acquisitions redefine the ancient grudge through the lens of global capitalism and its human casualties.

“[A]though I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract tonight.” act 2, scene 2

As her use of contractual language suggests, Shakespeare’s Juliet has the business sense in the relationship. With 541 lines to Romeo’s 615, she is one of Shakespeare’s earliest and most outspoken heroines, and she appeals, therefore, to contemporary society’s more progressive attitudes toward women. Juliet is a significantly more rational character than Romeo. Whereas Romeo’s language is laden with metaphor (to the extent that Juliet begs him three times in the balcony scene, “Do not swear”), her relationship to language is more cynical.

Indeed, Juliet recognizes the often arbitrary ways in which words construct social reality; she is inclined toward a deconstructionist approach to language, famously observing that the word “Montague” is “nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man.” Adding a measure of bawdiness to her rationale, Juliet’s allusion to an un-namable “part” of the male anatomy suggests her sexual awareness. Juliet is also remarkably bold with her parents. Before she even meets Romeo, she professes her general aversion to marriage, confessing to her mother: “It is an honor that I dream not of.” It is one thing to be headstrong, but it is another thing altogether to disgrace the family name. Responding to her father’s decision to marry her off to Paris at St. Peter’s Church, Juliet actually swears against her parents rather than being forsworn to Romeo: “Now, by Saint Peter’s Church and Peter too, / He shall not make me there a joyful bride.” Despite her wildly iconoclastic behavior, Shakespeare’s Juliet had a potential sympathizer in the Queen, for much of Elizabeth I’s life as a monarch was consumed with fending off marriage proposals from foreign suitors. Some were eager to shore up Protestant alliances, while others courted the Queen hoping to weaken England’s power as a sovereign nation. Indeed, once married, or legally “covered” by her husband, the king, Elizabeth would become—like every other woman in the Renaissance—a femme covert, or “covered woman.” With the exception of widows, who were always considered morally suspect, girls and women simply passed through the hands of their male keepers, rendered the legal property of their fathers, brothers and husbands.

It is a common misperception that women in the Renaissance married in their teens, when in fact most women wed in their twenties. At not quite fourteen years of age, Juliet’s arranged marriage to Paris at the hands of her father is closer to child trafficking. Nor can we disregard the significance of her would-be husband’s name, Paris, the character who “ravished” or “surprised” Helen—both euphemisms for rape—and stole her from Menelaus to launch the Trojan War. It is little wonder that Juliet races to Friar Lawrence’s cell and, threatening to kill herself with a raised dagger, cries: “O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris.” Shakespeare’s contemporary, Cyril Tourneur, invokes the inimical improprieties of arranged marriage in The Atheist’s Tragedy (1611), asking: “Why what is it but a rape to force a wench / To marry, since it forces her to lie / With him she would not?” But in the Renaissance, rape was prosecuted as a crime against male property; it was not the woman but her husband or keeper who was legally identified as the victim of the alleged “theft.” Already a “ruined” woman, Juliet awakens in the tomb of her ancestors to find Romeo dead and immediately knows her course. Upon hearing the approaching Watch, she is decisive, quick, and fearless: “Yea, noise? Then I’ll be brief. O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath! There rust, and let me die.” Whereas Romeo assumes the more typically female path to suicide through poison, Juliet is granted a noble Roman death by Shakespeare.

Courtney Lehmann is the Tully Knoles Professor of the Humanities at University of the Pacific. She is the author of Shakespeare Remains (2002), Screen Adaptations: Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (2010), and co-author of Great Shakespeareans: Welles, Kurosawa, Kozintsev, and Zeffirelli (2013). She has co-edited two volumes of Shakespeare and film criticism as well as The New Kittredge Shakespeare King John and Henry VIII (2015).
There is perhaps no greater testament to Shakespeare’s adaptability than the widespread and varied interpretations of what is arguably his most popular play, *Romeo & Juliet*. The tale of two star-crossed lovers has permeated pop culture over the years, and it has served as inspiration for wildly popular retellings.

*Romeo + Juliet* (1996)

Director Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet* featuring Leonardo DiCaprio and Clare Danes is a modern cinematic adaptation of the original play, preserving Shakespeare’s language and text in an abridged version. The movie was renowned for its star actor, and its high-octane representation of a classic story set against the backdrop of mafia warfare.

*West Side Story* (1961)

Perhaps the most famous example of a *Romeo & Juliet* remake is the Broadway musical-turned-film *West Side Story*, chronicling the trials of two young lovers from rival gangs in New York City. It was the recipient of two Tony Awards in 1957 and ten Oscars in 1961, including Best Picture.

*Romeo & Juliet Ballet* (1938)

The first classical ballet adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet* was composed by Sergei Prokofiev and was fully presented for the first time in 1938 in the Czech Republic, with choreography by Leonid Lavrovsky. Since then, the ballet has adapted many forms and is still presented today.
There are countless film versions of this romantic tragedy, from modern retellings to animated stories for young audiences. These are three popular films that use Shakespeare’s original text.

**Romeo and Juliet**
- directed by Carlo Carlei (2013)

**Romeo and Juliet**
- directed by Baz Luhrman (1996)

**Romeo and Juliet**
- directed by Franco Zeffirelli (1968)
Discussion Questions

- Romeo and Juliet may be the most famous pair of lovers in Western literature, but, seriously: is their love real, or is it just infatuation? Are they just melodramatic teenagers, or are they a model of romantic love? What proof does the play provide that their love is "real love," not just infatuation?

- What would have happened to Romeo and Juliet if they hadn't died? Is their relationship sustainable over time? Do they have anything to offer each other once the initial burst of passion calmed down? Would Romeo move on from Juliet as quickly as he moved on from Rosaline?

- How is the world of the young people in the play—Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio, Benvolio, and Tybalt—different from the world of their parents and mentors? In what ways do the young adopt the beliefs of the old, and in what ways do they ignore or fight against them? Should Romeo and Juliet's relationship be viewed as a rebellion of the young against the old? In other words, is this play's motto, "Kids these days," or "Move over, Grandpa?"

- Motifs of light and darkness run through the play. How do these references to day and night, sun, moon and stars, torches and lightning provide metaphors for what happens in the play? What kind of feelings do these images arouse in the reader?

- How do social institutions (like family, law, religion etc.) influence the love between Romeo and Juliet? How do they impede/support their love?

- What impact do gender roles have in Romeo & Juliet? How does it explore the context of 'honor' for a man and a woman in this particular time period?

- Compare and contrast Romeo and Mercutio. How are they similar? How are they different? How does each character view love?

- Who should have more influence on decisions: your family or yourself as an individual? Why or why not?

- What is similar or different about Mercutio and the Nurse's attitudes towards love, sex, and marriage?

- Why do the Nurse and the Friar ultimately fail in their attempts to help Romeo and Juliet?

- Who do you think is really at fault for Romeo and Juliet’s death and why?

Joseph Marcell as Friar Laurence in the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s 2002 production of Romeo and Juliet, directed by Rachel Kavanaugh. Photo by Carol Rosegg.
Writing Activities

Who’s to blame?

Ask your class who they think is responsible for the deaths in Romeo & Juliet and why. Write the characters on the board. Have each student pick a character and argue in a persuasive essay why that character is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The essay must include supporting evidence from the text. Once completed, have students read their essays in class. Encourage them to use their voices and delivery to be as persuasive as possible. After sharing their essays, ask students if anyone has changed their mind about who they think is responsible. What made them change their minds?

Have students write a persuasive letter in the voice of a character from Romeo & Juliet. Here is a list of characters and objectives to choose from:

Character Letters

Romeo writes a love letter to Juliet with hopes that she will be his girlfriend.

Juliet writes a love letter to Romeo proposing marriage.

Romeo writes a letter to the Friar convincing him to marry him and Juliet in secret.

Tybalt writes to Romeo challenging him to a duel.

Mercutio writes to Romeo to convince him to fight Tybalt.

Lord Capulet writes to Juliet to convince her of why she should marry the man he chooses for her.

Juliet writes to Lord Capulet to convince him why she should be allowed to marry Romeo.

The nurse writes a letter to Juliet to convince her to marry Paris.

Adaptation

Step 1) Plot timeline — As a class, make a list on the board of all the major events in Romeo & Juliet. For example: “Romeo meets Juliet at the masquerade ball and falls in love” “Romeo sneaks into Juliet’s garden and they plan to marry” “Romeo and Juliet are married in secret by Friar Lawrence.” Etc.

Step 2) Class Discussion—Ask your students if these events could happen today? Where do they imagine the story taking place today? Why might the Capulet’s and Montagues be feuding? Why might they not want their children to marry?

Step 3) Group Work—Break the class up into small groups of three or four and assign each group a plot point from the time line. Have the students work together to rewrite that plot point, having the characters make different decisions at the crucial moments. Have students present their Alternate versions of Romeo & Juliet to the class and discuss how these changes would affect all of the characters in the play.

Step 5) Playwriting—(This can be group work or individual work.) Have students write a short scene for their revised plot point. They are encouraged to set the play in modern day and to use their own words for the dialogue.

Step 6) Performance—Have students act out the adapted scenes in class.
Resource List

Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center— http://www.sprc.org/
- Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide— http://www.sptsusa.org/
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Available 24/7) — 1 (800) 273 - 8255

Shakespeare Dictionaries

Books on Teaching Shakespeare

Books on William Shakespeare’s Life and Writing

Websites
- Shakespeare Theatre Company—http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/education
  ON SHAKESPEARE: Articles and information about Shakespeare’s life and world.
  Teacher Curriculum Guides: Plot synopsis, character maps, lesson plans and discussion questions.
- In Search of Shakespeare: Shakespeare in the Classroom—http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/
  The companion website to Michael Wood’s four-part PBS series *In Search of Shakespeare*, this site includes extensive research about Shakespeare’s life and works, as well as interactive features.
- Shmoop Teacher Resources—http://www.shmoop.com
  Learning Guides, Homework Help, Study tools and Test Prep

Standards of Learning

Participation in our student matinee program and the lessons and activities found in this curriculum guide support grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts and The National Core Arts Standards for responding and connecting to Theatre Art. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core English Language Arts Standards</th>
<th>National Core Arts Theatre Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Standards for Literature</td>
<td>Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Ideas and Details</td>
<td>Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and Structure</td>
<td>Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</td>
<td>Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range of Reading and Complexity</td>
<td>Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding</td>
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<td>Speaking and Listening Standards</td>
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<td>Comprehension and Collaboration</td>
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<td>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</td>
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<td>Vocabulary and Acquisition Use</td>
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<td>Writing Standards</td>
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<td>Text Types and Purposes</td>
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The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

**Before you go:**

- Your personalized ring-tone is not part of the sound design of this production. Please help us create the appropriate Verona soundscape by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (iPods, games, etc.). Not only will it be inaccurate production element, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.

- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but because this theatre is so new and beautiful, we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.

- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

**During the performance:**

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”