

English Literature: *Romeo and Juliet*



WordIT

Fate

Meaning: (*n.*) A course of action that cannot be stopped or controlled by humans and seems to be something put in place by a higher authority such as 'the gods' or 'the heavens'.

Origins of the word: From the Latin word *fatum* which means 'that which is spoken'. It links to the Greek *phaos*, meaning 'light' and is connected to the words 'fable' and 'fairy'.

In context: The prologue presents the idea of "star-crossed lovers" and that Romeo and Juliet's fate is predestined from the start.

Challenge: How much do you think the tragedy was due to fate and how much to other 'more real' events – e.g. the feud between the families? Make a list of all the other events and factors that affect Romeo and Juliet's 'ill-fated' relationship.

Love

Meaning: (*v.*) To have a strong feeling of affection or devotion; to have a strong attachment to someone or something.

Origins of the word: From the Anglo Saxon word *lufian*, meaning 'to love'.

In context: "With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls/For stony limits cannot hold love out": the love between Romeo and Juliet is often connected with images of things that are light or heavenly.

Challenge: In the play, we see love presented in different ways: romantic love, dutiful love, devotion to friends, as well as sexual references. How do you think each of these characters sees love – Juliet, Mercutio, Lady Capulet, Paris?

Write a sentence and then find a quotation from the text to support your ideas about each one.

Secrecy

Meaning: (*n.*) The state of being hidden, privacy, something kept from general knowledge or concealed.

Origins of the word: From the French *secret*, and originally from the Latin word *secretus*, meaning 'set apart': *se*, 'apart', and *cerno*, 'I sift'.

In context: Juliet marries Romeo in secrecy, without the knowledge of her parents.

Challenge: A number of characters in the play keep secrets at different times. What secrets do these characters keep and how does their secrecy affect the action?

- Friar Lawrence
- The Nurse

Opposite

Meaning: (*adj.*) A person or thing that is totally different from, or the reverse of, someone or something else.

Origins of the word: From the Latin word *oppositus*: *ob*, meaning 'before', and *positus*, 'placed'.

In context: "My only love sprung from my only hate": there are many images and references in the play to opposites or oppositions as well as conflicts between opposing sides or views.

Challenge: Choose one of the following oppositions from the play and collect as many images as you can find that relate to it. You could present them as a spider diagram or even a collage or piece of artwork:
love/hate; peace/conflict; darkness/light; life/death; age/youth.

Family

Meaning: (*n.*) A household; perhaps including parents and children who may be descended from a common ancestor.

Origins of the word: From the Latin word *familia*, meaning 'a household' (which would also include the servants of that household).

In context: "Two households, both alike in dignity": from the start of the play, the family feud is significant.

Challenge: Who says the following lines? What do they tell us about the family feud? What significant event in the play does each one link to?

- "Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word/By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,/Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets..."
- "His name is Romeo, and a Montague,/The only son of your great enemy."
- "Oh brother Montague, give me thy hand./This is my daughter's jointure, for no more/Can I demand."

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