



# Romeo and Juliet: Who's to Blame?

## Unit Summary

Students explore the themes in *Romeo and Juliet* and see how the themes apply to modern life and relationships. Students pair with assigned ePALS partners and discuss the differences they see between Shakespeare's time and their own as well as discuss their impressions and reflections. As students read, they collect evidence as to who or what is guilty of murder. They present arguments in Verona's court to support whether the deaths of Romeo and Juliet were the result of fate, other people's decisions and actions, or their own choices. Using these arguments, students then write a jury statement discussing their findings and who or what they find guilty.

## Curriculum-Framing Questions

- **Essential Questions**

How does literature help us better understand ourselves?

- **Unit Questions**

How does Shakespeare still speak to a 21st century audience?

Who or what is ultimately to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?

- **Content Questions**

How do you read and understand Shakespeare's Elizabethan English?

Who are the characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, and how do they contribute to the deaths in the play?

What is imagery and what are some examples of how Shakespeare uses imagery in *Romeo and Juliet* to present a compelling and powerful message?

What are the themes and issues in *Romeo and Juliet* that are relevant today?

## Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered [assessments](#) are used in the Romeo and Juliet: Who's to Blame? Unit Plan. These assessments help students and teachers set goals; monitor student progress; provide feedback; assess thinking, processes, performances, and products; and reflect on learning throughout the learning cycle.

## Instructional Procedures

### Setting Up an ePALS Partner Project

Search for a class wanting a partner class to study *Romeo and Juliet* at [ePALS\\*](#). If none exists, set up a project proposal. Do this as far in advance as possible.

### Beginning of the Year

Introduce a discussion about why people like a good story. *What is it about the writing of characters that helps them "come alive" off the page? What kind of characters can students identify with? What do stories do for us, anyway? Are they just a means of escaping into fantasy?* Then, introduce and discuss the Essential Question that will be used all year, *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?*

### Weeks 1–4

#### Understand the Play

During the first four weeks of the unit, set up a variety of activities to help students understand Shakespeare's *Romeo*

### At a Glance

**Grade Level:** 8-10

**Subject:** Language Arts

**Topics:** Shakespeare

**Higher-Order Thinking**

**Skills:** Literary Analysis, Interpretation, Argumentation

**Key Learnings:** Literary Devices, Literary Themes, Persuasive Writing

**Time Needed:** 5-6 weeks, 55-minutes/5 days per week

**Background:** California, United States

### Things You Need

[Assessment](#)

[Standards](#)

[Resources](#)

and *Juliet*. This helps students gain an initial understanding of Shakespeare and his time. Activities may include:

- Read the passage by [Bernard Levin](#)\* about the influence of Shakespeare on our everyday speech.
- For homework, ask students to bring in examples of where they see Shakespeare's influence in their world today (movies, TV, magazines, other storylines, and so forth).
- Present background information about Shakespeare, his time, and Elizabethan theater, so students can better understand his work. Resources are available at the [Shakespeare Resource Center](#)\* and [Shakespeare's Life and Times](#)\*.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - *What plot elements are usually required in a blockbuster movie?*
  - *Which elements do you think are present in *Romeo and Juliet*?*
  - *How does Shakespeare still speak to a 21st century audience?*
  - *Do you think Shakespeare still has any impact on what we hear, see, and think today?*
- Hand out the [understanding Elizabethan English](#) document for students' use throughout the unit.

Discuss the projects in this unit:

- Trials in Verona's court to determine who or what is at fault for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet
- Use of ePALS partners (an assigned e-mail partner from an English class in another part of the country—or even the world) to help each other analyze the play

Assign each student an e-mail partner from an English class in another part of the country (or world) to help them analyze the play. Explain that students have 30 minutes one day a week to e-mail their ePALS partner. Discuss expectations. Distribute the [ePALS discussion](#) document electronically, in hard copy, or both. This document is to be used to write notes, questions, and summaries for each of the scenes and is a scaffold for their discussions with their ePALS partners. Discuss how the questions help them form an opinion about the Unit Questions as to whether Shakespeare still speaks to a 21st century audience. Point out that the questions also help them to gather their thoughts about who is to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Assign ePALS partners. Explain that students' reading logs will be checked periodically. Distribute and review the [reading log checklist](#). Have students brainstorm "two truths and a fib" for their ePALS partner introduction. (See the [ePALS discussion](#) document.) Students must have the three statements written out as their "ticket" to use the computer. Provide a short amount of time for students to e-mail their introduction to their ePALS partners.

Assign students to read the play. Read difficult parts aloud in class. Act out some of the scenes. During the reading of the play, explore plot elements, Elizabethan English, metaphors, and imagery. Present the following questions:

- *How do the metaphors help to paint a picture of not only Juliet, but Romeo's state of mind?*
- *How does that imagery affect how we judge Romeo's true intentions or inclinations?*
- *How does the use of imagery add to the mood of this scene?*
- *How does the imagery affect the way we respond to this scene?*
- *Considering how Romeo talks about Juliet, what does that suggest about Romeo's character and primary focus?*

Explain that these initial activities prepare students for trials in Verona's court to determine who or what is at fault for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

### **Set Up Verona's Court**

Verona's Court hears four cases. Assign different prosecuting attorneys, defending attorneys, judges, witnesses, and jurors for each case. The cases are against the following as the ones who should be held accountable for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet:

- Romeo and Juliet themselves
- The Montague and Capulet families
- Friar Laurence
- Fate

Assign or ask for volunteers for the following court case members:

- Eight students (each case has a team of two students) as the prosecutors
- Eight students (each case has a team of two students) as the defending attorneys
- Four judges
- Witnesses (if a witness will be called in different cases, assign a different student so all get a chance to participate; costumes encouraged; prosecutors and defending attorneys submit a witness list for their case to determine which witnesses will be required for all the cases):
  - Balthasa
  - Fate (personified)
  - Friar Laurence
  - Juliet
  - Lady Capulet
  - Lord Capulet

- Mercutio
- Prince Escalus
- Romeo
- The Nurse
- Tybalt
- When not participating as a character in a case, students act as jurors.

**Week 5**  
**Practice Using the Tool**

- Click [here](#) to set up the practice Is the Nurse guilty? project in your workspace.
- Open the practice project and, as a whole class, walk through the creation of a claim that the Nurse is to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Have a Web site up with the [entire play](#)\* available so you can copy and paste appropriate quotes. Have the students come up with ideas as to why the Nurse might be to blame as well as evidence that she is not, but be sure to have a few pieces of evidence as backup.
- Discuss what can be used as evidence, such as quotes from the play, historical references, even psychological findings, and remind students that all evidence must have citations. Discuss the rating of the evidence and hand out the [rating rubric](#) document. Discuss the sections that should be left to last, after all the evidence has been gathered and assigned to the claim, such as the claim rating, explanation, and conclusion. The following *Showing Evidence Tool* space represents an example of the practice case. You can double-click on the evidence and comments to read the descriptions.

**Project Name:** Is the Nurse guilty? (Click here to set up this project in your workspace)

**Prompt:** Is the Nurse to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?

**VIEW-ONLY MODE** As a viewer, you can view but cannot edit this project.

Claim	Support	Quality	Evidence
<b>YOUR CLAIM</b> The Nurse is to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.	+++	★★★★	The nurse supports the secret marriage.
<b>Your Explanation</b> This claim is based on the idea that the Nurse goes from hot to cold in her support of Romeo--both of which are deadly to Juliet.	++	★★★	The nurse turns away Juliet with her words
<b>Your Rating</b> ★☆☆☆☆ Although there is some truth to this claim, the evidence clearly does not	+	★★★★	The Nurse leaves her alone the night before
	○	★★★★	Juliet takes her own life.

CLAIMS WORKSPACE | EVIDENCE BIN

- After practicing with the tool, have teams meet to brainstorm evidence on paper. Prosecutors and defenders must turn in their witness lists prior to having students work with *Showing Evidence*.

**Prepare the Case**

Based on the prosecutors' and defenders' witness lists, assign students (or let them sign up) to be a witness. You may have several Romeos, Juliets, Friars, and so forth, if they are needed in more than one case. If you still have students who have not been assigned a role, you can also have two of the same witnesses per case, one for the defense and one for the prosecution.

Provide teams with their team IDs and passwords, along with the teacher ID. Have them log in at the *Showing Evidence Tool* workspace. Explain that they will work on only one claim at this time. The assigned prosecutors or defenders or specific witnesses will work on a claim and evidence based on their assignment.

Have students use the print feature of the tool to see the layout of their evidence and to prepare for their day in court. Encourage students to use visual aids, timelines, charts, forensic evidence, and other props to help present their cases. However, they must use specific quotes and content from the play to back up their evidence and reasoning. Let them know they will have a maximum of 20 minutes for their case to be heard in court, so they should use their best evidence and witnesses. Hand out the [court case scoring guide](#) so they know what will be expected of them in the trial.

## **Week 6**

### **Court is in Session**

Provide guidelines for the roles in the court, explaining the following:

- Attorneys can object if a witness makes a statement that is contrary to what is written in the play or goes beyond accepted interpretation.
- The judge must know the play well enough to rule on the objections.
- The prosecution will call its witnesses and the defense can cross-examine.
- After the prosecution, the defense can call any witnesses not already heard, and the prosecution can cross-examine.
- Both the prosecution and defense must provide closing statements, which should be based on the conclusion stated in the *Showing Evidence Tool*.
- Students not currently acting in their roles are jurors and take notes to use in their future *Showing Evidence* case as well as their jury report (essay).

### **Return to *Showing Evidence***

Before proceeding with the next activity, click [here](#) to set up the CSI Verona project in your workspace.

After the cases have been heard, the teams will return to *Showing Evidence* and complete at least two other claims based on the evidence they heard in the trial and their own ideas that are supported in the text or other appropriate sources. Remind them to use the [rating rubric](#) as a guide.

After teams have worked on their case, demonstrate how teams can leave comments. Provide a portion of the time for teams to review each other's work using the [claim and evidence rubric](#). Be sure teams have time to review comments and make changes as necessary.

After students complete three to four claims and their associated evidence, discuss with students the process for writing a [jury report \(essay\)](#). A jury report presents and supports a three-part jury finding (thesis statement) on who or what is found guilty. Explain that in their jury reports, each student identifies the top three characters or elements most to blame, and ends the report with an analysis and conclusion of the one who ultimately must take responsibility. Hand out the [jury report checklist](#) for students to self-assess and peer review their work.

### **Examine the *Showing Evidence* Activity**

The *Showing Evidence Tool* space below represents one team's investigation in this project. You can double-click on the evidence and comments to read the team's descriptions.

**Project Name:** CSI Verona ([Click here to set up this project in your workspace](#))

**Prompt:** Who or what is ultimately to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?

Claim	Support	Quality	Evidence
<p><b>YOUR CLAIM</b></p> <p>The Capulet and Montague families are ultimately to blame for the deaths</p> <p><b>Your Explanation</b></p> <p>Although the families play a huge role in why this situation feels hopeless to both Romeo and Juliet, none of them actually killed Romeo and Juliet directly.</p> <p><b>Your Rating</b></p> <p>★★★★☆</p> <p>There is a lot of evidence that supports this claim, but none that can counter the evidence against the claim.</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>Tybalt kills Mercutio, escalating the violence.</p> <p>Romeo and Juliet must keep their relationship</p> <p>Lord Capulet forces Juliet to marry Paris</p> <p>Mercutio tries to pick a fight with Tybalt.</p> <p>The prince blames the Montagues and</p> <p>Nothing could stop the feud except the death</p>
<p><b>YOUR CLAIM</b></p> <p>The Friar is ultimately to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.</p> <p><b>Your Explanation</b></p> <p>Everything the Friar does is with good motives, unlike the actions of the families. His decisions were poor, but</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>The Friar tries his best to get the message to</p> <p>The Friar marries Romeo and Juliet secretly.</p> <p>The Friar is a coward and leaves Juliet alone</p> <p>The Friar chooses to</p>

As a viewer, you can view but cannot edit this project.

- The prince blames the Montagues and
- A greater power thwarts their good
- The Friar chooses to deceive all with Juliet's
- Romeo has a feeling that he will soon die.
- The chorus says Romeo and Juliet were
- Nothing could stop the feud except the death
- Romeo kills Tybalt out of vengeance
- Juliet chooses to kill herself.
- Romeo chooses to kill himself.
- The Friar is a coward and leaves Juliet alone
- Mercutio tries to pick a fight with Tybalt.
- Lord Capulet forces Juliet to marry Paris
- The Friar marries Romeo and Juliet secretly.
- Romeo purchases the prison

### Wrap Up and Revisit the Essential Question

Discuss what students have learned from *Romeo and Juliet* and whether Shakespeare still speaks to a 21st century audience. Reflect on how literature helps us better understand ourselves.

### Prerequisite Skills

- Basic computer skills
- Essay writing experience

### Differentiated Instruction

#### Resource Student:

- Provide a parallel text of *Romeo and Juliet* in modern English
- Provide fill-in-the-blank plot worksheets to help the student simplify and identify the characters and action
- Include scaffolds for the jury report (essay) to help the student identify the form and content of the report
- Allow the student to choose the type of participation in the trial that draws upon on the student's strengths

#### Gifted Student:

- Pair the student with another gifted student for the ePALS partners discussions
- Encourage the student to support the cases creatively and appropriately
- Encourage the student to look beyond the obvious text quotations and come up with creative but appropriate evidence to support claims

#### English Language Learner:

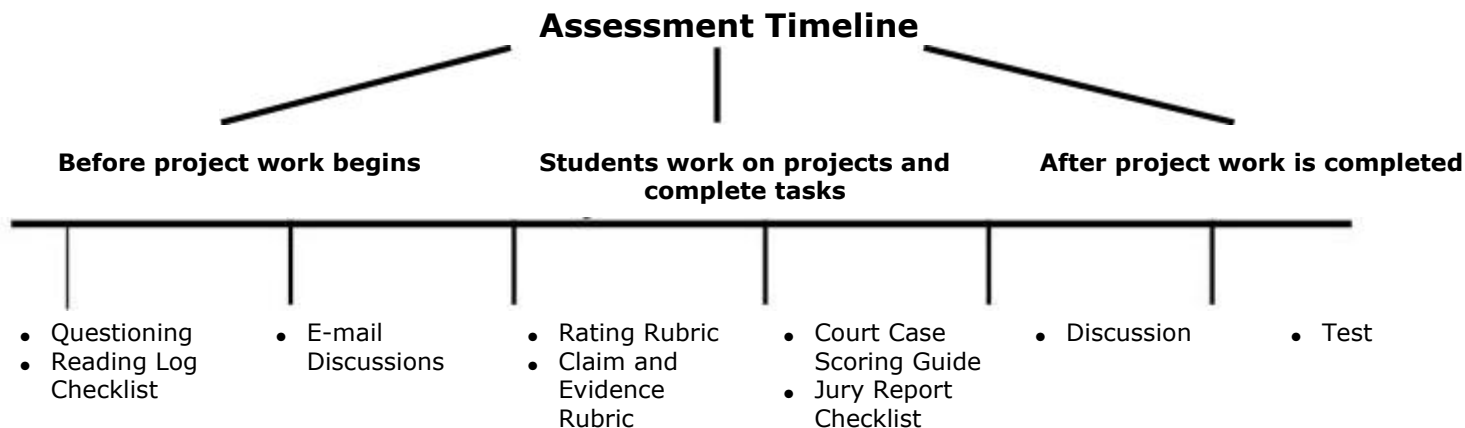
- Provide a parallel text of *Romeo and Juliet* in the student's native language whenever possible or use a modern English version of the text
- Use some of the scaffolds provided for the resource student, such as the fill-in-the-blank plot worksheets, if appropriate
- Allow the student to choose the type of participation in the trial that draws upon on the student's strengths

### Credits

Some resources in this unit were developed by teachers participating in the Intel® Teach Program. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

# Showing Evidence Tool: Romeo and Juliet Assessment Plan

## Assessment Plan



Throughout the unit, students engage in discussions about the Curriculum-Framing Questions, which prompt them to explore their analysis and interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*. As students read *Romeo and Juliet*, they keep reading journals and share their questions and thoughts with ePALS partners. Reading journals are assessed with a [reading log checklist](#). The ePALS partners e-mail discussions are spot-checked throughout the unit to identify and verify the quality and depth of knowledge of the concepts being discussed. The [rating rubric](#) is used to assist in the development of the teams' *Showing Evidence* cases. The [claim and evidence rubric](#) is used to evaluate the individual student *Showing Evidence* claims and to help teams evaluate each other's work.

A [court case scoring guide](#) is used to evaluate the students' work in the trial, with adjustments to the group score based on individual effort and contribution. A [jury report checklist](#) provides students with a scaffold to review their own essay and peer review another's. Typical assessments may also be used, such as quizzes and a final test on plot development, literary devices, characters, and so forth.

# Showing Evidence Tool: Romeo and Juliet

## Content Standards and Objectives

### Standards and Objectives

#### California State Standards

##### Reading

3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot.

3.7 Recognize and understand the significance of various literary devices, including figurative language, imagery, allegory, and symbolism, and explain their appeal.

##### Writing

1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

1.6 Integrate quotations and citations into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas.

2.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports:

- a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.

##### Listening and Speaking

1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

1.5 Recognize and use elements of classical speech forms (e.g., introduction, first and second transitions, body, conclusion) in formulating rational arguments and applying the art of persuasion and debate.

1.6 Present and advance a clear thesis statement and choose appropriate types of proof (e.g., statistics, testimony, specific instances) that meet standard tests for evidence, including credibility, validity, and relevance.

2.2 Deliver expository presentations:

- a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.

### Student Objectives

#### Students will be able to:

- Define, understand, and properly use the Elizabethan English used in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*
- Identify the characters and plot of *Romeo and Juliet* and analyze the actions, themes, and social issues of the play and relate them to those that are relevant today
- Recognize and understand the use and purpose of various literary devices
- Write a literary essay that cites appropriate text-based information to support the thesis

# Showing Evidence Tool: Romeo and Juliet

## Resources

### Materials and Resources:

#### Printed Materials

Text of *Romeo and Juliet*, preferably with footnotes to define archaic words. Modern parallel version available for resource and second language learners, if desired.

#### Internet Resources

*Romeo and Juliet*

[www-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/romeo\\_juliet](http://www-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/romeo_juliet)\*

The complete text of *Romeo and Juliet* organized by scene

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>\*

A complete annotated guide to the scholarly Shakespeare resources available on Internet, as well as resources not found elsewhere

Shakespeare's Grammar – Glossary Search

<http://www.bardweb.net/grammar/04gloss.html>\*

A glossary for archaic terms used in Shakespeare's plays

Shakespeare Help – Romeo and Juliet

[ShakespeareHelp.com](http://ShakespeareHelp.com) -- Romeo and Juliet\*

Links to resource sites for *Romeo and Juliet*, including lots teacher resources

Shakespeare Illustrated

[http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated\\_index.cfm](http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated_index.cfm)\*

Art reflecting Shakespeare's works

#### Technology – Hardware

- Computers with Internet access for using the *Showing Evidence Tool* and accessing Web-based e-mail
- Printer to print *Showing Evidence* cases and Jury Report (essay)

#### Technology – Software

- Word processing software for writing the Jury Report (essay)



## Reading Log Checklist

Prologue, Act I	Student	Teacher + Comments
<b>Vocabulary:</b> New words with definitions		
<b>Summary:</b> Summary of scene in your own words		
<b>Questions:</b> Questions about the scene		
<b>ePALS Discussion:</b> Examines text, shows depth of understanding		
<b>Answers:</b> Answers to questions explored with ePALS partner and recorded		
<b>Personal Reaction:</b> Reactions based on a second reading		
<b>New Questions, New Answers, Insights:</b> Discussion with ePALS partner based on second reading		
Act II	Student	Teacher + Comments
<b>Vocabulary:</b> New words with definitions		
<b>Summary:</b> Summary of scene in your own words		
<b>Questions:</b> Questions about the scene		
<b>ePALS Discussion:</b> Examines text, shows depth of understanding		
<b>Answers:</b> Answers to questions explored with ePALS partner and recorded		
<b>Personal Reaction:</b> Reactions based on a second reading		
<b>New Questions, New Answers, Insights:</b> Discussion with ePALS partner based on second reading		
Act III	Student	Teacher + Comments
<b>Vocabulary:</b> New words with definitions		
<b>Summary:</b> Summary of scene in your own words		
<b>Questions:</b> Questions about the scene		
<b>ePALS Discussion:</b> Examines text, shows depth of understanding		
<b>Answers:</b> Answers to questions explored with ePALS partner and recorded		
<b>Personal Reaction:</b> Reactions based on a second reading		
<b>New Questions, New Answers, Insights:</b> Discussion with ePALS partner based on second reading		
Act IV	Student	Teacher + Comments
<b>Vocabulary:</b> New words with definitions		
<b>Summary:</b> Summary of scene in your own words		
<b>Questions:</b> Questions about the scene		
<b>ePALS Discussion:</b> Examines text, shows depth of understanding		
<b>Answers:</b> Answers to questions explored with ePALS partner and recorded		

<b>Personal Reaction:</b> Reactions based on a second reading		
<b>New Questions, New Answers, Insights:</b> Discussion with ePALS partner based on second reading		
<b>Act V</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher + Comments</b>
<b>Vocabulary:</b> New words with definitions		
<b>Summary:</b> Summary of scene in your own words		
<b>Questions:</b> Questions about the scene		
<b>ePALS Discussion:</b> Examines text, shows depth of understanding		
<b>Answers:</b> Answers to questions explored with ePALS partner and recorded		
<b>Personal Reaction:</b> Reactions based on a second reading		
<b>New Questions, New Answers, Insights:</b> Discussion with ePALS partner based on second reading		

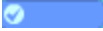




# How Good Is It? How to Rate Your Evidence and Claims

## Minimum Requirements

Each claim must have a minimum of three pieces of evidence that support the claim and a minimum of one piece of evidence that opposes the claim.






## Rating the Quality of Your Evidence






In literature, just as in life, we must evaluate whether what we're being told is the truth. Part of that evaluation is considering whether we can trust the source, plus how accurate and credible we believe the information is. When reviewing and rating your evidence, use the following rubrics.

				
The evidence is simply someone's opinion without any basis to back it up. The evidence is hearsay.	Circumstances do seem to indicate that the evidence could be true, but what is claimed is outside of what the source or reader could possibly know.	It appears that the evidence is true, but there are not enough facts or details to really know for sure.  The source of the evidence appears to be credible and trustworthy, but not enough is known about the source.  The action or result may be correct, but the stated motive may not necessarily be true.	There is a small amount of room for interpretation, but basically the evidence appears to be accurate and the source is credible.	The action is "seen" or the dialogue "heard" firsthand by the reader and is undisputable.

## Rating How Well Your Evidence Supports or Weakens the Claim






The rating above is just to determine whether the evidence is true and reliable. This rating is to show how well the evidence supports or weakens the claim—where we determine the strength of the evidence in relation to the claim. For this rating, put aside any concerns about whether or not the evidence is true or valid. If the evidence is true, how well does the evidence support or weaken the claim? Is the evidence central to your argument?

				
The evidence has little effect on the determination of whether the claim is true or valid.	The evidence seems to support the claim, but there are still significant uncertainties as to whether that support really proves the claim is true.	There are other elements that come into play so that this evidence is not terribly important, but it does help to build the case.	There is a small amount of room for interpretation or other variable, but basically the evidence is strong in its support of the claim.	Considering for the moment that the evidence is true, it makes a very strong case for the claim.

				
The evidence has little effect on the determination of whether the claim is not true or valid.	The evidence does seem to weaken the claim, but there are still significant uncertainties as to whether that opposition really proves the claim is false.	There are other elements that come into play so that this evidence is not terribly important, but it does help to build the case against the claim.	There is a small amount of room for interpretation or other variable, but basically the evidence is strong in its opposition of the claim.	Considering for the moment that the evidence is true, it makes a very strong case against the claim.

## Rating Your Claim

After you have collected, evaluated, and attached your evidence to a claim, you must determine whether the claim is actually true or valid or not. In literature, as in life, things are rarely black or white. A rating scale is provided in the *Showing Evidence Tool* to help you communicate how strongly you believe all the evidence together supports or opposes the claim.

(no stars)					
Considering all of the evidence and the quality of that evidence, this claim has absolutely no merit and has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt to be untrue.	Although there are elements of truth in this claim, the evidence casts such considerable doubt as to the truth of this claim, that it is fairly clear that the claim is not true and/or valid.	Circumstantial or minor evidence does seem to support this claim, but not enough to make a determination. "Reasonable doubt" exists.	The evidence provided does support the claim, but there are still uncertainties as to whether that support really proves the claim is true. This rating is the result of a "hung jury."	There is a small amount of room for interpretation or other variable, but considering all of the evidence and the quality of that evidence, the claim is strongly supported and is most likely true and/or valid.	Considering all of the evidence and the quality of that evidence, it is quite obvious that this claim is true and valid.

## Conclusion

The conclusion section is to be used when you have multiple claims to consider. Weigh the merits of each claim and explain your reasoning as to which claim or claims are more true or valid than the others, if that is your finding.

## Romeo and Juliet: Claim and Evidence Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Explanation of Claims	Explanation of claim specifically provides accurate, detailed information on who or what is responsible/not responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The evidence includes direct quotes from the play.	Explanation of claim provides a brief amount of information on who or what is responsible/not responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The evidence includes direct quotes from the play.	Explanation of claim provides vague information on who or what is responsible/not responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The evidence shows minimal direct quotes from the play.	Explanation of claim provides no information on who or what is responsible/not responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The evidence does not include direct quotes from the play.
Analysis of Evidence	Analysis shows sophisticated understanding of how evidence relates to and supports or opposes claims. Rationale of support/non-support reflects understanding of the complex interaction of factors and points of view in the play.	Analysis shows basic understanding of how evidence supports or opposes the claims. Rationale of support/non-support reflects some understanding of the complexity of the play	Analysis shows vague understanding of how evidence relates to the claims. Rationale of support/non-support reflects a superficial understanding.	Analysis shows understanding of evidence/ claim relationship is non-existent or inconsistent. Rationale does not support rating.
Conclusion	Conclusion reflects well-developed understanding of the characters or elements that are most to blame for the deaths based on evidence gathered. Final focus on who or what is ultimately to blame is convincing.	Conclusion reflects adequate understanding of the characters or elements that are most to blame for the deaths based on evidence gathered. Final focus on who or what is ultimately to blame is somewhat convincing.	Conclusion reflects basic understanding of the characters or elements that are most to blame for the deaths based on evidence gathered. Final focus on who or what is to blame is not clearly related to claim.	Conclusion is not related to claim and/or does not show relationship between claim and evidence. No understanding of who or what is to blame is evident.

## Romeo & Juliet Language Arts Role-Play Scoring Guide

	4	3	2	1	Score/ Comments
<p><b>Preparation and Research</b> (x 15)</p>	<p><b>Attorney:</b> If an attorney, my arguments and examination of witnesses are concise, clear, and compelling. My statements and questions display a clear understanding of the plot and characters of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and are based on specific evidence and reasoning.</p> <p><b>Judge:</b> If a judge, my rulings are based on a thorough and correct understanding of the play and on claims, specific evidence and reasoning and an appropriate court atmosphere is maintained.</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> If a witness, my answers are appropriately based on an excellent understanding of the play and thorough and accurate understanding of the claims, specific evidence and reasoning. I demonstrate an ability to improvise and apply appropriate interpretation of the text to fit the attorneys' questions.</p> <p><b>Juror:</b> If a juror, I pay attention to the current discussions and take notes. My notes reflect attention to the important aspects of the case along with questions and personal responses to the evidence presented.</p>	<p><b>Attorney:</b> If an attorney, my arguments and examination of witnesses are clear and convincing. My statements and questions display a basic understanding of the plot and characters of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and are based on evidence and reasoning.</p> <p><b>Judge:</b> If a judge, my rulings are based on a basic understanding of the play and on claims, evidence and reasoning and an appropriate court atmosphere is maintained most of the time.</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> If a witness, my answers are appropriately based on a basic understanding of the play and claims, specific evidence and reasoning. I am able to apply an appropriate interpretation of the text to fit most of the attorneys' questions.</p> <p><b>Juror:</b> If a juror, I pay attention to the current discussions and take notes. My notes reflect attention to most of the important aspects of the case along with questions about the evidence presented.</p>	<p><b>Attorney:</b> If an attorney, my arguments and examination of witnesses are fairly clear, understandable, and for the most part, convincing. My statements and questions display a limited understanding of the play and are based on some evidence and reasoning.</p> <p><b>Judge:</b> If a judge, my rulings are based on a limited understanding of the play and claims, evidence and reasoning. The seriousness of an appropriate court atmosphere is not always maintained.</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> If a witness, my answers are based on a limited understanding of the play and claims, evidence and reasoning. I am able to apply an appropriate interpretation of the text to fit some of the attorneys' questions.</p> <p><b>Juror:</b> If a juror, I sometimes pay attention to the current discussions and take notes sporadically. My notes reflect attention to some of the important aspects of the case and have limited questions about the evidence presented.</p>	<p><b>Attorney:</b> If an attorney, my arguments and examination of witnesses are unclear, illogical, and for the most part, confusing. My statements and questions are not based on the play or on claims, evidence or reasoning.</p> <p><b>Judge:</b> If a judge, my rulings are not based on an understanding of the play, claims, evidence or reasoning. The seriousness of an appropriate court atmosphere is not maintained.</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> If a witness, my answers do not reflect an understanding of the play, claims, evidence or reasoning. I am not able to apply appropriate interpretation of the text to fit the attorneys' questions.</p> <p><b>Juror:</b> If a juror, I do not pay attention to the current discussions or take notes. I may be distracting to other class members.</p>	
<p><b>Presentation</b> (x 10)</p>	<p><b>Court Presence:</b> My characterization is creative and well rehearsed with a smooth delivery. I have appropriate eye contact and</p>	<p><b>Court Presence:</b> My characterization is evident at a basic level, along with some rehearsal. I have appropriate eye contact and</p>	<p><b>Court Presence:</b> My characterization is evident at a limited level, along with little rehearsal. I have some eye contact and</p>	<p><b>Court Presence:</b> Neither my characterization nor rehearsal is evident. I have no eye contact and it is difficult to hear the responses and</p>	

	maintain my voice volume.	my voice volume is maintained most of the time.	my voice volume is maintained some of the time.	questions.	
<b>Props</b> (x 5)	<b>Props/Characterization:</b> I use appropriate costume, props, visual aids, timelines, charts, etc. during the trial to enhance the understanding and evaluation of the evidence.	<b>Props/Characterization:</b> I use mostly appropriate costume, props, visual aids, timelines, charts, etc. during the trial to enhance the understanding and evaluation of the evidence.	<b>Props/Characterization:</b> I use some level of costume, props, visual aids, timelines, charts, etc. during the trial, but what is used sometimes detracts from the understanding and evaluation of the evidence.	<b>Props/Characterization:</b> I do not use costume, props, visual aids, timelines, charts, etc. during the trial.	
<b>Teamwork</b> (extra or neg. pts)	Evidence of teamwork is obvious and my contributions greatly enhance the court presentation.	Evidence of teamwork is obvious and my contributions enhance the court presentation.	Some evidence of my contribution to the court presentation exists, but my efforts are not equal to the other team member(s).	I contribute minimally to the effort.	Adjusted score:
	<b>Comments:</b>				<b>Total</b>

## Jury Report Checklist

### Introductory Paragraph

- Does it have an attention getter?
- Does it mention the author, the title of the work, a short background of the work?
- Does it have a complete, three-part jury finding (thesis statement) on who or what is found guilty?

### Developmental (Body) Paragraphs

- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence that relates to one part of the jury finding?
- Does each paragraph have at least three concrete details (facts from story or quotes) and each detail have at least two commentary sentences?
- Does the final body paragraph focus on the character or element that is most at fault for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?

### Conclusion Paragraph

- Does it restate the jury finding?
- Does it show what the writer has learned?
- Does it come to a satisfying closure?

### Final Editing - The following have been checked:

- Present tense used throughout essay
- Limited personal pronouns ("We, the jury..." is acceptable, but not "I" or "me")
- No contractions
- No fragments or run-on sentences
- Correct spelling
- "Be" verbs used sparingly
- Subjects and verbs agree; pronouns and antecedents agree (and antecedents are clear)
- Modified MLA essay format used (double-spaced, etc.)
- References to lines in the play are formatted correctly (act.scene.lines) Example (I.ii.5-7) = Act I, Scene ii, lines 5-7



## Reading Shakespeare's Plays: Understanding Elizabethan English

### Unusual Word Arrangements

Many students wonder if people really spoke the way they do in Shakespeare's plays. The answer is no. Shakespeare wrote the way he did for poetic and dramatic purposes. There are many reasons why he did this—to create a specific poetic rhythm, to emphasize a certain word, to give a character a specific speech pattern, and so forth. Take a look at a great example from Robinson's *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*:

I ate the sandwich.  
I the sandwich ate.  
Ate the sandwich I.  
Ate I the sandwich.  
The sandwich I ate.  
The sandwich ate I.

Robinson shows us that these four words can create six unique sentences, which carry the same meaning.

When you are reading Shakespeare's plays, look for this type of unusual word arrangement. Locate the subject, verb, and object of the sentence. Notice that the object of the sentence is often placed at the beginning (the sandwich) in front of the verb (ate) and subject (I). Rearrange the words in the order that makes the most sense to you (I ate the sandwich). This will be one of your first steps in making sense of Shakespeare's language.

### Language Omissions

Again, for the sake of his poetry, Shakespeare often left out letters, syllables, and whole words. These omissions are not that much different from the way we speak today.

For instance, we say:

"Been to class yet?"  
"No. Heard Coker's givin' a test."  
"Wha'sup wi'that?"

We leave out words and parts of words to speed up our speech. If we were talking in complete sentences, we would say:

"Have you been to class yet?"  
"No, I have not been to class. I heard that Mrs. Coker is giving a test today."  
"What is up with that?"

A few examples of Shakespearean omissions, also called *contractions*, follow:

'tis ~ it is  
ope' ~ open  
o'er ~ over  
gi' ~ give  
ne'er ~ never  
i' ~ in  
e'er ~ ever  
oft' ~ often  
a' ~ he  
e'en ~ even



## Unusual Words

Most of us run into problems when we come across archaic words that are no longer used in Modern English. Or worse, when we run across words that are still used today but have much different meanings than when Shakespeare used (or invented) the words. This is particularly troublesome, because we think we know what the word means, but the line still does not make sense. For instance, when Juliet says, "Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" she is not asking *where* he is; she is asking *why* is he Romeo. In other words, of all the people I could have fallen in love with, why do you have to be a Montague, the son of my father's enemy?

While running across unknown words can be frustrating, it is not surprising. After all, Shakespeare's vocabulary included 30,000 words! Today, our vocabularies run between only 6,000 and 15,000 words. Because Shakespeare loved to play with words, he also created new words that we still use today.

## Some Basic Words

an - if

anon - now; at once; soon; shortly

beseech - implore; beg; ask; importune

durst - dared; had the courage to

fain - ready; willing; eager

marry - the meaning and force are similar to those of the word *well*

morrow - morning

prithee - please; I pray thee

fellow - mister (the word is used disrespectfully/mockingly)

truth - fact

thee, thou =

sirrah = fellow; mister. The word is used disrespectfully/mockingly.

sooth - truth; fact

thee, thou - you

thine - yours

thy - your

thyself - yourself

wherefore - why

withal - in addition; notwithstanding; besides

zounds - expression of surprise, anger, amazement, disappointment. The word is a corruption of "by His wounds" (meaning the wounds of Christ). The word came about after people began pronouncing "by His wounds" quickly so that it sounded like a single word--zounds.

## Resources

Glossary of Archaisms

Old Words That Occur Frequently in Shakespeare

[www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xArchaisms.html](http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xArchaisms.html)

For help with specific words, look them up at:

Shakespeare's Grammar—Glossary Search

[www.bardweb.net/grammar/04gloss.html](http://www.bardweb.net/grammar/04gloss.html)

And just for fun...

Ye Olde Official Shakespearean Insult Kit

[www.petelevin.com/shakespeare.htm](http://www.petelevin.com/shakespeare.htm)



Shakespeare

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Engl. 1

Epal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Smith, Period \_

## **Two Perspectives Are Better Than One**

Keep a reading log that you will use to discuss the play with your ePAL. Follow these simple steps to create a reading log that will help you gain a deeper understanding of the play:

### **Step 1 ~ Reading for Understanding**

- a. Read each scene at least once.
- b. Record any new words or phrases you looked up during reading. Be sure to include the definitions in your reading log.
- c. Write a summary of the scene in a dark color pen or font.
- d. Record any questions you may have about the scene.

### **Step 2 ~ Discussing the Scene/Play with your ePAL**

- a. Discuss the scene/play with your ePAL
- b. Ask the questions you wrote down in your reading log.
- c. Discuss the focus question(s).

### **Step 3 ~ Adding Answers to Your Reading Log**

- a. Use a different colored pen or font.
- b. Write the answers to your reading log questions.

### **Step 4 ~ Reading for Pleasure**

- a. Use a different colored pen or font.
- b. Now that you have a basic understanding of the plot and unusual words or phrases, it is time to read the play again.
- c. Record your personal reactions to each scene.

### **Step 5 ~ Discuss the Play**

- a. Your rereading will probably create new questions, so go back to class or your ePAL and continue discussing the play.
- b. Record any new answers or insights you gain in your reading log (be sure to use a different color font or ink).

## Understanding and Discussing *Romeo and Juliet*

Use these links to jump to the appropriate Act:

[Act I](#)

[Act II](#)

[Act III](#)

[Act IV](#)

[Act V](#)

**Reminder:** A copy of every email to and from your ePAL is also sent to both teachers. Keep conversations appropriate or this opportunity will be revoked.

### I N T R O D U C T I O N

<b>Who is your assigned ePAL?</b>	
<b>Two truths and a fib... Tell two true things about yourself (interesting activities you've done, hobbies you have, etc.) and one fib. Your ePAL will try to guess which ones are true and what is not.</b>	
<b>What are your ePAL's two truths and a fib?</b>	

### A C T I

**Date:**

**Prologue; Act I, Scene i**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the prologue, it discusses "star-crossed lovers"—what does that mean? As you go through the play, think about whether it's a valid label for Romeo and Juliet.</li> <li>• How do you think the insults add to the tension? What could be done differently?</li> <li>• What do you think the effect of constant fighting would be on the rest of the citizens of Verona? What parallels do you see in today's world?</li> <li>• What is your first impression of Romeo?</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act I, Scenes ii-iii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your first impression of Lord Capulet, the father of Juliet?</li><li>• What is your first impression of Juliet?</li><li>• What about the nurse?</li><li>• How involved is Juliet's mother in Juliet's life do you think?</li></ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act I, Scene iv**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <p>What's the deal with Mercutio and the whole Queen Mab speech? What kind of friend is he to Romeo?</p>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act I, Scene v**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is your impression of Tybalt? Do you know anyone who can be set off as quickly as he can? How do you deal with that kind of person?</li><li>• Why do you think Lord Capulet doesn't mind that Romeo is at the party?</li></ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

# A C T I I

**Date:**  
**Prologue; Act II, Scene i**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is Romeo's description of Juliet reasonable for someone he has just met?</li><li>• Anyone surprised that Juliet brings up marriage on the first day she meets Romeo? What do you think about the speed of this relationship?</li><li>• How do Romeo and Juliet compare in terms of maturity?</li></ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act II, Scene ii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <p>Is Romeo right in turning to the Friar for guidance? What kind of help does the Friar give Romeo? Is there something else he should have done?</p>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act II, Scene iii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <p>What do you think about the teasing the "boys" give the nurse? What kind of advice does the nurse give Romeo?</p>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act II, Scene iv-v**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> What do you think about the Nurse and the Friar conspiring to wed these two behind their parents' back? Is ending the feud a good enough "excuse"?	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**A C T I I I**

**Date:**  
**Act III, Scene i**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who dies first? What would have happened if Romeo didn't try to avenge this death?</li> <li>• What are the effects on Verona of banishing the heir to the Montague family? What are the effects on the family itself?</li> <li>• How could this whole situation been dealt with differently?</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act III, Scene ii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the imagery of the beginning of the scene. Does Juliet sound like a girl or a woman?</li> <li>• Imagine the effect of the news the Nurse brings: your husband has killed your cousin and you'll never see your husband again. Discuss what kind of emotions Juliet must have felt.</li> <li>• The Nurse just wants Juliet to feel better. Is there another course of action she should have taken or</li> </ul>	

advice she could have given?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act III, Scene iii**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> What is Friar Lawrence's plan after Romeo's banishment? What is the Nurse's? How much can we blame them when their plans fail?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act III, Scene iv**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> What was Capulet's stand on Juliet's marriage when Paris first approached him earlier in the play? How does he change in this scene? Why do you think he changes? And how old is Juliet?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act III, Scene v**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some things that Romeo and Juliet say that foreshadows what is to come?</li> <li>• Did Juliet actually lie to her mother?</li> <li>• What's the deal with Lord Capulet? Was there any indication in earlier scenes that he would react this way? Is there anything anyone could have said or done to help diffuse this situation?</li> <li>• Think about all the changes that have happened in the few days of the play. How is Juliet making decisions as her life becomes</li> </ul>	



more complex? How could she have thought out her options differently? Who could she have turned to for help?	
Discussion with ePAL	

## A C T I V

**Date:**  
**Act IV, Scene i**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> Does the Friar really mess up here? Or is it a good plan? Knowing how desperate Juliet is, is his plan and giving her the means of carrying it out the best way to go?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act IV, Scene ii**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> Why does Capulet rush Juliet into marriage a day early? What could Juliet or the Friar have done differently?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act IV, Scene iii**

Unclear Vocabulary or Content	
Questions about this scene	
Summary	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> What are some of Juliet's fears? How does her imagination get the best of her? How does Shakespeare help to "paint a picture" of her fears?	
Discussion with ePAL	

**Date:**  
**Act IV, Scene iv-v**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of impact does Juliet's "death" have on her family?</li> <li>• How is death personified? How does that help the mourners describe their grief?</li> <li>• What do you think of the Friar deceiving everyone with his speech about how she's better off in heaven?</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

## A C T V

**Date:**  
**Act V, Scene i**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romeo says when he hears of Juliet's "death," "I defy you stars!" What does he mean? Is he able to defy them?</li> <li>• What is the apothecary's part in all of this? Should he bear part of the blame?</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act V, Scene ii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Question:</b> Why does the Friar's plan fail?	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

**Date:**  
**Act V, Scene iii**

<b>Unclear Vocabulary or Content</b>	
<b>Questions about this scene</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Focus Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could Balthasar have done anything to prevent Romeo from his plan?</li> <li>• Why is Paris so determined to keep Romeo from Juliet's grave? What does Paris think Romeo is going to do? Was his death really necessary?</li> <li>• What is ironic about Romeo's speech about how beautiful Juliet still is?</li> <li>• Again, death is personified. Discuss some of the more interesting descriptions.</li> <li>• The friar is scared of being caught, so he leaves Juliet with her just-dead husband beside her. What was he thinking?!</li> <li>• Discuss the Prince's chiding to the lovers' parents: "See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate, that heaven finds means to kill your joys with love! ...all are punished." What do they learn too late?</li> <li>• Looking back on the play, how does Shakespeare through <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> help us to see and understand ourselves and the effects our decisions have on those around us? Is there any insight we can take away from this story?</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussion with ePAL</b>	

Some questions from <http://www.jetlink.net/~massij/wssq/rj.htm>

Jessica Jones

Mrs. Smith

English 1, period 2

22 March 2005

### Who's To Blame?

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings"  
(*Julius Caesar*, I.ii.41-42). The question of who is to blame is in many of Shakespeare's works. The idea that fate is behind the scenes, pulling this string and that, was a popular idea in Shakespeare's day. However, Shakespeare has his characters question whether it really is not fate or stars that control them, but their own decisions and the type of people they are that dictate their fate. Our charge as the jury has been to determine whether it is fate or the actions of certain individuals that turn a love story into a story of woe in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. We the jury find that fate, the quarreling families, and Romeo and Juliet themselves are all to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Fate does appear to have a hand in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Even the Chorus at the beginning of the play calls them "A pair of star-cross'd lovers" and describes their love as "death-mark'd" (Act 1 Prologue). The Chorus is a form of omniscient narrator so if the Chorus says that Romeo and Juliet are doomed to die then it is fairly good evidence that fate has to bare some blame. Even the Friar acknowledges that "a greater power than we can contradict hath thwarted our intents" (V.iii.153-154), which indicates that even he sees an outside power involved in the events. Even more condemning are the circumstantial evidence. Friar John just happens to get himself quarantined when he has an important letter to deliver to Romeo. Romeo just happens to drink the poison just minutes before Juliet awakens. Friar Laurence just happens to arrive at the Capulet's tomb minutes too late to save Romeo. One of these circumstances alone would not prove anything; however, all of them together build a fairly

strong case against fate. Fate, however, never can act alone; therefore, it is the actions of the families that allowed these terrible things to occur.

The Capulet and Montague families share in the blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The feud between these two families has gotten so bad that the Prince has to intervene and tell them that the next brawl that breaks out will result in capital punishment. It is no wonder that Romeo and Juliet feel they must keep their relationship a secret. The only reason Friar Laurence marries them is because he hopes the marriage will “turn your households' rancour to pure love” (II.ii.92). But before the marriage could be announced, Tybalt fights with Mercutio, killing him and escalating the violence. If Tybalt had not killed Mercutio, Romeo most likely would have been able to smooth things over and eventually reveal his marriage to the families. Lastly, Lord Capulet himself is to blame for his own daughter's death. He says to her,

Hang thee, young baggage! disobedient wretch!  
 I tell thee what,--get thee to church o' Thursday,  
 Or never after look me in the face;  
 ...An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;  
 An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets  
 For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee  
 (III.v.160-162, 192-194)

Capulet's flying into a rage and forcing Juliet to marry Paris in such haste makes her desperate to try anything. He may not have plunged the knife into her heart, but he certainly placed it in her hand.

Although the situation goes from bad to worse, nothing and no one forces Romeo and Juliet to commit suicide. They must take responsibility for their own actions. The turning event of the play occurs when Romeo kills Tybalt out of vengeance. After Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo says, ““And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now! ... Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads, staying for thine to keep him company: Either thou, or I, or both, must go with him”

(III.i.127, 129-132). If Romeo had not killed Tybalt, he would not have been banished. If he had not been banished, there might have been a way for Romeo and Juliet to reveal their marriage and heal the wounds between their two families. The killing of Tybalt does not end Romeo's rash decisions. When Romeo hears that Juliet is dead, he immediately plans to kill himself. He asks the Apothecary for a "dram of poison; such soon-speeding gear as will disperse itself through all the veins, that the life-weary taker may fall dead..." (V.i.60-62). He could have waited to hear from the Friar, but his reckless actions end up costing his and Juliet's life. When Romeo gets to the Capulet's tomb, he wastes no time and quickly drinks the poison:

Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!

Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on

The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!

Here's to my love! [Drinks] O true apothecary!

Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

(V.iii.116-120)

Romeo could have chosen a different route, but instead he chooses death. If he hadn't chosen death, Juliet would not have killed herself. Juliet, too, is pronounced with the same judgment. When she sees that Romeo is dead, she says, "Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!" [Snatching Romeo's dagger] "This is thy sheath;" [Stabs herself] "there rust, and let me die" (V.iii.169-170). Although circumstances were horrible, no one forces Juliet to kill herself. She makes that decision herself. The evidence is overwhelming that the deaths of Romeo and Juliet were directly caused by their own decisions and actions.

All are to blame, to some extent, for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. However, the evidence is clear that there are varying degrees of guilt. Fate has a significant role in the outcome; the actions of the families are even more to blame; however, Romeo and Juliet are guilty most of all.