

ROMEO AND JULIET (20% of whole English Lit GCSE) - Context		Key themes		Key Terms		
Duelling and the concept of honour: Maintaining the honour of your family name was hugely important at the time. If you were challenged to a duel and you refused, you would be deemed a coward, thus damaging your honour and the status of your family. Most Elizabethan gentlemen carried swords in public and many did fight in the streets.		CONFLICT: Conflict is one of the key driving forces in the play and it occurs between a range of characters: between warring households; within families; within friendship groups; and between members of the communities. This conflict results in violence; violence opens the play in scene one and it also concludes the play with the deaths of the two lovers. It is worth noting that the motif of light vs dark is also linked to many of these themes.		violence & hate		Tragedy
Courtly Love & cures for lovesickness: common in medieval literature where a knight was consumed with passion for an unattainable noblewoman; Romeo fits this perfectly. Elizabethan doctors saw unrequited love or desire as a disease, a type of melancholy sometimes called lovesickness. They tried various cures and sometimes sent patients to church to confess to a priest. They believed that if lovesickness was left untreated, it could lead to madness.				death, secrecy family youth vs age individual vs society/religion order vs chaos appearance vs reality		Protagonist
Role of women in a patriarchal society: Elizabethan England was a society controlled by men. Women were seen as the weaker sex & were expected to be meek & mild, and most importantly, obedient to their fathers & later their husbands.		LOVE: The love Romeo and Juliet share is beautiful, passionate, exhilarating, transformative and they are willing to give everything for it. But it is also chaotic and destructive, bringing death to friends, family and to themselves. It is worth noting that the motif of light vs dark is also linked to many of these themes.		conflict courtly love marriage sex youth.		Antagonist
Arranged marriages: Marriages amongst the wealthy were arranged by parents in order to match or improve social standing. However, in practice, parents did try to choose someone their child liked and was happy to marry. Secret marriages such as that between the young Romeo and Juliet would have been both illegal and shocking.				FATE: No matter how much they love each other or what plans they make, their struggles against fate only help fulfil it. But defeating or escaping fate is not the point. No one escapes fate. It is Romeo and Juliet's determination to struggle against fate in order to be together, whether in life or death, that shows the fiery passion of their love and which makes that love eternal.		Prologue
The Italian setting of the play: The play is set in Italy, which was known for its warring states. It is also a Catholic country; religion was extremely important and marriage vows were seen as sacred – once made, they could not be broken.		Monologue				
Plot		Soliloquy				
ACT 1		In Italy, two noble families (the Montagues & Capulets) are feuding yet again. Romeo is in love with Rosaline, who rejects his love. As a result, he is depressed. To cure Romeo of his lovesickness, Benvolio persuades him to attend a masked ball at the Capulets, where he might see prettier girls and therefore forget about Rosaline. Romeo meets Juliet and they instantly fall in love with one another. Tybalt hears Romeo's voice at the ball and is furious that a Montague has dared to attend.		Sonnet form		
ACT 2		Romeo stands beneath Juliet's balcony. He sees Juliet leaning over the railing, hears her calling out his name & wishes that he wasn't a Montague. He reveals his presence & they resolve, after a passionate exchange, to be married secretly.		Dramatic irony		
ACT 3		Romeo returns from his recent marriage to Juliet and encounters Tybalt, who challenges Romeo to a duel. Unbeknownst to all present, Tybalt is now Romeo's kinsman by marriage so Romeo refuses. Mercutio is livid with Romeo's refusal and fights with Tybalt who underhandedly kills Mercutio. Furious by the death of his friend, Romeo kills Tybalt and takes shelter in the Friar's cell. The Prince exiles Romeo for his part in the fray.		Foreshadowing		
ACT 4		In despair, Juliet seeks Friar Lawrence's advice. He gives her a sleeping potion, which for a time will cause her to appear dead. Thus, on the day of her supposed marriage to Paris, she will be carried to the family vault. By the time she awakens, Romeo will be summoned to the vault and take her away to Mantua.		Juxtaposition		
ACT 5		The Friar's letter fails to reach Romeo. When he hears of Juliet's death, Romeo procures a deadly poison from an apothecary and secretly returns to Verona to say his last farewell to his deceased wife and die by her side. When Juliet awakens from her deep sleep, she realises Romeo's error and kills herself with his dagger. The Capulets and Montague decide to reconcile as a result of the deaths of their children.		Oxymoron		
Significant characters		AO1 (40%)		Make an informed personal response using a critical style. Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.		
Romeo		AO2 (40%)		Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.		
Juliet		AO3 (20%)		Show understanding of the relationships between texts & the contexts in which they were written.		
Friar Lawrence		AO4 (4 marks)		Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.		
Nurse		The exam		Firstly, highlight the key words in the question		
Capulet		The exam		Now read the extract and highlight good evidence to answer the 1st bullet point of your question (5 min)		
Mercutio		The exam		Write response to both bullet points:		
Benvolio		The exam		Intro: discuss the extract's place in the play then go straight into analysing the extract (20 mins)		
Prince		The exam		Write 2 or 3 detailed PEELS for the second part of your question. (20 mins)		
Tybalt		The exam		Sum up how the writer presents...whatever the question asks. (5 mins)		
		The exam		Note: If you're struggling with one of the bullet points, spend some more time on the bullet point you're happy with.		
		The exam		Check spellings, punctuation and vocab (5 mins)		
		Sample answer		Starting with this moment in the play (Act3, Scene1), write about how Shakespeare presents conflict.		
		Sample answer		Through the use of dramatic irony, Shakespeare allows his audience to understand why Romeo “love[s]” Tybalt, whom Romeo now regards as family following his clandestine marriage to Juliet. However, an Elizabethan audience would be aware of the dishonour of refusing a challenge and would not be surprised at the hot-headed Mercutio's desire to join the “fray” due to what he sees as Romeo's “vile submission”. The sudden death of Mercutio's lively character would come as a shock and his final pun when he refers to himself as a “grave man” would actually reinforce that shock rather than add humour; it illustrates the brutal reality of Romeo's world, which is in stark contrast to the romantic world of the preceding marriage scene. The audience would now expect “grave” consequences and indeed there are: Mercutio's death becomes the pivotal point in the play as a series of tragic events ensues, leading to the tragic climax. Mercutio's repeated curse on “both [their] houses” would also remind the audience that it is the families’ “ancient grudge” that has ultimately led to his death. Such a dramatic scene could be staged in such a way as to convey its importance with perhaps the actors frozen in horror as Mercutio looks to the audience while delivering his final lines.		
		Stretch yourself		➤ Whilst analysing the extract, quickly refer out to other parts of the play.		
		Stretch yourself		➤ Watch different performances of key scenes to provide you with ‘ammunition’ when discussing form.		