



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside Out

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Romeo & Juliet

The two greatest families in Verona, the Montagues and the Capulets, are involved in a bitter feud. In disguise, Romeo, the son of Lord Montague, attends a feast hosted by the Capulets where he falls in love with the beautiful Juliet Capulet. Waiting under her window after the party in the hope of seeing her, Romeo overhears Juliet confess her love for him. He decides to ask her to marry him secretly the next day.

Romeo's presence at the feast, discovered after he leaves, leads to a fight in which Tybalt Capulet mortally wounds Mercutio, Romeo's friend. Romeo, in turn, kills Tybalt, a crime for which he is banished from Verona. Lord Capulet, unaware of Juliet's marriage, offers her hand in marriage to Count Paris. However, with the help of Friar Lawrence, who performed the marriage ceremony of the young lovers, Juliet plans to avoid the union to the Count by swallowing a potion that will let her mimic death for 42 hours. The Friar will then contact Romeo, who will rescue her from the burial vault.

Sadly, Romeo misinterprets the Friar's message and believes that Juliet is truly dead. Stricken, he commits suicide beside her sleeping form by swallowing poison. He dies after killing Count Paris outside the vault and, when Juliet awakens to find Romeo's dead body beside her, she joins him in death by stabbing herself with his dagger.

The prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*

*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
Doth 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.*



Photo by Gary Isaacs

About the Production...

The National Theatre Conservatory's *Romeo and Juliet* opens on a scene of actors at rehearsal. The audience is invited into the magical world of theatre where only seven actors perform all the roles in the play, where places are created through imagination, and where poetry is spoken in conversation and fantastic reality comes to life. The focus of this production is on story rather than spectacle.

Production concept is the term for a director's ideas about a play; the concept for this piece is to find a world in which Shakespeare's language and situations can exist through the use of seven actors. "Our production embraces the less-is-more visual aesthetic of project work in the belief that it usually leads to a richer experience for actors and audience alike. When an all but exclusive priority is placed on language, imagination and depth of human connection, Shakespeare soars." (Jennifer McCray Rincon, director)

In order to understand the production concept, it is important to be familiar with the process of a production. The **rehearsal process** is the time when the artists involved with

the project collaborate in the creative process to transform, unify and intensify the life of the play.¹ One of the first phases of the rehearsal process is termed "**table work**." During this period, the actors familiarize themselves with the text and the director discusses objectives and ideas for the play. Because this production is actor-driven, the director encouraged the actors to explore the work through improvisation within a workshop-style framework in order to build upon and highlight the specific gifts of each of the cast members and reflect their contemporary sensibilities.

The next step of the rehearsal process is usually **blocking** or the positioning of actors on the set and the plotting of movement.² During this time, the actors are "**on-book**" (working as they read from the script) and the concept begins to take form. Special rehearsals were scheduled with the **fight choreographer** for the actors to learn the stage combat. The fight scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* reflect the production concept by blending styles and periods from street brawls to swordfights with rapiers. **Rehearsal props** (simple properties or pieces of the set) are

introduced at this time; they are replaced with final props before the show opens. The properties in this production remain simplistic in that only those items essential to telling the story are used: a table, a bed, some chairs, benches, torches, rapiers, etc.

The next stage of rehearsal occurs when the actors are **off-book** (they have memorized their lines) and are testing, selecting and modifying the choices of behavior that bring each character to life. This phase lasts until the actors and all technical elements are ready for final rehearsals. **Tech and dress rehearsals** refer to those last few days before opening when the technical elements of set, lights, sound, costumes and make-up are added to the production. For *Romeo and Juliet*, the technical elements are kept simple in order to focus on the spoken word. The production, not burdened by scene changes, has an almost filmic flow that enhances the evolution of character and story. From casting to the final curtain, the production of a play is an evolutionary process. Components are continually added that create new dimensions to what you will see tonight.

Courtly Love

Examining the nature of Romeo and Juliet's love is important to achieve an understanding of the play as a whole. In some ways, the lovers' passion reflects the practice of "courtly love." Courtly love is a tradition that defines what love is and establishes a code of behavior for lovers. It flourished in the Middle Ages and had a significant influence on Renaissance literature. In essence, under this system, love is illicit and sensual and is accompanied by great emotional suffering. The lover (in literature, usually a knight) falls in love at first sight and agonizes over his situation until his affection is returned. Once he achieves this goal, he is inspired to perform great deeds. Further, the lovers pledge their fidelity to one another and vow to keep their

union secret. Romeo and Juliet's affair closely follows this pattern: they fall in love at first sight; their love is strengthened rather than weakened by the feud; they meet at night and vow to conceal their union, and each promptly resolves to commit suicide upon learning of the other's death. Another important feature of *Romeo and Juliet* is the spiritual quality and redemptive power of their love. The couple treats love with great reverence, and it is their faithfulness to it in the face of violence, hatred and even death that ultimately restores peace and order to Verona. In the words of Robert Metcalf Smith, *Romeo and Juliet* is "the perfect love poem of the English race and of the world."



SOURCES OF THE STORY

The first version of a plot that is specifically about Romeo and Juliet appeared in a collection of Italian romances, *Il Novellino* published in 1476 by Masuccio Salernitano. It was adapted, and in the process, made into something considerably closer to the Shakespearean version by Luigi da Porto in or about 1530. The first important English version of the story was in the form of a long narrative poem, *The Tragical Historie of Romeus and Juliet*, published in 1562 by the English translator, Arthur Brooke. Brooke's poem is attributed to being Shakespeare's direct source.

Shakespeare sets his play in Verona. Many Italian cities of the period contained those who favored a strong and centralized secular government under the German Emperor (Ghibellines) and others who favored decentralized and independent city-states under the moral leadership of the Pope (Guelphs). The cities were divided by the rivalry of internal factions led by competing noble families. The hostility of the opposing factions resulted in street fighting with private armies of sympathizers. They lined up on sides in feuds, "or sometimes they had feuds for other reasons and lined up on opposite sides in consequence."³

Shakespeare does not give the nature of the feud between the Veronese households, and there is no indication that it was political in nature. In 13th-century Italy, however, there were two Italian families, the Montecchi and the Capelletti, locked in political struggle. The Montecchi lived in Verona and the Capelletti lived in

Cremona, 60 miles away; it is not known if they had any children named Romeo and Juliet. A. L. Rowse, in his *The Annotated Shakespeare* provides an insight as to why Shakespeare might have been familiar with feuds and made them an issue in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare's friend and patron, Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, had two close friends who were excellent swordsmen, Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers. The Danvers family was involved in a bitter feud with another family, the Longs. Sir John Danvers, the father, was a quiet man (not unlike the senior Capulet) and had little interest in the squabble. But his wife, Lady Danvers (a Mrs. Capulet type) was a vengeful sort and spurred her sons on. One October, the Danvers brothers forced their way onto the Long's estate and into their home. Henry Danvers killed Henry Long, son and heir of the estate. The Danvers escaped after their deed and sought asylum at the Earl of Southampton's home. The Earl fed the boys and ensured their safe passage across the English Channel. The Danvers eluded the local sheriff but fell into the service of Henri of Navarre, much to the grief of their gentle father. He died because his sons had broken his heart. Lady Danvers then married a cousin of Queen Elizabeth's in order to assure her sons' return to England. Return they did to their native land and both obtained pardons.

THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD

Courtesy of Intiman Theatre

The world of the Elizabethans consisted of an enforced class structure:

- God
- Queen
- Nobility—titled
- Gentry—the lesser nobility, untitled, what we today would call upper-middle class
- Yeomanry—makes at least 40 shillings per year from freehold land (rising middle class),
- Artisans, Craftsmen, Laborers
- The Poor

However, the world was beginning to shift. Previously, almost everyone believed that God had ordained a certain order to the world, that the order was fragile and that everyone must do their part lest chaos and murder run rampant. Everyone had a part to play and everyone received the part they deserved. But with the Renaissance, the focus was beginning to shift from a *God-centered* world to an *individual-centered* one. As always, whenever times are good, more people begin thinking as individuals and contemplate larger questions such as the meaning of life and our purpose on earth.

Under Elizabeth's rule, the country remained relatively secure. The quality of life, at least for the upper classes, improved. One dilemma was that with the old order still present and the new world order on the horizon, people weren't quite sure what they believed. It was a bewildering mixture of the past with a vague hint of what was to come. "The moral and intellectual tone of this picturesque and vivacious society was singularly free and unrestrained."¹² Fashions in clothing, hair, court conduct and ideas of honor and nobility were adapted from the rest of Europe—especially from Italy. "The events of the previous generation, the vast doctrinal changes, the extensive secularisation of Church property, the growing discredit of religion, contributed greatly to the atmosphere of atheism and epicurism in which the Elizabethan lived. The unsettlement of belief, combined with the unprincipled struggle for wealth, prepared the soil for the seeds of materialism and a frankly hedonistic view of life."¹³

SHAKESPEARE

HIS LIFE AND WORLD

by Chris McCoy

There are many myths and legends surrounding the life of William Shakespeare. Relatively few provable facts exist about the man who created the most important canon in English literature. The little that we do know is documented through the unreliable legal records of the time, many of which have been lost and remain only through secondary sources such as early biographies. The rest has been deduced through reasonable speculation.

Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564 in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. The exact date of his birth is unknown but is commonly celebrated on April 23. His father, John Shakespeare, may have been a tanner and glover at the time of William's birth although records show that he became a successful citizen holding many high-ranking positions in Stratford including a seat on the city council. William's mother, Mary Arden Shakespeare, was a woman from a very prosperous lineage – it is believed that she was the daughter of John's landlord when they were married. John purchased many houses in Stratford including a sizable Tudor-style home on Henley Street that is speculated to be the birthplace of William.

Nicholas Rowe published the first biography of Shakespeare's life in 1709, 93 years after Shakespeare's death. In it, he proposes that William attended the King's new school at Stratford-upon-Avon, a "free" or public institution. There, Shakespeare was probably exposed to the works of Virgil, Plautus, Terrence, Ovid, Horace and Seneca, which provided a basis in his own dramatic writing.⁴ On November 27, 1582, William was granted a bishop's license for marriage to Anne Whately. The bond of sureties, however, refers to his wife as Anne Hathaway, daughter of Richard Hathaway of Shottery. Anne was 26 when she married 18-year-old William. Although the actual date of their mar-

riage is unknown, it is presumed the ceremony occurred shortly after they were given a license and Anne gave birth to their first child, Susannah, on May 26, 1583. The couple also had a pair of twins, Judith and Hamnet, who were baptized on February 2, 1585.

Many have speculated upon the whereabouts of Shakespeare between the years 1585-1592 because little was documented during that time. The only evidence we have is that at some point in this seven-year period, Shakespeare made his way to London and into the theatre. In 1592, the dying dramatist Robert Greene makes the first of many literary references to Shakespeare in his vitriolic *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance*. His allusion to the young playwright attacks him for becoming the latest success, prized over his older, disappointed rival, Greene.

London, in the late 16th century, was a hub of industry. As the capital city, it was home to major courts of law, a prosperous port of trade, and Parliament. In 1592, the city boasted a population of approximately 200,000 making it the largest city in Europe and including people from all social classes. Under Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603), England remained at peace until the attack and defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. This victory over one of the continent's most affluent Catholic powers (Elizabeth herself was Protestant) secured Elizabeth's power as a world leader and provided her the authority to exercise absolute monarchical control of England. London, however, was primarily ruled by city officials, courts of law and medieval guilds.

On December 6, 1574, an order by the Common Council of London placed heavy restrictions upon the public performance of plays. The doctrine cited theatre as an uncivil and immoral occasion causing "evil practices of incontinency in great inns, [i.e. public brawls]

and uncomely and unshamefast speeches and doings of actors, diverted citizens from worship on Sundays and holidays, and even gave account for the spread of plague."⁵ In response to this action, James Burbage (father to the famed actor, Richard) moved his company of actors of which Shakespeare was probably a member to Shoreditch, a suburb of London. Here they built "The Theatre," the first identified commercial theatre venue in England. "The Theatre" was purportedly a circular structure with a central courtyard open to the sky. The stage was placed at one end and jutted out into the courtyard. The rest of the surrounding sides had enclosed galleries. The cheapest way to see the play was standing in the courtyard. The more affluent theatergoers were seated in the galleries. Behind the stage was erected a "tiring house," which served as both backdrop and backstage area for the actors. The tiring house was also used as dressing room and probably for resting between scenes. This first structure became the model for subsequent theatres including "The Globe" in which many of Shakespeare's plays were first produced.

We know that Shakespeare was an established dramatist and actor by 1592 with at least six plays already produced (*The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Two Gentleman of Verona*, the *Henry VI* plays and *Titus Andronicus*). Payments made to the Lord Chamberlain's Company of actors cites Shakespeare as a payee for performances on December 26 and 28, 1594. This informs us that he was not only a member of the company, but one in high standing since managers, playwrights and lead actors were typically the only ones paid.

When Shakespeare first appeared in the London theatre society, English theatre was already flourishing. Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, George Peele and Robert Greene were among the most famous playwrights of the day.

And although Shakespeare is the most highly praised dramatist of his era, his contemporaries certainly helped to form his style. John Lyly introduced the idea of poetic language in dramatic writing; John Greene made significant contributions to the development of comedies including multiple plots, strong female characters and presenting serious issues through comedic expression. George Peele introduced history plays that combined elements of the contemporary world while Thomas Kyd wrote tragedies that focused on the topic of revenge. Christopher Marlowe is probably the best known of these playwrights creating protagonists who reflect principles of the Elizabethan era. The style of Shakespeare's writing also owes much to dramatic predecessors from ancient Greece and Rome such as Seneca, Terrence, Plautus, Ovid, Virgil and Horace.

Between the years 1594 and 1601, Shakespeare was probably the leading dramatist of the time given the fact that most of his earlier contemporaries were deceased and the next wave of dramatists was yet to appear. When James I succeeded Elizabeth I to the throne of England in 1603, a document titled "The Players' Privilege" renamed Shakespeare's acting troupe, The Kings Men, and appointed them to the honorary rank of Grooms of the Royal Court.⁶ Likewise, the rise of the Jacobean era (the reign of King James) brought about a turn in literary figures and genres. Playwrights such as George Chapman, John Marston and Ben Jonson, as well as Shakespeare, focused on writing fewer histories and more revenge tragedies and satiric comedy.⁷ Shakespeare's work shows a shift in theme such as comedy dealing with

dark plots of human degeneracy (*Measure for Measure*) and characters facing internal and psychological obstacles (*All's Well that Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*). Likewise, Shakespeare's tragedies divided into two categories: the great tragedies that posed characters with dilemmas of humanity questioning its existence (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*) and classical tragedies that confirmed the nobility in the human spirit (*Julius Caesar*, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra*).⁸

In 1608, The King's Men signed a lease for the use of Blackfriar's playhouse – an indoor theatre in London proper. This begins the era historically referred to as Shakespeare's later years. The plays written during this period reflect a return to the pastoral romances popularized by Robert Greene and classified as "tragicomedy." For Shakespeare, these included *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, all of which may have been performed in the Blackfriar's playhouse as well as at The Globe.⁹ It is presumed that during this time, possibly around 1611 or 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford. His last recorded acting job was in Ben Jonson's *Serjanus* in 1603.

The last documented record of Shakespeare's life is a shaky signature confirming a revision in his will on March 25, 1616. He died on April 23. The monument erected at the head of his grave in Trinity Church, Stratford was erected some time before 1623. It contained an inscription with the date of his death and a bust – one of only two likenesses created of Shakespeare during his time.¹⁰

Of the 37 plays written by Shakespeare that have been preserved,

only 18 were printed during his lifetime. Acting companies rarely published their repertoire due to the possibility of rival companies pirating the work. The first complete edition of Shakespeare's plays was collected and sponsored by two of his colleagues, John Heminges and Henry Condell in 1623. This first edition, called the First Folio, was presumably printed from Shakespeare's own drafts although none of the originals survived.¹¹

He has been called "the greatest playwright that ever lived" and his plays are produced more frequently than those by any other playwright. They continue to be presented throughout the world more than 380 years after his death. It is impossible to imagine the theatre without Shakespeare or that his influence will diminish in time.

THE LANGUAGE OF VERSE IN SHAKESPEARE

by Gary Logan, Head of Voice and Speech for the National Theatre Conservatory

Shakespeare wrote his plays in two distinctly different styles: a poetic style called iambic pentameter, and a non-poetic style called prose. The density of poetry in his plays ranges from 100% in *Richard II* and *King John*, to only 13.4% in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. But in the main, his plays are predominantly in poetic verse. In *Romeo and Juliet*, more than 87% of the text is in verse — a high percentage.

But why write in two styles? What does it signify? It might have something to do with who is doing the talking. By taking a closer look at who speaks in verse and who doesn't, an interesting pattern begins to show up.

Everyone, it seems, is capable of speaking in prose. One might say that it is everyone's natural right to speak in prose, a manner of speech we naturally inherit. Everyone from prince to pauper in the "Chain of Being" may speak it, though some in the higher social order never deign to do so. Divisions between the different social orders are evidently encoded into the manner in which a character chooses to speak.

If (or when) someone from the upper ranks speaks in prose, they stand precariously on the same ground as the plebeian, the mob, or the vulgar, for there is little in prose to distinguish the speaker in terms of his/her class, social strata, or nobility. The upper class sometimes do speak in prose: when the subject matter is particularly unenlightened, when they condescend to address someone from the non-verse-speaking class, or when the topic degrades into the bawdy.

In order for the upper classes in Shakespeare to distinguish themselves linguistically, as they do in manner and apparel, a different mode of speech is required. The elite must consciously don a verbal manner, an extravagant mantle of words and style, in order to lord their language over those incapable of study, leisure and the pursuits of noble thought.

One notable exception to this is in the case of anyone smitten by Love. The ennoblement of love, the highest of high emotion, is evidently capable of endowing even the simplest of souls with the ability to speak in the heightened ways of verse. After all, Love is blind and the upper

classes do not have a singular right to its possession, nor in such instances can they claim sole possession of its by-product, verse.

As far as anyone was concerned in Shakespeare's day — except for the monarchy — there were always those who were above them in social rank and intellect to whom tribute was paid. Usually there were those beneath them as well, to whom no tribute was paid. Tribute was paid (in Shakespeare's plays) in the form of social courtesies, including manner of speech. Verse then becomes, at times, an exploitation by the ruling class over the governable; yet it is still the verbal means by which one shows obeisance to his or her "betters." Verse in Shakespeare's plays is an expression of the elite and the ennobled and a statement of their place in the world and their perception of the world around them.

The low-born characters in Shakespeare, those of base origins, are well-advised not to attempt verse-speaking (with the exception of the example cited above). To do so would be to speak in a cultural idiom from a class-conscious culture to which they do not belong. They would be perceived as laughably ill-equipped, out of their element and perhaps even insulting. Were those of plainness of heart to attempt verse, they might be seen as insinuating themselves into a class to which they do not belong and very likely punished for it.

Try to identify these distinctions in style in *Romeo and Juliet*. Realizing that the way they are choosing to speak is a condition of their given circumstance might help you to appreciate more of the play's meaning.

DUELING AND HONOR

“The wise man thinks it better not to enter the fight than to win.”

—La Rochefoucauld

History

During Elizabeth’s reign in 1581, the international situation was very tense and violence in the streets was running rampant. Many important nobles were involved in duels, for example, the playwrights Christopher Marlowe and Ben Johnson were both charged with killing men in duels. With nearly 100 men being killed a month by duels in England, Queen Elizabeth had to take action. She said that duels were displeasing to God and unbecoming to Christians; they were contrary to all good order and government, killing too many nobles and allowing the different social classes to challenge one another. She issued a decree that enumerated crimes and punishments making dueling the equivalent of murder. This decree had little effect, so the Queen was forced to declare that dueling would be considered high treason. Even this failed to stop dueling in London and the countryside. And so Shakespeare made it an issue in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Honor

In Elizabethan England, honor was recognition of one’s place in society and the realization of virtuous action—not a virtuous self. If a person allowed another to publicly state or imply by an action that he was of a lower place, everyone would then treat him as such. The honorable man needed to live neither higher nor lower than the place God had given him.

Honor was more important than life itself. Life was not worth liv-

ing without it; once honor was lost, it could never be recovered. Honor meant the recognition of worth and, in accordance with one’s place in the world, one had to eliminate all challenges to that place and the duel was a most important means to keeping one’s honorable reputation.

The Art of Dueling

Duels were a step higher than a fight or brawl. Rather than drawing one’s sword and stabbing one’s enemy immediately upon insult, or sneaking up later and stabbing him in the back, the sequence was:

- The Insult: Never insult another person, but speak the truth or imply the other person is beneath you, by word or deed. If you insult someone by accident, don’t admit it or your honor will be tarnished.
- The Challenge: You must challenge a person if you believe you’ve been insulted. This can be done on the spot or by letter or messenger.
- The Acceptance: You must accept all challenges or apologize and admit you were wrong, and thus dishonorable.
- Decision on location, time of fight and weapons: Often duels were held in open fields at the moment of the insult and challenge was answered with the rapiers the men were wearing. Sometimes they were held as public events on a stage.
- (Optional): You can pick one or more Seconds who agree to fight or not. Also, you can agree to let people know about the duel, so it becomes public knowledge with spectators coming from all around.
- Decide on the rules of fighting:

You can begin immediately or more ceremoniously depending on your social class. You can go from no rules (biting, kicking, etc.) to no physical engagement at all, just swordplay.

- The Fight: Anyone may cheat or not follow the agreed-upon rules. Rapier fights can be very short, or they can go on until one or more parties resembles a pincushion. The wounds were such that death may not follow for days.
- Proclaim victory: If still alive, or even while dying, you should claim victory and say this proves your honor in the eyes of God and country. This is also a good time to allege your opponent has cheated, especially if he’s maimed or dead and can’t challenge you again.

Of course, formal duels were conducted with much more courtly rituals including a salute, balletic sweeps in the air with one’s sword and the establishment of the correct fighting distance.

The Weapons of Dueling

The rapier was the modern technology of the duel. It was a relatively new weapon to Elizabethan England but quickly became available to the everyday man—the Elizabethan equivalent of the cheap handgun. Rather than wearing armor and a heavy sword, one could now wear an elegantly thin rapier that would pierce the enemy with the tip instead of slicing him with the edge. Because thrusts were quicker than swiping blows, the rapier was fast, deadly and very portable. It was introduced to England’s upper class by visitors from Italy and quickly spread to all men from classes who could afford them. I

1594, DiGrassi's volume on the use of the rapier for best results was translated into English. With such a desirable weapon at hand, violence rapidly increased.

Everyone carried at the very least a dagger, but the nobility carried rapiers that could be worn in the streets at-the-ready for challenges. The rapiers, swords and daggers that people carried were of every conceivable shape and size. Usually, the rapier measured from 3.5 to 5.5 feet long and was sometimes used with a dagger held in the left hand. Gone was the old way of fighting using brute force and endurance; the new way of violence required physical technique and mental discipline and so fencing schools sprang up everywhere. Besides

teaching technique, they taught a man to be aware of danger at all times.

When the Dueling Stopped

Between 1590 and 1610, one-third of the nobility of France was killed in duels: 4000 men. The toll in England was comparable with duels occurring daily. From 1602 to 1626, France passed a series of laws which punished dueling; these included death by hanging, the denial of Christian burial to those killed in duels and the confiscation of estates by the Crown. Still, dueling did not cease in France or in England.

In 1603, Queen Elizabeth died and King James ascended to the throne. In 1613, 11 important members of the aristocracy challenged one another and King James issued a declaration stopping all such duels. This gave the aristocracy a loophole out of the code of honor. Challenges could now be given and accepted so publicly that the government was forced to step in and prevent the duel. The hierarchy of ranks was more rigorously enforced, so challenges could not be issued from one order to another. This action did much to reduce the number of duels in England.

A Comparison: Shakespeare's World and Our World

Then: 16th-Century England

Constant warfare outside England is matched by violence within its borders. Brawls break out at the drop of a hat.

Beer is cheap and ale houses are full. Liquor provides some comfort to the harshness of life.

Fun is brutal. Cock fights and bear-baiting. The Royal Court glitters. The rich play while thousands of homeless people wander from parish to parish begging and stealing to survive.

Mystery diseases such as the bubonic plague and cholera kill thousands and medicine cannot prevent death.

The Renaissance—the age of science and discovery. Information is now available to many through the invention of the printing press.

The world is expanding as explorers find new countries where it was thought nothing existed.

Now: 21st Century US

War and military conflicts overseas (Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, etc.) are matched by violence here at home—gang warfare, school violence and murder.

Drug and alcohol use is high in lower social-economic groups.

Entertainment contains a great deal of violence—films, TV, video games. Shows such as “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” are shown in the media juxtaposed with the stories of thousands of homeless people.

HIV/AIDS continues to kill. New viruses, immune to current medicine, are developing.

The “Information Age”—a world of information is easily available to many through the Internet.

Science, particularly quantum physics, is revealing that the world is not as “solid” as we thought. Space exploration continues.

NOTES

1. Smiley, 89.
2. Ustinov, 59.
3. Asimov, p. 476.
4. Bevington, p. iv.
5. Ibid, p. xlv.
6. Ibid, p. lxix.
7. Ibid, p. lxxi.
8. Ibid, p. lxxii.
9. Ibid, p. lxxiii.
10. Ibid, p. lxxvi.
11. Ibid, p. lxxvii.
12. Intiman, p. 3.
13. Intiman, p. 3.

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ACTIVITIES

- Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Reading and Writing #2

Creative Writing

Imagine that you work for the Verona News Service and have been assigned the task of writing articles on one of the following topics:

1. You have been sent to observe the Capulet's party and on tomorrow's news you will be given a two-minute slot to report on the event. Prepare and deliver your report as a newscast.
2. Write a brief, memorable headline for each of the five scenes of Act 1. Your headlines may be those of a tabloid or a legitimate paper. Make your headlines as accurate as possible and use some of Shakespeare's words.
3. You write a personals column in the newspaper and Romeo or Juliet has written to you about his/her love, the feud, future plans, etc. Your job is to give advice. Write his or her letter using Shakespeare's language and then write your advice to them.

- Students understand the history of social organization in various societies.

Colorado Model Content Standard: History #3.2

The world of the Elizabethans consisted of a strictly enforced class structure. Use the following game to understand the concepts of status and aristocracy as it applies to the Elizabethan world.

Status Cards

- 1) You will need a deck of cards or at least enough for each member of your class to have a card and a clear playing space.
- 2) Ask the students to create a place and Elizabethan event for

the improvisation to occur: a party to honor the king and queen in a castle, a wedding in a cathedral, a festival in the town's square, etc.

3) Everyone in the room selects a card from the deck. Explain to the students that each card represents their character's status, King being the highest strata and two being the lowest.

4) Select a host of the event who will greet each new character as he/she enters. Encourage the students to act the part as soon as they enter the party. Every student must show his/her card to the other guests in order to treat each other according to their status (for example, a King may not talk to a 3, but he would talk to a Queen).

5) After the students have had ample time to create the improvisation, ask them how status affected the way they viewed others or the way they viewed themselves. Think of examples of status in your school, in the adult world, etc. How would status relate to Elizabethan society? Assign a card ranking to the following list of Elizabethan hierarchy: God, Queen, Nobility (titled), Gentry (the lesser nobility), Yeomanry (rising middle class), Artisans, Craftsmen, Labourers, The Poor.

Variations: You may repeat the exercise with students not showing their card to anyone else or by placing the card on their forehead so that everyone may see their card except for the one who owns it.

- Students know how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Geography #2.3

One of the primary themes in *Romeo and Juliet* is the tension that pervades the play: familial tension, sexual tension, civic tension, etc. The following exercise examines how differences are created in

the human experience and why these impact groups of people as well as individuals.

Cultural Mapping

For each of the following topics, the room should be divided into different areas. For example, designate a corner of the room for each season (winter, spring, summer and fall). Then, instruct each student to stand in the corner in which their birthday falls. Once in groups, invite the students to discover three (3) commonalities that they all share and present these to the entire class. Use the following topics to continue the exercise:

1. Make a map of where you were born (use the room as a giant map of North America)
2. Make a map of where you live now (use the room as a map of your State or district)
3. Gender (females on one side and males on the other)
4. Where you fall in your family (oldest, middle, youngest, only)
5. Are you habitually early, on time or late?
6. Race or ethnicity
7. Political orientation (Republican, Democrat, Independent, Other)

Relate the exercise to topics from the play:

1. Act 3 Scene 1: Who starts the fight? Benvolio or Mercutio?
2. Why did Romeo and Juliet die? Their own hastiness, fate or chance, the feud between their families?
3. What characters do you identify with most: Romeo/Juliet, Benvolio, Friar Lawrence/Nurse, or the Duke.
4. What action was most fundamental to the fatal ending? Romeo and Juliet falling in love, Romeo's banishment for slaying Tybalt, the inability of the messenger to deliver the note, or Romeo's decision to kill himself over Juliet?

- Students develop interpersonal skills and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration.

Colorado Model Content Standards: Theatre #1

Tableaus

Tableaus were a common form of theatre for many years in Vaudeville. A tableau is a stage picture (the actors are frozen in position) that tells the audience a story or part of a scene from a play. Begin by creating tableau about familiar subjects such as a football game, a classroom, a school bus, etc. Then, divide the class into five small groups and create tableaus for each act of *Romeo and Juliet*. The pictures should reflect the general mood, basic characters and main event from each act. Then, assign each group a set of lines from their act or challenge them to find a line that fits their place in the picture. Instruct the students to deliver their line within the tableau and create a simple movement that expresses their emotion, character, or action within the act. How do the tableaus help to tell a story? Can you think of any time you have seen tableaus used in plays, movies, or T.V.? What action did each group choose as the most important of each act? Why? If you put all of the tableaus together, do you think an outsider would understand the general story of *Romeo and Juliet*?

- Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.
- Colorado Model Content Standard: Reading and Writing #5*

Creating an Atmosphere

Shakespeare creates almost everything through the use of words. Look at the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* and follow the instructions in presenting it for your class:

1. Decide upon a style of presentation (suspense/thriller, soap

opera, melodrama, film noir, etc.)

2. Select 5-10 words or phrases that have a strong visual image for your group. Create movements or tableaux that reflect these images.
3. Rehearse the blocking you have created while reading/memorizing the prologue.
4. Perform your presentation for the class and discuss why you chose that certain style and how it impacted the performance.

- Students know how cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Geography #4.5

The Capulet/Montague feud lasted so long that no one knows why the feud began. The feud is based on honor and prejudice; each family hates the other not because of personal differences but merely because of the family name. The following is an exercise that encourages students to explore and challenge the ideas of feuds, prejudice and honor.

Blue Eyes/ Brown Eyes

- 1) Select one student who has Blue or Brown eyes.
- 2) Confidentially inform the student that s/he is only to allow classmates with the same shade of eyes into her group (Blue or Brown). Others are not allowed to join the group and the leader is not to tell anyone that they are looking at eye color.
- 3) Inform the students that this student will be selecting a group of leaders for the class. There are certain criteria each member needs in order to join the group. Each student will ask to be admitted into the group and the group leader will either accept or reject that student.
- 4) Each student must try to join the group and figure out the criteria.
- 5) When all students have been accepted or rejected, stop the game.
- 6) Ask the students that are not the leaders why they are not in the group?
- 7) Once the eye criterion is revealed ask the students the following questions: What was it like to be rejected for something you were not aware of and could not control? Do you feel differently when you are accepted into a group? What was it like to watch others try to get in and be denied? Does this game apply to real life in any way?

Make a parallel on fighting or feuding that exists in your family, neighborhood, or school. For example, sibling rivalry, differences in families, peer groups in school, racial groups, religious groups, etc. What is the real reason for the arguments? What is the desired outcome? How do prejudice and honor play a role in the rivalry? How do you think some of this fighting and feuding could be averted?

- Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Colorado Model Content Standard: Reading and Writing #2*

Shakespeare's Insults

Supply the students with the following list of insults from *Romeo and Juliet* and have them explore ways of saying the phrases. Encourage the students to extend the words and play with the sounds to amplify the force of the insults. For example, what happens when you elongate the "s" sound or overstress the "k"? In pairs, have two students stand opposite each other and use several lines to insult each other. You might want to choose winners from the person who delivers his line in the most insulting manner. Encourage students to find their own insults from Shakespeare's texts.

- Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit. (I,3,42)
- [You] small gray-coated gnat. (1,4,67)
- [He] not half so big as a round little worm. (1,4,68)
- She speaks, yet she says nothing. (2,2,12)
- [A fan] to hide her face, for her fan's the fairer face! (2,4,106-107)
- By playing it to me with so sour a face. (2,5,23-24)
- [He's] a gentleman that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month. (2,4,144-146)
- Scurvy knave! I am none of his flirt-gills, I am none of his skains-mates companions.
- Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat. (3,1,22)
- You rat-catcher. (3,1,74)
- Blister'd be thy tongue for such a wish. (3,2,90-91)
- Thou sober-suited matron. (3,2,11)
- Hang Thee young baggage! (3,5,160)
- A wretched puling fool, a whining mammet! (3,5,183-184)
- [Your] foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in. (4,3,16)
- Pray you put up your dagger and put out your wit. (4,5,119)
- Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death. (5,3,45)
- What a pestilent knave is this same. (4,5,139)

• Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Visual Arts #4

Make-a-Mask

Select a character from the play and design the type of mask you think s/he would wear to the Capulet's masquerade ball. Research the different types of masks or make-up designs in theatre for ideas (for example, Greek, Roman, Italian Commedia del arte, Japanese, Chinese, Beijing Opera, Tribal masks from Africa or Native America). Be sure to include in your design what type of materials you would make the mask out of and why this mask reflects the character. You may decide to make the mask using cardboard, paper plates, paper mache, foam, etc. Perform the scene at the ball wearing masks and/or costumes.

- Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Reading and Writing #4

The Balcony Scene

One of the most famous scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* is the balcony scene. Watch two different movie versions of the balcony scene and compare and contrast the following categories:

1. Setting: Balcony, background environment, sounds, light
2. Costumes: Period, what do they reveal about the characters?
3. Dialogue: Were any cuts made from the original script? Do the actors have accents?
4. Actors: How are the Romeos and Juliets alike or different?
5. Directing: What is the pace of the scene? The overall mood or feeling?

- Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Reading and Writing #6

Debate and Discussion

Divide the class into two groups, one will be the Montagues, the other, the Capulets. The groups should convene to make a list of all the wrongs done to them by the other family. Instruct the students to use specific examples from the play only. Then, select a "panel of experts" to facilitate the discussion. Encourage each group to answer the following questions from the viewpoint of their characters:

1. What can be done to avert fighting in the future?
2. How can politeness, understanding, compassion, or manners help in averting fights?
3. What role does a sense of honor play in the feud?
4. Do you believe honor and integrity to be external or internal forces? Why?

- Students know how to use maps, globes, and other geographic tools to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Colorado Model Content Standard: Geography #1.1

An Alternate Route

Friar John has been given the task of delivering the message to Romeo in Mantua but was quarantined before he could get away. Imagine you are Friar John and must find the fastest route from Verona to Mantua. You may use a modern or historical map to plan your route. Be sure to consider the different forms of transportation that would have been available to him in that time period.

- Students analyze and assess the characteristics, merits, and meanings of traditional and modern forms of dramatic expression.

Colorado Model Content Standards: Theatre #5

After the Play

Using the terms defined in the article, "About the production," identify examples of each of the following from the production of *Romeo and Juliet*:

1. Blocking
2. Fight choreography
3. Properties (props)
4. Tech or technical elements
5. Costumes

Define the production concept in your own words. Give specific examples of how each of these reflects the production concept.



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