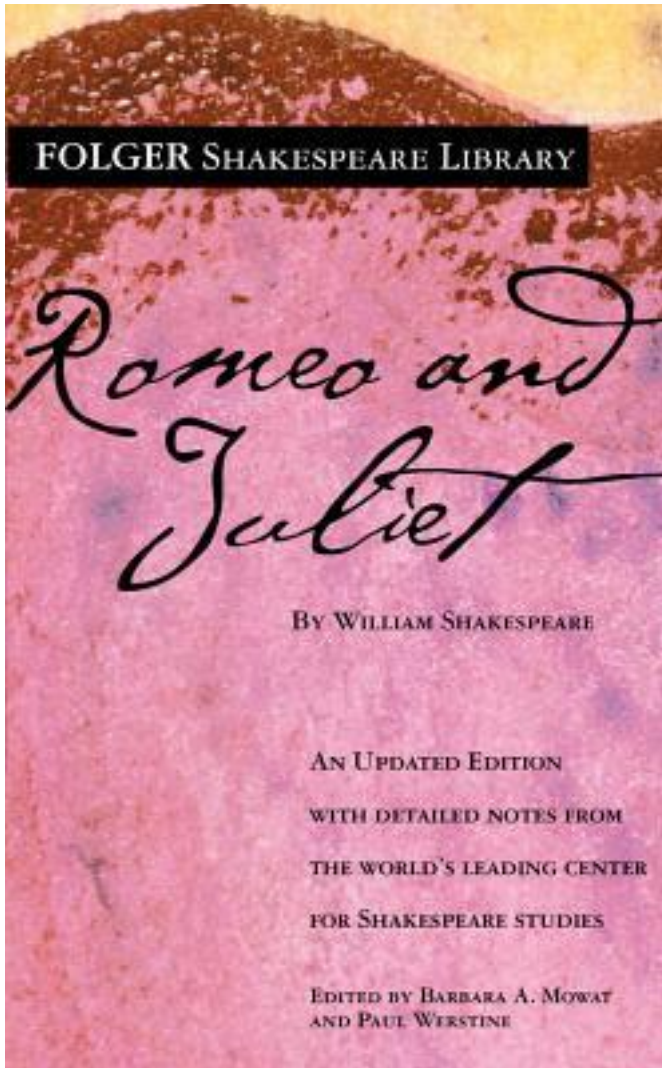


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# William Shakespeare

## Romeo and Juliet



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## Description

A paperback copy of Shakespeare's popular romance play, *Romeo and Juliet*, which provides the original text side-by-side with a more modernized version of the material, which can aid readers in understanding the content.

## Insightful reviews



Haleema :

Jean: Who does not know the story of **Romeo and Juliet**? And these immortal lines,

*"O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?"*

*"But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?  
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun."*

*"Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow,  
That I shall say good night till it be morrow."*

The very word "Romeo" has become synonymous with "male lover" in English, and the idea of the doomed romantic lovers, whose deaths ultimately reconcile their feuding families, is famous world-wide. It has been adapted numerous times for stage, film, musical, opera and radio; the latest film went on general release just a few months ago in 2013.

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However, Shakespeare did not invent the story of **Romeo and Juliet**. He reworked a long poem by Arthur Brooks, called "*The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*", written in 1562. The tradition of tragic romances had been well established in literature - in particular Italian literature - for almost a hundred years, but what may be surprising is that many of the plot elements of *Romeo and Juliet* were all in Brooks' poem. The first meeting of the lovers at the ball, their secret marriage, Romeo's fight with Tybalt, the sleeping potion, and even the timing of their eventual suicides, are all episodes which we usually attribute to Shakespeare. This is characteristic of the author, who often wrote plays based on earlier works.

Shakespeare's text is believed to have been written between 1591 and 1595, and as such was one of his earliest performed plays, although not published until later. It was an immediate success; so popular that Shakespeare continued to rework and hone the notes from the play's performances. It was then first published in 1597, with later editions improving on it still further. It was among Shakespeare's most popular plays during his lifetime, and has remained so, now being the most performed of all his plays alongside "*Hamlet*." Although the initial idea for **Romeo and Juliet** came from the earlier text, it is Shakespeare's wonderful play which is credited with having had such a profound influence on subsequent literature.

It starts with a short prologue, in sonnet form, which tells the audience what is to follow. Nobody can be in any doubt that the story is a tragedy about young love, and that it will take their deaths to bring an end to family feuds. We are then straight into the action, which is a masterly piece of writing, full of bawdy references to ensure his audiences' attention, while providing all the background information needed to understand the world of the play. We are immediately told about the long-standing hatred between the two feuding families, the Capulets and the Montagues, and then immediately find ourselves engaged by an exciting brawl.

Shakespeare cleverly establishes some of the major themes of the play, right at its start. He also portrays all of the layers of Veronese society starting with the servants, right through to Prince Escalus. Many of the secondary characters important to the play are also introduced here; for instance, Romeo's friend, Benvolio, thoughtful, pragmatic and fearful of the law, and Juliet's cousin Tybalt, a hothead, professing a hatred for peace as strong as his hatred for Montagues. A modern audience becomes aware that in the Verona of this play, masculine honour is not restricted to indifference to pain or insult. Tybalt makes it plain that a man must defend his honour at all times, whether the insult is verbal or physical.

Mercutio is established as another friend; one who who can poke friendly fun at Romeo quite mercilessly. Benvolio is not nearly so quick-witted. Mercutio is confident, constantly joking, making puns and laughing. He is a passionate man, but his passions are different from Romeo's love and Tybalt's hate. Their passions are founded respectively upon two ideals of society - love and honour - but Mercutio believes in neither. He comes across as the character with the clearest vision. Just as Mercutio can see through words to other meanings, he can also see through the ideals held by those around him. He understands that often they are not sincerely held, but merely adopted for convenience.

The characters in this play are multi-layered and complex, and Shakespeare is adept in

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revealing their subtleties by means of the action. Even as Mercutio dies, he utters his wild witticisms, cursing both the Montagues and the Capulets,

*"A plague o' both your houses!  
They have made worms' meat of me!"*

*"Ask for me tomorrow, and  
You shall find me a grave man."*

The character of Romeo develops significantly from the first impression we have of him as a stock callow youth. At first he is melancholy, distracted and lovelorn, as we expect. But surprisingly he is not lovesick over Juliet, but is in love with Rosaline. This love seems to stem almost entirely from the reading of bad love poetry! We understand from this that Romeo's love for Rosaline is an immature love, more a statement that he is ready to be in love than actual love. Perhaps Rosaline, who never appears in the play, exists only to demonstrate Romeo's passionate nature, his love of being in love.

We meet Juliet in scene 3, and learn that in the Verona of this play, her status as a young woman leaves her with no power or choice in any social situation. Juliet at 13 years old is completely subject to parental influence, and is being encouraged to marry her parent's choice of Paris. Lady Capulet observes wryly that that she had already given birth to Juliet herself when she was Juliet's current age, before she was 14.

In this way the forces that determine the fate of Romeo and Juliet are laid in place well before they even meet. Parental influence in the tragedy becomes a tool of fate. Juliet's arranged marriage with Paris, and the longstanding feud between Capulets and Montagues, will eventually contribute to the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The reader enjoys the tension, and knowledge that terrible events are about to happen. Events and observations continually reinforce the presence and power of fate.

Juliet's speeches have many different facets, and are capable of many interpretations. She often professes one thing, whilst we know she has an ulterior motive, and another intention. This is particularly evident when she is speaking to her parents, knowing that she intends to make her own decisions, she perversely wants to speak her mind, but deliberately couches her words in double meanings so that the truth will remain hidden.

Juliet is a strong character in the play, particularly fascinating to a modern reader as she seems almost contemporary. She repeatedly goes against what is expected of women of her time and place, and takes action. The best example of this is when she drinks the sleeping potion. She comes up with many reasons why it might cause her harm, and recognises that drinking the potion might lead her to madness or even death. Yet she chooses to drink it anyway. This demonstrates a willingness to take her life into her own hands - and also hints at future events. There is never just one side to, or interpretation of, any event in this play. It is a portent. Juliet drinks the potion just as Romeo will later drink the apothecary's poison.

Another instance of ominous foreshadowing is when the Nurse teases Juliet by saying that she

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is too tired to tell her what happened when she first met Romeo. This delay in telling Juliet the news is mirrored in a future scene, when the Nurse's anguish prevents her from relating news to Juliet and thereby causing terrible confusion. Another example of delicious dramatic irony is when Romeo is proclaiming his love to be the most powerful force in the world. Friar Laurence advises caution, saying,

*"These violent delights have violent ends  
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder  
Which, as they kiss, consume".*

The reader knows that the play is a tragedy, and that Romeo and Juliet will die. Shakespeare ingeniously manipulates the plot, so that we feel the impending doom, and are swept up in the inevitability of it all. Even the characters themselves are sometimes aware that they are pawns. Romeo cries,

*"O, I am fortune's fool!"*

when he realises he has killed Tybalt. He knows that by killing his new wife's cousin, he will be banished from Verona, and feels the inevitability of the situation. This emphasises the sense of fate - or fortune - that hangs over the play.

Juliet also indicates in her speeches the power of fate and predestination. In her final scene with Romeo, the last moment they spend alive together, she says that he appears pale, as if he were dead. She looks out of her window and cries,

*"O God, I have an ill-divining soul!  
Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,  
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb."*

This vision blatantly foreshadows the end of the play. The next time she sees Romeo, he will be dead.

Friar Laurence is a pivotal character in the play. When we first see him he is collecting herbs and flowers for medicinal purposes, demonstrating a deep knowledge of the properties of the plants he collects, and alerting the reader to what may be to come. He meditates on the duality of good and evil that exists in all things; another clearly portentous speech. Referring to the plants, Friar Laurence says that, although everything in nature has a useful purpose, it can also lead to misfortune if used improperly,

*"For naught so vile that on the earth doth live  
But to the earth some special good doth give,  
Nor aught so good but strain'd from that fair use  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;  
And vice sometime's by action dignified".*

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Friar Laurence ruminates on how good may be perverted to evil and evil may be purified by good. By making plans to marry Romeo and Juliet, he hopes that the good of their love will reverse the evil of the hatred between the feuding families. Shakespeare portrays him as a benign, wise philosopher. But his schemes also serve as tools of fate; secretly marrying the two lovers, sending Romeo to Mantua, and staging Juliet's apparent death. The tragic failure of his plans are outside his responsibility, and due to chance.

The structure of the play is carefully controlled; it would be interesting at this distance to read the earlier versions. Different poetic forms are used by different characters, and sometimes the form changes as the character develops. There are many instances of the sonnet, as the reader would expect, because it is a perfect, idealised poetic form often used to write about love. The play starts with a Prologue in sonnet form, a masterly precis of the story. As it describes Romeo and Juliet's eventual death, it also helps to create the sense of fate that permeates the entire play.

Romeo himself, develops his expertise in the sonnet over the course of the play. When Romeo and Juliet meet they speak just fourteen lines before their first kiss. These fourteen lines make up a shared sonnet, which creates a link between their love and their tragic destiny, as told in the introductory prologue.

There are numerous instances of such tightly written formal structure, which is remarkable in such an early play. Even the dramatic action of the play has a tight schedule, spanning just 4 days. Perhaps this is why many of the most important scenes, such as the balcony scene, take place either very late at night or very early in the morning.

Shakespeare makes great use of effects such as switching between comedy and tragedy to heighten the tension, and bringing minor characters into the foreground to increase depth and interest. His additional use of sub-plots to enrich the story, is often cited as an early sign of his dramatic skill.

This play has everything; love, beauty, and romance, but also sudden, fatal violence early on. Viciousness and danger are continually present, yet just at the point when they threaten to overcome the reader, the action will be tempered by wit, comedy and humour. We are in a masculine world in which notions of honour, pride, and status are prone to erupt in a fury of conflict, but there is a strong female who defies her confined expectations. Rashness, vengeance, passion, grief; they are all here. The motif of fate continues to the very end of the play. Romeo proclaims,

*"Then I defy you, stars"* and

*"I will lie with thee tonight"* in a last desperate attempt to control his own destiny by spending eternity with Juliet.

Yet in this ultimate example of tragic irony, this defiant act seals both his fate, and their double suicide. Shakespeare tells his audience that nothing can withstand the power of fate. The neat twists of the ending are supremely ironic, devastating and heart-wrenching. Here is Romeo, in

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despair,

*"O true apothecary!  
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die."*

And on waking, Juliet,

*"I will kiss thy lips;  
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,  
To make die with a restorative...  
O happy dagger!  
This is thy sheath...  
There rust and let me die!"*

It is said that the best way to appreciate Shakespeare is to go to a live performance of a play. Of course in one sense this is true of any play; the live action is how the play was intended to be experienced. But there is a lot to be said for reading Shakespeare on the page. The structure and poetry of the language is so much more evident. The puns and in-jokes are so much clearer. The reader can give pause to properly interpret the manifold meanings of both the exciting events and the rousing speeches. And above all we can marvel at the mastery of a writer who can still speak to us with relevance, move us with poetry and story, and entertain his audience well over 400 years later.

*"For never was a story of more woe  
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo."*

Bill Kerwin:

Two things struck me during this re-reading: 1) From the first scene of the play, the sexual puns are drenched in metaphorical violence (drawing your weapon, laying knife aboard, forcing women to the wall, etc.), creating a stark contrast with the purity of Romeo and Juliet's love and language, and 2) Mercutio, the Nurse and Old Capulet are something totally new both in Shakespeare and also in English drama, that is, characters who are not only realistic but whose language completely reflects their thought processes to the point where they take on a life of their own. Shakespeare would create many other such characters, but these three are the first.

Madeline: Romeo and Juliet, abridged. ROMEO: I'm Romeo, and that i was emo and demanding yet now I'm so completely in luuuurve and it's AWESOME. MERCUTIO: Okay, 3 things: One, there's basically room during this play for one outstanding personality and it's me, bitch. Two, you're nonetheless emo and annoying. Three, didn't you are saying that individual related stuff the day prior to this approximately Rosaline? ROMEO: Who?\*meanwhile, Juliet prances round her room and attracts hearts on issues and scribbles "Mrs. Juliet Montague" in her diary over and over. simply because she is THIRTEEN. How previous is Romeo purported to be? Let's now not speak about that, k?\*CAPULET: solid news, Juliet! i discovered you a husband! PARIS: Hello, I'm a whole tool. JULIET: Daddy, I don't are looking to marry that it appears first rate and unflawed guy! I'm in love with Romeo Montague – we met the day before

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today and it was once HOT. CAPULET: i'll be DAMNED IF I SEE MY DAUGHTER MARRIED TO the single SON OF the guy who's MY MORTAL ENEMY FOR purposes TOO UNIMPORTANT TO SPECIFY during this PLAY! JULIET: \*stamps foot, runs off to her room to monitor highschool Musical back and sulk\* TYBALT: hi there Romeo, your mom was once a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries! MONTAGUE POSSE: Oh, snap. MERCUTIO: you're taking THAT BACK! TYBALT: MAKE ME! ROMEO: No! You can't struggle him, Mercutio simply because I already married his cousin! TYBALT: I KEEL YOU! \*Romeo makes an attempt to prevent the struggle and fails miserably\* MERCUTIO: FUCK YOU ALL! \*dies\* ROMEO: Okay, overlook what I stated approximately no longer fighting. I KEEL YOU! TYBALT: \*dies\* PRINCE: I've had sufficient of your shit, Emo McStabbypants. You're banished. ROMEO: Waaaaaahhhhhh! I'm banished and Juliet goes to marry one other man and it's no longer reasonable WHY DOES GOD HATE ME? FRIAR LAURENCE: Jesus Christ, no longer this again. Okay, in case you promise to develop a pair, I'll assist you and your spouse out. Here's the plan: she takes a potion that'll make her move right into a coma, after which she'll get installed the relatives tomb after which you'll sneak again into town, holiday into the tomb, wait until eventually she wakes up, after which the 2 of you break out and stay fortunately ever after! It's perfect! AUDIENCE: ...the hell? \*Shockingly, the plan fails. Romeo is going again to the tomb (pausing to kill Paris only for stable measure), yet he thinks Juliet's lifeless and beverages poison and dies, after which like seconds later she wakes up and sees that Romeo isn't often useless like she was, he's dead, so she stabs herself.\* MONTAGUE: Wow, we're lousy parents. CAPULET: i've got an concept – let's make strong gold statues of our useless kids to commemorate their love and function a relentless reminder of the truth that our simply childrens killed themselves simply because we have been such uncaring parents. \*they really do this.\* SHAKESPEARE: Beat that, Stephenie Meyer. THE END. Read for: ninth grade English BONUS: courtesy of the second one urban Network. each Shakespeare heroine wishes a sassy homosexual pal

Nora: the very first thing you must learn about this play is that, yes, it's a tragedy, however it most probably isn't really a romance. How this can be certainly one of the best love tales of all time is past me. give it some thought this way. on the play's opening, Romeo is ready to die of a damaged center from being rejected through Rosaline, who might really remain celibate ceaselessly than be with him. (If I say that i discovered this funny, am I an average person?) Romeo is going about, moping and moaning and being a whole drama queen approximately it. Come on, man, pull your self together! according to the context of the play, they have been by no means jointly or anything, and but he's so stunned while she rejects him. loopy alert! He says he will by no means love back and should spend the remainder of his existence single. brain you, he is about, what, SIXTEEN? Later on, this obnoxious little manchild makes a decision to do whatever very stupid. He runs off and crashes a celebration thrown by means of none except Lord Capulet, realizing that any Capulet could kill him quickly as examine him in the event that they discover that he is a Montague (and one in all them approximately does). And then, from around the room, he sees...a girl. A thirteen-year-old girl. Who in order that occurs to be none except the daughter of his family's sworn enemy. bear in mind Rosaline? Yeah, Romeo doesn't. So he sees this THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD woman and he falls in luuuurve together with her face simply because she is oh so purdy, doncha know? and he or she sees him from around the room and falls in luuuurve together with his face, too. They kiss, and later discover that their households are mortal enemies (for purposes which are by no means laid out in the play, and



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which nobody in both extended family turns out to recollect anyways). So our luststruck young people join up in Juliet's yard and alternate a few fairly fancy shmancy phrases of luuuurve. the following day--the very subsequent DAY--these kids get married. Yes, as in, til-death-do-us-part married. permit me to remind you that they're 16 and 13 years outdated and every has purely identified that the opposite exists for 24 FLIPPING HOURS. Apparently, Friar Lawrence, who's alleged to be this wise, old, revered clergyman, thinks that secretly marrying underage strangers whose households are locked in a vicious feud is an efficient idea. He thinks this can in some way make issues better. HOW, Lawrence, how?! Now we get to the half the place every person dies. have you spotted that during the majority of Shakespeare's plays, all people dies? and many instances all of them die inside a couple of traces of every other. Shakespeare was once an odd man. Anyways, Tybalt, Romeo, and Mercutio join up the subsequent day, and every of them pulls out their sword and subsequent factor ya know, Mercutio's lifeless ("A plague on either your houses!"), Tybalt's dead, and Romeo's been banished by way of the Prince. That night, as an alternative of, you know, feeling to blame approximately killing his kinsman through marriage, Romeo runs off to have his marriage ceremony evening with Juliet. O\_o Juliet's all, "Hmmm...he's killed my cousin and now he is banished and i'm going to most likely by no means see him again...oh, what the hell. i'm going to sleep with him in any case simply because luuuurve conquers all." Juliet's nurse is simply as idiotic. That night, she's all, "Here, Romeo, here is a ladder. Now climb up into my preteen charge's room and sleep together with her purely hours after you may have murdered her kinsman. it really is totes cool." \*eye twitch\*The subsequent morning, Romeo runs off in exile to Mantua and our loony friar comes up with one other completely moronic plan that Juliet blindly follows. Drink the potion, he says. you will not need to marry Paris, he says. Yeah, yeah, so your mom and dad may be overwhelmed and may mourn your intended demise for the remainder of their lives, yet come on, you are in luuuurve with Romeo! that is far more vital than kinfolk loyalty, morals, or universal sense, isn't really it? Juliet wholeheartedly agrees. She foolishly takes this potion, her relatives thinks she's dead, and so they lock her within the Capulet crypt. our favourite boob, Friar Lawrence, makes an attempt to inform the both dense Romeo approximately his catastrophe of a plan. Of course, Romeo in simple terms hears that his adolescent bride is dead. He, of course, rushes to her tomb, sees Paris mourning, kills the guy, is going into the tomb and immediately beverages poison, killing himself (the dolt). As this can be a Shakespearean play, it is just average that the results of Derpina's potion put on off mere seconds after Derp offs himself. Naturally, she proceeds to stab herself. Like I said, all people dies. What of our holy buffoon, you ask? Well, he runs for the hills. Finally, whilst the Montagues and the Capulets see what is turn into in their children, they are all "Let's construct gold statues of them and bury the hatchet." The End. this occurs over the process 3 days. Now, i have heard inform that Shakespeare wrote this all tongue-in-cheek, yet i do not thoroughly purchase that. Anyway, i might be mendacity if I advised you i did not get pleasure from this play. i do not understand what this says of my character, yet I completely reveled in observing every thing visit hell for those moronic people. What i need to clarify is that this isn't really a love story. it is a tale of hormonal youngsters who enjoyed each one other's faces and who relatively simply did not have any challenge killing themselves and not using a moment thought. through the way, they're creating a new motion picture of this, too.: <http://youtu.be/jTGWNHa1wIQ>How R&J must have ended: [http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lwnFE\\_Np...](http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lwnFE_Np...)

Kiki: the unique whiny love tale will get screwed over the Twilight treatment. Who knew?Aside

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from the canopy butchery, it is a strong stable book, yet now not one among Shakespeare's best. I grew up with Macbeth (I've been within the rattling factor 3 times and skim it five) and it is still my eternal favorite. Romeo and Juliet? no longer so much. Why? Because it is some of the most gravely misunderstood tales within the background of ever. through the years it has been warped greater than Hercules used to be via the Disney guys. the purpose Shakespeare used to be attempting to turn out right here (a aspect that any one who has really learn it is going to know) is that you possibly can confuse lust with love. you can still rush into issues if you are younger and to make your self think that the realm revolves round your shallow romance whilst rather you are simply making an fool of yourself. Romeo and Juliet are a number of idiotic teenagers who notion they have been in love simply because each one loved the glance of the other. They knew not anything approximately every one other, they slightly talked, and the spotlight in their dating was once the pseudo-sugar rush from sneaking around. In real fact, it is going with Twilight particularly well. What i am announcing is this isn't really Shakespeare's most sensible work, and whereas it really is outstanding in a few elements it's been too badly crushed and neutered over the process it really is existence to have any actual price left at all. do not count on with a view to persuade someone concerning the actual tale being Romeo and Juliet; they will imagine you are crazy. Even an English instructor will imagine you are crazy. it truly is like Wuthering Heights. in simple terms those people who are truly able to studying among the strains and connecting Shakespeare himself with the ideologies offered will quite get it in its entirety. Sorry, William. I heartily say sorry on behalf of trendy youth.

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