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Introduction

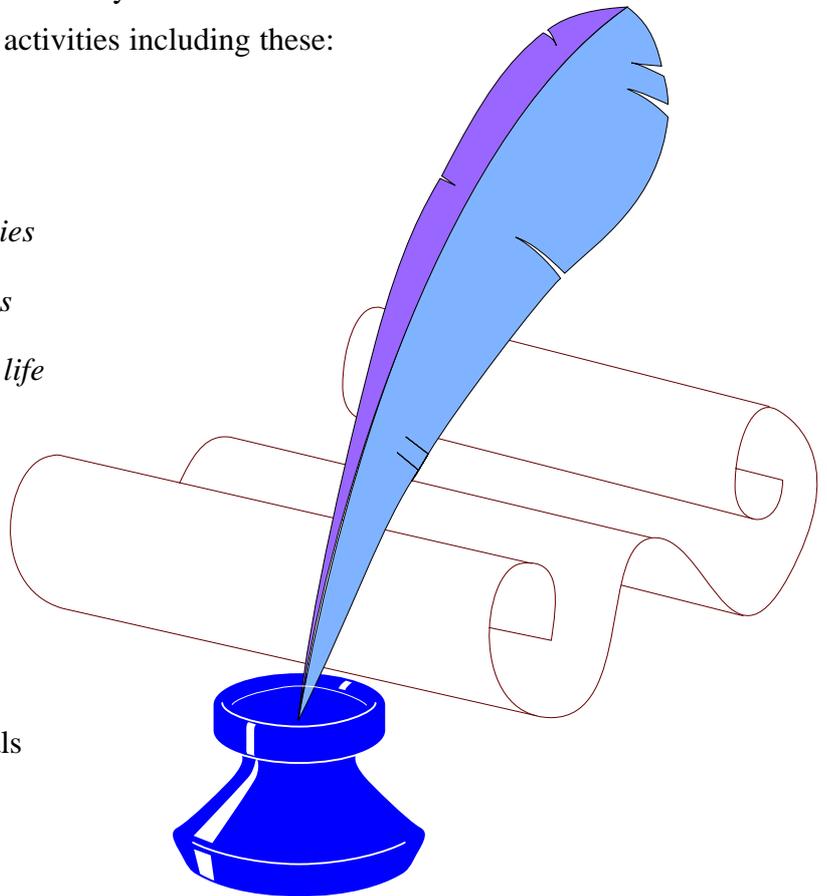
Really good literature never dies, it just gets better as it ages! This is just as true of a good play as it is of a good book. Over and over we can return to it for enjoyment and each time we do, we can say, 'Oh, I never read it that way before! How wonderful!'

In *Literature Units*, great care has been taken to select pieces of literature to which one can return again and again as we do to old friends.

Teachers who use this unit will find the following features to supplement their own valuable ideas.

- Sample lesson plans
- Pre-reading activities
- Biographical sketch and picture of the author
- Play summary
- Vocabulary lists and suggested vocabulary ideas
- Each act grouped for study with activities including these:
 - quizzes*
 - hands-on projects*
 - cooperative learning activities*
 - cross-curricular connections*
 - extensions into the reader's life*
- Post-reading activities
- Book report ideas
- Research ideas
- Culminating activity
- Three different options for unit tests
- Bibliography of Related Materials
- Answer key

We are certain that this unit will be a very worthwhile addition to your planning and we hope that as you use our ideas, your students will increase the circle of 'old friends' to be found in good literature.



Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare

(Oxford University Press, Inc., 1993)

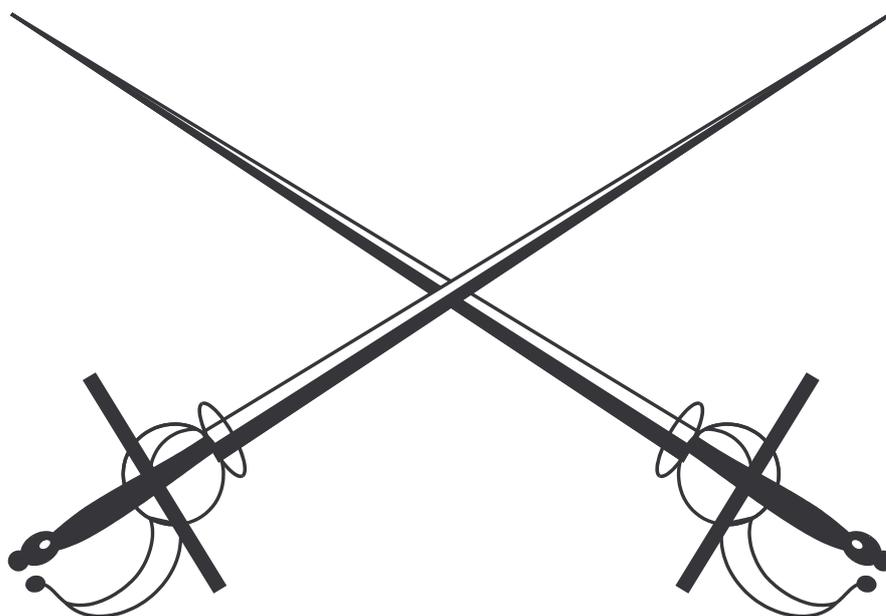
The tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* is the story of star-crossed lovers, two young people whose love and marriage are doomed as soon as they have begun. Their families, the Montagues and the Capulets, have maintained a blood feud in Verona, Italy, for many years and members of each family have been killed by members of the other in a never-ending cycle of murder for revenge.

Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight when Romeo, a Montague, sneaks into a masked ball given by the Capulets and sees Juliet. With the help of Juliet's nurse and a sympathetic clergyman, they secretly marry, knowing that they do so at the risk of Romeo's death if they are discovered. When Romeo kills a Capulet in a duel, he is banished from Verona.

Meanwhile, Juliet's father, not knowing she is already married, promises her hand in marriage to County Paris. Juliet tries to change her father's mind, but he will not give in. The two young lovers separate in despair when Romeo is banished from Verona and Juliet longs to be with him. Unknown to Romeo, Friar Lawrence gives Juliet a vial of a potion which will cause her to sleep as though dead. Her plan is to 'die' and thereby escape the impossible marriage to County Paris and then go to be with Romeo after the 'funeral'.

Romeo, however, does not know of these well-laid plans and when he discovers the seemingly dead body of his beloved Juliet, he kills himself. When Juliet awakens to find her lover dead by her side, she takes Romeo's knife and uses it to kill herself, this time for real.

Although *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the best loved of Shakespeare's plays, its story was a popular one long before this play was written, having been told before in Italian, French and English. It is thought to be one of Shakespeare's earliest plays and was written while he was still almost a poet more than a playwright. It was based on an English poem by Arthur Brooke called *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, which was printed in 1562. The language of the play, however, is entirely that of Shakespeare.



Vocabulary Activities

Romeo and Juliet contains many words which will be new to the students, some of which have obscure meanings because they are no longer used. Learning the words listed in the vocabulary lists, however, should help the students get a very good understanding of the play. If the play is studied orally, even a few unfamiliar words should not get in the way of student comprehension.

Have students keep a vocabulary list of the words they do not understand. Using the words in a variety of activities appropriate to the study of the play will help them remember and understand the words. Try some of the suggestions below for the listed words.

- **Illustrate a dictionary.** The Elizabethan Age during which Shakespeare wrote and acted followed close behind the first English printing press of William Caxton. Until that time, most books had been labouriously printed by hand and were often lavishly illustrated. Artistic students might enjoy making an illustrated dictionary of their own. Early dictionaries were printed with bright colours and a lot of gold. You might include in your dictionary only words which have their origins in French or in German.
- **Compile a glossary of words used in drama.** As with any specialised area, dramatic works contain a number of words specific to that area. Sometimes words used specifically in one field are known as *jargon*. What would these words be in drama?
- **Use the words to write a one-act play.** Write a one-act play or skit using as many of the vocabulary words as you can. The play or skit can be serious or silly, as you wish. Will your play be a comedy or tragedy?
- **Compose a soliloquy.** A soliloquy is a speech said by a character in which he or she speaks as though no one else is there. It is a way for the character to allow the audience to hear his or her thoughts. Imagine yourself to be one of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet*. Using several of the vocabulary words, compose a soliloquy which tells how that character feels at a given point in the play. Present your soliloquy to the class.
- **Invent an animal.** Invent an animal named with one of the vocabulary words. Draw a picture of your animal, list its favourite foods, its life habits and describe its habitat.
- **Put Romeo and Juliet in a time machine.** Imagine that you are either Romeo or Juliet and you have been transported through time to the city where you now live. Write a description of your school, your home and your street as it would be seen through that character's eyes.

Quiz Time

1. On the back of this paper, list three important events in Act I.
2. Who describes the setting of *Romeo and Juliet* to the audience?

3. Where does *Romeo and Juliet* take place?

4. Name the two families who maintain a blood feud against each other.

5. What does Capulet tell Paris to do about Juliet?

6. How are Mercutio and Juliet's nurse alike?

7. Describe in your own words the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet.

8. How does Romeo change after he falls in love with Juliet?

9. What does Tybalt want to do when he spies Romeo at the ball and how is he prevented from doing it?

10. On the back of this page, tell how you think Romeo and Juliet's parents will react if they learn the two have fallen in love. Tell your reasons for having this opinion and whether or not you think either of them can, or will, do anything to change their parents' minds.

Attend a Masquerade

Romeo and Juliet meet at a masquerade ball. This was a favourite kind of party for Elizabethans. They loved to dress up and pretend to be someone other than who they were and they loved to wear masks in order to watch other people without being recognised themselves. Many people still enjoy masquerade parties, especially on New Year's Eve. Look at the pictures on the next page to see how men and women commonly dressed in Shakespeare's England. Children's clothing was identical to that of adults, just smaller.

Elizabethan clothing was much different from the clothing we wear today. For one thing, sleeves were separate from the rest of the upper garments. For another, women's clothing was similar to men's in that both men and women wore garments which accentuated broad shoulders and narrow waists.

English winters can be cold and a drafty house uncomfortable. The interiors of houses had only fireplaces for warmth, so men, and often women as well, wore hats inside. And men wore leggings. Trousers and pockets had not yet been invented.



Activity

Imagine you are going to a masquerade ball where you are to wear only Elizabethan-styled clothing. Do one or more of the following:

1. Write a complete description of the Elizabethan costume you will wear. Describe your costume in terms of colours and fabrics and include any accessories such as jewellery, swords, buckles, etc., that you will wear.
2. Draw a picture of yourself in your costume. Colour it with the colours you intend to wear and then describe the fabrics and texture.
3. Make your Elizabethan costume. With this activity, you need to be aware that men's doublets and the upper parts of the leggings which cover the thighs were stuffed with horsehair, wool or rags. Women's sleeves were also stuffed and both men's and women's sleeves were tied at the wrists. Ruffs at the neck were stiffly starched. Both men and women wore cloaks for warmth and to protect their clothing, which was seldom washed. Washing machines, dryers and dry cleaning had not yet been invented. In fact, cupboards in which to keep the clothing had not been invented, either! Model or display your costume for the rest of the class.