
Year 8

English

Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet

Lesson 2

Characterisation

Overview of Lesson

L	Content	Skills
2	Students learn about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The balcony scene in Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ▪ The characterisation of the tragic hero and heroine 	Students learn to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyse language features such as allusion and extended metaphor ▪ Discuss perspective in dramatic speech
	Evidence of Learning: Class discussions; small text analysis exercises, personal reflections Assessment: Homework Two (content knowledge quiz)	

1. Lesson One Review

In Lesson One we focused on the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*. In preparation for Lesson Two, let's read the full synopsis of the play that is provided at the end of Lesson One.

Class Discussion

What emotions and challenges do you think the main characters face in the play?

Before we explore the characters of Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet in greater detail, it is worth briefly considering one of the most important features of this play.

Dramatic Irony	When the audience knows more about the events or characters than at least one of the characters in the world of the play. The action on stage consequently takes on different meanings for the audience by keeping them in a state of suspense and anticipation.
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By revealing the tragic outcomes of the play in the prologue, Shakespeare tells the audience what the tragedy of the play will be, and in doing so generates intense curiosity as to how this tragedy will come about.

Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony means that whenever we hear Romeo or Juliet speak, we may feel a greater sense of empathy for them because we anticipate what they cannot. This foreknowledge of the fate awaiting these two lovers contributes to heightened emotions in key scenes of the development of their romance.

2. Characterisation in the “Balcony Scene”

In this lesson, we will focus on how Shakespeare, as a dramatist, creates characters for us. Character is central in Shakespeare’s plays because it is the connections and tensions between characters that drives much of the plot. Act 2, Scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet* is often referred to as the ‘balcony scene’. It sets up the most significant action of the play: Juliet and Romeo decide to marry!

Let’s watch a performance of the balcony scene. Don’t worry too much about what’s being said at this point, but instead think about the performances of the two characters. What is their body language telling us? What does the tone of their voices suggest about their interaction?



Media Viewing: Bell Shakespeare - Romeo and Juliet 2.2

Class Discussion

- What is Romeo’s opinion about Juliet?
- What is Juliet trying to say to Romeo?

Focus Questions

Describe the performances of the actors. What feelings are they conveying?

How are your emotions towards these characters affected by what you know will happen to them?



Pair Activity

With a fellow student consider the following lines from the scene. What do you think they mean? What are some connotations that they carry? Focus on the underlined words. You can also refer to the extract of Act 2, Scene 2 included in the Extension section of this lesson for more details.

Connotation	<p>A connotation is a meaning that is implied by a word, apart from the thing that the word explicitly describes. Words may have cultural and emotional associations that are additional to the literal definition.</p> <p>For example 'Wall Street' refers explicitly to a street in New York, but 'Wall Street' carries connotations such as 'wealth' and 'power' that have developed because Wall Street is the centre of the financial district in New York.</p>
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'Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon' (line 7)

'O, speak again, bright angel!' (line 26)

'That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet' (lines 43-44)

□ Romeo's Metaphors

Romeo is clearly quite taken with Juliet. We can tell from the actors' performances in the version we watched earlier that each is drawn to the other. The performance of the actors helps us to decode the meaning of Shakespeare's language which in this scene is packed with figurative language and particularly metaphors! We can start to build a deeper interpretation of Shakespeare's language and the meaning of the lines by looking more closely at Romeo's metaphors.

Romeo describes Juliet with the following metaphor: "what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun". Juliet is obviously a person and not the sun, so this means Romeo is suggesting that Juliet and the sun share some qualities. Let's investigate this further.

Metaphor	A figure of speech where you compare two dissimilar things in order to suggest that they share qualities.
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Let's consider the metaphor in these lines: "what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun".

Class Collaboration

Work together with your teacher to discuss the meaning you see in this metaphor when we think about deeply:

"what light through yonder window breaks?"

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun"



Romeo in Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film adaptation of the play, *Romeo + Juliet*.

Focus Questions

What qualities does Romeo suggest that Juliet possesses through this metaphor: “what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun”?

What does Romeo's use of this metaphor to describe Juliet suggest about his character and how he feels about Juliet?

Given that the audience knows that both Romeo and Juliet are doomed to die by the end of this play, what additional emotions may be evoked by this use of metaphor?

Romeo is not just comparing Juliet to the sun, but to the moment of sunrise. Sunrise is typically considered to be one of the most beautiful moments of the day in terms of the way the sunlight changes the colours over the landscape and in the sky. The rising sun also is a sign that night-time is over. These ideas are all built into these two lines! Romeo further refers to Juliet through use of extended metaphor in the lines:

Extended Metaphor	A figure of speech which makes a comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics by saying that one thing is another. An extended metaphor continues through a series of sentences or lines.
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Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 15-25

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, 15
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres¹ till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven 20
Would through the airy region stream so bright²
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek! 25

¹ *To twinkle in their spheres* – orbits.

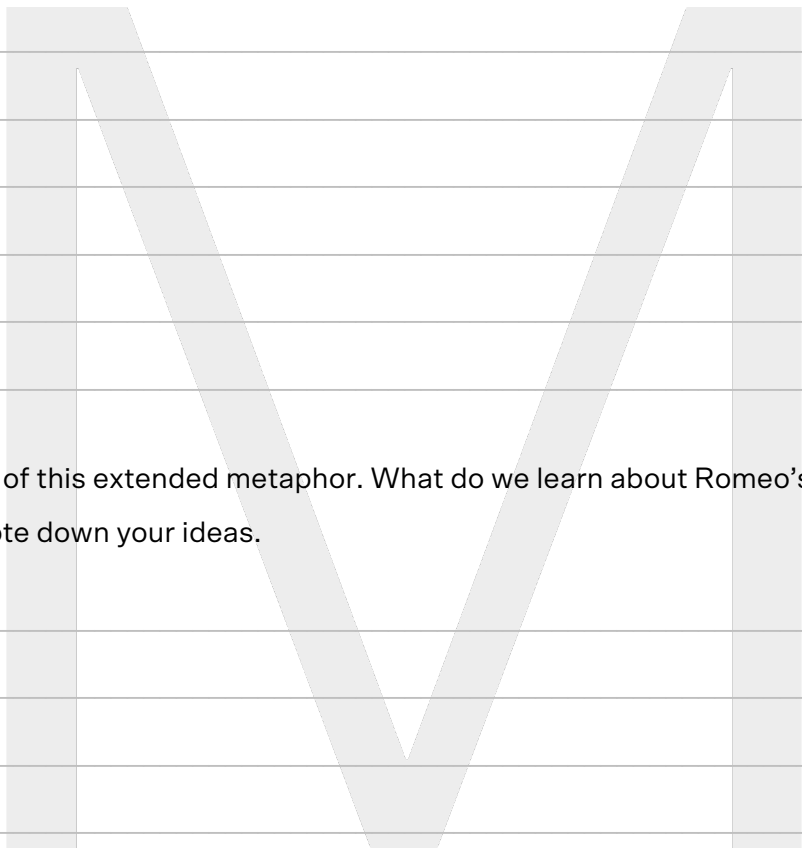
² *Airy region* – the sky or upper limit of the air, the heavens; *stream* – emit continuous beams of light.

Pair Activity

Work together with a fellow student to answer the following questions.

What two things are compared in this extended metaphor?

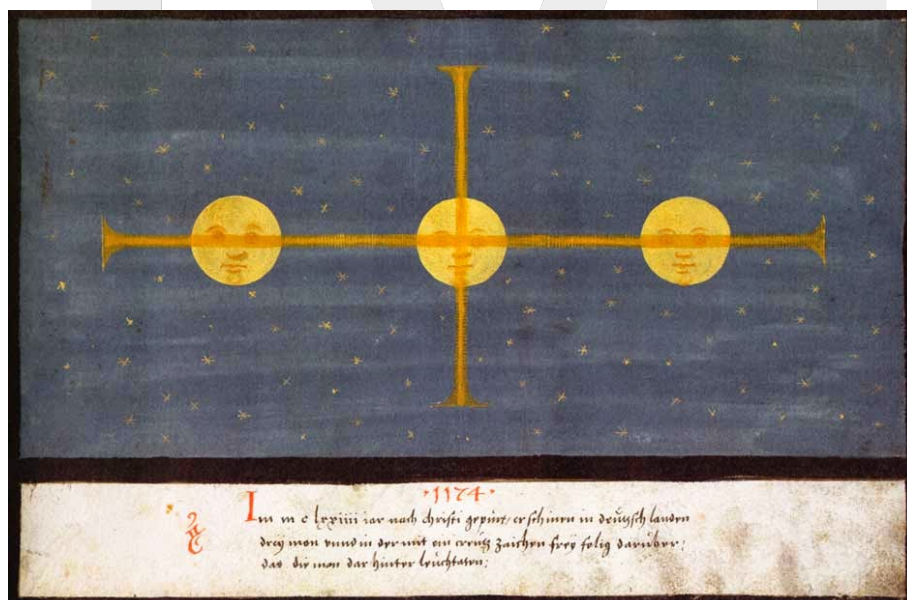
Note down the different ways that Romeo expands on his initial comparison.



Discuss the effect of this extended metaphor. What do we learn about Romeo's feelings towards Juliet? Note down your ideas.

What characteristics does Romeo attribute to Juliet by making repeated allusions to the stars and to heaven?

Allusion	A brief reference to a person, event, place, or phrase. For example, “that kid is a real Newton!”. Here ‘Newton’ is a historical allusion to the famous scientist Isaac Newton. By describing the kid as a ‘Newton’, the writer transfers the characteristics associated with Newton – intelligent, problem-solving – to the kid.
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“Three moons and a cross, a portent seen in Germany” – from the German *Book of Miracles* (1560)³

³ Source: <http://benedante.blogspot.com/2014/05/the-book-of-miracles.html>

□ Juliet's Perspective

Now let's consider Juliet's perspective of Romeo. When we see Juliet in the balcony scene, it is after meeting Romeo at the Capulet ball. Juliet is home speculating upon the implications of liking someone from a family that is an enemy of her own. She muses out loud about the potential conflict she sees and how it might be overcome.

Note to Students: Shakespearean to modern English

The following questions contain Shakespearean words that you can easily translate into their modern versions. Here are some:

Thy = your

Thou = you

Thyself = yourself

Though = even if

Focus Questions

Juliet opens with the thought: "Tis but thy name that is my enemy". What argument could Juliet be making here?

When Juliet says: "What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!", what is she wishing for?

Class Collaboration

Juliet expresses her anger at the fact that Romeo comes from the family with whom her family is fighting. She does not, however, state this anger in such explicit terms. Juliet draws attention to the abstract and non-physical nature of a name, and the eloquent way she does it reveals aspects of her character. Let's look at her monologue in full now.

Monologue	A long speech spoken by one character. A monologue can be addressed to another character on stage, spoken to oneself, or shared with the audience.
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Work together with your teacher to clarify the meaning of words and make notes around the speech to help your understanding.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 38-47

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;	38
Thou art thyself, though ⁴ not a Montague.	
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,	40
Nor arm nor face, nor any other part	
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!	
What's in a name? That which we call a rose	
By any other name would smell as sweet;	
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,	45
Retain ⁵ that dear perfection which he owes ⁶	
Without that title.	47

⁴ *Though* – even if

⁵ *Retain* – keep

⁶ *Owes* – owns, possesses

Focus Questions

'That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet' is perhaps the most famous metaphor in the entire play! What do you think Juliet is saying about Romeo here?

What impression do you have of Juliet's character through her speech? What qualities does she demonstrate here?