

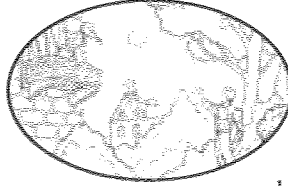
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet, written around 1594, is one of Shakespeare's most popular plays and is considered one of the greatest love stories ever written.

Originally called *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, the play is a tragedy of fate rather than of flaws. Romeo's family, the Montagues, has had a long and bitter rivalry with Juliet's family, the Capulets. Romeo and Juliet fell in love before they knew each other's names.

This story of ill-fated love had been told many times in Italian, French, and English. Shakespeare's primary source was Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem, *Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*. But Shakespeare's brilliant use of language makes his version the one we remember. Romeo and Juliet speak their devotion in poetry—the



conversation at their first meeting is a shared sonnet—and prose. Shakespeare plays with language throughout, using paradoxes, oxymorons, double entendres, rhyming tricks, and puns.

Activity: Ask each student to choose a major event in the story and write a diary entry about it from Romeo or Juliet's point of view. For example, Juliet might write after she and Romeo profess their love to each other, when she learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt and is banished, or when her parents order her to marry Paris. Romeo might write after he and Juliet profess their love to each other, after he kills Tybalt, or when he hears that Juliet is dead.

BARD CARD

Romeo and Juliet

Plot Summary: *Romeo and Juliet* is the story of the brief courtship and early deaths of two star-crossed lovers from bitterly feuding Italian families, the Montagues and the Capulets. This tragedy takes place in the 1400s in Verona, Italy.

Main Characters

- Romeo:** son of Montague
- Juliet:** daughter of Capulet
- Mercutio:** Romeo's friend
- Benvolio:** Romeo's friend
- Tybalt:** Lady Capulet's nephew, enemy of Romeo
- Nurse:** Juliet's attendant
- Friar Laurence**
- Prince of Verona**

Glossary

- cordial:** a kind of liquor
- disparagement:** to speak of as unimportant
- doff:** to get rid of
- dram:** a small portion of something to drink
- foe:** enemy
- gall:** bitterness
- hence:** from this place
- hie:** hasten; go quickly
- sheath:** a case for a blade
- woe:** deep sorrow