**Romeo and Juliet**

**Definition:**

Romeo and Juliet from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, first performed 1594–95. The play is concerned with the doomed love of teenagers Romeo and Juliet, victims of the bitter enmity between their respective families in Verona.

**documents**

Shakespeare, William: Romeo and Juliet, from II i

Shakespeare, William: Romeo and Juliet, III i

**audios**

Shakespeare, William Romeo and Juliet

**Summary Article:**

**Romeo and Juliet**

from *Dictionary of Shakespeare, Peter Collin Publishing*

One of Shakespeare’s early tragedies (see tragedy) which he probably began writing around 1591-92; it was first performed between 1594 and 1596, and first published in a quarto edition in 1597. The primary source of the play was a popular narrative poem, itself based on earlier versions of the story, entitled *the Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) by Arthur Brooke. Shakespeare followed Brooke's poem closely but speeded up the action from several months to four or five days and added the character of Mercutio. The play, set in Italy, explores extremes of emotions, love and hate for example, and is full of contrasts such as light and dark, day and night. There is comedy in the play, with punning and bawdy jokes that highlight the difference between the pure romantic love of Romeo and Juliet and a coarser sexual one.

**SYNOPSIS :**

Two families in Verona, the Capulets and the Montagues, are engaged in a long-running feud which is so bitter that even their servants fight in the streets. Juliet, a Capulet, and Romeo, a Montague, meet at a masked ball and unaware of each other's family names they fall in love. Because of the feud, they are forced into secrecy, and are married the next day by Friar Laurence. The Capulet and Montague feud still simmers and Romeo is drawn into a quarrel with Juliet's cousin Tybalt. Although he is reluctant to fight, Romeo kills Tybalt and is straightaway banished from Verona. Friar Laurence advises the distracted Romeo to stay with Juliet that night and then flee to Mantua and wait for a time when they can be reunited. Unaware of her marriage to Romeo, Juliet's parents are making arrangements for her to marry a young nobleman, Paris. Juliet in desperation consults Friar Laurence. Both he and Juliet's nurse advise her to make a second, bigamous marriage, but Juliet refuses. Friar Laurence provides her with a drug which will make her appear dead for forty-two hours. He promises to send word to Romeo to come in secret and fetch her from the family vault, where she will be laid out, and take her back to Mantua. On the morning of her proposed marriage to Paris, Juliet is discovered apparently dead, and is
placed in the tomb. The Friar’s message to Romeo fails to reach him in time, and learning that Juliet is dead and he hastens in despair to the Capulet tomb where he plans to be united with Juliet in death if not in life. Paris tries to stop Romeo from entering the vault, but Romeo kills him, and drinks a deadly poison. When Juliet awakes moments later, she is thrilled to find Romeo beside her. Her happiness is brief; she sees that he is dead and kills herself. As a result of the tragedy there is a reconciliation between the feuding families.

See also Abram, Apothecary, Balthasar, bawdy, Benvolio, Brooke, Arthur, Capulet, Capulet, Cousin, Capulet, Lady, Catling, Simon, Chorus, Citizens, comedy, dramatic irony, epithet, Escalus, Prince, exposition, fate, Gregory, Irving, Sir, John, Friar, Juliet, Kemble, Fanny (Frances Anne), Laurence, Friar, masque, Mercutio, Montague, Montague, Lady., motif, Musicians, NurseA, Paris, Peter, plague, the, play production and performance, playhouses, Potpan, prefigure, prologue, Pyramus and Thisbe, Rebeck, Hugh, resolution, rhyme, Romeo, Rosaline, Sampson, Servants and Servingmen, Shakespeare’s Plays, Soundpost, James, Tybalt

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