Romeo and Juliet 1595

ROMEO AND JULIET

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHORUS.

ESCALUS, *Prince of Verona.*
PARIS, *a young nobleman, kinsman to the Prince.*
MONTAGUE, } *heads of two houses at vari-*
CAPULET, } *ance with each other.*
An Old Man, *of the Capulet family.*
ROMEO, *son to Montague.*
MERCUTIO, *kinsman to the Prince, and friend to Romeo.*
BENVOLIO, *nephew to Montague, and friend to Romeo.*
TYBALT, *nephew to Lady Capulet.*
FRIAR LAWRENCE, } *Franciscans.*
FRIAR JOHN, }
BALTHASAR, *servant to Romeo.*

SAMPSON, } *servants to Capulet.*
GREGORY, }
PETER, *servant to Juliet's nurse.*
ABRAHAM, *servant to Montague.*
An Apothecary.
Three Musicians.
An Officer.

LADY MONTAGUE, *wife to Montague.*
LADY CAPULET, *wife to Capulet.*
JULIET, *daughter to Capulet.*
Nurse *to Juliet.*

Citizens of Verona; Gentlemen and Gentlewomen of both houses; Maskers, Torchbearers, Pages, Guards, Watchmen, Servants, and Attendants.

THE SCENE: *Verona and Mantua.*

Sources:

THE TUDOR EDITION OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
THE COMPLETE WORKS
COLLINS
LONDON AND GLASGOW
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A new edition, edited with an Introduction and glossary by
PETER ALEXANDER
Regius Professor of English Language and Literature, University of Glasgow

David Akenhead, CEO Akenhead crosswords currently enjoying 499,116 visits at his Visits page on his website at crosswordsakenhead.com where there is a link to his crossword challenges:

Howard Staunton (1810-1874) on proof of authorship
(extracts)

"The Nurse, describing Juliet's being weaned, says, - 'On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen; that shall she; marry, I remember it well. 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years' Holinshed has given a striking and minute account:- 'On the sixt of Aprill
(1580), being wednesdaie in Easter weeke about six of the clocke toward euening, a sudden earthquake happening in London caused such an amazednesse among the people as was wonderfull for the time, and caused them to make their earnest praiers to almightie God' On the theory that the Nurse's observation really applied to the earthquake of 1580, we may ascribe the date of this play's composition to 1591."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

(on Mercutio) "O! how shall I describe that exquisite ebullience and overflow of youthful life, wafted on over the laughing waves of pleasure and prosperity, as a wanton beauty that distorts the face on which she knows her lover is gazing enraptured, and wrinkles her forehead in the triumph of its smoothness! Wit ever wakeful, fancy busy and procreative as an insect, courage, an easy mind that, without cares of its own, is at once disposed to laugh away those of others, and yet to be interested in them – these and all congenial qualities, melting into the common *copula* of them all, the man of rank and the gentleman, with all its excellencies and all its weaknesses, constitute the character of Mercutio!"

The night she meets Romeo, Juliet cries 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy'. But it is not this alone which destroys the lovers, the power of passion kills them too. Shakespeare's sonnets brim with images of love shown, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, as a sweet-tasting fatal poison. W.H. Auden says 'It is impossible to feel the full tragic import of the play unless one can entertain, at least in imagination, the Christian belief held by everyone in an Elizabethan audience (and many still sadly today), that suicide is a mortal sin, and that suicides go to Hell for all eternity . . .' So when the lovers die at the end of the play, both of them by their own hands, they are immortally lost.

Story (extracts and further comments) courtesy of John Goodwin RSC's Short Guide to Shakespeare's Plays 1990. – bracketed items with my observations – DA

"**Romeo and Juliet** are innocent victims of destiny. They are parted by the hatred of their two families.

The story tells of the long vendetta between the families of Montague and Capulet in Verona. Romeo, a Montague, falls in love with Juliet, a Capulet, and secretly marries her. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel. Romeo refuses, but his friend, Mercutio fights in his place and is killed. In anger and revenge, Romeo slays Tybalt, and is banished.

Juliet is commanded by her father to marry Paris, a nobleman; and the Friar who had secretly married Juliet to Romeo now helps her by giving her a potion which makes her seem dead. She is put in the family vault from where when she wakes she is to escape to Mantua with Romeo. But he mistakenly believes her really dead, goes back to Verona, kills Paris at her graveside, and then himself takes poison. Juliet wakes, finds her young husband's body beside her and stabs herself. The warring families, in grief, are reconciled."

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