

THE TRAGEDY OF ROMEO AND JULIET

William Shakespeare

Context

- Original story not created by Shakespeare
 - ▣ The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet by Arthur Brook—1562 (two years before Shakespeare was born)
- Takes place in Verona, Italy
- Shakespeare expanded the plot by adding Mercutio and Paris
- Shakespeare wrote his version of the play between 1591 and 1595



Conflict

- The central conflict is two lovers caught between two feuding families, the Montagues and the Capulets
 - ▣ The feud is older than many of the characters in the book.
- Dante references the families in *The Divine Comedy* (1308)
 - ▣ “Come and see, you who are negligent,
Montagues and Capulets, Monaldi and Filippeschi
One lot already grieving, the other in fear.”
 - ▣ Seems to be alluding to a political polarity in which they each allied to rival political factions
 - ▣ The feud may have lead to destruction of both parties and this furthered the feud even more.

Themes

□ Love—duh!

- ▣ More importantly is this even a love story or is it a story of lust getting the best of feeble minds?

□ Fate vs. Free will

- ▣ Tragic events require that many specific moments happen in exact sequence and time.
- ▣ Is this mere chance or is it one's destiny that is unchanging?

- ▣ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dakx97gRCx0>

Major Motif

□ Light vs. Dark

- ▣ Both Romeo and Juliet describe one another as an intensely light object amid surrounding darkness
- ▣ "Whiter than snow upon a raven's back."
- ▣ "Beauty makes this vault a feasting presence full of light."
- ▣ Could be seen as a metaphor for the situation that they are in...

Linguistics

□ Pun heavy

- ▣ “Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling. Being but heavy, I will bear the light.” Context: Romeo is reluctant to attend a party because he is suffering from a broken heart.
- ▣ “Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.” Romeo: “Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead So stakes me to the ground I cannot move



Archetype: Star-Crossed Lovers

- Archetype: a statement, pattern of behavior, or prototype which other statements, patterns of behavior, and objects copy or emulate.
- Star-Crossed Lovers
 - ▣ A pair of lovers whose relationship is often thwarted by outside forces.
 - ▣ Their relationship is ultimately ruined even though they share a genuine and rare love.
 - ▣ Astrological in origin, the phrase stems from the belief that the positions of the stars ruled over people's fates.
 - ▣ "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes,
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life"

Can you think of any other examples of Star-Crossed Lovers?



[The Fault in Our Stars Trailer](#)