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Love Kills

Romeo and Julietis arguably Shakespeare’s most powerful play. Throughout the story he makes great use of oppositions between different themes and ideas. These ideas would seem unrelated to most people but he does a great job of intertwining them so that they build off of each other throughout the play. The main opposition he uses is love and death. These two themes are constant throughout the play and there isn’t a scene in Romeo and Juliet when there is neither death nor love. The love between Romeo and Juliet is the heart of the play and everything that happens is caused by their love for each other. Love is thought to bring eternal happiness but Shakespeare illustrates love in a form that often ends up bringing darkness and death. There were better ways to handle a lot of the situations but Romeo and Juliet’s love brought about more death than there would have been if they never loved each other in the first place.

The history of the Montagues and Capulets is supposedly riddled with death. Many people in each family are well known to hate each other and the audience is brought in assuming there must have been a lot of violence in the past. The very first part of the play is a well-written sonnet, explaining to the audience what the setting is, as well as giving clues about what will happen in the play. Shakespeare writes, “From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.” (I.Prologue.3-4) Civil blood is the key phrase in this passage. “Civil,” people are supposed to be thought of as just and they’re supposed to only bring good things. However, before the story even starts, Shakespeare is telling the audience that the most civil people often become the most violent. This is another opposition he uses and it comes out in many characters throughout the play. Most people during this time period are expected to believe that the civil and most powerful people do everything right and they’re generally envied. However, if it’s true they do everything right then Romeo and Juliet would have ended up happily ever after. This was not the case and Shakespeare foreshadows from the beginning that the people we think have the greatest lives are actually equally as unjust as anyone else.

Many would agree that Romeo and Juliet were bystanders in the chaos going on around them. They were born into feuding families and they had no control over who they loved. This is both right and wrong. It is true they ended up with unlucky situations. The setting is in a place where hatred is more important than love for a lot of people. The Montagues and Capulets have been at it for a very long time and to be placed into one of the families meant being raised to hate and be hated solely based on your last name. The entire plot wouldn’t unfold if the families weren’t fighting. In fact Romeo and Juliet’s love could have even been accepted and possibly embraced. This just proves that regardless of how civil or wealthy people are, they still can act like barbarians. These families may call themselves just and ride around on their high horses but grave problems still exist in their houses and are often worse than the problems of peasants. These houses are supposed to be looked at as the best places to fall in love but it turns out love is the worst thing you could do to these two families.

Immaturity was potentially the root of the slaughter that ensued in Romeo and Juliet*.* It is often believed that young people act overdramatic and can’t handle the problems people face that are in love. Capulet even calls this out. He says, “But saying o'er what I have said before:  
My child is yet a stranger in the world; She hath not seen the change of fourteen years, Let two more summers wither in their pride, Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.” (I.II.8-12) He is saying Juliet is only thirteen and she doesn’t know of the corrupt times that may lie ahead. It takes wisdom to make the correct decisions and wisdom comes from years of trial and error. Romeo and Juliet aren’t wise because they’re so young. Shakespeare’s theme comes out when Capulet says this. Everybody, besides Shakespeare and Capulet, think love is the best thing that can happen to someone. It is commonly believed that love always gives people meaning and ends up happily ever after. However, in many cases this is wrong. Capulet knows that love may lead to disaster. If everyone listened to Capulet and waited a couple more years then Juliet wouldn’t have been forced to marry Paris so young. This then would have prevented Romeo and Juliet from getting married in the first place and they both could have seen how bad their marriage would’ve ended up. However they carry on with the wedding and the two young adults marry out of impulse. It only takes one childish act of impulse to have serious consequences.

Shakespeare shows how love can lead people to act irrationally. Romeo and Juliet know about the feud of their families. They have seen and heard of the violence that has happened between their houses over the years and know that much of the interactions have led to death. However, this doesn’t stop them from acting foolishly. Generally love is thought of as a good thing that brings people together and gives them a happy life. It turns out that people want this outcome so bad that they become blind to things they would normally avoid. This adds to what Shakespeare is trying to illustrate in Romeo and Juliet*.* The star crossed lovers know not to associate with the rival family but they don’t care. This is entirely because of love. If Romeo and Juliet didn’t fall in love then life would have carried on. Juliet would have married Paris and their family legacy would have continued as it always was. However, Juliet didn’t care once she met Romeo. Her love for him caused her to go against her natural instincts and she sacrificed everything so she could be with who she thought was her true love at the time.

Teenagers are often naïve, especially when it comes to love. Many teenagers find someone they like and decide that they are they love them unconditionally but it takes some years of experience for them to know if they were actually in love or not. Romeo is a prime example of this. At first, Romeo loves Rosaline unconditionally. When he finds out she doesn’t love him back he becomes what resembles a moody teenager. This leads him to the Capulet party and once he sees Juliet, he instantly falls deeply in love with her. This goes to show that young adults can snap into and out of love at the drop of a hat. Shakespeare does well at using this quality to prove that love often leads to bad things. When people are young, their love seems to be stronger and this causes more bad things to happen to them. At this point in his life, Romeo was forcing love wherever he could find it.

Shakespeare’s view on love doesn’t fully come out until the end. Juliet is so in love that she is willing to let everyone she has ever known believe she is dead only so she can be with Romeo. She takes the fake poison and makes her family’s worst fear come to life. The love she felt leads the entire Capulet family to become heart broken. This is a selfish act and many people had to suffer because of her tunnel vision, including Paris. Throughout the play nobody knew much about Paris and he was even viewed as an antagonist. By the end, the audience sympathizes with him because he did actually love Juliet. If their marriage would have carried out then he would have treated Juliet well and they could have ended up being happy for the rest of their life. But the impulsive love created with Romeo destroyed this outcome. Paris not only died emotionally but also ended up actually dying because of the relationship between Romeo and Juliet. Romeo came in to see Juliet and things became confrontational. Shakespearian tragedies always seem to end with the innocent dying. In Romeo and Juliet, the death of the innocent comes from an immature love triangle.

The way Shakespeare finishes the play really shows his thoughts on love having disastrous consequences. Romeo was supposed to know Juliet was faking her death but bad luck led to him not receiving that news. He kills Paris only because he wants some alone time with his wife and then continues on to see Juliet dead in her grave. This scene shows how blind love can make people. Romeo is so in love with Juliet that he thinks that he would rather be dead than not be with her alive. Instead of thinking it over first, he instantly drinks poison. Juliet then wakes up, goes through the same thought process and stabs herself. Most people in this situation would carry on in life or at least consider not committing suicide. However, Shakespeare illustrates the danger and power love can evoke on someone. It’s nearly impossible for most people to kill themselves but this story shows that one thing that would push somebody to do it is love. Shakespeare’s main theme throughout this play is love can often lead to bad things including death.

By the end we learn that Shakespeare likes to write about death. He killed off many of the main characters and all of their deaths can be traced back to the love between Romeo and Juliet. It is a sad ending but there could have been no other way of ending it without changing the main theme. There are many themes throughout the play but the one he uses most and utilizes best is the relationship between love and death. The star-crossed lovers brought it all upon themselves. The audience is supposed to believe that love overwhelmed them so much that they lost all rational thought. Because of this they acted stupidly and did things that any right-minded individual would generally avoid. What comes from analyzing this is that love makes people make bad decisions and, in the case of Romeo and Juliet**,** leads to the death of many people associated with a relationship. This play is based on forbidden love between two characters that shouldn’t be in love to begin with. Without the overwhelming love there would be no death and there would be no interesting story.