

KEY WORDS

Soliloquy, Foreshadowing, Omniscient, Catholic, Pansophic, Catalyst, Quintessentially, Mediator, Paternal, Dramatically ironic, Futile, Insurmountable

Friar Lawrence

COMPARISON

Friar Lawrence almost seems on a separate, **elevated** (higher) level to the other characters in the play because he is a religious and wise and yet he still makes mistakes which lead to disaster, proving that **ultimately**, he is just a man.

COMPARISON

What is ironic about this scene, is that the Friar talks about good and evil in nature and man and yet later in the play he uses one of his plants to give Juliet a sleeping draught which ends up contributing to her suicide. This shows he is not **exempt** (excused) this good and evil in man.

COMPARISON

Friar Lawrence is far calmer and more logical in comparison to Romeo, who is **hasty and impulsive**, this links to how Shakespeare generalises the young vs the old. He shows youth to be associated with rashness and logic to come with age.

COMPARISON

Even friar Lawrence, who was not involved in the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets, still ends the play in a state of melancholy. This shows the destructive nature of feuds.

FRIAR LAWRENCE GOOD VS EVIL

- The introduction of the Friar, come with a long **soliloquy** from him as he tends to his plants. He speaks of **"baleful weeds"**, **evoking** the theme of death which is ever- **present** and **foreshadowing** the poison we see Romeo drink at the play's denouement (climax).
- He speaks of the earth, and says **"the earth, that's nature's mother, as her tomb. / what is her burying, grave that is her womb"**. His use of **rhyming couplets**, rhyming tomb with womb **juxtapose** life and death and his **iambic pentameter** makes the line seem almost like a proverb (a rhyming phrase that tells a moral or a lesson); it makes it memorable.
- These techniques make Friar Lawrence appear to have some sort of higher knowledge of the workings of life and nature. He has a true almost **omniscient** (all knowing) understanding of the conflict of life and death and good and evil in nature
- He speaks of **"two opposed kings [... reside] in man as well as herbs"**, essentially stating that there is good and evil in men as well as in plants. He speaks of evil as if it were **a natural quality** and comparing men to plants, he **dispels** the notion that humans are any more superior than nature.
- After all, many of the men in the play have a bit of a **superiority complex** (they think they are superior)
- His greeting to Romeo being **"benedicte"**, reminds us of his position as a friar, which enhances that sense of **omniscience** we get from his monologue. We are reminded that he is the plays religious figure, and his **catholic faith** makes him seem wise.
- The Elizabethans were extremely religious and thus their view of Friar Lawrence would have been influenced by that fact. His religion would have made him wise, too, in the eyes of the audience.
- Friar Lawrence's knowledge of the good and evil quality that exist in man and nature, **foreshadow** the **good and evil** to come in the rest of the play and his position as a religious man gives him a superiority over the other characters in the play and make him seem **pansophic** (possessing wisdom / knowledge about the universe)



FRIAR LAWRENCE GOOD INTENTIONS BAD OUTCOME + FATE

- Friar Lawrence is **plagued with immense** guilt for the role he played in the lovers' death. **"Myself condemned"** he says, self-critically admitting his faults. He says he **"stand[s] to be impeached and purged"**. The word **"purged"** has religious **connotations**, reminding us that he is a **religious** man and thus all his actions are driven by a catholic desire to be moral.
- He recounts the whole story to the prince and the lovers' parents, saying he gave Juliet a **"sleeping potion"** which he describes as **"so tortured by my art"**. He speaks of the sleeping potion he made from his plants as if it were a **perversion of nature**, juxtaposing **"tortured"** against **"art"**.
- He is so preoccupied with preserving **God's natural order (great chain of being)** he is likely distraught that he has **perverted** God's intended plan. Taking on the role of God, especially in the choice of who lives and dies, would have been classified as the **ultimate sin**. This heightens the tragedy as even Friar, a man of God, has been tainted in this devastating tragedy.
- He claims to have **"entreated her to come forth, / And bear this work of heaven with patience"**. He uses **religious imagery** to justify that he only meant good, but it somehow falls flat in the face of this tragedy.
- As **mentioned**, Elizabethans were **devoutly** religious and thus friar Lawrence would have been granted with a lot of **inherent** trust from the audience because of this. And yet his ability to still do wrong shows him to be **inherently human**. He **exemplifies** that even men guided by religion can still commit wrong, no matter his intentions.
- He begs **"let [his] old life be sacrificed [...] unto the rigor of the severest law"**, showing that, like a true religious man, he is willing to **repent for his sin- he pleads for salvation**.
- Ultimately the Friar had the best intentions and is willing to repent to prove this, but despite his good intentions, he could not overcome the **insurmountable** power of fate.
- The whole play is **dramatically ironic**, in that, we know what will happen to the lovers from the onset and yet somehow, we still root for them, as though they might somehow escape their fate. Our hope, however, like the hope of characters like Friar Lawrence, is ultimately shown to be **futile** (fruitless).

FRIAR LAWRENCE AS THE MEDIATOR

- The primary reason Friar Lawrence encourages the marriage between Juliet is that he thinks it will be a **catalyst** (cause) for a **reconcile** between their two feuding families. When he hears of Romeo's love for Juliet he exclaims **"Holy Saint Francis"**.
- He reminds us, with this line, of his faith, which furthers his role as a **mediator**. For it is **quintessentially catholic** to desire peace and harmony.
- He is **a mediator of Romeo's expectations**, advising him **"wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast"**, encouraging him to be less hasty.
- Indeed, friars were, and still are, often tasked with providing people with advice not solely (only) on matters of faith. Romeo **confides** in Friar Lawrence not his own father, showing that Lawrence acts as a paternal figure for Romeo. This characterises him as **wise** and **un-biased**.
- The friar agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet but is aware that it may have consequences. **"These violent delights have violent ends"** he says. He speaks with a **narrator like tone**, using repetition to show his apprehension. But he is attempting to **mediate the conflict**.
- In a later scene, Friar Lawrence acts as a **mediator** again regarding Romeo's banishment. **"be patient"** he pleads, after Romeo finds out he has been banished. His tone is almost fatherly, and he is reasoning with Romeo in the way that a father would.
- "The world is broad and wide"** he says, trying to manage Romeo's frustration. Friar Lawrence is **paternal** (fatherly) in his mediation. He attempts to **reconcile conflict** but does not succeed in this.
- Perhaps this is Shakespeare communicating the overwhelming power of fate, in that mediation and logic cannot surmount it, despite the friar's best efforts.

TOPIC SENTENCES

- Friar Lawrence appears **supremely** aware of the constant battle between good and evil in the world and with his position as a **religious figure** in the play, his knowledge seems to come from some form of **omniscience** (he is all knowing).
- Friar Lawrence often takes on the role of the **mediator** in Romeo and Juliet. He seeks peace and resolution of harmony, and this drives a lot of his actions in the play.
- Friar Lawrence, while some of his actions are questionable, ultimately had the best of intentions. His failure to unite the families and dissolve their feud, which was his goal, shows that **insurmountable** power of fate even over good intentions.



Context doesn't simply have to be about Shakespeare, it can be focused on the conventions of the time he was writing in as well (AO3).

Writing your answer based around how a character changes from the start of the play in comparison to the end, makes sure your answer includes structural analysis (AO2).