

Friar Lawrence

Key Themes

- Chance/fate
- Youth
- Individuals vs society
- Family vs duty
- Violence
- Love

Key Words/Phrases

- Interconnected with nature and religion
- Wise
- Omniscient (all-knowing)
- Pansophic (possessing wisdom / knowledge about the universe)
- Inherent wisdom of the earth
- Pious (religious)
- Paternal figure (fatherly figure) to Romeo
- Divine guidance
- Religious advisor
- Surrogate father

Shakespeare's intentions

- The Friar is constructed by Shakespeare as a character to which the audience trusts, and finds **solace** (comfort) in his **pious** (religious) nature. His **omniscience** (all-knowing) about the **renewal and regeneration** of nature offers the audience a moment of respite from the bleakness of the rest of the tragedy.
- Shakespeare creates the Friar to serve a dual purpose of being both Romeo's religious advisor and surrogate father to show the destructive **destructive power** of familial feuds in every aspect of life - it **destroys relationships, lives and society as a whole**. In the face of hatred and violence, religion and morality will prevail.

“The earth, that’s nature’s mother, os her tomb. / what is her burying, grave that is her womb” Act 2

Translation: The earth, which is nature’s mother, is both her tomb and her womb. Death is actually a place where new beginnings and life start.

Link to main key themes:

- **chance/ fate**
- **Youth**
- **violence / death**
- **Love**

Analysis

- **Rhyming couplets:** Friar Lawrence's use of **rhyming couplets**, particularly in pairing "tomb" with "womb," emphasise the **interconnectedness** between life and death. He suggests that the earth, often viewed as a tomb for the deceased, is **paradoxically** (conflictingly) **also the source of new life**.
- In the face of inevitable tragedy, it offers a glimmer of hope for the audience by emphasising the potential for **renewal and regeneration** – even in the face of the destruction of Romeo and Juliet lays hope for a **renewal of their love in another realm**.
- **Personification:** Through his use of **personification**, he portrays the earth and its **celestial bodies** (sun, moon, planets) as powerful and wise entities. The **cycle of death and rebirth**, symbolised by the earth's actions, demonstrates **humanity's inevitable partaking in this relentless cycle**.
- This reinforces the influence of **fate and the inherent wisdom of the earth**, emphasising the Friar to have profound insight and an **omniscient** (all-knowing) understanding of nature, life and death.

"So tortured by my art" Act 5

Link to main key themes:

- Family vs duty
- Individual vs society
- Love
- violence/ death

Analysis

- **Connotations:** As "art" connotes creation, it illustrates how the **pious** (religious) Friar is distraught in manipulating God's natural process of creation in life and death. 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**.
- By attempting to manipulate life and death, the Friar may fear he has strayed from his **pious (religious) role**. This internal struggle deepens the tragedy, as even a holy man like Friar Laurence becomes **entangled in the web of death and destruction that consumes Verona**.

“Good morning father” (Act 2 said by Romeo)

Link to main key themes:

- Family vs duty
- Individual vs society
- Love

Analysis

- **Paternal (fatherly) figure:** While Friar Lawrence is indeed a priest, his role extends beyond mere religious duties, **serving as a nuanced (subtle) symbol of paternal (fatherly) guidance for Romeo**. Romeo lacks a supportive father figure due to the Montague-Capulet feud, therefore seeks **guidance and solace (comfort) in Friar Laurence**.
- **Role 1:** Friar Lawrence fulfils his traditional role as a **religious advisor**, offering guidance and support to Romeo in matters of **love and morality** – he acts as **divine guidance and moral reflection**.
- **Role 2:** Friar Lawrence becomes a **surrogate father figure for Romeo**, offering him solace and understanding in the absence of his own paternal guidance. His surrogate role emphasises the **destructive power** of familial feuds in every aspect of life – it **destroys relationships, lives and society as a whole**.