

Sample Essay

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet

Read the following extract from Act 3 Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Juliet has just been told that she must marry Paris.

CAPULET

How now, wife,
Have you delivered to her our decree?

LADY CAPULET

Ay, sir, but she will none, she gives you thanks.
I would the fool were married to her grave.

CAPULET

- 5 Soft, take me with you, take me with you, wife.
How, will she none? doth she not give us thanks?
Is she not proud? doth she not count her blest,
Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought
So worthy a gentleman to be her bride?

JULIET

- 10 Not proud you have, but thankful that you have:
Proud can I never be of what I hate,
But thankful even for hate that is meant love.

CAPULET

How how, how how, chopt-logic? What is this?
'Proud', and 'I thank you', and 'I thank you not',

- 15 And yet 'not proud', mistress minion you?
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no pouds,
But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,
To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.
20 Out, you green-sickness carrion! out, you baggage!
You tallow-face!

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Starting with this moment in the play, explore how Shakespeare presents relationships between adults and young people in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents relationships between adults and young people at this moment in the play
- how Shakespeare presents relationships between adults and young people in the play as a whole.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

- **Intro:** Fundamental flaw in relationships between parents and children
- **Para 1:** In this moment it is flawed because their relationship is not a safe space to be emotionally vulnerable
- **Para 2:** Furthermore, their relationship has an imbalanced power dynamic
- **Para 3:** The consequences of these relationships are shown in the plays end.

Shakespeare demonstrates a fundamental flaw in relationships between adults and young people in his play 'Romeo and Juliet'. The relationship between Juliet and her parents is shown to lack emotional support and their power dynamic is shown to be unevenly weighted. This flawed relationship is one of the many factors which contributes to the lovers sinister fate.

In this extract, Shakespeare exemplifies that in her relationship with her mother and father, Juliet lacks a space in which she can be emotionally supported. She is clearly in a great amount of distress and yet her parents prioritise her socially advantageous arranged marriage over the happiness of their daughter. Lady Capulet says that "she will none she gives [her father] thanks. [she] would the fool that were married to her grave". The way she is Juliet's spokesperson at this moment in the play, is demonstrative of her inconsideration for her daughter's feelings; she is actively projecting her own idea of how her daughter feels on her. The metaphor that she employs of Paris being "married to her grave" is sinister and it demonstrates her complete and utter lack of empathy for her daughter. There is a hint of sarcasm in her tone, and Juliet's silence in this moment is representative of how fundamentally flawed her parents relationship is with her. Her father questions "doth she does not give us thanks?", using rhetoric to almost mock Juliet's impotence in refusing to marry Paris. Her parents are not willing to listen to any excuse Juliet might have and thus Shakespeare shows that Juliet is not provided with emotional support from her parents, which has ominous connotations for the rest of the play. Parents of Shakespeare's era were under a huge amount of pressure to secure a socially, financially and politically match for their offspring and thus they often had to prioritise such a match over their children's happiness and Shakespeare provides a critique of this through Juliet and her parents in this scene.

Furthermore, there is an immense imbalanced power dynamic in Juliet's relationship with her parents. Her parents clearly have the final say when it comes to Juliet's fate and thus their relationship will never be equal nor intimate emotionally. "Fettle your fine joints!"

Capulet orders Juliet, using an imperative to assert his paternal power that he holds over her to achieve his will. We can see the power imbalance in this line even in the way Capulet is almost mocking in his language, calling her joints "fine", ridiculing her supposed high view of herself. He makes Juliet feel small and powerless and is brutal in the way that he does it.

He claims he will "drag her on a hurdle thither", using violent language. The monosyllabic word "drag" is plosive and thus creates a harsh sound making it so his language expresses his angry disposition. During Shakespeare's time, it was men who held a lot of power and would exert it over women. Society was very much a patriarchy which meant that women had little to no freedom. Thus, Juliet is ultimately ruled by her father in all aspects of her life which does not create an environment of love or trust and her relationship with her parents is inherently flawed that way.

In fact, Shakespeare cautions of the dire consequences of such flawed relationships, in the play's final ending. The lovers commit suicide, choosing death over a life without each other and Lord Capulet exclaims "look how our daughter bleeds". The determiner "our" connotes

love and belonging, which is ironic given his harsh tone earlier in the play. His line is coloured with regret and the simplicity of it, being that it is a simple sentence that lacks any adjectives, demonstrates that Capulet's guards have been stripped down and thus he is, at the end of the play, simply a father filled with regret. He is stripped of his inherent authority as a father in the eyes of the audience and reduced to a man who has made a dire mistake, that being, prioritising wealth over his daughter's happiness. Lady Capulet laments that "this sight of death is a bell", using a metaphor and turning death into an ominous ringing sound, reminding her of her own immortality. Their language contains a measure of empathy which we have seen them to possess up until this point in the play. They are clearly grief stricken and thus Shakespeare uses Juliet's parents as a cautionary tale, warning of the dire consequences of dysfunctional parent child relationships. The play's ending is reminiscent of its origins which is Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe, which too warns of the dangers of dysfunctional parents.

Shakespeare shows the relationships between Juliet and her mother and father to be flawed in its nature, he uses them as a cautionary tale, criticising parents for prioritising material gain over their children's happiness. He shows that a lack of emotional support and an imbalanced power dynamic can produce consequences that are far from ideal.