

Juliet

Key Themes

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

Key Words/Phrases

- **Defiance of societal and familial boundaries**
- **Eponymous character (name is in the title of the play)**
- **Love transcend (goes beyond) mortal limitations**
- **Folly of youth (foolishness of the young)**
- **Impulsive**
- **Rash (reckless)**
- **Impetuous (impulsive)**
- **Recklessness**
- **Naïve idealism**
- **Oblivious (not knowing)**
- **Fervid (passionate)**
- **Blind passion**
- **Disillusioned with their love (not as good as originally thought)**
- **Self-sacrifice**

Shakespeare's Intentions

- Through **dramatic irony**, Shakespeare's crafting of an inevitable tragedy shows how love and violence are **inextricably linked**. He utilises Romeo as an example of this entwined duality, portraying him as the embodiment of the conflicts of love and violence within a single individual.
- Shakespeare's tragic portrayal of Romeo and Juliet reinforces that even the seemingly **boundless power of love** is ultimately constrained by forces beyond human control. He reinforces Elizabethan ideas of **determinism** (everything is pre-set out) showing **celestial bodies** (stars/moon/planets) were powerful forces on human life.
- Juliet is constructed by Shakespeare as **impulsive** and **fervid** (passionate). Shakespeare links how her **impulsiveness and recklessness is her hamartia (fatal flaw)**—the very qualities that have led directly to her imminent demise. Shakespeare highlights the dangers of **unchecked** (uncontrolled) passion and the importance of considering consequences before acting impulsively.

"My only love, sprung from my only hate!" (Act 1)

Link to main key themes:

- **Love**
- **Violence**
- **Youth**
- **Family and duty**
- **Individual vs society**

Analysis

- **Juxtaposition:** The juxtaposing 'love' and 'hate' encapsulates the core conflict of these two concepts which **underpins** the play.
- As it is said by Juliet in Act 1, this **foreshadows** (hints at) the intertwined nature of passion and violence - these two forces will become **indistinguishable** (identical), **catalysing** (accelerating) the tragedy further.
- **Personal pronoun "my":** The repeated use of the personal pronoun "my" highlights Juliet's **prioritisation of her own love** over the **societal and familial expectations** that once restricted her.
- The young **eponymous** (names are the title of the play) character of Juliet is blinded by passion and are ignorant to the dangers of this **prohibited love**. As "hate" ends this sentence, it could **foreshadow (hint)** how the feud will symbolically and physically end her and Romeo's love.

"If he be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed." (Act 1)

Link to main key themes:

- **Destiny/ Fate**
- **Violence**
- **Love**
- **Individual vs society**

Analysis

- **Dramatic irony (audience knows something character doesn't):** The **prologue** ("*star-cross'd*") sets the stage for the audience, **foretelling the tragic destiny awaiting** both Romeo and Juliet. This creates dramatic irony since Juliet remains unaware of her impending fate. Her **impulsive** nature becomes her **hamartia** (tragic flaw), as she fails to grasp the true consequences of **pursuing forbidden love**.
- Shakespeare follows **Aristotle's conventions of tragedy**, aiming to produce **pathos** (pity) from the audience. Here, pathos arises from Juliet's youthful recklessness in love, ultimately leading to her demise.
- **Syntax:** The syntax of "*grave*" before "*wedding bed*" hints at Juliet's looming death before she can **consummate** (marriage complete by having sex) her marriage with Romeo.
- This foreshadowing, coupled with Juliet's **obliviousness** (not knowing) to her grim fate, reinforces **deterministic** (everything pre-set out) themes— Juliet's tragic ending was **predetermined by cosmic forces**.

“Deny thy father and refuse thy name” Act 2 scene 2

Translation: Go against her father and her last name (the familial feuds that keep them apart)

Link to main key themes:

- Family and duty
- Love
- Violence
- Individual vs society
- Youth

Analysis

- **“Deny” and “refuse” semantic field:** “deny” and “refuse” creates a **semantic field (group of words linked by an overall topic)** of defiance, this illustrating her rebellion and defiance against the constraints of her family feud and commitment to true love.
- This **declaration** exemplifies her to be rather **impulsive** and **fervid** (passionate) in the way that she loves which is, again, characteristic of the sign that she is born under, **Leo**. The Elizabethans believed **celestial bodies** (stars, moon etc) to have an enormous influence over a person’s **disposition** (nature) which explains why Juliet is so **akin** (similar) to those traits of her star sign.
- **Patriarchal society (male-dominated):** Juliet's statement to “deny thy father” goes against the norms of a **patriarchal society** where daughters were considered their father's property, used to enhance his **political and social standing** through arranged marriages.
- By rejecting her father, Juliet challenges a fundamental societal structure. This reinforces her **blind passion**, disregarding societal norms and considering **no institution, whether legal, familial, or religious, as a barrier**.

“O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!” . Act 3

Translation: Romeo’s attractive charm and face was hiding his true deceitful and violent nature (this is after she finds out he kills Tybalt - her cousin)

Link to main key themes:

- **Violence**
- **Love**
- **Family and duty**
- **Individual vs society**

Analysis

- **Biblical allusions:** The term "serpent" carries **biblical allusion** to the story of Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis. Juliet's use of this term suggests her **disillusionment** (not as good as originally thought) with their love. Just as the serpent brought sin and suffering into the world in Genesis, Juliet realises that Romeo's involvement in her life will lead to similar consequences.
- The religious undertones may also reflect Juliet's recognition of her **deviation** from religious teachings. By **defying societal norms** for the sake of love, she now questions the strength of their love.
- **Natural imagery:** The natural image with "serpent" and "flowering" makes hatred and love seem natural and **innate (something born with)**.
- **Critic D. A Traversi** says that "love and death" are "separate and identical" in the play, this is clear as Juliet's passionate hatred for Romeo here, has similarities for her passionate love for him throughout.

“Then I’ll be brief. O happy dagger! Act 5

*Translation: I’ll be quick to kill myself, I am happy I can kill myself
with the same dagger that Romeo used*

Link to main key themes:

- Violence
- Love
- Family and duty
- Individual vs society
- Youth

Analysis

- **Oxymoron:** The term "happy dagger" is **oxymoronic** (two contrasting words placed side by side), as the joyous connotation of "happy" starkly contrasts with the deadly imagery of "dagger." This **juxtaposition** illustrates Juliet's profound sorrow as she seeks comfort in death, seeing it as an eternal reunion with Romeo.
- This act of **self-sacrifice** characterises her as a **tragic heroine** (starts off noble and has a fall). Her strength and self-discovery is clear at the start, yet her **passionate nature** ultimately leads to her tragic end.
- **Diction on "brief":** The diction (word-choice) on "brief" shows Juliet's urgent **desire to escape from a world where their forbidden love challenges societal norms enforced by law, family, and religion**. In death, they can finally be together, free from these obstacles.
- Her urgency to speed up the process highlights, in her final moments, that her **impulsiveness and recklessness is her hamartia (fatal flaw)**—the very qualities that have led directly to her imminent demise.

Links To Other Key Themes

- **Fate:** Juliet's bleak and tragic ending reinforces the ideas of determinism. She was bound to her fate, and despite her naive idealism about their passionate love, it was not enough to alter her inevitable destiny.