

# ROMEO and JULIET – Knowledge Organiser

**Context** a play by William Shakespeare published in 1597



**William Shakespeare** was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon".

**Honour:** Maintaining family honour was seen as of great importance. If you were challenged to a duel and refused, your family would be seen as cowardly and this would dishonour their status and power. This strong regard for honour could often lead to violence and unrest.

**Gender:** Men controlled society. Women were seen as the weaker sex and were expected to be obedient to their families and husbands.

**Arranged Marriage:** Arranged marriages between wealthy families were never about love. They were arranged to improve status, power and wealth.

**Catholicism:** Religion was very important at this time and set in Italy, the Catholic church had great influence. Marriage was sacred and could not be undone. There was a strong belief in 'damnation' for mortal sin. Suicide was considered a mortal sin.

**Family and children:** Children were considered property of their parents. It was also common for children to have a 'nurse' and as a result, did not often have strong bonds with their parents.

**Courtly love:** Courtly love was all about behaviour and was supposed to be polite, restrained and courteous. Often gifts were exchanged but there was little contact. The notion of 'courtly love' strongly opposes the passion and emotion we associated with 'real love'.

## Key Characters

Romeo Montague	Son of the Montague family.
Juliet Capulet	Daughter of the Capulet family.
Mercutio	Friend to Romeo – neither Capulet nor Montague.
Tybalt	Juliet's Cousin, a prominent Capulet.
Benvolio	Romeo's cousin.
Friar Lawrence	A Franciscan monk and friend to both families.
Nurse	Juliet's confidante, very close to her, motherly.

## Plot Summary

**Act 1:** Set in Verona, we find two warring families – the Montagues and the Capulets. There is a ball and two young people meet and fall in love – Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet. Their families will never allow this.

**Act 2:** Romeo and Juliet continue to see each other secretly. Romeo wishes he was not a Montague and they decide that they will secretly marry.

**Act 3:** Tybalt (Juliet's cousin) tries to argue with Romeo, who refuses. Mercutio (Romeo's friend) goads Tybalt into a fight and is killed by Tybalt when Romeo attempts to stop them. Romeo then murders Tybalt in his anger.

**Act 4:** Juliet asks for help from Friar Lawrence. He gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear dead so that on her supposed wedding day to Paris she will be carried to the family vault, where Romeo will find her and whisk her away.

**Act 5:** Romeo doesn't receive the letter about the plan. He hears Juliet has died and obtains a poison for himself. Romeo sees Juliet (assuming she is dead) and poisons himself. Juliet awakes and realising what has happened kills herself. The two families reconcile in the wake of the tragedy.

## Key Vocabulary

patriarchy	Elizabethan	character
society	violence	conflict
resolution	civil	unrest
marriage	catholic	Catholicism
Shakespeare	Verona	brawl
unease	predicament	suicide
adversary	provoke	relationship

## VIPERS style questions

**Vocabulary** - Find and copy a word on page that is similar in meaning to 'promised'

**Explain** - Romeo is impulsive. Do you agree? Disagree? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Infer** - How do we know that Mercutio is fed up and feeling impatient

