



Heart of America Shakespeare Festival

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ROMEO AND JULIET TEACHER GUIDE

Shakespeare in Education

At the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival we present education programs that nurture an early appreciation for the art of theatre and the work of William Shakespeare. We teach Shakespeare through performance in order to enhance understanding of language arts, Renaissance history and theatre performance. Two teaching artists will interactively bring to life the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. Students will be given the opportunity to role play along with the teaching artists and use their imaginations to tell Shakespeare's tale. Problem solving skills will be explored in depth as the

“But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun.”

students turn the tables and decide what *could* have happened next. Students will work in small groups to focus closely on specific aspects of the play. Our program is intended to complement the work that is already being done in the classroom.

“Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name.”

About the Play

Romeo and Juliet is studied in most high school curriculums and is many young people's first glimpse into Shakespeare's plays. Not only does the play offer a rich tapestry of poetry and romance but the play portrays teens immersed in a battle with authority, a theme that many young people find captivating to learn about. Six actors will portray twenty-one roles in this fast-paced, pared-down production. A small traveling set will create the stage and a few hand props coupled with lush costume pieces will enliven the world of the play. Students will see how the themes of *Romeo and Juliet* relate to their own lives. The focus of our production is clarity of language, capturing the spirit of the play and bringing the play to you in a fun and interactive way. A ten-minute question and answer session will follow every performance.

Curriculum Ties: (National Standards from Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, McREL, 3rd ed.) 1.2, 1.8, 5.2, 6.1, 6.5, 6.6, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.5, 14.7.
English Language Arts: CCSS.SL.3-10.1
Theater Arts Education: NS.CS#1.3-10

“True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain, begot of nothing but vain fantasy.”

What's in a name?
That which we call a
rose by any other name
would smell as sweet.
-*Romeo and Juliet*

Pre-Workshop Activities

- Have students research Shakespeare's life and times. What was life like? How did people dress? What was going on in politics? Religion? Theatre? What is known of Shakespeare's life?
- Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 and come up with a new setting for *Romeo and Juliet*. Use *West Side Story* as an example of one way to tell the story in a new setting. Their profile should include a new title, new character names, character descriptions and an original advertisement for their production including casting of popular movie actors.
- The first and second acts of *Romeo and Juliet* begin with a chorus that sheds light on what is to come in the following act. Have students write and perform a chorus for acts three, four and five.

Post-Workshop Activities

- Have the students create a "Romeo Wanted" poster. Encourage them to draw or use computer generated images. Be sure they include the crime that Romeo has committed as well as a reward for the individual that finds him.
- Choose one of the scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and pass it out to the class. Have students get up on their feet and act out the scene, alternating parts each time you arrive at a new page. Next have students circle any words that are unclear and discuss as a class possible pronunciations and meanings. Talk about each character and their overall intentions within the scene. Next have the class cast the scene, assign directors, and arrange a setting. Rehearse the scene a few times and finish by talking about the process and the final outcome.
- Have students design a costume for the masquerade ball. Tell them it can be anything they want, but the idea is disguise. Part of the fun of the ball was the element of mystery. Who will I be dancing with next? Maybe have them practice a bow and curtsy.

Questions for Discussion

- Each quote presented on this document is taken from *Romeo and Juliet*. Use each as a springboard for discussion of both theme and meaning.
- Have the class discuss the play as if one major point was drastically different. For example, "what if Romeo had gotten the letter?" or "what if Juliet had obeyed her parents and married Paris after marrying Romeo?"
- Have students present both sides of Romeo's crime, have other students act as jury. Should he be allowed to remain in Verona? Is banishment a severe enough punishment?
- Discuss with students the types of love portrayed by the characters in the play. The discussion should include unrequited love (Romeo for Rosaline, Paris for Juliet), romantic love (Romeo and Juliet), parental love (Capulets for Juliet, Montagues for Romeo, Nurse for Juliet), and love of family honor (Tybalt, Mercutio, Romeo). Have students find quotes from the play that demonstrate each of the types of love listed above.

"Good night, good night! Parting is
such sweet sorrow, that I shall say
goodnight till it be morrow."

Online Resources

www.kcshakes.org
artsedge.kennedy-center.org
www.nosweatshakespeare.edu
nfs.sparknotes.com
www.folger.edu

Please contact the Director of Education for HASF at 816-531-7728 with further questions