

Name: _____

English 9R

Romeo and Juliet: Introductory Materials



Table of Contents

1. Believe in Love?
2. Shakespeare's Theater
3. Shakespeare's Reading Comprehension
 4. Sonnets
 5. Language
 6. Creative Dialogues
 7. "Pyramus and Thisbe"

Name: _____

English 9R

Romeo and Juliet-Journal

Believe in Love?

Read each of the statements below concerning the topics of love and relationships. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement and briefly explain your opinion.

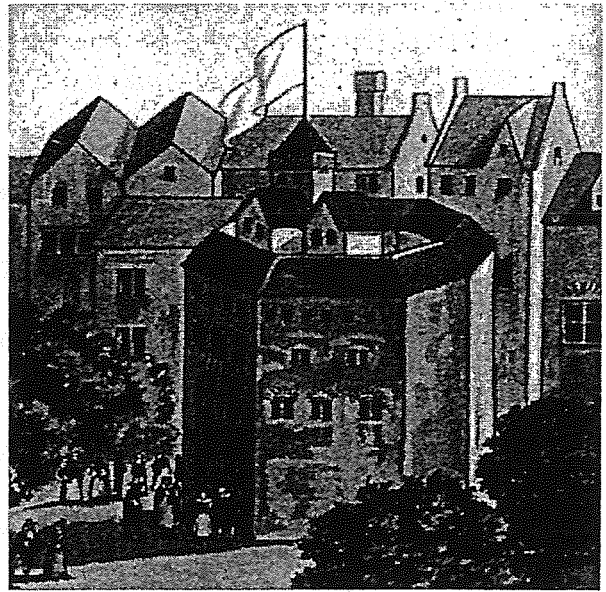
Statement About Love	Agree or Disagree	Defend your opinion
Love at first sight is possible.		
Love is blind.		
Children have a duty to love their parents.		
True love never changes.		
Teenagers cannot experience true love.		
Physical attraction must precede true love.		
People in love often do foolish things.		
All's fair in love and war.		

Now...Select one of the above statements, and write a journal that defends your belief.

Informational Focus: Theater in Shakespeare's Time

Shakespeare is often misunderstood or underappreciated by the modern reader. Many have suggested that this is due to the popular approach to his works; that is, reading them as merely a text when they are, in actuality, much more. Shakespeare wrote for the theater—his theater—with the intent that his work would reach the stage. Thus, when his works are read as one might read a story, many feel that there are gaps in the story, as indeed there are. Under the circumstances, Shakespeare intended these gaps to be filled by the action on the stage. Difficult conversations would be made more coherent through the gestures and facial expressions of the actors. Even the audience would contribute to the story through their reactions. Drama is meant to be ephemeral, not static, so trying to force a dramatic work to be read like a book may result in frustration. To help you understand what you read, it is important that you understand some aspects of the theater in Shakespeare's time.

Much has changed since Shakespeare lived over five hundred years ago, and the theater is no exception. If a person from the present time were to walk into a theater in London during the 16th century, he would be met with a very different sight than what he is used to. A stage in the 1500s consisted of a platform that rose about five feet from the ground, much like the theaters of today. One would notice, however, that unlike the auditorium seating we have come to expect, the seating arrangement consisted of space along three sides of the stage where spectators might stand, and three stories, each with its own gallery, where others might sit. The



17th Century drawing of the Globe Theater

people who stood closest to the stage, called *groundlings*, were often a rowdy and difficult group who would have paid a mere penny to see the show. The people who sat in seats along the balconies of each story would have paid a penny more, and were generally the more educated, better behaved, upper-class citizens.

The Globe, where many of Shakespeare's plays were staged, is believed to have been very large and elegant, with pillars, arches, and other impressive architectural features. It has been computed that an average-sized theater of the time might have held anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 spectators—huge compared to many community and professional theaters of today.

Behind the stage was the tiring house that served as a versatile backdrop for the shows and where the actors would prepare for the performance. Most scenes would have been staged

downstage (closer to the audience) as there was no way to amplify the actors' voices at that time. If, however, a scene required a discovery of some kind, a curtain upstage (farthest from the audience) would be used to reveal an actor. There were also doors to the left and right of the stage where actors entered and exited, in addition to trap doors in the floor. Plays were performed during the day, as artificial lighting would have been limited to torches or candles. No scenery was used, so the audience was often forced to use their imagination. Often, a character's speech told where and when a scene took place. Props, which were used in abundance, also aided in establishing setting.

Actors of the time would have been like today's celebrities—dressed in the best styles of the day. Many were rumored to be vagabonds and vagrants—stories which were often embellished to make the actors sound more interesting. Specific actors were known for playing very specific roles, such as the king, or the clown, or the lover, and often plays

were written with a certain actor in mind. Women were not allowed to perform publicly, so all female roles would have been played by men.

Plays were written under general categories: *tragedy*, which ends sadly and often with the demise of the main character; *comedy*, which ends happily, usually with a wedding or other celebration; *history*, which dramatizes a fictional historical event; *romance*, which is a more serious form of comedy with strange, fantastic, or supernatural elements. Most importantly, it is crucial to keep in mind that the meanings of the words tragedy, comedy, history, and romance in the dramatic sense are not the same as the meanings we commonly associate them with today. Tragedy, though serious in its nature, does not necessarily mean that every aspect of the play will be serious. Comedy, though it often includes humor, does not mean that every scene will be light-hearted and laughable, and in fact, most of Shakespeare's comedies end with—of all things—a wedding.

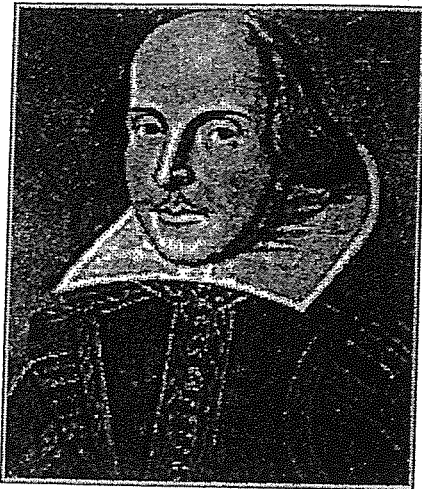
Comprehension Check: Shakespeare's Theater

Directions: Based upon the article *Shakespeare's Theater*, answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

1. Why do some readers find Shakespeare's writing difficult to understand? Explain. How do you feel about Shakespeare's language? Why?
2. What would you suggest that a reader do to better prepare himself for Shakespeare's writing to make it more understandable, and therefore, more enjoyable?
3. What does the word *ephemeral* mean in paragraph one? Why might this quality of drama make a play more difficult to read than a novel would be?
4. What kind of people would you expect to see in a theater (one in which live drama is performed) today? Are the people you imagine different from the people Shakespeare would have expected? How?
5. What are some conveniences that theaters have today that someone in Shakespeare's time could probably never imagine?
6. How are today's actors or celebrities similar to the actors of Shakespeare's time? How are they different?
7. Briefly explain the four types of drama. How are these types of drama different from what we might expect?

Informational Focus: Author Biography

William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare is widely believed to have been the greatest playwright in history. His plays are continually produced and students around the world read his works in school. Shakespeare is known for his ability to depict the depth of human character and his skill in illustrating issues to which for hundreds of years, people around the world can relate.

Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, was a wealthy business owner and active citizen of Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He married Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, in 1557, and they had William on April 23, 1564.

During the sixteenth century, waves of the Black Plague ravaged England and William was lucky to have survived. Two of his sisters, Joan and Margaret, died from the affliction. William's younger brother, Gilbert, fortunately escaped the deadly epidemic and had a long and successful career as a tradesman. Later, John and Mary Shakespeare had four more children: Joan (named after their firstborn), Anne (who died at age eight), Richard, and Edmund, who eventually followed in William's footsteps as an actor.

Shakespeare began his education at the age of six or seven at the Stratford grammar school, known as the King's New School of Stratford-upon-Avon. His lessons were primarily in Latin, but William also likely learned in English. Shakespeare was taken out of school at about the age of thirteen, due to his father's financial problems at this time. It is believed that William continued his studies on his own, however, educating himself as much as possible. The events of William's life between the age of thirteen and when he emerged in London as an actor, is generally unknown. However, it is recorded that in 1582, at the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than him and pregnant at the time.

Shakespeare's first child, Susanna, was born in 1583. In 1585, twins Hamnet and Judith were born. In 1596, Hamnet died of unknown causes. The loss was said to have affected William deeply. Shakespeare's grief and loss is said to be expressed in his writing.

Little is known about Shakespeare's life during the years of 1585 to 1592, before he appeared as an actor in London. It is believed he spent this time perfecting his craft as an actor and playwright. By 1592, Shakespeare was already an established and respected actor in London. Productions of *Henry IV* and *The Comedy of Errors* were performed by Pembroke's Men, a popular acting troupe who often performed for Queen Elizabeth. In 1594, Shakespeare joined another acting troupe, Lord

Name _____ Period _____

Chamberlain's Men, and it was while he was with this group that Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet, Richard II, King John, and others.

Although Shakespeare was never wealthy, he lived a comfortable life, buying a home in Stratford in 1597. He became part-owner of the most popular theater in London, the Globe Theater, in 1599, and the Blackfriars Theater in 1603. Shakespeare continued to act until 1613, when he returned to Stratford to retire. Shakespeare is believed to have died on April 23, 1616, exactly 52 years to the day of his birth.

Shakespeare's Style***The Sonnet Form and Iambic Pentameter***

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets in addition to his plays. In fact, he even added sonnets into his plays. Most of his sonnets were related to the topic of love, and were often written in a sequel-like fashion. Before we dive into reading an entire play, we will be approaching Shakespeare's style in a smaller poem, called a sonnet. The word sonnet comes from the Italian word sonnetto, meaning "little song."

The Shakespearean sonnet almost always follows the same format. It has 14 lines with approximately 10 syllables each line. Each line of the sonnet is written in iambic pentameter. The prefix pent means "five." A line of iambic pentameter consists of 10 syllables, or five iambs of two syllables each. An iamb is an "unstressed" syllable followed by a "stressed" syllable. When written, the "U" symbols mean unstressed, and the "/" indicates a stressed syllable.

To understand the idea of a stressed or an unstressed syllable, think about the syllables of some common names. The name Christopher can be divided into three syllables: Chris/to/pher. If we place the stress, or the emphasis, on the "Chris" it would look like this:

/ U U
Chris / to / pher

If we place the emphasis on the "to" the name would sound odd to our ears, and look like this:

U / U
Chris / to / pher

When analyzing a line of Shakespeare's work, it would look like this:

U / U / U / U / U / U /
Let me | not to | the mar | riage of | true minds (from Sonnet 116)

Finally, Shakespearean sonnets always follow the same rhyme scheme: ABABCDCEFEFGG, ending with the rhyming couplet, or two rhyming lines.

Now that the technical terms have been introduced, it is time to put that knowledge to work in a practical activity.

Directions: Read the sonnet on the next page. This sonnet is one of the most famous of Shakespeare's sonnets: Sonnet 23. Read and analyze this sonnet, paying careful attention to the rhyme scheme and the pattern of syllables. Then, using the chart, divide the sonnet into syllables and label its rhyme scheme. The first line has been done for you.

Shakespeare's Style*The Sonnet Form and Iambic Pentameter*

- 1 As an imperfect actor on the stage
- 2 Who with his fear is put beside his part,
- 3 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
- 4 Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart.
- 5 So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
- 6 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
- 7 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
- 8 O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.
- 9 O, let my books be then the eloquence
- 10 And dumb presages of my speaking breast,
- 11 Who plead for love and look for recompense
- 12 More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.
- 13 O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:
- 14 To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Rhyme Scheme
As	an	im	per	fect	ac	tor	on	the	stage	A
									part	B
									rage	A

Now You Try It!

Using the rhyme scheme and form of a Shakespearean sonnet, write your own sonnet about new love, lost love, a beautiful day, a terrible day, or anything you wish! Draw the same grid as above on a separate piece of paper to plan and organize the sonnet. Then share it with the class for an exercise in public speaking and performance.

Informational Focus: Appreciating Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare was meant to be seen and heard as a performance—not necessarily intended to be read. Therein lies the first problem to reading Shakespeare in a classroom. Shakespeare used an extensive array of vocabulary, including archaic language, an unfamiliar grammatical structure, and a “backward” arrangement of words in his sonnets and plays. The combination of these elements can make reading Shakespeare difficult for most people. The trick to reading Shakespeare’s works is to try to get the idea or “gist” of what the characters are saying, rather than trying to figure out what every single word means.

Early Modern English: While Shakespeare did speak an earlier form of English than we currently do, it was still considered modern English—which should make reading his work less intimidating than reading Chaucer, for example, who spoke an even earlier form of English. Shakespeare used a few words and conventions that have disappeared, such as *hath* instead of *has* and *doth* instead of *does*. In fact, these words were disappearing from use in his time and he used them mainly for dramatic and linguistic affect. The same is true for *thee*, *thou*, and *thy*, which were rarely used in his time, but Shakespeare felt were appropriate to convey certain messages in his works.

With this in mind, try to pay attention to when and why Shakespeare seems to choose to use language that is slightly archaic: he may have a reason for it. For instance, *thee*, *thou*, and *thy*, are more formal forms of the pronoun *you* (just like *usted*, in Spanish, is a formal form of *tu*); sometimes in Shakespeare’s language, a shift from *you* to *thou*—or the other way around—is a signal to the audience.

According to the *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, ed. David Crystal (CUP: 1995), pg. 71:

During **Early Modern English**, [the language of Shakespeare's time] the distinction between subject and object uses of *ye* and *you* gradually disappeared, and *you* became the norm in all grammatical functions and social situations. *Ye* continued in use, but by the end of the 16th century it was restricted to archaic, religious, or literary contexts. By 1700, the *thou* forms were also largely restricted in this way.

By the time of Shakespeare, *you* had developed the number ambiguity it retains today, being used for either singular or plural; but in the singular it also had a role as an alternative to *thou* / *thee*. It was used by people of lower rank or status to those above them (such as ordinary people to nobles, children to parents, servants to masters, nobles to the monarch), and was also the standard way for the upper classes to talk to each other. By contrast, *thou* / *thee* were used by people of higher rank to those beneath them, and by the lower classes to each other; also, in elevated poetic style, in addressing God, and in talking to witches, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. There were also some special cases: for

example, a husband might address his wife as *thou*, and she reply with *you*.

Of particular interest are those cases where an extra emotional element entered the situation, and the use of *thou* or *you* broke the expected conventions. *Thou* commonly expressed special intimacy or affection; *you*, formality, politeness, and distance. *Thou* could also be used, even by an inferior to a superior, to express such feelings as anger and contempt.

Shakespeare's Vocabulary: Another point of frustration for Shakespeare's reader is his choice of words. Remember that Shakespeare was an artist and his words were his tools; if he spoke the way everyone spoke, or used the same words in the same way that everyone else did, his art would not be distinctive and we would probably not read still read his works today. Also, keep in mind that Shakespeare had a vocabulary of about 29,000 words: almost twice that of an American college student today. More importantly, words such as *dwindle* and *assassination* are actually Shakespeare's invention and had never been used before him.

Words, Words, Words: Not only did Shakespeare use new words, he liked to use them in clever ways and often in a strange order. Think about how Yoda speaks in the *Star Wars* movies. We understand exactly what he says, even though the word order sounds mixed up to our ears. This is exactly what Shakespeare does at times, which can make reading Shakespeare difficult.

By reading and "translating" the following lines into modern English, see if you can figure out what Shakespeare meant. Remember that Shakespeare often rearranged wording or left out words in a sentence to make the rhythm fit iambic pentameter.

"Fear me not."

"Saw you him today?"

"Why call you for a sword?"

"Right glad I am he was not at this fray."

"Come you this afternoon."

"Dost thou not laugh?"

Verse and Prose: Though Shakespeare sometimes writes in *prose* (ordinary speech), he is most famous for his *verse*, or poetry. The most common form of verse he used was *iambic pentameter*, which means each line contains 5 *iamb*s, or a total of ten syllables. An *iamb* is a unit of verse consisting of an *unstressed* syllable followed by a *stressed* syllable. Shakespeare also uses rhymes (end rhymes) both at the end of lines and within them (internal rhyme). Sometimes Shakespeare employs blank verse, which is unrhymed poetry, usually in iambic pentameter.

Creative Writing - Romeo and Juliet

Becoming Familiar with the Language of Shakespeare

Choose one of the following scenarios to write a scene using some of Shakespeare's language:

1. Write a scene between a mother and daughter in which a conflict arises because the daughter wants to go out with a boy that the mother dislikes. As the daughter, justify why you should be given permission. As the mother, state reasons why you oppose this.
2. Write a scene between a father and son in which a conflict arises because the son wants to go to a party being given by a family or person of which the father disapproves. As the son, justify why you should be given permission. As the father, state reasons why you oppose this.

Use at least 20 of the vocabulary words listed below. Each person must have at least 10 lines.

1. an: if
2. marry: by the Virgin Mary, a mild oath meaning "indeed"
3. soft: an exclamation meaning "Wait a minute!"
4. withal: with
5. heavy: sad, depressed
6. thee: you
7. nought: nothing
8. attend: listen to
9. counsel: advice
10. will: desire
11. whereto: to which
12. sirrah: used when addressing people of inferior rank, like "boy"
13. thither: there
14. foe: enemy
15. hither: here
16. discourses: speaks
17. thou art: you are
18. nay: no
19. woo: to court in love, or chase (as in boy-chase-girl)
20. doth: does
21. adieu: farewell
22. woe: misery
23. thy: your
24. mark: pay attention to
25. hie: go
26. pray: beg
27. plague: curse
28. wrought: provided
29. would: wish
30. tidings: news
31. decree: order
32. resolve: plan
33. methinks: I think
34. dispatch: kill
35. privy: informed

Name: _____

English 9R-Romeo and Juliet

TASK: After you have read Ovid's myth, "Pyramus and Thisbe," construct a claim/theme about *love*. Use 4 specific quotes from the myth that establish a claim/theme about *love*. Under each quote explain how the author uses specific literary elements or techniques to convey ideas.

Eight Brief Tales of Lovers

"PYRAMUS AND THISBE"

This story is found only in Ovid. It is quite characteristic

of him at his best: well-told; several rhetorical mono-

logues; a little essay on Love by the way.

Once upon a time the deep red berries of the mulberry tree were white as snow. The change in color came about strangely and sadly. The death of two young lovers was the cause.

Pyramus and Thisbe, he the most beautiful youth and she the loveliest maiden of all the East, lived in Babylon, the city of Queen Semiramis, in houses so close together that one wall was common to both. Growing up thus side by side they learned to love each other. They longed to marry, but their parents forbade. Love, however, cannot be forbidden. The more that flame is covered up, the hotter it burns. Also love can always find a way. It was impossible that these two whose hearts were on fire should be kept apart.

In the wall both houses shared there was a little chink. No one before had noticed it, but there is nothing a lover does not notice. Our two young people discovered it and through it they were able to whisper sweetly back and forth. Thisbe on one side, Pyramus on the other. The hateful wall that separated them had become their means of reaching each other. "But for you we could touch, kiss," they would say. "But at least you let us speak together. You give a passage for loving words to reach loving ears. We are not ungrateful." So they would talk, and as night came on and they must part, each would press on the wall kisses that could not go through to the lips on the other side.

Every morning when the dawn had put out the stars, and the sun's rays had dried the hoarfrost on the grass, they would steal to the crack and, standing there, now utter words of burning love and now lament their hard fate, but always in softest whispers. Finally a day came when they could endure no longer. They decided that that very night they would try to slip away and steal out through the city into the open country where at last they could be together in freedom. They agreed to meet at a well-known place, the Tomb of Ninus, under a tree there, a tall mulberry full of snow-white berries, near which a cool spring bubbled up. The plan pleased them and it seemed to them the day would never end.

At last the sun sank into the sea and night arose. In the darkness Thisbe crept out and made her way in all secrecy to the tomb. Pyramus had not come; still she waited for him, her love making her bold. But of a sudden she saw by the light of the moon a lioness. The fierce beast had made a kill; her jaws were bloody and she was coming to slake her thirst in the spring. She was still far away for Thisbe to escape, but as she fled she dropped her cloak. The lioness came upon it on her way back to her lair and she mouthed it and tore it before disappearing into the woods. That is what Pyramus saw when he appeared a few minutes later. Before him lay the bloodstained shreds of the cloak and clear in the dust were the tracks of the lioness. The conclusion was inevitable. He never doubted that he knew all. Thisbe was dead. He had let

his love, a tender maiden, come alone to a place full of danger, and not been there first to protect her. "It is I who killed you," he said. He lifted up from the trampled dust what was left of the cloak and kissing it again and again carried it to the mulberry tree. "Now," he said, "you shall drink my blood too." He drew his sword and plunged it into his side. The blood spurted up over the berries and dyed them a dark red.

Thisbe, although terrified of the lioness, was still more afraid to fail her lover. She ventured to go back to the tree of the tryst, the mulberry with the shining white fruit. She could not find it. A tree was there, but not one gleam of white was on the branches. As she stared at it, something moved on the ground beneath. She started back shuddering. But in a moment, peering through the shadows, she saw what was there. It was Pyramus, bathed in blood and dying. She flew to him and threw her arms around him. She kissed his cold lips and begged him to look at her, to speak to her. "It is I, your Thisbe, your dearest," she cried to him. At the sound of her name he opened his heavy eyes for one look. Then death closed them.

She saw his sword fallen from his hand and beside it her cloak stained and torn. She understood all. "Your own hand killed you," she said, "and your love for me. I too can be brave. I too can love. Only death would have had the power to separate us. It shall not have that power now." She plunged into her heart the sword that was still wet with his life's blood.

The gods were pitiful at the end, and the lovers' parents too. The deep red fruit of the mulberry is the everlasting memorial of these true lovers, and one urn holds the ashes of the two whom not even death could part.

Claim/Theme:

Quote	Literary Element	How does this prove the theme?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		