

Romeo & Juliet

An Interaction Unit Introducing Young Learners to the
World of William Shakespeare



About the author

Renee Clark received her undergraduate degree in Drama and English from Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York, and her Master of Education degree from Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut. She also studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, London. For 25 years she has taught English and drama at the middle school level, and has researched, developed and field tested a program to integrate Shakespeare into the elementary and middle grades. She has presented her work at the Southwest Regional Middle Level Consortium and in workshops statewide for the Arizona English Teachers Association. She currently teaches high school theater and English in the Sierra Vista Public Schools, Sierra Vista, Arizona, where she also serves as Artistic Director for Sierra Repertory Company, a non-profit community theater. She is currently regional representative for the Utah Shakespearean Festival.

Revised 2010

©1999 Interact

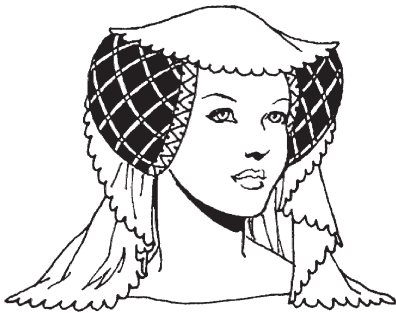
10200 Jefferson Blvd • P.O. Box 802 Culver City, CA 90232

Phone: (800) 359-0961 • www.teachinteract.com

ISBN# 978-1-57336-320-4

All rights reserved. Interaction Publishers Inc. grants permission to reproduce activity sheets and student handouts for classroom use. No other part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without prior written permission from the publisher.

Welcome to *Romeo and Juliet!*



Ten days of reading an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet*; performing a rap about Shakespeare's life; writing and performing parodies of scenes from the play; creating Shakespearean limericks ("There once was a shrew named Kate..."); designing coats of arms, masks, and costumes; and preparing Elizabethan food and drink culminates in an Elizabethan "Feast and Festival" in this unit for middle school students. Each student guide contains a copy of the adapted play, complete with notes on difficult words, discussion questions, and brief improvisations to help students understand the issues in the play. The teacher's guide includes daily directions and reproducible activities, as well as an overview. The unit can also be adapted for use without a final festival.



● *Table of Contents* ●

Purpose 1

Overview 3

Setup Directions 4

Bibliography..... 12

Unit Time Chart..... 15

Daily Directions..... 16

Reproducibles..... 43

 Festival and Feast Invitations..... 43

 Food for a Feast 44

 Making Costumes 45

 Activity 1: Script Writing 48

 Activity 2: Life and Times of Will Shakespeare 49

 Activity 3: Coat of Arms 51

 Activity 4: Making a Mask 53

 Script for Jester 54

 Activity 5: The Maltese Brawl 55

 Challenge Project: Let’s Talk Elizabethan 57

 Activity 6: Measure the Globe 58

 Activity 7: Limericks..... 59

 Place Card..... 60

● *Table of Contents* ●

Place Card Alphabets.....61

Greensleeves..... 62

Student Guide.....67

Purpose

The purpose of *Romeo and Juliet* is two-fold: to instill in young learners an appreciation and enjoyment of theatre and to introduce them to the world of William Shakespeare. Students will read and possibly perform an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Theatre activities, along with the play, are used as a motivator for integrating cross-curricular activities that will give students an appreciation for the life and times of late Renaissance Elizabethan England. Specifically, students will experience the following:

Knowledge

- Elements of literature: plot and characterization
- Familiarity with Shakespeare's most popular tragedy
- Significant dates and events relating to Shakespeare's life
- Food and clothing during Elizabethan times
- Significance of a coat of arms
- How to organize an Elizabethan feast
- Familiarity with the geography of Italy, as location pertains to setting in the play
- Understanding parody as a form of humor
- Appreciation of the limerick as a form of humorous poetry

Attitudes

- Realizing that reading a Shakespeare play can be fun
- Recognizing the "life lessons" that can be learned from Shakespeare
- Gaining excitement and self esteem from presenting part of a Shakespeare play or other entertainment before a live audience
- Feeling pride in the accomplishments of working cooperatively with others, writing a play script and creating and presenting a theatrical experience to the class
- Appreciating Elizabethan life and customs
- Understanding the humor of limericks
- Anticipating the culminating Elizabethan feast

Skills

- Speaking or performing through oral presentation, improvisation and mime

Purpose

- Listening and following directions
- Writing a script for a parody
- Writing limericks for fun and humor
- Completing math word problems
- Creating a coat of arms based on personal values
- Creating a mask
- Utilizing teamwork and responsibility in the planning and presenting of unit activities
- Learning a simple Renaissance dance

Overview

Romeo and Juliet is designed to give students a brief taste of theatre and Shakespeare. Therefore, the activities are set up as a mini-unit, using a 10-day schedule with 45 to 60 minutes of instructional time per day. It can easily be shortened, using isolated activities to supplement a social studies unit in World History or Renaissance studies. Additionally, the unit may be lengthened to include an optional production of the play, which would require more time for rehearsals. Activities include reading the play, cross curricular activities (in drama, language arts, social studies, math and art) and the planning of the unit's culminating activity—an Elizabethan festival and feast.

The Play. The unit begins with students reading an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet*, which follows the main plot of the story, but takes approximately 40 minutes to read. Limited paraphrasing is used as students will experience the beauty of Shakespeare's language through performance and discussion. Narrator(s) and an expanded Chorus weave the plot scene to scene and provide extra parts so the entire class can participate in the play. Since this is a theatrical approach to teaching a Shakespeare play, students will actually stand and move as they read the play aloud, stopping for discussion questions and improvisations. The questions serve as a quick check for comprehension; the improvisations relate the play to real life situations.

The Activities. Although the play writing and craft activities follow a schedule which has been field tested at the middle level grades, feel free to adapt these activities to your particular needs and time limits. Language Arts **Activities 1** and **7** are designed to enhance students' knowledge of the elements of script writing, humor in poetry, and reinforce writing skills. Social Studies **Activities 2, 3, 4** and **5** incorporate rap music, crafts and dance to explore Shakespeare's life and times. Participating in the rap strengthens students' speaking skills and improves self confidence, and craft activities enable students to express their creativity and display their work. Additionally, these crafts serve as a take-home souvenir of their experience. Finally, Math **Activity 6** reinforces math skills, utilizing measurement and problem solving.

Elizabethan Festival and Feast. A separate section in the Setup Directions details the organization and planning of an optional Elizabethan festival and feast. Every activity presented prior to the feast produces a creation or performance that can be used as a visual display or entertainment at the festival. If plans for the festival are announced early in the schedule, anticipation generates excitement and the students become even more enthusiastic as they participate in the planning. Students will also experience a sense of teamwork and responsibility as they volunteer to provide food for the feast and practice their presentations for the festival. Should you decide not to include the entire festival on the last day, alternate daily plans are included in the Setup Directions under **Simplifying the Unit: Eliminate the Feast.**

Setup Directions

Gathering Resource Materials

1. **Books.** Prior to beginning this unit, locate age-appropriate books and articles on Shakespeare, Elizabethan England or Renaissance Italy. The bibliography for *Romeo and Juliet* includes many useful titles. Your school librarian can help you locate materials. Display some in your classroom and others in a designated “Project Shakespeare” area of the library for further student enjoyment.
2. **Creating a bulletin board.** High school English and social studies teachers are often good sources for posters or photos of Shakespeare and maps of Renaissance Italy and Elizabethan England. Magazines or periodicals can provide maps and posters for your bulletin board. You may also want to post a list of all 37 of Shakespeare’s plays. These visual aids will help introduce students to the unit. On the bulletin board, leave plenty of room for students’ work to be posted.
3. **Maps.** Acquire a globe and good maps of Italy and England, either contemporary or accurate for the Renaissance period. Your school librarian is an excellent resource to assist in locating good maps.

Internet Resources

1. **Access to the Internet.** If you have access to the Internet, your students may benefit from the wealth of information available through that resource. Before using the Internet, become familiar with your school’s Acceptable Use Policy. Always preview any web sites you make available to your students. Following are three suggestions for making web sites available for your class:
2. **Interact’s Resource List.** Several recommended web site addresses are listed on a Resources page available through the Interact web page. To find the *Romeo and Juliet* Resources Page, follow these steps:
 - a) Connect to the Internet.
 - b) Go to Interact’s home page www.teachinteract.com.
 - c) Enter “Romeo and Juliet” in search box.
 - d) Click on “View related Web sites.”
 - e) Click on the name of a resource Web site that you would like to visit. You will then see the resource Web site appear on your screen.
 - f) When you are finished exploring the resource web site, click the “Back” button on your browser to return to Interact’s web site.

3. **Bookmarks/Favorites.** You can use any browser to mark specific web site addresses for your students to use. Depending on your browser, these saved web addresses will be called "Bookmarks" or "Favorites." To create a "Bookmark":
 - a) Go to a web site.
 - b) Click on the Bookmarks "pull down menu" and choose "Add Bookmark." Different search engines may have different terminologies and/or processes for marking or saving web addresses.
 - c) The name of the web site will automatically enter on your menu as a bookmark or favorite.
 - d) Search out several appropriate web sites and place the sites in a folder entitled "Romeo and Juliet" on your browser. When you have completed your search, save the entire folder on the desktop or to a disk. You can then insert the folder into the browser on each available computer in the classroom or computer lab.
4. **Off-line browsing.** If Internet access is limited for your students, you may want to save selected web sites to your hard drive in your classroom or in the computer lab. Downloading web sites requires significant hard drive space; you may want to put only a few downloaded files on each computer and have students rotate time at the computers.

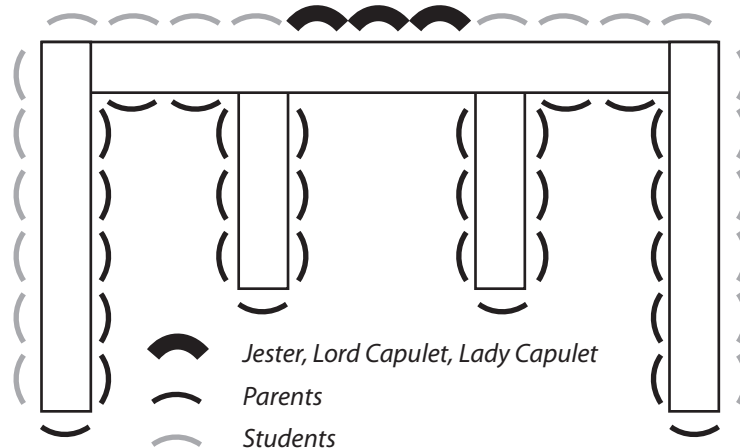
Planning the Elizabethan Festival and Feast

1. **Advance planning.** Planning an Elizabethan Festival and Feast for a single class in one period can be painless and fun if the activities for the entire unit are planned with the festival in mind. The key to success is advance planning. Announce within the first three days that on the last day the class/students will celebrate the end of their Shakespearience with a festival and feast. Tell students they are responsible for creating their own costumes and helping with the plans. As the unit progresses, students might decide to portray a character from the play for the festival.
2. **Reserve the place.** Prior to beginning this unit, estimate the number of guests you expect to attend the festival. Reserve the cafeteria, library, gym or any large functional room in your school. Once you have the place reserved, notify and invite your building administrator and any support staff you would like to attend.
3. **Room arrangement.** Arrange for extra tables and chairs. The festival can actually be presented in a large classroom if the desks or tables are arranged properly. A head table may be reserved for "nobility" should you decide to have students play Lord and Lady Capulet, who

Setup Directions

will preside over the feast. A small area at the front should be available for the entertainment.

Following is a workable suggestion for a seating arrangement:



- Invitations.** On Day 2 students will make invitations to take home to their parents. Invitations can also be sent to administrators and other guests. With a phone call to the local newspaper, you can arrange news coverage for the event.
- The Feast.** This event is not a “chip-and-dip” affair; the goal is to create an Elizabethan feast. Each student will be responsible for bringing in food or drink for the event. A list of suggested food is included in the Teacher Guide for Day 2. Most of the foods on the list are easy and inexpensive and require little or no preparation. Since meat was plentiful in Elizabethan England, cold precooked meat is acceptable and an easy option. Whole baked chickens (seven to 10 can feed small portions to 40 to 50 guests) can often be purchased at a grocery store. Be prepared to eat with your fingers! In keeping true to Elizabethan feasts, no forks will be used. Be sure to bring enough napkins, cups and plates for the group.
- Characters and costumes.** All students and teacher should try to dress in a costume, either as a member of court or a character in the play. You can choose (or have students vote by ballot) a Lord Capulet, Lady Capulet and Jester to preside over the feast. The masks and coats of arms made by the students on Day 6 can be worn to supplement costumes for the festival. (See **Making Costumes** for additional suggestions about the “Elizabethan Look.”)
- Entertainment.** Students will enter in procession to music that is regal. In advance, acquire music you think is appropriate. Although not quite Elizabethan, Mouret’s “Rondeau” (*Masterpiece Theatre* theme) and “Prince of Denmark’s March” by Clarke are good processional

Teaching tip

You can make your own mask and coat of arms prior to beginning the unit. Your models will help students to understand the assignment.



selections. Renaissance or Elizabethan music should be played softly throughout the feast. Your school librarian or music teacher should be able to help you find CDs. For program entertainment, the class can perform the Shakespeare Rap, their parody skits, the dance, or they may read a few limericks.

8. **Getting parents involved.** Parents can make your job easier. If you have a teacher's aide, she/he can call parents to help you set up and organize food the day of the feast. Enlist a few parents who would be willing to call all the other parents to remind them of the date, time, their child's food assignment and to verify their attendance and food donation. Ask for parent volunteers to stay after the event to help you and your students clean up.
9. **Handouts.** Prepare handouts by duplicating the following Master pages in quantities indicated in italics.
 - Activity 1: Script Writing—*class set*
 - An Elizabethan Festival and Feast (Invitation)—*class set + extras*
 - Food for a Feast—*class set*
 - Making Costumes—*class set*
 - Activity 3 (Part 1) Coat of Arms—*one for half of the students*
 - Activity 3 (Part 2) Making a Coat of Arms—*one for half of the students*
 - Activity 4: Making a Mask—*one for half of the students*
 - Script For Jester—*two (one for you, one for student playing Jester)*
 - Activity 5: Dance: The Maltese Brawl—*class set*
 - Activity 6: Measure the Globe—*class set*
 - Activity 7: Limericks—*class set*
 - Place Cards—*class set + guests*
 - Place Card Alphabet—*class set + guests*
 - Optional Activity: Greensleeves—*class set*
 - Challenge Project: Let's Talk Elizabethan (Optional)—*class set*
10. **Student Guides** include the following items:
 - *Romeo and Juliet* Script
 - Activity 2 (Part 1) Life and Times of Will Shakespeare: Shakespeare Outline

- Activity 2 (Part 2) Life and Times of Will Shakespeare: Shakespeare: A Rap

Simplifying the Unit: Eliminate the Feast

Romeo and Juliet, including the Elizabethan Festival and Feast, has been successfully field tested numerous times using the 10-day schedule. However, to simplify the entire project, you may eliminate the feast portion of the festival.

1. On the final day students can present their skits, the Shakespeare Rap, and any extra credit or optional assignments to the other students for a “Show and Tell” day. They may dress in prepared costumes or wear their coats of arms and masks with school clothes. Administrators, other school staff and parents may be invited.
2. On Day 2 eliminate the making of the invitations.
3. Eliminate all student reminders for food from the rest of the schedule. However, encourage students to prepare a costume for extra credit. The costume can be worn on the final day for bonus points.
4. On Day 9 eliminate the dress rehearsal for the festival and substitute the Optional Activity: Greensleeves.

Extending the Unit: Play Production

Should you decide to extend this unit beyond the 10-day schedule, the following production notes will aid you in rehearsing and producing *Romeo and Juliet*.

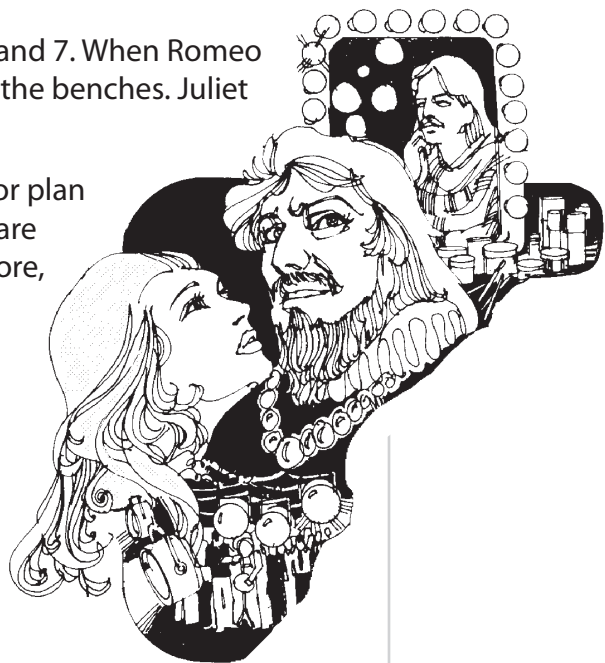
1. **Assigning roles.** Since women were not allowed to participate in plays during Elizabethan times, it is not surprising that Shakespeare had so few parts for females. Young boys played the female roles. Today, everyone has an equal chance to be in the play. Girls may be cast in any role except Romeo and the fathers. In this adaptation, there should be enough parts for everyone. You may expand or reduce the number of Narrators and Chorus members. However, when you cast the characters, keep in mind that some parts require a certain amount of memorization. You will also need students to help with scenery, costumes or props. The backstage crew is an extremely important part of any production. In the event you have a limited number of students, some may double in small parts and on the crew, and Narrators and Chorus may be reduced to one or two.
2. **Creating the set.** The play can easily be produced in a classroom or on a stage with minimal cost. Sets can be elaborate or simple, depending on budget and facility limitations. If using a stage that has a thrust,

exterior scenes can be performed in front of the curtain, interior scenes further toward the back. If a classroom is used, a stage crew can be responsible for clearing props and furniture between scenes. Narrator's podium can be left or right, the Chorus on stools upstage, along the back.

Following are suggestions for the least expensive, simplest way to stage *Romeo and Juliet*, using two benches:

- **Exterior scenes** (Scenes 1 and 5). Both exterior scenes involve sword fights. Keep the area clear of all obstructions.
- **Interior scenes** (Scenes 2 and 3). Position benches where they balance the stage with the placement of the podium. In Scene 2, one bench should be down center or right of center, since Juliet is the focus of attention. In Scene 3 the benches can be used in the background for party guests while the main action takes place towards the front.
- **Balcony scene** (Scene 4). This can be staged simply and safely. Juliet can stand on a bench with Romeo on the floor. I have also used a good sturdy step ladder turned sideways. The side facing the audience can be covered with cardboard or a cloth painted to look like bricks. Juliet climbs up the steps as far as is safe. Romeo either stands on the floor, or, if the support braces are sturdy enough, he can step on the first one to bring him closer to her. Make sure the ladder is strong and safe!
- **Juliet's room** (Scenes 6 and 7). Position the benches end to end to form a bed long enough for Juliet to lie on.
- **The Tomb** (Scene 8). Same as Scenes 6 and 7. When Romeo "dies," he can fall on the floor in front of the benches. Juliet can collapse on the benches.

The following diagram suggests a basic floor plan for the set. A reminder: all stage directions are given from the actor's point of view. Therefore, when looking at the diagram, right and left are reversed.

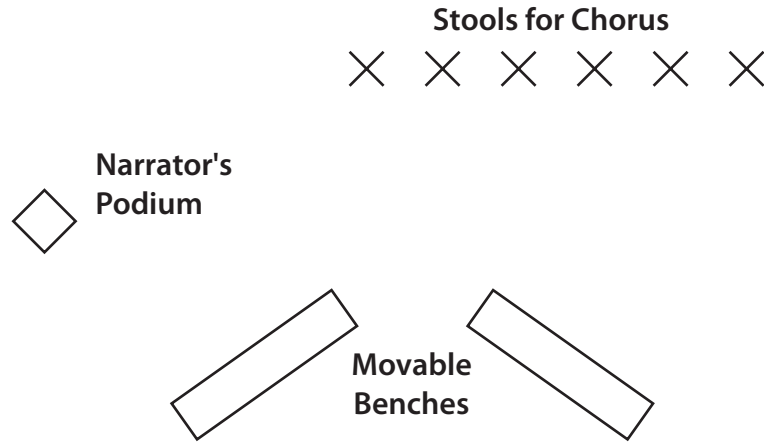


Setup Directions



Teaching tip

Remember: all stage directions are given from the actor's point of view. When looking at the diagram, right and left are reversed.



3. **Acquiring and/or making costumes.** *Romeo and Juliet* can be staged in any time period. You might even want to experiment with a futuristic setting. If you wish to keep the actual time of the action, refer to the **Making Costumes** handout for information and tips for creating Elizabethan costumes. Otherwise, you can still create a feeling of a period piece. Use long skirts or dresses for the girls. Boys can wear robes and "poet" shirts. They can also roll up their trousers and wear high socks to create knickers. Gray wigs can be found at thrift stores for the older characters, or powder or gray temporary hair spray can create the right effect.
4. **Staging.** Blocking or staging this play is simple. Detailed stage directions are included in the script in the Student Guides. Remember, directions "stage left" and "stage right" are written from the actor's point of view when facing the audience.
5. **Acquiring props.** Props for a simple production of *Romeo and Juliet* may be pantomimed, made in class, borrowed or purchased. For extra credit, individual students may volunteer to make or bring in simple props from home.

Here is the list of props needed for *Romeo and Juliet*, followed by the identities of the characters who use them:

Scene 1

- Toy swords—two (*Benvolio, Tybalt*)

Scene 3

- Masks—10 to 12 (*Romeo, Juliet, Benvolio, Mercutio, chorus members, and party guests*)
- Plastic cups or glasses—seven to 12 (*party guests*)

Scene 5

- Toy swords—*three* (Tybalt, Mercutio, Romeo)

Scene 8

- Small bottle—*two* (Juliet's potion; Romeo's poison)
 - Toy knife—*one* (Romeo)
6. **Shakespeare Festival.** If you wish to conclude the unit with a more comprehensive festival, refer to *Shakespeare Festival* by Jesse Hise, Interact, Culver City, CA. It is an excellent guide for organizing a school-wide festival.

