

Exit, Pursued by Bear

There is a lot of language in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and some of it might seem a bit difficult to understand. **Use this activity to examine the play and help your students gain a better understanding of its text. Get ready for an exercise in script analysis.**



Materials Needed: one copy of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* per student

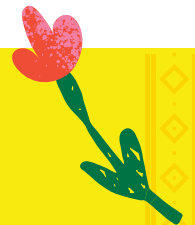
- To begin, have students read *Romeo and Juliet* in its entirety or assign small groups to read one act of the play. Discuss the play's given circumstances and plot. Some of this context will be found in the play's stage directions, but most of it can be found in the play's text.
- Then, as a full group or in small groups, select one scene on which to focus.
- On a smartboard or large piece of chart paper draw four quadrants and label them: Time, Location, Tone and Theme, respectively.
- Begin by identifying the time of the play. Guide students by asking questions like: *Based on the language used, what is the time of day, week or year during which the action of the play takes place? How does time affect the world of the play, including the circumstances within which the characters are living? What is the time period during which the play is set? What was happening in the world outside of the play (socially, economically, globally, etc.)? How might this time period affect the characters of the play?* Scribe these ideas in the "time" quadrant.
- Then, identify the setting and location. To do this, ask questions like: *What is the specific location in which the play's action occurs? What language is used in the play's text or stage directions to indicate this? Is the location inside or outside? How does the setting affect the characters' behavior? What is the larger location (town, city, etc.) in which the play is set? In what ways is the location important or central to the action of the play?* Scribe these ideas in the "location" quadrant.
- Next, identify the play's tone: *What is the overall mood or atmosphere of the scene? In what way does the play's text or stage directions indicate this? In what way does the mood change within each scene and throughout the play?* Scribe these ideas in the "tone" quadrant.
- Finally, identify the play's theme(s): *What big ideas does this play bring to mind? Does the play have an overarching question (e.g., "What is the meaning of life?" or "What happens when we die?") that it wants to answer or examine? In what ways do the stage directions or action of the play develop or bring up these ideas? Scribe these ideas in the "themes" quadrant.*
- As a culminating event, take what you've learned from your analysis and have each small group perform an excerpt from their scene in a reader's theater style, with script in hand. Their reading and character portrayal should be influenced by the work they've done analyzing the script. Then, have a group discussion about the importance of text/script analysis. Guide this conversation by asking questions like: *How might analyzing text deepen your understanding of a play? In what ways did analyzing Romeo and Juliet broaden your understanding of the time period(s) in which it's set?*

Reflection Questions:

What surprised you about this activity?

What did you discover about your ability to analyze a play's script?

What did you find most challenging about this activity?



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