

◆◆◆ **ROMEO AND JULIET** ◆◆◆

COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY: *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare is represented by the abbreviation **RJ**. The student should become familiar with the course plan, determining, with the help of parents, whether to read each synopsis beforehand, afterward, or as a study aid. The final week will offer students the opportunity to read and respond to one of the critical essays that follow the novel--**doing so is optional**.

COURSE TEXTS:

- RJ** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Ed. Joseph Pearce. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011. (T3647)
- RJSG** ❖ Kolbe Academy Study Guide to *Romeo and Juliet*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2014. (The two-book set includes a student book with questions and a teacher book with questions and answers.) (T3647A),Optional

A NOTE ON IGNATIUS CRITICAL EDITIONS: Kolbe Academy is fortunate in having *Ignatius Critical Editions* to offer for many titles in its British Literature Course, including for *Romeo and Juliet*. The *Critical Editions* series “represents a tradition-oriented approach to reading the Classics of world literature.” It “concentrates on critical examinations informed by our Judeo-Christian heritage.”¹ We at Kolbe could not hope for a better tool to help students of all ability levels learn to appreciate the beauty, artistry, and wisdom to be found within the pages of a great book. Those students who are inclined to a deeper study of literature will thrive on learning how to examine a work to gain insights like those contained in the critical essays; those not so inclined will discover how to examine a text to learn what it truly has to say.

**CHARACTERS:****Chorus:**

Prince Escalus: Prince of Verona. He is unable to keep the peace of the city.

Romeo Montague: A youth whose name is synonymous with one half of a pair of star-crossed lovers who are caught in the middle of warring families. Romeo is dreamy, sensitive, intelligent, and in love with Rosaline at the beginning of the play. When he falls in love with the daughter of his father’s greatest enemy, he cannot know that his love will end in tragedy.

Montague: Romeo’s father and head of the Montague clan.

Lady Montague: Romeo’s mother.

Benvolio: Nephew of Montague. A friend to Romeo.

Abraham: Servant to Montague.

Mercutio: Romeo’s friend, a natural wit, a brawler. He is a kinsman of the prince.

Balthasar: Servant to Romeo.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*. Ignatius Press (San Francisco) 2011. Back Cover.

Juliet Capulet: The famed maiden in her early teens who is destined to a tragic end. Her resourcefulness, determination, and bravery are used in the service of a passion for which she is not mature enough to understand.

Capulet: Juliet’s father and head of the Capulet clan.

Lady Capulet: Juliet’s mother. She seeks vengeance against Romeo.

The Nurse: Juliet’s nurse and confidant. She is not wise enough to help Juliet act in a prudent way.

Peter: Servant to Juliet’s nurse.

Tybalt: Nephew to Lady Capulet

Sampson and Gregory: Servants to Capulet

Paris: A young nobleman, kinsman to the Prince

Friar Lawrence: a Franciscan friar, confidante, and guide to both Romeo and Juliet. Friar Lawrence officiates at Romeo and Juliet’s secret wedding hoping for peace between the two families. He is also an amateur maker of potions.

Friar John: A Franciscan friar.

An apothecary: a druggist

Three Musicians: Called upon to play Juliet’s wedding song, they end by playing her dirge

An Officer

Citizens of Verona; Gentlemen and Gentlewomen of both houses; Maskers, Torchbearers, Pages, Guards, Watchmen, Servants, and Attendants

WEEK 1		
READING	RJ	Read Introduction to the book by Joseph Pearce Read Act I and Act II
Study Guide	RJSG	Do Study Guide Questions for Act I and Act II
Synopsis	The feud between the Montagues and the Capulets sets the stage for our pair of star-cross’d lovers. The play opens in petty strife as two attendants of the house of Capulet, Sampson and Gregory, quarrel with two attendants of the house of Montague, Abraham and Balthasar. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to break up the quarrel which has escalated, but Tybalt, a Capulet, draws him into the fray. Soon the townspeople present attack both sides as public menaces. Capulet and Montague, the heads of the two households, arrive and barely restrain themselves from joining in. When Prince Escalus, lord of Verona, appears, he quells the brawl and pronounces the following sentence: “If ever you disturb our streets again,/Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.” (I.1.94—95). As the crowd disperses, Montague and his wife talk to Benvolio of their concerns about Romeo who seems melancholy. Romeo is lovesick for a young woman named Rosaline who wishes never to marry. Benvolio promises to cure Romeo’s sadness by showing him other beautiful girls. Romeo is not interested. At the Capulets, the young nobleman Paris is paying suit to gain the hand of Capulet’s young daughter, Juliet. Capulet encourages him, but advises him to win Juliet gently and to give her time to mature before they are married. Paris would prefer to hurry the marriage, but Capulet persuades him to make his desire known to Juliet at a lavish party he means to give that very night. Capulet has a servant issue invitations for the event, but the man cannot read. When Benvolio and Romeo chance upon the servant, the servant begs their help. Of course, Romeo learns of the party at	

	<p>Capulet’s house. Benvolio states that Rosaline will be at the feast. He and Romeo decide to break into the party—Benvolio hoping that Romeo will see another that makes him forget Rosaline, Romeo hoping to see his lady fair. In Scene 3, we meet Juliet. Lady Capulet and her nurse have called upon her to prepare her for the prospect of marriage. The nurse, who loves Juliet, conducts a running reminiscence on Juliet’s life that borders on the bawdy, until censured by Lady Capulet. Juliet is informed of Paris’ suit and told to consider it seriously. A servant announces the start of the party. Romeo, joined by a merry group of his friends, all in mask, enters the party. Benvolio is among them, and Mercutio, Romeo’s witty and moody cousin. As the dance starts, Romeo catches his first sight of Juliet and realizes he had never loved until then. Tybalt recognizes his voice as that of a Montague and grows restless to punish him for invading the party. Capulet, however, forbids such action. Romeo, in the meantime, has spoken to Juliet and kissed her twice. As the nurse calls Juliet away, and as Romeo departs, they both discover to their horror that their chosen one is descended from the house of their most bitter enemy. Act 2 includes the famous balcony scene. While secreted in Capulet’s garden, Romeo glimpses Juliet. Praising her as the sun, he listens avidly as she speaks his name. Juliet utters the famous “What’s in a name?” speech. Juliet tutors Romeo to not swear by the oaths of common lovers, but by himself alone. After the nurse calls her away, Juliet returns. She tells Romeo that if he offers love in honorable fashion, she will marry him the next day. Romeo must make arrangements with Friar Lawrence to officiate at the marriage. The friar is shocked by his precipitous love and his choice of a mate. In scene 4, Benvolio and Mercutio wonder at Romeo’s disappearance. Benvolio notes that Tybalt has written Romeo and assumes the letter contains a challenge to fight. Finally Romeo appears and reveals nothing. The Nurse arrives and is caught up in Mercutio’s merciless jesting. At last she speaks to Romeo. He discloses his plan to marry Juliet that afternoon. In Scene 5, the Nurse discloses Romeo’s plan. Later they meet and marry.</p>
<p><i>Paper Topic</i></p>	<p><i>Examine the Balcony Scene in Act II, Scene 2, and offer proof regarding whether or not Juliet and Romeo truly love. Keep your answer based on the text. Areas that you may want to examine are whether Juliet and Romeo have a solid basis for their love (The portion where Romeo swears his love may help you resolve this.), whether they decide on the right course of action, and whether or not they are in earnest.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">◆◆◆</p> <p>↔ Key Points:</p> <p>Introduction: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> is one of the most famous and best known of Shakespeare’s plays. In its rich poetic language Shakespeare invites us to witness the course of a passionate and doomed love. When one is young, one reads or views the play as though plot matters above all else. Why could not the Capulets have waited to arrange a marriage for Juliet? Why could not Tybalt have held his tongue? Why could not Mercutio have walked away from the brawl? Why could not Friar John have moved faster? Why could not Friar Lawrence have done the same? Why did that fool of a Paris have to go to the tomb? It is no good. Nothing could save the two lovers from their fatal end. That anxiety one feels throughout the swift action of the play provides the basis for asking a few key questions upon more calm reflection. Did all the characters play their</p>	

parts because the social order had broken down? (Chaos tolerated by Prince, Family Heads, Clergy); were they acting on false ideas (inherited feuds, false ideas of love, vengeance), were they truly star-cross'd (fate determine all)? The wonder of the play is that the answers can be discovered through close examination of the text and through the process of debate and argument. Of course, to enjoy the play as Shakespeare intended, one has to see the play.

Setting: Verona, Italy

Themes: Ancient Feuds; Romantic Love (particularly poking fun at the conventions of Petrarchan poetry)

Symbols: Names

Conflict: Man vs. Man

Genre: Tragedy



Discuss: ◆ How the disorder in the streets in the opening scene runs from the highest to the lowest levels

◆ What is the character of Romeo's relationship with his parents? ◆ What is the character of Juliet's relationship with her parents? ◆ Does Romeo know anything about love? ◆ Does Juliet know anything about love? ◆ What are the failings of the authority figures in the play?

Notes