



HOUSTON
SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL

ONE ROLE, TWO ACTORS: Romeo

Character Change – Oh Romeo, Romeo...

Curriculum Authors: Laura B. Turchi, Abbey Bachmann, and Cori Stevenson

Approximate timeline: 45 minutes – see sequence

TEKS (9th Grade) :

(4) Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to comprehend text with increasing depth and complexity. The student is expected to: (A) establish purpose for reading assigned and self-selected texts; (B) generate questions about text before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding and gain information; (C) make, correct, or confirm predictions using text features, characteristics of genre, and structures; (D) create mental images to deepen understanding; (E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and the larger community; (F) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding; (G) evaluate information read to determine what is most important; (H) synthesize information to create new understanding; and (I) monitor comprehension and make adjustments when understanding breaks down.

(5) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. The student is expected to: (A) describe the personal and emotional connections to a variety of sources, including self-selected texts; (B) write a response with accurate and relevant text evidence and commentary to compare texts within and across genres; (C) use text evidence to support an appropriate response; (D) paraphrase and summarize texts in ways that maintain meaning and logical order; (E) interact with sources in meaningful ways such as notetaking, annotating, freewriting, or illustrating; (F) respond using acquired content and academic vocabulary as appropriate; (G) discuss and write about the explicit or implicit meanings of text; (H) respond orally or in writing with appropriate register, vocabulary, tone, and voice; (I) reflect on and adjust responses as new evidence is presented; and (J) defend or challenge authors' claims using relevant text evidence.

(6) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to: (A) analyze how themes are developed through characterization and plot in a variety of literary texts; (B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils. (C) analyze non-linear plot development such as flashbacks, foreshadowing, subplots, and parallel plot structures and compare it to linear plot development; and (D) analyze how the setting influences the theme.

(7) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts--genres. The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts. The student is expected to: (A) demonstrate knowledge of American, British, and world literature across literary periods; (B) analyze the effects of metrics; rhyme schemes such as end, internal, slant, and eye; and other conventions in poetry; (C) identify and explain the function of archetypes and motifs; (D) analyze characteristics and structural elements of informational texts such as: (i) clear thesis, relevant supporting evidence, pertinent examples, and conclusion; and (ii) the relationship between organizational design and thesis; and (E) analyze characteristics and structural elements of argumentative texts such as: (i) clear arguable claim, appeals, and convincing conclusion; (ii) counter arguments, types of evidence, concessions, and call to action; and (iii) identifiable audience or reader

(8) Author's craft: listening, speaking, reading, and writing using multiple texts. The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors' choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts. The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances. The student is expected to: (A) identify and analyze the use of allusions and motif; (B) identify and analyze how the author's diction and syntax contribute to the mood, voice, and tone of a text; and (C) identify and analyze the use of rhetorical devices, including appeals, understatement, overstatement, parallelism, and shifts.

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Teacher Notes/Background Information:

Thinking about character motivation and change over time

One goal for this lesson (in addition to diving deeper into Shakespeare's text) is to think about Shakespeare's characters as dynamic. Romeo is quite impetuous and impulsive, but his motives change after Act 1. Once he realizes that Juliet is his soul-mate, the motivation behind his decisions changes dramatically. Students can pick up on Romeo's inner most feelings in this scene by looking at diction, punctuation, and listening to the actors' portrayals of Romeo in the accompanying video.

What is this scene about?

In this scene, Romeo has just had his first encounter with Juliet at the Capulet party and has separated from Mercutio and Benvolio. He's not in the mood to joke around with the boys as love is the only thing on his mind. His feelings for Juliet are lust and infatuation at this point, but during this scene we see a change in Romeo. This is the moment that he realizes that Juliet is his true love. Rosaline ceases to exist in Romeo's eyes. Have students attempt to identify that moment. How do they notice that Romeo is truly in love with Juliet?

If you are teaching the whole play

This scene is a major turning point in the play. We highly recommend taking some time to focus on this iconic speech if you are teaching Romeo and Juliet in its entirety. Every decision that Romeo makes after this point is based on what he would do or should do for Juliet and to be with her. This is a touchstone point to go back to in order to examine Romeo's motivation and decision-making process throughout the rest of the play.

If you are teaching just this excerpt

Your students are likely to have some basic understanding of Romeo and Juliet even if you are not reading the whole play. This excerpt does a great job of showcasing the "a-ha" moment in a character. Provide students with a brief background of Romeo's previous unrequited love for another woman and explain that he had just met Juliet hours earlier. Students will likely be able to characterize Romeo based on this speech alone. The character that students see in this speech from Romeo is a glimpse into who he becomes and develops throughout the rest of the play.

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Key Vocabulary:

Discourses (Line 13) – speaks/talks

Because this lesson is based on dramatic performance, this is a great opportunity to start a conversation – or even a collaboration – with a drama teacher.

And here's a music connection: theater people call this speech an aria because, like in an opera or oratorio in classical music, it is a formal expressive piece for one performer. The Metropolitan Opera explains that, "arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting on their emotions."¹ This video enables students to hear two actors talk about how they understand the speech, and to see how each performs it as a result.

1 <https://www.metopera.org/discover/education/educator-guides-content/agrippina/10-essential-musical-terms/>

Objectives:

Students will gain a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's text by analysis of character and character change over time.

Students will analyze the importance and role of Shakespeare's characters' choices and the effect that those choices have on the plot of the play.

Materials Needed:

Script for Act 2, Scene 2 Romeo Speech (But soft)– 1 per student

2 Actors, 1 Role Video – Romeo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0gLFmvWxYU&t=915s>

Warm-Up/Activate Prior Knowledge (5-10 Minutes)

If students are reading the play in its entirety, use the warm-up time to review the last scene of the play that students read. (Note: Act 2, Scene 1 could be read on the same day as Act 2, Scene 2).

Suggestion: A choral reading of a cloze summary of Act 1 will help students to review the action of Act 1 and enforce understanding. Ask students to share out as a class the words that fit in the blank.

If students are not reading the entire play, use the warm-up time to set the stage for the reading of the aria.

Suggestion: Give students a summary of Act 1 in order to ensure they don't encounter any confusion around the plot of the aria.

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Text Focus Instruction (20-25 Minutes)

Teacher Reading (5 Minutes)

Start by reading the scene together as a class. Students should have their own copy. The teacher can model reading out loud first. Ensure students don't have any questions regarding the words in the scene.

Student Reading (10-15 Minutes)

Ask students to work in groups of 3-4 to read through the speech as a group. Choral reading is a great option for groups to utilize here. Once students have read the speech, ask them to ensure they understand the plot. What has happened here? What is Romeo talking about?

- Focus questions for students: character motivation/love

What motivates Romeo to speak this aria?

Do you feel that Romeo changes during this aria? Where?

What line? Why?

If time allows in small groups, students can take turns acting out this speech. Where would Romeo's attention be as he speaks? Where would he pause? (Students can look at punctuation for help on this) On which lines or words might he place emphasis?

Whole Class Discussion (5-10 Minutes)

Bring students back together and discuss the focus questions as a class. Have students share out ideas that really dig into Romeo's character (ask them to share out their answers to the above questions)

The teacher should record student responses on the whiteboard, PowerPoint slide, Google doc, so that they can be revisited during the Video Reflection aspect of this lesson.

Video Reflection (15-20 Minutes)

Watch video for Clark brothers' interpretations

16:47 - 21:20: The Aria: Act 2, Scene 2

As students watch each of the Clark brothers' interpretations of Romeo's speech, ask them to reflect on how each actor brings Romeo to life. Things to notice: where are the actors focusing their attention during the speech, where are they pausing, where are they having Romeo "change" (what line?), etc.

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Video Reflection (15-20 Minutes continued)

Whole Class Discuss

Ask students to share out their thoughts about each actor’s interpretation of Romeo in this scene. Students can share out their responses to the above questions. Another question, did each actor have the same “moment” where Romeo realized he was in love with his soulmate?

Note: Students are likely to use this moment to say one performance is better than the other. Encourage students to positively critique, knowing that mutual admiration and individual/actor interpretation can be supported with lines from the text (why the actor chose to deliver a line a certain way)

Character Motivation Chart

Going forward through the rest of the play, ask students to track major decisions Romeo makes throughout the rest of the play. This will help students to reflect on Romeo’s motivations as well. There should be a common thread of Juliet and their marriage as the primary motivator of Romeo's decisions from this scene on out. Students can even compare his motivations from the remainder of the play to the ones he makes prior to confessing his love for Juliet.

Watch video for Clark brothers’ interpretations

16:47 - 21:20: The Aria: Act 2, Scene 2

Act & Scene	Romeo’s Decision	His Motivations for Making this Decision
Act 2, Scene 2	Romeo decides to confess his love to Juliet after the Capulet party.	He realizes while outside her balcony that she is his soulmate. He cannot live without her.

Writing Extension - After Finishing the Play

After reading the whole play, students can practice their literary analysis writing skills using their Character Motivation Chart. Questions could focus on Romeo’s decision making, his motivation and using text evidence to support their responses.

Prompt Example: What character trait might you give Romeo to describe his decision-making process throughout the play? Support your response with text evidence from the play.

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Video Extension – *After Finishing the Play*

Revisit the video (times 7:00-16:00) to watch the actors' analysis of Romeo's pivotal moment in Act 2 Scene 2.

Note: We recommend waiting till the end of the play to watch this aspect of the video as there are spoilers, including Romeo's revenge by killing Tybalt.

Video Timeline:

Kyle Clark – Romeo Studio 208 Houston, TX;

Josh Clark – American Shakespeare Center

0:25 – 2:24: Venue Discussion

Kyle - Studio 208 in Houston, TX. Very small & intimate. Would get much warmer. 40x40 room and always within 7-10 feet of the audience. Nowhere to hide.

Josh – Toured and played in a variety of studios from outdoor venues to high school theaters. When in residency, Blackfriars (300-350 capacity) was warm, inviting, and intimate. The actors could feel the energy.

2:24 – 5:20: Production (Setting)

Josh – Traditionally Shakespearian costumes and props. Centered around Shakespeare's traditional staging conditions. Helps to break down the 4th wall and bring the audience into the show. Live music as the preshow and cast as a live band with contemporary music. Montague vs. Capulet rap battle to start the show. Shakespeare started his shows with music beforehand as well.

Kyle – modern production. Modern Italian clothes and nonexistent set. Music was exclusively Gregory Alan Isakov (folk indie music).

5:20 - 7:15: The Aria – *What inspires Romeo to begin this speech?*

Josh – For me, the aria starts with noticing Juliet's face at the window. Full face, her beauty, the light from behind her, the glow, the balcony all creates an angel like appearance. Not a choice for him, but completely reactionary.

Kyle – It's actually 2 arias but one gets broken. The first line "He jests at scars that never felt a wound.." is tied to Mercutio, but then is broken off by noticing the balcony window being opened. Juliet then becomes the focus of the new aria.

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Video Timeline: *(Continued)*

Kyle Clark – Romeo Studio 208 Houston, TX;
Josh Clark – American Shakespeare Center

7:16 – 10:40: The Big News/Discovery/Deal in the Aria

Kyle – 2 big discoveries in the aria. First is immediately (Juliet is the sun) Juliet is my soulmate, my other half. “It is my love” is the second one. Connecting the two together.

Josh – More guts than head. Realized that any love he felt before was completely wrong and misled. “Oh it is my love” is the moment he changes, much more about what love is and how it changes you entirely. What he would do to never lose her is a big deal. He grows up here in that one moment, from a boy to man. He cares more about something else than himself. First love was self-obsessed.

10:41 - 16:45: The Aftermath/What Follows/Leading Romeo Forward

Kyle – The connection of these two souls in this moment dictates every decision he makes going forward. Keeps the relationship secret to protect his new relationship. Doesn’t kill himself after being banished so that he can still see Juliet. Comes back instead of killing himself immediately with the poison because it’s ultimately about her now.

Josh – Focuses on the battle between being a kid and wanting to be a man. Focus on bringing people together as an unintentional decision rather than fighting. Romeo cuts ties with his old life (especially in fight with Tybalt). More adult in the moment before he leaves for Mantua than he’s been before (less impetuous) and more grounded and thinks ahead a little bit more. Example, lark vs nightingale scene. He chooses to leave for the better good. Similar moment to the aria in the tomb. In the tomb, he realizes he won and it’s not a tragedy. He gets to spend death with her as well as his life being with her.

16:47 - 21:20: The Aria: Act 2, Scene 2

Josh and Kyle alternate lines, interpretations, and performances of the “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks...” aria. The moment of Romeo’s realization is made abundantly clear in each actor’s performance. *This would be a great place for students to compare and contrast these moments.

16:48 – 19:00: Kyle

19:00 – 21:20: Josh

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Video Timeline: *(Continued)*

Kyle Clark – Romeo Studio 208 Houston, TX;
Josh Clark – American Shakespeare Center

21:22 – 31:46: Mutual Admiration Society

Josh – Notices and notes Kyle’s intentional pauses at the very beginning. Also the time he takes allows the audience to connect to this “new” moment.

Kyle – Notices the way Josh uses onomatopoeia in the aria - “Arising sun”

Josh- “Oh, it is my lady..... it is my LOVE.” Loves the pause that Kyle put between that line and his body language and gestures align with the change/realization as well. (23:40) Both incorporated humor. Loved Kyle’s pauses to allow for Romeo’s “crush” to be clear.

Kyle – Second note is on Josh’s use of the word “birds.” Flaps his arms like a bird – adds a gentle, immature, and childish approach. Indicative of Romeo’s character.

Josh – Kyle’s speech focuses exclusively on turning the attention to Juliet rather than how he’s performing the speech itself. Josh admits he did the opposite and made it more about him. This shows growth in Romeo and allows him to connect with the audience in a way that is intimate. They’re with you for the rest of the play.

29:08 – Josh discusses the idea of watching his sibling perform a role that he’s played before as well as how his brother has grown in his craft over the years. Reminds him that there’s always work to do, your craft can always be improved, and you can always learn from what’s around you. Discusses actors as continual learners.

31:49 – Still of both actors’ headshots.

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Act 2, Scene 2

Romeo comes forward.

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

Enter Juliet above.

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief 5

That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.

Be not her maid since she is envious.

Her vestal livery is but sick and green,

And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

It is my lady. O, it is my love! 10

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold. 'Tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, 15

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars

As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven 20

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET Ay me.

ROMEO, aside She speaks.

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