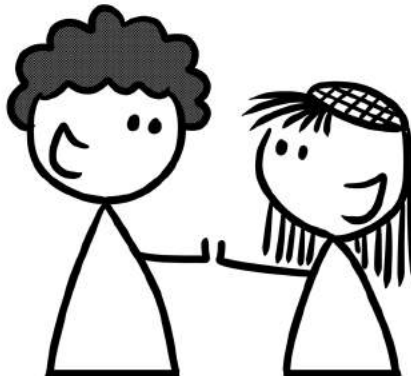


Romeo and Juliet

An Active Introduction to Romeo and Juliet



Shakespeare's plays and characters can be brought vividly to life for students using a variety of interactive, energetic and engaging storytelling techniques. The following active introduction provides a great first encounter with Shakespeare and his stories for students.

How it works

As the leader you are the storyteller, and the whole group should sit in a circle for this activity. You will need to choose a particular action word or phrase to use as a command. In this Active Introduction the phrase 'Hold thy peace' has been used. When said out loud the word is used to quickly return the students to their place in the circle after acting in each 'scene'. Everyone will have the opportunity to join in with the telling of the story by becoming a character or an object in the tale.

Start telling the story, and as soon as a character or an object is mentioned, indicate the first student to step into the circle. Encourage the student to strike a pose or make a shape. If two or more characters are introduced, then they can step in at the same time to act their part of the story. When you call out 'Hold thy peace' the student should sit down. Continue telling the story with the next person from the circle.

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As more characters or objects are introduced, move around the circle so that all the students are given a chance to take part. Explain to the group that it does not matter if the character they have been chosen to be is male or female. Using this technique means that different pupils get to play the same character at various times and everyone gets a chance at acting several roles, regardless of gender.

Continue telling the story, introducing more characters or actions, and making sure all students are given a chance to take part. Props can also be introduced although this is not essential. At any time the students can add lines from the play or improvise with dialogue, but remember, during the telling of the story, once the teacher says 'Hold thy peace' everyone returns to their original place in the circle.

The text below gives possible suggestions for interjections; however you may choose to adapt the text for your group. You may prefer to use different quotations from Shakespeare or encourage students to use their own words. For ease of storytelling, new characters in each 'scene' are highlighted in bold text. If the students are struggling to distinguish characters, visual props can be introduced to identify each character.

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Romeo and Juliet

The tragic tale of *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in the Italian town of Verona. In Verona there are two noble families, the Montagues and the Capulets, who hate each other.

On the streets of Verona, a **group of 3 Montagues** come across a **group of 3 Capulets**.

A Montague challenges a Capulet: '*Do you bite your thumb at us, Sir?*'

The Montagues and the Capulets are about to fight, but then the ruler of Verona, **Prince Escalus**, arrives to stop the brawl.

He commands: '*On pain of torture, from those bloody hands, throw your mistempered weapons to the ground*'.

The Prince tells the Montagues and the Capulets that if he ever catches them fighting in the streets again, they will be executed.

Hold Thy Peace

Romeo, the son of Lord Montague, is walking with his cousin **Benvolio**. Romeo is sad.

He complains: '*Ay me! Sad hours seen long.*'

Benvolio is concerned: '*What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?*'

Romeo is in love with a girl called Rosaline, but she does not love him.

Benvolio advises Romeo to find a new lover, but this makes Romeo angry.

Before the two have an argument, a **servant** arrives. The servant is delivering invitations to the Capulets' ball. The servant does not recognise Romeo as a Montague, so Romeo decides to attend the party in order to distract himself from his love sickness.

Hold Thy Peace

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In the Capulet household, **Juliet** is getting ready for the ball with her **Nurse**.

Her mother, **Lady Capulet**, asks the Nurse to call for Juliet:

'Where's my daughter? Call her forth to me.'

Lady Capulet tells Juliet that it is time she should be married, and that the valiant Paris, a friend of Juliet's father, will meet Juliet at the party tonight, and they are to be married soon after.

Hold Thy Peace

The party has begun and the **Capulets** (including Juliet's cousin **Tybalt** and **Lord Capulet**) are all distracted, dancing and drinking, so they do not notice the arrival of the Montagues.

Romeo, **Benvolio**, and their troublemaking friend **Mercutio** arrive at the Capulet ball with masks to disguise themselves. Suddenly Romeo spots **Juliet**, and falls in love with her instantly.

He says: *'O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.'*

Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, recognises Romeo's voice and sends for his sword. Lord Capulet reminds Tybalt of the Prince's warning, and forbids him from starting a fight.

Meanwhile, Romeo has been flirting with Juliet.

He attempts to woo her by saying: *'My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.'*

Juliet decides that she likes Romeo as well, and they kiss.

Juliet's mother calls her away, and Romeo discovers that Juliet is a Capulet.

Romeo cries: *'Is she a Capulet? O dear account!'*

Benvolio finds Romeo, and tells him that they have to leave straight away as Tybalt is coming to chase them out!

Hold Thy Peace

Romeo and Juliet

After the party, **Juliet** asks her **Nurse** who Romeo was. The Nurse tells her that he is a Montague.

Juliet sobs: *'My only love sprung from my only hate!'*

Left alone in her room, Juliet looks out of her window and speaks of her love for Romeo. She wonders: *'O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?'*

What Juliet does not know, is that **Romeo** has returned to the Capulet's house and is sitting underneath her window listening!

She asks herself: *'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; so Romeo would, were he not Romeo called.'*

Unable to keep quiet any longer, Romeo replies to Juliet.

He shouts: *'Henceforth I never will be Romeo.'*

Juliet tells Romeo to leave as it is not safe for him, but he refuses, saying that the dark night will hide him.

They declare their love for one another, despite their warring families.

Hold Thy Peace

Very early the next day **Romeo** goes to a priest called **Friar Laurence**.

Romeo calls: *'Good morrow, father.'*

Romeo tells Friar Laurence that he has fallen in love with a Capulet, and wants to marry her.

Friar Laurence asks about Rosaline, but Romeo says that Juliet is his one true love.

Romeo sends a message to Juliet via her **Nurse**. He tells her to tell Juliet to meet him at Friar Laurence's cell where they can be secretly married.

Thrilled, **Juliet** rushes there.

Friar Laurence marries Romeo and Juliet to each other.

Hold Thy Peace

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Meanwhile, **Mercutio**, **Benvolio** and a group of other **Montagues** are walking the streets of Verona. Benvolio wants to leave, as he fears they will run into the Capulets, but Mercutio is looking for trouble.

Tybalt arrives with a group of **Capulets**.

Benvolio warns the other Montagues: '*By my head, here come the Capulets.*'

Mercutio responds: '*By my heel, I care not!*'

Mercutio and Tybalt start to argue in the street.

Romeo arrives. However, Romeo refuses to be drawn into an argument with Tybalt as, since marrying Juliet, the Capulets are now his family too!

But Tybalt is determined to fight. He shouts at Romeo: '*Turn and draw!*'

Frustrated that Romeo is refusing to fight, Mercutio challenges Tybalt instead. Mercutio and Tybalt draw their swords and fight! Romeo tries to get between them, but Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm. Tybalt and the Capulets run away.

Mercutio dies, screaming: '*A plague on both your houses.*'

Tybalt returns. Romeo is so angry, he fights Tybalt. Romeo stabs Tybalt, and Tybalt dies. Romeo runs away, just before the **Prince** arrives.

The Prince asks Benvolio: '*Where are the vile beginners of this fray?*'

Benvolio tells the Prince everything that has happened. As Tybalt started the fight with Romeo, the Prince decides to banish Romeo rather than execute him.

Hold Thy Peace

Back at the Capulets' house, **Juliet** is waiting for her new husband, Romeo, to come and see her.

Her **Nurse** arrives, and tells Juliet the news that Tybalt is dead and Romeo is banished.

Juliet is really upset, but decides that she still loves Romeo and asks her Nurse to bring him to her one last time before he is banished.

She pleads: '*Bid him come to take his last farewell.*'

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Reluctantly, her Nurse agrees and brings Romeo to Juliet. The couple spend one last night together. When dawn breaks, Romeo says: '*Farewell, farewell! One kiss, and I'll descend.*' He then leaves Juliet and Verona to face his banishment.

Hold Thy Peace

Later on, **Lady and Lord Capulet** come to tell **Juliet** her that she must marry Paris the next day. Juliet is very distressed, as she is already married to Romeo and doesn't want to marry Paris as well.

After her parents leave, Juliet decides to go to **Friar Laurence** to ask for his help.

The Friar comforts Juliet and comes up with a plan to reunite her with Romeo: He gives Juliet a drug that will send her into such a deep sleep, everyone will think she is dead and put her in the Capulet tomb. The Friar promises to write Romeo a letter, telling him that Juliet is not really dead. Romeo can then rescue her and they can run away together.

Juliet agrees to the plan and goes home to take the drug.

Hold Thy Peace

The next day the **Nurse** comes to wake **Juliet** up for her wedding. However, the Nurse cannot wake her no matter how hard she shakes her.

She shouts: '*Fie, you slug-a-bed!*'

When Juliet still will not wake, the Nurse thinks she is dead.

She screams: '*Alas, alas! Help, help! My lady's dead!*'

Lord and Lady Capulet, **Paris** and **Friar Laurence** all gather around Juliet. The Friar declares her dead. Everyone is sad, and Juliet's body is taken to the tomb.

Hold Thy Peace

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo is living in the Italian town of Mantua. But he misses Verona and Juliet. His friend, **Balthasar**, arrives bringing important news.

Romeo asks: *'News from Verona!—How now, Balthasar?'*

Balthasar tells Romeo that Juliet is dead, and her body is lying in the tomb.

Romeo is really upset and decides to go to the tomb.

On the way there, Romeo visits an apothecary and buys some poison.

Hold Thy Peace

Romeo arrives at **Juliet's** tomb later that night. He believes she is dead, and decides he also wants to die. Before drinking the poison, he says: *'Here's to my love! Thus with a kiss I die.'*

He takes the poison, kisses her and dies.

Moments later, Juliet awakes. She asks: *'Where is my Romeo?'*

She is happy at first when she spots Romeo, but then she sees the poison bottle and realises that he has killed himself. Hearing a watchman outside, she takes Romeo's dagger.

She says before stabbing herself: *'Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger! This is thy sheath.'*

She dies next to Romeo.

Meanwhile, **Friar Laurence** has discovered that his letter never got to Romeo. He rushes to the tomb, but he is too late and discovers the dead lovers.

The Prince, the **Montagues** and the **Capulets** all arrive.

The Friar tells them all what has happened.

The Prince blames the feud between the Montagues and Capulets for Romeo and Juliet's deaths.

Lord Capulet is so upset that he takes Lord Montague's hand. The two agree to be friends hereafter.

The Prince says to end the play: *'Never was a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo.'*