

Romeo and Juliet – Staging a Fight

Overview

- The students will examine the opening scene looking for staging clues and tone and then perform the scene.

Grade Level	Subject Area	Curriculum Expectations and Learning Outcome			Time Needed	Space	Materials
7-12	English, Drama	Develop and explain interpretations of the Shakespearean text, using evidence from the text and visual cues to support their interpretations;	Use appropriate decoding strategies to understand unfamiliar words/ideas and stage the scene;	Analyse the text, motivation, speech, and actions of the characters to build roles.	1-2 class Periods	Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text	Attached handouts of Activities

Romeo and Juliet – Act I, scene 1 (excerpt)

ACTIVITY:

The Capulet servants, Sampson and Gregory, meet two of the Montague servants, Abraham and Balthasar, on the street. Sampson eggs Gregory on to pick a fight with the Montague servants. Benvolio, a Montague, intervenes to stop the fight. Tybalt, a Capulet, enters and challenges Benvolio to a fight.

Working in groups of six, examine the text for staging clues and tone and then decide who will play Sampson, Gregory, Abraham, Balthasar, Benvolio and Tybalt.

FOR DISCUSSION

- ◇ Why do the servants call each other 'sir'? What tone of voice are they using?
- ◇ Why does Sampson repeat Abraham's words at the beginning? What effect does it have on the mood of the scene?
- ◇ Why does Shakespeare start the audience off with a dramatic fight scene at the top of the play?
- ◇ Where would you set the play? Discuss possible settings where you think the fight could take place.

Romeo and Juliet - Act I, Scene 1 (excerpt)

GREGORY

Draw thy tool, here comes two of the house of the Montagues.

weapon or penis

SAMPSON

My naked weapon is out: quarrel, I will back thee.

either phallic wordplay or takes out the actual weapon

GREGORY

How, turn thy back and run?

what

SAMPSON

Fear me not.

doubt

GREGORY

No, marry; I fear thee!

by the Virgin Mary

SAMPSON

Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin.

on

GREGORY

I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.

please

SAMPSON

Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.

an offensive gesture

Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR (from the House of Montague)

ABRAHAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAHAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

[Aside to GREGORY] Is the law of our side, if I say ay?

GREGORY

No.

SAMPSON

No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY

Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAHAM

Quarrel sir! no, sir.

SAMPSON

If you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAHAM

No better.

SAMPSON

Well, sir.

GREGORY

Say 'better!' here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

SAMPSON

Yes, better, sir.

ABRAHAM

You lie.

SAMPSON

Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing blow. *a particular fencing stroke or a slashing move*

They fight

Enter BENVOLIO

BENVOLIO

Part, fools! Put up your swords; you know not what you do.

Beats down their swords

Enter TYBALT

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? *mocks Benvolio for fighting with servants, punning 'heart' for 'hart' a male deer with 'hinds' as female deers without male parts (harts)*
Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword,
Or manage it to part these men with me.

use

TYBALT

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee:
Have at thee, coward!

They fight