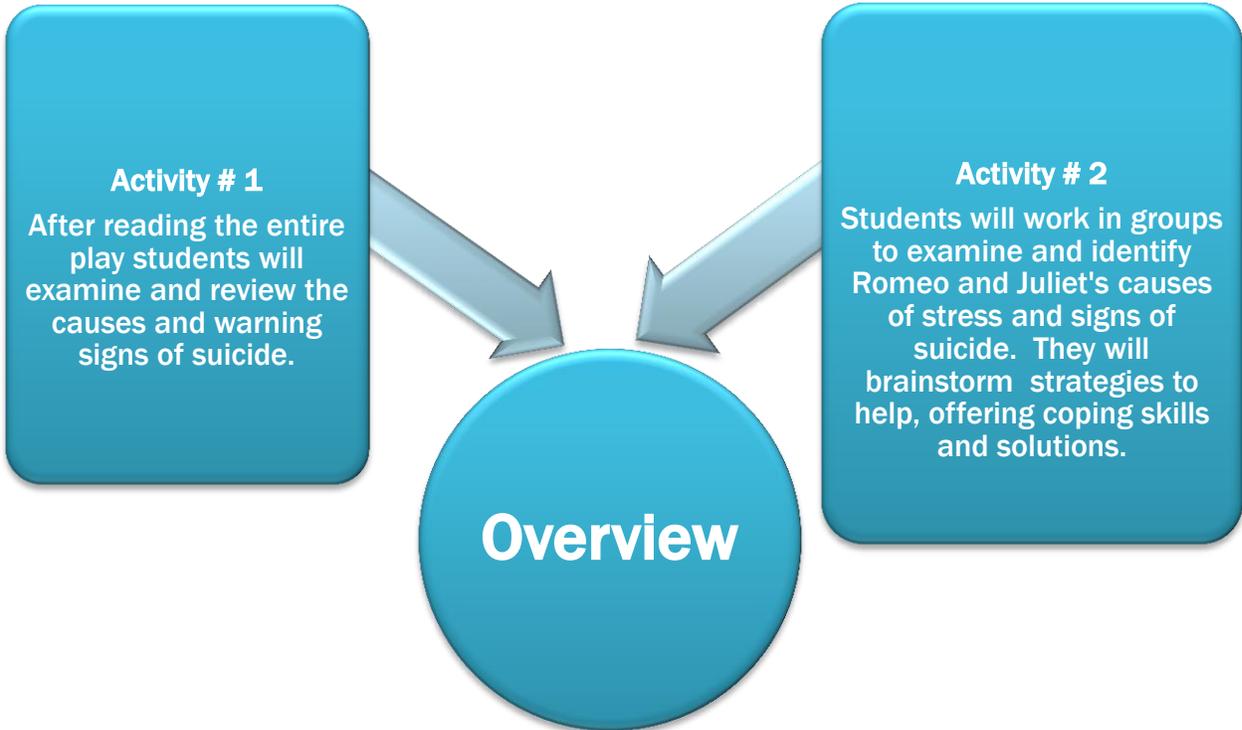


**Imaginative Ways to Approach the Text**

**Romeo & Juliet– Preventing Teen Suicide**



Grade Level	Subject Area	Curriculum Expectations and Learning Outcome			Time Needed	Space	Materials
7-12	English, Drama	Identify warning signs & symptoms that could be related to mental health concerns and describe a variety of strategies for coping;	Analyse the text and explain how they help communicate meaning and enhance effectiveness;	Describe the challenges & struggles facing R & J which contributed to their eventual suicide and apply effective strategies that could have prevented their demise.	1-2 class Periods	Desks in groups	Attached handouts of Activities

## Activity 1: About Preventing Teen Suicide

Suicide is a complex and difficult topic. Many factors are involved that lead people to die by suicide or attempt suicide. It is the second-most common cause of death among young people after motor vehicle accidents.

On youth and suicide the Canadian Mental Health Association says the following:

*Suicide can appear to be an impulsive act. But it's a complicated process, and a person may think about it for some time before taking action. It's estimated that 8 out of 10 people who attempt suicide or die by suicide hinted about or made some mention of their plans. Often, those warning signs are directed at a friend.*

*Recognizing the warning signs is one thing; knowing what to do with that information is another. Suicide was a taboo subject for a very long time. Even talking about it is still difficult for most people. But being able to talk about suicide can help save a life. Learning about suicide is the first step in the communication process. Suicide is about escape. Someone who thinks seriously about suicide is experiencing pain that is so crushing, they feel that only death will stop it.*

Suicide and Youth (2016, December 8) [http://toronto.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/youth-and-suicide/#.WEnCdLrLcs](http://toronto.cmha.ca/mental_health/youth-and-suicide/#.WEnCdLrLcs)

### WARNING SIGNS

Considering suicide does not necessarily mean one is determined to die. They may place warning signs as a way to ask for help or shed light on serious and painful circumstances.

Here are some warning signs to look for as outlined by the Canadian Mental health Association:

- ◆ Sudden change in behavior (for better or worse)
- ◆ Withdrawal from friends and activities
- ◆ Lack of interest
- ◆ Increased use of alcohol and other drugs
- ◆ Recent loss of a friend, family member or parent, especially if they died by suicide
- ◆ Conflicting feelings or a sense of shame about being gay or straight
- ◆ Mood swings, emotional outbursts, high level of irritability or aggression
- ◆ Feelings of hopelessness
- ◆ Preoccupation with death, giving away valued possessions
- ◆ Talk of suicide: e.g. 'no one cares if I live or die'
- ◆ Making a plan or increased risk taking
- ◆ Writing or drawing about suicide
- ◆ 'hero worship' of people who have died by suicide
- ◆ Their behavior is out of character, etc. (this list is not exhaustive)

**WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU KNOW A  
PERSON IS CONSIDERING SUICIDE?**

- ✓ Really listening, without judging not challenging, or becoming angry or shocked
- ✓ Finding ways to break through the silence and secrecy
- ✓ Asking if they have plans or have made prior attempts
- ✓ Helping them find ways to lessen their pain
- ✓ Helping them see positive possibilities in their future
- ✓ Guiding them to other sources of help as soon as possible, such as a counsellor or other trusted adult, or community crisis lines listed in your telephone listings
- ✓ If they are in crisis and you aren't sure what to do, you can always call 9-1-1 or go to your local emergency room

## ACTIVITY 2: *Romeo and Juliet* – Helping Romeo and Juliet

**NOTE:** This is an activity after reading the entire play.

1. Divide into five (5) groups. Note: Act I and V are lumped together because they are fairly short and Act III are split into two groups because it is very large.
2. Romeo and Juliet are trying to solve problems but are unable to do so and finally turn to suicide as the last option.

Read the soundbites in your section and answer the following questions:

- a. Identify the causes of stress in Romeo and Juliet's lives.
- b. What suicidal warning signs are Romeo and Juliet displaying?
- c. How do Romeo and Juliet handle their stress?
- d. Is there anyone in the play who is a good listener?
- e. Do you see evidence in the play of the following: bullying; criticizing; judging; peer pressure, etc., (come up with your own)?
- f. What recommendations would you make to reduce their stress?  
If you get stuck use these sentences to help you get started:
  - i. The best way to help is...
  - ii. The best way to communicate is...
- g. Are there other quotes in the play, not listed in the soundbites, that might be considered warning signs?