

THE DUBUQUE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

at the Carnegie Stout Library, Dubuque, IA

Fall 2024

BECOMING THE BARD

Romeo and Juliet

Synopsis: In this, the most famous love tragedy of all time, Shakespeare's doomed lovers find each other in a violent society beset with ancient grudges. Exquisite poetry, memorable characters and a relentless pace immerse the audience into the world of the play.

Discussion Topics:

- How is love portrayed in this quintessential love story? What devices does Shakespeare employ to delineate Romeo and Juliet's love to make it bigger and truer than what surrounds them? Consider the shift in language of the young lovers, the characters that surround them and the plotting of scenes.
- Time, both the progression of it and the parts of a day, is an important theme of the play. Shakespeare often goes out of his way to signify time of day with numerous signifiers like moon, lark, etc. How is the timelessness of this tale and its themes bound up in how time is used within the play?
- Even though the lovers' deaths are foretold in the opening chorus, the play's structure is closer to that of a romantic comedy with several misunderstandings and near misses. Does the structure help support the themes or does it undercut the tragedy?
- Romeo and Juliet is an intense play with every scene featuring violent conflict: between youth and age, life and death, free will and fate. How does Shakespeare sustain this intensity over five acts while developing character and incident? What thematic purposes does it serve to keep the drama boiling throughout?

Folger Text Links: <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/romeo-and-juliet/>

Kanopy Film link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/677396>

Other resources to consider:

Romeo and Juliet, 1968 film by Franco Zeffirelli

Romeo + Juliet, 1996 film by Baz Luhrmann with Leo DiCaprio and Claire Danes

Shakespeare in Love, 1998 film by John Madden with Josph Fiennes and Gwyneth Paltrow

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/102817> 2005 staged production at the Globe

Romeo et Juliette, Charles Gounod's opera

Romeo and Juliet, Profokiev's opera

Dear Juliet: Letters from the lovestruck and lovelorn to Shakespeare's Juliet in Verona, 2019 book curating some of the letters (also a subject of the book and movie Letters to Juliet).

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Carnegie-Stout Public Library 360 W 11th Street, Dubuque, IA