INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

Indiana Repertory Theatre 140 W. Washington Street Indianapolis, IN 46204

Romeo & Juliet: The Story.

Taken from Stephen Usherwood's ***Shakespeare Play by Play***

In the beautiful Italian city of Verona lives two rich and noble families, the Montagues and the Capulets. From generation to generation an unreasoning and unreasonable feud had been going on between them and their households. The servants of the Capulets go about the streets armed, and following the example of Tybalt, a Capulet to whom the very word peace is hateful, they pick quarrels with the Montagues on every possible occasion. Not even the most solemn rebukes from the Prince of Verona himself can stop the feuding, which brings even the heads of the two families into the streets in the opening scene of the play.

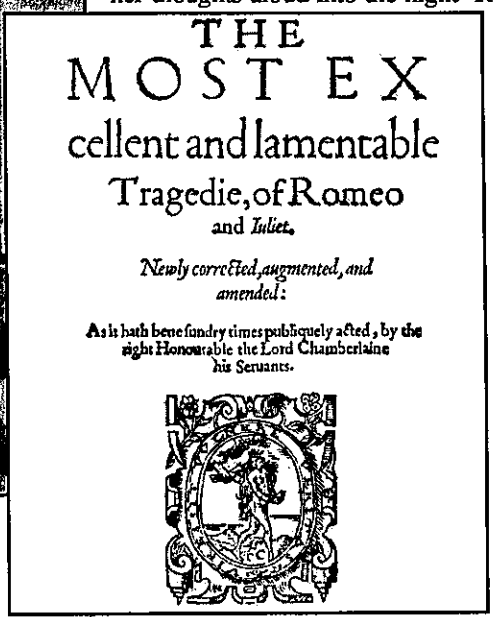
After the brawl, the head of the house of Montague notices that Romeo, his son, is absent, and asks Romeo's friend Benvolio to find out why. Benvolio promises to do so, and, finding Romeo mooning in the orchard, discovers that he loves Rosaline, a beautiful and learned girl who vows she will not marry anyone.

The head of the house of Capulet is perplexed for a different reason. The wealthy young Count Paris wishes to marry Juliet, Capulet's only child, who, at only fourteen years of age he does not consider old enough for marriage. Capulet plans that Paris should attend a lavish supper party he is giving that night and there meet Juliet, whom he has never seen.

An illiterate servant taking the Capulets' list of party guests from house to house meets Romeo, who sees the name of Rosaline upon it, and falls in with Benvolio's suggestion that they should take the risk of going to the party that night. Benvolio hopes that Romeo will meet a beauty who will outshine the lovely Rosaline. On the way they meet Mercutio, a talkative, high-spirited companion. Together they put on festive masks and enter the house of the hated Capulets. Romeo, still out of spirits, just watches the dancers. One suddenly catches his eye and drives all thought of the others from his mind. In vain he asked a servant for her name. He speaks words of incautious praise and Tybalt overhears him: he recognizes the voice as Romeo's and, if old Capulet had not prevented him, would have started a fight on the spot. Romeo, not knowing the danger, is soon beside the girl and gently holds her hand. After a few half-serious words, to which she answers with a witty jest, they kiss. A moment later her old nurse is at their side bringing a message from Lady Capulet, so Romeo learns the lovely dancer's name is Juliet, daughter of his enemy, Capulet. Juliet sends her nurse to find out the name of the masked gentleman she kissed and finds that he is Romeo, son of the rival family, Montague.

After the party Romeo does not go home, but scales the wall of Capulet's orchard. Juliet, before she goes to bed, opens her window, and, not guessing that anyone can be inside the garden, speaks her thoughts aloud into the night--Romeo she thinks is perfect in all but one thing--his name, Montague. Romeo, hearing her words, stays silent for a little, but when he answers she recognizes his voice at once and warns him that his life is in danger if he is caught in their garden. He ignores her warning and declares his love for her. She in turn assures him: "My

The balcony scene has been the subject of many paintings and illustrations since the play was written in 1596. At right is the first title page for the play.



THE
MOST EX
cellent and lamentable
Tragedie, of Romeo
and *Iuliet.*

Newly corrected, augmented, and amended:

As it hath bene sundry times publiquely acted, by the right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants.

Romeo & Juliet: The Story (continued)

bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep: the more I give to thee, the more I have." Her nurse begins to call her from inside the house. Juliet goes in to answer her, and then returns to tell Romeo there is nothing in the world she wishes for more than to be married to him, secretly, and as soon as he can find a priest. She promises to send a messenger next day to learn the time and place.

Romeo goes to his friend Friar Lawrence, who teases him for forgetting Rosaline; then, seeing him so serious, the friar promises to do what the young lovers wish hoping that this marriage might mend the feud between their families.

Soon after, Romeo, having joined Mercutio and Benvolio, meets Juliet's nurse in the street and begs her to tell her mistress to be at Friar Lawrence's cell that very afternoon. The nurse delivers Romeo's message, and the two are married secretly. They separate, to meet again by night. All might have been well if the fatal feuding had not broken out again. Tybalt and his friends, meeting Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio in the street, call Romeo a villain. Mercutio, hating to hear him slandered, and not knowing of Romeo's love for Tybalt's cousin Juliet, starts to fight. Before his friends can stop them, Tybalt, thrusting his blade beneath Romeo's arm, kills Mercutio. Romeo knows that now he must meet Tybalt and avenge his friend, and in the fight that follows Tybalt is killed. Romeo, fearing he will be executed, goes into hiding. The Prince of Verona, called to the scene, declares him banished. If he stays in Verona his life will be forfeited.

When Juliet hears of Tybalt's death she grieves for him, but never wavers in her loyalty to her husband. Thoughts of his banishment are like pains of death to her. Her nurse, guessing that Romeo has taken refuge in the friar's cell, finds him there broken with sorrow, but Friar Lawrence soon restores his courage, and tells him to go to Juliet at night and then flee to Mantua. Meanwhile the Capulets are entertaining Count Paris, and at his request decide Juliet should marry him forthwith. Lady Capulet is impatient to tell Juliet of her father's scheme. The nurse, knowing her beloved Juliet is taking a long farewell from Romeo, gives her a warning. The lovers part and Juliet meets her mother with composure, allowing her to think her eyes are red with weeping for Tybalt. But when Lady Capulet proposes a marriage to Count Paris within two days, Juliet says she can on no account consent. Her father, hearing this, falls into a rage. Ignoring protests from the women, he tells his daughter he will turn her out into the streets if she will not do as he wishes. So frightened is the nurse she begs Juliet to obey her father. Juliet, pretending to do so, goes to Friar Lawrence, leaving a message with her nurse that she is going to confession.

At the good friar's cell she meets Count Paris, and, after Paris has gone, the friar hatches a plan to save her from this second marriage. He gives her a drug that will cause her to fall into a death-like coma, and her parents, thinking her dead, will carry her to the family tomb. He promises to get Romeo back from Mantua in time to rescue her when she awakens. The first part of the plot goes well. Juliet goes home, seeks her father's forgiveness, retires to her room alone to take the drug. The next morning she is discovered seemingly dead and taken by her stricken parents to the family tomb. But the friar's message does not reach Romeo. Instead a servant brings him news that Juliet is dead. Enraged, Romeo purchases poison and hastens back to Verona, determined to break into her tomb and die beside her. But when he get there, he finds Paris, who at once assails him with insults and with blows. Romeo, a skillful swordsman, gives him a mortal wound. Granting Paris' dying wish, he lays his body beside the still sleeping Juliet.

Gazing at her, Romeo can scarcely believe her dead, so beautiful she looks. Desperate, he takes the quick-killing poison he has bought in Mantua. A moment later Friar Lawrence, having learned that his message has miscarried, comes into the vault. His cries rouse Juliet who, waking from her coma, finds Romeo lying dead beside her. She sends the friar away and, kissing Romeo farewell, takes his dagger and quickly stabs herself.

Soon the Capulets and Montagues, standing beside the tomb with the prince, hear Friar Laurence unfold the tale of love and death. They vow that henceforward friendship between their houses must prevail. The death of the "star-crossed lovers" ends the feud forever.

Productions of Romeo & Juliet on stage and in film.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

(As he might fancifully tell it in 1986!)

The chief objection I have to being dead for nearly 400 years is because it gives people such a chance to talk. You'd think from the way they do, I did nothing in the old days but sit and write. If you were to believe the high school teachers, you'd think I had been a saint. In fact, there is a whole section of the population that insists that I never lived at all and you know how disconcerning that is. I wouldn't have missed living in those exciting days for anything in the world. And now to my memories.

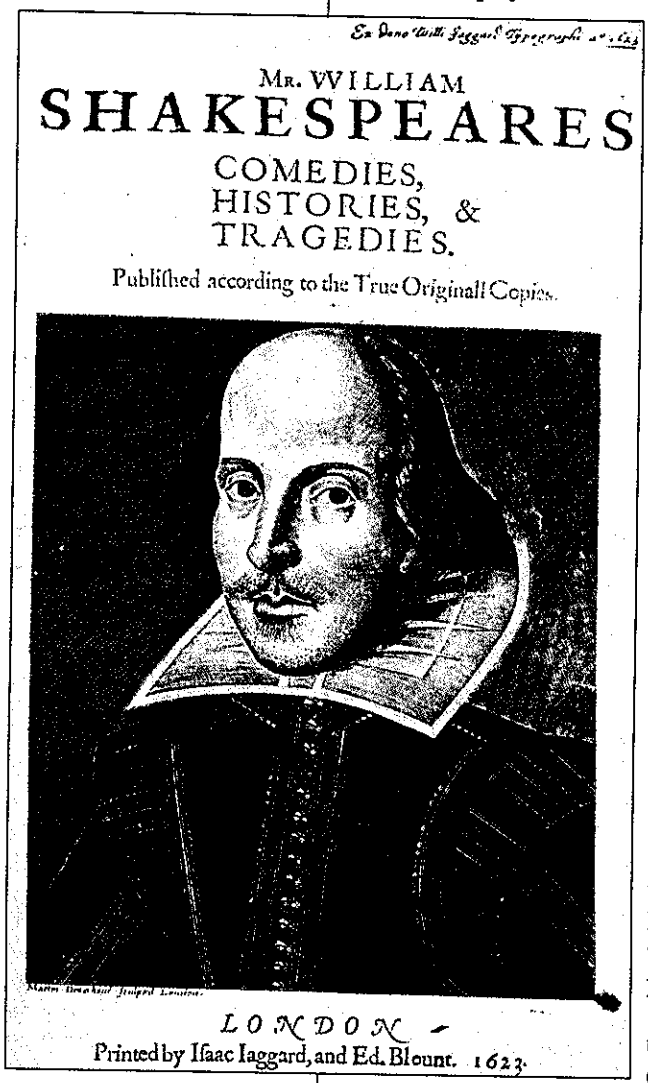
One of my earliest is getting arrested. I put this in just so I won't have to start with school days. As I was saying, I was arrested. My father at that time was one of the rich and influential men in Stratford-on-Avon. Not far from our home was Charlecote park where the gang used to like to hunt. The only trouble was that the place was owned by a louse (I called him this in one of my plays and that got by the censors so I don't think your teachers can object) named Sir Thomas Lucy. There were lots of deer in the park and poaching, if you weren't caught, was fun. The trouble was we were caught, and then it became a serious offense.

I had to leave Stratford to escape jail. And if that isn't a funny start to a career as a playwright, show me a funnier one.

Before I go to pleasant memories of London, I'd like to scotch a lie or two that has sprung up about me. I won't say I was a college man. But neither was I a butcher's boy without any education. As a matter of fact, one of my earliest memories is getting beat on the knuckles by my old school teacher, Simon Hunt, when I missed out on a passage in Julius Caesar's "Gallic Wars." And Caesar, as every schoolboy knows, wrote nothing but Latin.

I was only seventeen when I met Anne Hathaway. She was a good wife, and I suppose I should have been a far better husband. But marriage at eighteen and a half, and three children within a short time isn't good for the kind of wildness I had in my blood. The threat of jail was only an alibi for my leaving Anne Hathaway. The real story was in the romance and glamour that London and the stage had for me.

Years before, when I was about ten, Queen Elizabeth had come to the castle of the Earl of Leicester, close by Stratford.



During that week were the most exciting doings I had ever seen. I'll never forget the plays I saw then acted by the Earl of Leicester's players. I told my Dad that I would never be satisfied until I myself was dressed in those rich costumes and stood on the stage in front of the Queen to play my part. He pooh-poohed these childish imaginings but I had made up my mind. When Sir Thomas Lucy's men arrested me for poaching and I was threatened with jail, I knew the only way out. I would go to London.

Any actor can tell you what it was like trying to land your first job. There were only a few managers then, but they asked you the same questions they do now: "What play were you in last?" "What experience have you had?" Of course, I told them the usual lies about the years I had played in stock, but it didn't work. My first job was in the theatre, all right, but not exactly as an actor. What I did was to hold the horses for the rich patrons of James Burbage's theatre while they dismounted. I never made enough money to stay at an inn, so I used to sleep in the hallway of the only theatre that counted. It was called "The Theatre." It was later that we built "The Globe," where most of my plays were produced.

The great thrill of my life was the night that James Burbage, the owner and producer, literally fell over me as I slept in the doorway. Many of the players who liked me had told him about me. That was the night he gave me a job. Of course, it was only carrying a spear. But even today the excitement comes back to me of that minute when dressed as a Roman warrior, I stepped out on the stage.

I have lived through many triumphs since then. When I heard the mob applaud the opening night of **Romeo and Juliet** and watched tears drip from the eyes of Queen Elizabeth herself at a performance in the Palace: when I received from the College of Heralds my coat of arms, entitling me to call myself William Shakespeare, gentleman, and I was the first actor to be so honored; when Ben Jonson clapped me on the shoulder and acknowledged me as a playwright; when I bought the largest house in Stratford and installed my family there. But none soothed my soul as did that shout of applause after I said my

William Shakespeare's life (continued)

first lines in my first speaking part. The plaudits of the mob, how empty, trifling, raucous, silly, and fruitless they are, but oh, how sweet.

I begin to realize that four hundred years of memories ought not to be compressed into a column. I ought to tell you about Dick Burbage, my first boss's son and later my partner. I would love to write about how I happened to write my plays--how I found the story of **"Romeo and Juliet"** in a little book I picked up--Paynter's "Palace of Pleasure"; of my excitement when a friend gave me Holished's "Chronicles" to read, and of the plays, "Macbeth" and others I drew from it. But there isn't space.

I ought to answer one question that millions of other have asked. Ever since I dedicated a book of sonnets back in 1600 or thereabouts, millions have wondered to whom they were written. I'm sorry, but they'll never know. And neither will I tell who the "Dark Lady" of the Sonnets was. It is enough to tell how I met her. I started out in London a merry young blade. At first, as an actor, I was no more than a vagabond. But with the success of my plays and the patronage of the Queen, I took my place in society. I met the young bloods of the time and wrote their love letters. And finally I met my "Dark Lady," a maid of honor to the Queen. She turned me slowly but surely from "Romeo" to "Hamlet." Life was by turn sweet and bitter in those days, as she was sweet or bitter. She was the only love of my life, and to her my memory turns now, as my work turned then. And even now, centuries later, "age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety." You'll forgive my quoting myself.

And then, in 1616, with my family properous and happy in Stratford, I left my body and began my wanderings as a legend. And don't think I haven't memories since. The thrill, for instance, when all my plays found their way into print. That was the printing of the 1st Folio edition in 1623. It was so exciting to see that I, just a writer for the mob, was the first to be honored.

My memories become a series of flashes: the thrill of seeing the first woman, play Juliet. Before that all my women had been played by boys. Then the chagrin of having the great actor, Garrick, cut my plays to bits. The fun of reading one great world's critic after another, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Browning, T.S. Eliot, right up to today, write about me as a poet. The joy of seeing my plays converted into ballets, symphonies, operas, even paintings and sculptures. And finally, the strange pleasure of watching my plays made into flickering images called films. And what, can you imagine, will happen in the next 400 years? My plays performed on the moon? Impossible!

Romeo & Juliet defines "Classic"

*18th Century Actor David Garrick rewrote **Romeo and Juliet** giving it a happy ending.*

Movie mogul Irving Thalberg described producing the 1936 film version of *Romeo and Juliet* as "the fulfillment of a long cherished dream." This seems strange given the Hollywood attitude which has tended to consider most classics "dry as dust." Thalberg's film starred a forty-two year old Leslie Howard as Romeo (who had never done Shakespeare) and a thrity-five year old Norma Shearer as Juliet (who had never appeared on the stage). What do you suppose that actors of their caliber and experience encountered approaching Shakespeare for the first time?

One of the things they found, according to Thalberg's recollection, was that Shakespeare in many ways anticipated film technique: his plays, written in brief scenes, lend themselves well to editing and scenario construction. Shakespeare, unlike contemporary playwrights, shifted location rapidly in his plays, another element which lends itself easily to film. Today, we find that the continued appeal of Shakespeare has much to do with his use of these story-telling techniques which mirror the movie format: the structure is at once familiar to modern audiences.

Romeo and Juliet is perhaps Shakepeare's most familiar play. Its story of forbidden love, told through the keenest of dramatic incidents, translates effortlessly not only into any language, but into music, opera, ballet, film and visual art. Perhaps no single literary work other than of the Bible has inspired so many adaptations into other art forms, and filtered so pervasively into the lives of even those who have never read or seen a play. Nearly every generation since Shakespeare wrote the play, nearly four centuries ago, has had its manifestation of the play: in the recent past, Bernstein's *West Side Story* (1961) modernized the tale setting it in gang-torn New York City; Zeffirelli's lush film version of the play itself (1968) made Shakespeare live for millions of young adults; and *Pretty in Pink* (1986) made by *Breakfast Club* director John Hughes is being described by Newsweek as a "thrift-shop Romeo & Juliet" as Molly Ringwald plays a lower middle-class teenager caught in a warring atmosphere between the have and the have-nots in a Midwestern High School.

Richard Beymer and Natalie Wood in the film of West Side Story.

Irving Thalberg's definition of the classic still holds true: "A classic is a work of beauty which has emerged victor over time. A work of creation only becomes a classic by consent of an enormous number of people over a long stretch of time. To win such wide popular approval, the work, whether written, painted, or played, must have had, in addition to the orthodox requirements of beauty and technical perfection, the quality of excitement, an excitement felt by the masses. Certainly all this is true of *Romeo and Juliet.*"

Youthful Spirit Celebrated in Romeo & Juliet

Their parents do not understand them. They are sure of what they want. They choose to die for a love that has been forbidden them. They are both teenagers, and no one bothered to see what was happening to them.

Doesn't this sound like the plot of a TV movie starring Molly Ringwald? It is also the story of Romeo and Juliet. Sometimes we think that Shakespeare is very old-fashioned and difficult to understand, but the story he tells in Romeo and Juliet is really simple, and timeless: love can transform the lives of all people, including those considered too young to feel its pangs.

It's Shakespeare's language that often makes us think his stories and characters are remote; the verse structure is a more formal method of speaking than we are used to, but if we begin to think of it as music it makes better sense: the words are lyrics and the beat is the cadence and rhythm of the verse lines. Shakespeare's language has a richness not found in everyday speech. It allows Romeo and Juliet to talk about their love in language as special as the love they discover, almost as if love causes them to find new words for their vocabularies, and stronger powers of expression.

There are many kinds of love explored in Romeo and Juliet:

-love between parents and children which often becomes confused when the children refuse to obey their parents. (This is particularly true when Juliet's father threatens to disown her if she refuses to marry Paris.)

-love between friend and friend (This love causes Romeo to revenge his friend Mercutio's death by killing Tybalt, which causes Romeo's banishment.)

-the love that is loyalty (as with the Nurse's participation in the secret plan for Romeo and Juliet's marriage.)

-the love of a ruler for his people (The Prince forbids the Capulets and Montagues to fight so that no more lives will be lost.)

-and the love of Romeo and Juliet for each other -a love which perfectly combines all elements of physical desire, friendship, and devotion.

Love is expressed in the language of the play quite differently by different characters. Mercutio talks about love from a sexual point of view; Benvolio talks about it as if it were a sickness which can be cured; the nurse talks about love from the viewpoint of how much money and how many children it can bring; Friar Lawrence sees love as a possible way to patch up the Capulet/Montague feud. Only Romeo and Juliet experience love in all its richness. Although first attracted to one another by looks, they soon exchange witticisms and discover through conversation that they can connect mentally as well. Despite their brief courtship, they experience a multitude of feelings and exchange views on faithfulness, tenderness, concerns of self-worth, and the power of love to overcome obstacles, all in the brief span of the balcony scene.

"All great lovers... feel more real than the world."

Denis de Rougemont

Love motivates the violence in the play as well, but this love too often borders on self-love or egotism. The two families continue their feud, each wanting to uphold the honor and supremacy of their clan. It is interesting to note that no one in the play seems to know how the feud broke out or why it is continued. It takes the deaths of Romeo and Juliet to make the families see the futility of their argument. Love drives them to suicide, because death seems to be the only place left for them to be together. In the most violent actions of the play there is great passion.

The sweetness of the love Shakespeare creates between Romeo and Juliet stands in sharp contrast to the violence and tragedy that eventually take over. In the process, many questions are raised that cut across the 400 years which separate us from Shakespeare's writing of the play. We are asked to condemn the destructive power of hatred between the warring families and see how easily innocent people can be trapped in this

IRT's Romeo: Michael Cerveris

world of hatred. We are asked to question just how much power parents should maintain over their children's lives once they reach the age of adulthood. Ultimately Shakespeare seems to suggest that generations should try to understand each other, so that young lives need not be wasted.

These questions are equally important to us today and Romeo and Juliet provides a powerful metaphor for the plight of adolescent love and the resourcefulness of youth in any century.

IRT's Juliet: Michelle Joyner

Glossary of Words and Ideas Prominent in *Romeo & Juliet*

Fate: Romeo & Juliet seem to be fated, or destined to meet, love & die. Their deaths seem to be inevitable once the wheel of events is set in motion. Notice in their language the many references to death as if death and love were natural partners in the order of the world. They are called "star-cross'd lovers" and many references in the play seem literally to suggest that their fates are entangled, and their stars are destined to cross (in astrology, an indication that people are meant for each other).

Foreshadowing: To suggest something before it happens. Notice how Romeo has had a dream or premonition of something momentous happening the night he meets Juliet. Mercutio tries to tease him out of these frightening thoughts but Romeo's dream foreshadows his fate. Juliet has a number of these foreshadowing thoughts too. Watch for them in the play.

Irony: Irony involves the use of opposites. For instance it is ironic that Juliet should fall in love with a member of the enemy family. They should hate each other. There are many examples of the existence of these opposite reactions in the play, so many that the world of the play is a confusing place sometimes. The greatest irony is in the last scene, when Romeo, thinking Juliet dead, remarks about how alive she looks, but takes the poison anyway, just seconds before she wakes up. Often an ironic situation happens because the characters are not fully aware of the facts about the situations they find themselves in.

Paradox: A statement which seems to contradict itself, but is nonetheless true. After Juliet finds out that Romeo has killed her cousin, Tybalt, she calls Romeo a "beautiful tyrant," and an "angelical fiend." These are paradoxical observations and the play is full of them.

Puns and Metaphors: Listen for puns and metaphors, two figures of speech used often in the play. Talk about these so you're sure you can identify them. Mercutio uses puns alot: after he receives his death blow he says "Ask for me tomorrow and you will find me a grave man." "Grave" has two meanings here and both are intended.
Common metaphors in the play use stars, planets, night, day, fire, water--listen for these images used to describe a person or a feeling. For instance, Juliet calls her love for Romeo "as boundless as the sea."

Tragic Flaw: Great tragic figures are often examined for a tragic flaw. This is a characteristic which makes them particularly vulnerable to their tragic fate. Romeo's tragic flaw is often considered by critics to be his youthful desire to rush too quickly into things.

Banishment: This term is used in a legal sense in the play. It means that Romeo's punishment for killing Tybalt is not execution, or imprisonment, but banishment--being sent out of Verona never to return. It he returns he could be killed on sight. This may seem like an unusually light sentence to us today, because transportation and telephones make it easy for us to communicate with people far away, but in the 16th century, there were, of course, none of these conveniences.

Drugs and Poison: Another of the out-dated ideas in the play concerns the drug Juliet takes which makes her look dead. Of course, with medical practice as advanced as it is today, a drug like this would be useless--any doctor wold know that she was not really dead. Drugs and poisons were very mysterious in the 16th century--their properties were unknown to most people.
As we learn in the scene between Romeo and the Apothecary, selling poison was illegal, and Romeo must pay much more than it is worth to get it.

Cell: This word refers to Friar Lawerence's room in the church, not to a room in a prison.

Shrift: An old word for going to confession, or for going to church.

Cupid: Cupid is the god of love. He is often depicted as a mischievous child, who shoots arrows of love into lovers' hearts. He is also often depicted as blind, since, love is often considered blind; that is, it is not rational but emotional. There are many references to archery in the play and all refer to Cupid and love.

Soliloquy: A speech in which a character is alone on the stage, and speaks directly to the audience about their feelings.

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