

The use of soliloquies in romeo and juliet

Literature, William Shakespeare



The Use of Soliloquies in Romeo and Juliet Talking to yourself is never a good idea in society, unless of course you are a character in a work by William Shakespeare. Many of his famous works are riddled with people talking to themselves, rambling on and on in Shakespeare's unique poetic fashion of iambic pentameter. These outbursts of thought that come from the minds of the characters are generally called soliloquies. One of the most famous scenarios of a soliloquy happens to come from the play Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare. In this particular play, many soliloquies tend to appear in various places for various reasons, posing the questions of why they are so important and why Shakespeare chose to use them. Is it purely for the enjoyment of the audience or reader? Or is there a deeper meaning for the use of soliloquies? The answer here, lies in the play of Romeo and Juliet itself and by dissecting the placing, wording, and speaker of a soliloquy, one is able to reveal that soliloquies give a reader the ability to look through a window into the speaker's feelings, their dedication and emotions, and even provide a helpful and interesting scenario for the reader and/or audience. As stated above, there are very famous soliloquies used in Romeo and Juliet, one being the first time he talks about Juliet in act 1, scene 5. A possible reason for this particular soliloquy may have been to show how Romeo feels about Juliet, giving readers a sense of how he views her. He speaks of Juliet as the one that “.. doth teaches the torches to burn bright! ” (1. 5. 51 — 60) , meaning that to him she was so beautiful that she out-shined all of the bright torches around her. In lines 55 and 56 he says “ So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows/As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows" (1. 5. 55 — 56) Here he is saying that she stood out to him like a white dove in a

surrounding group of black crows. Also, in the lines 59 and 60 he expresses his final thoughts by saying " Did my heart love till now?/Forswear it, sight/ For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. " (1. 5. 59 - 60) These words can be translated into him stating to himself that he cannot believe what he is seeing, and that he had not seen such a beautiful girl until that night. This soliloquy was able to express to people just how amazingly beautiful Romeo sees Juliet, allowing them into the mind of Romeo himself. Even though these particular lines shows his physical view on Juliet, the lines throughout the soliloquy also provide an emotional insight to how Romeo feels about her. This same soliloquy can also provide another reason for it's use and that is that this soliloquy happens to apply to Shakespeare's rhyme scheme. With the rhyming of Romeo's words, it does not only make for a good poem, but it gives the soliloquy even more depth. It attracts the reader and or audience of the play by placing a rhyme scheme that is pleasing to one's ear. By doing this, he unknowingly draws the audience to pay more attention to what is being said. It also creates a steady flow for the reader that keeps them understanding and retaining what Romeo is saying. Along with letting readers and/or viewers understand just how Romeo physically views Juliet, a different soliloquy lets the reader go even deeper into Romeo's emotions. Probably one of Romeo's most famous soliloquies appeared in Act 2, scene 2, lines 2 through 26 and starts with the lines " But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?/It is the east, and Juliet is the sun" (2. 2. 2-3) Now, it is not necessarily what is being said in this soliloquy that lets the readers feel as though they were Romeo, but the placement and scenery of it. At the point of his soliloquy, he is currently hiding in the shrubbery of Juliet's home,

under the balcony when he begins to speak of Juliet. This expresses his true love of Juliet, because by being on the grounds of his family enemy, he risks possible death. It also shows his yearning to be near to her. Initially, he is talking to himself, professing his love for her even though she is not around to hear it. By doing this, Shakespeare proves that Romeo loves her deeply, just by talking to himself in the first place! The next soliloquy is also a very famous one, now spoken by Juliet. This particular monologue may not be viewed by some as a soliloquy, because Romeo hears it. However, Juliet is not aware that Romeo is outside, not did she intend for him to hear it, which is why some consider it one. Nevertheless, she states her very first soliloquy in Act 2, scene 2, lines 41-46 with the words " O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?/Deny thy father and refuse thy name/Or if thou wilt not, but be sworn my love/And I'll no longer be a Capulet. " (2. 2. 41- 46) Simply put, she is confessing to herself that she misses Romeo, and that she is in love with him. She is telling herself that if that Romeo being a Montague and her a Capulet would prove to hinder their ability to love each other, then she would " no longer be a Capulet". By her announcing her willingness to leave her family and her name behind despite the consequences, it shows her true love to Romeo. Thus, it provides the readers now with both an insider's look on Romeo, and Juliet's feelings towards each other. In conclusion, after dissecting the famous words of Shakespeare it is clear that soliloquies play an important role in Romeo and Juliet. To say that they are there just for the reader's enjoyment is an understatement. Through examining the play itself, it has been proven that soliloquies do indeed have a much deeper and more important role. One such reason being that they provide a window of

opportunity to get a better understanding of the characters feelings.

Similarly, it gives one the ability to experience the speaker's dedication and emotions. Finally, it even can be seen as a literary tool to draw the audience closer, helping them to pay more attention to what is being said, exemplifies what is being said to help readers and viewers understand what is being said, and provides an interesting scenario for the reader and/or audience.