

Examine how shakespeare presents the character of

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Examine how Shakespeare presents the character of Friar Lawrence 'Romeo and Juliet' In 'Romeo and Juliet' Shakespeare presents Friar Lawrence in many ways, such as, a holy man, a fatherly figure but also as a coward. Friar Lawrence is a key instrument of fate within the play; he has good intentions but ends up helping fate to create tragedy. In the first scene the audience see Friar Lawrence in; he is presented as being extremely knowledgeable. The audience see him gathering plants and herbs and demonstrates his knowledge by saying 'For this being smelt, with that part cheers each part cheers each part being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.' This line portrays the idea that each cure for an illness can also be deadly if taken in the wrong way. This demonstrates his knowledge of plants, herbs and medicine. As well as this the Nurse enters one scene and praises Friar Lawrence for his 'good council' by saying 'O, what learning is!' This emphasises the Friar's knowledge and shows that other characters view him as intelligent. Secondly Shakespeare presents Friar Lawrence as not only being a holy man but as being aware of the world or 'worldly wise.' This is proven at many points throughout the play such as when Romeo comes to Friar Lawrence's cell and the Friar can tell that Romeo hasn't been to sleep because he has been with a girl. This is illustrated in the line 'Our Romeo hath not been to bed tonight.' As well as this Friar Lawrence comments on how quickly Romeo falls in love with one girl to the next by saying 'Young men's love then lies not truly in their hearts but in their eyes.' This demonstrates that Friar Lawrence is aware that not all love is true. Furthermore, Friar Lawrence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet so hastily to ensure that they do not have sex before marriage. This is proven in the lines

' We shall make short work for by leaves, you shall not stay alone, till holy church incorporate two in one.' This again emphasises how ' worldly wise' Friar Lawrence is as he realises that young people do have sex before marriage and do not always worry about faith and what religion has to say about their actions. Throughout the play Shakespeare also presents Friar Lawrence as being a councillor and fatherly figure towards Romeo. This side is portrayed in many scenes and is proved in lines such as ' That's my good son' where Friar Lawrence is addressing Romeo as if he is his son. This is also illustrated in the line ' wisely and slow they stumble that run fast'. This shows that Friar Lawrence is seeing Romeo grow up and make mistakes so that he can learn from them; this is something a father would usually say about their own child. As well as this the first time Romeo greets Friar Lawrence Romeo uses the word ' father' which proves to the audience that he perceives Friar Lawrence as a fatherly figure. Friar Lawrence appears to be someone that Romeo can go to, to seek advice and guidance rather than speaking to his father. This highlights that in upper class families the relationship between parents and children is maybe not as strong as it is in lower class families. As well as having all of these characteristics Shakespeare also presents Friar Lawrence as being a respected man among other characters. We see this in the final scene where the prince asks Friar Lawrence for his account of events, the line that proves this is ' Then say at once what thou dost know in this'. This illustrates to the audience that the Prince respects and values Friar Lawrence's view and opinion on events that have occurred. However even though Friar Lawrence is presented as having lots of positive characteristics he also possesses some negative ones, such

as being slightly irresponsible. Examples of his irresponsibleness occur several times throughout the play, the first example being when he first agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet by saying ' I'll thy assist be'. This is an irresponsible thing to do because Friar Lawrence knows that he does not have either parents consent, he also knows that Romeo and Juliet only met the night before and therefore, may not be truly in love. Another example of Friar Lawrence being presented as irresponsible is when he agrees to perform a bigamous marriage between Juliet and Paris, he tells Juliet to ' Give consent to marry Paris'. This shows he is irresponsible because bigamous marriages are illegal and he is a priest so is supposed to abide by the law. Furthermore, the plan Friar Lawrence comes up with to help Romeo and Juliet be together is not thought through fully and is generally irresponsible. This is proved in the lines ' I'll send a Friar with speed to Mantua, with my letters to thy lord', this is not thought through fully as how will the Friar that is sent know where Romeo is in Mantua and how will Friar Lawrence know that Romeo has received the letters in time. The whole plan that Friar Lawrence comes up with is irresponsible as he is giving a 13 or 14 year old girl a ' remedy' that will give her no pulse and make her appear dead, which could be potentially risky. Finally, at the end of the play we see Friar Lawrence being presented as behaving quite cowardly, which is a contrast to what we see throughout the play when he risks his reputation by helping Romeo and Juliet to secretly marry. We see evidence of this when the Prince and his guards turn up in the final scene of the play and Friar Lawrence says ' Come go, good Juliet, I dare no longer stay'. This is cowardly behaviour because he is willing to come up with a plan but then does not

want to face up to the consequences of it. Friar Lawrence is presented in many different ways throughout the play by Shakespeare. It is apparent that in Friar Lawrence's beginning scenes his more positive characteristics are presented to the audience, such as how knowledgeable, worldly wise, fatherly and respected he is. Whereas towards the end of the play the audience begins to see how irresponsible and cowardly Friar Lawrence can be. Despite his small amount of negative characteristics it is evident to the audience that Friar Lawrence's intentions are good but because fate had everything mapped out tragedy occurred and there was nothing any of the characters could do to stop it.