

How does shakespeare create sympathy for romeo and juliet? essay sample

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



Shakespeare creates sympathy for the two protagonists in 'Romeo and Juliet' skilfully using emotive language, sonnet form, alliteration and metaphor. Before the play begins, the audience are told that it will end in a disaster. This creates an emotive reaction in the audience throughout the play as they are reminded of the fate of the two young lovers. This is emphasised by the fact that the protagonists foreshadow their own death. There is therefore dramatic irony in that the audience know how the tragic events will unfold but Romeo and Juliet do not. Shakespeare cleverly creates twists and tension throughout the entire play. Shakespeare immediately begins to create a sense of sympathy for Romeo and Juliet in the Prologue of the play. He achieves this by using emotive lexis such as "blood", "mutiny" and "fatal", implying that someone is going to die. After that, the audience are informed that someone "takes their life". However, we are not told exactly who it is that dies although, we assume that it is Romeo and Juliet as the phrase "star-cross'd lovers" is used.

This phrase has an ambiguous meaning creating tension in the audience as it could seem that information is being held back. If two lovers are "star cross'd" people could be inclined to think they have fate against them and that their love may go against the stars, which is therefore doubtlessly going to end in disaster. As a result to this, throughout the play the audience suppose the two lovers will die, causing a sense of dramatic irony. Likewise, "death-mark'd love" implies that their love is going to end with death; the words "death" and "love" used in the same sentence is an example of juxtaposition. This subsequently makes the audience feel sympathy for Romeo and Juliet throughout the entire play, as they are in the knowledge

that this hopeful relationship will end prematurely. In addition to this, the audience may show an expression of sympathy for the two protagonists, as they are separated due to the fact that the other members of their families, although “both alike in dignity” fight.

Furthermore, “from ancient grudge” shows hatred has been between them for years. The play starts with a fight between members of the Montague and Capulet families. This introduces the two families and reminds the audience that Romeo and Juliet will not be able to be together. Tybalt says “Peace! I hate the word!” shows that the two families will not unite, no matter what. He emphasises this by using emotive lexis, Short sentences and Exclamation marks. As Romeo and Juliet are introduced in Act 1, they appear to be young, foolish and naïve; this could create sympathy in the audience as people may believe that they are not as experienced and wise as older people and could easily be foolish when as they are in love. This may be the case if the play was shown to a modern audience. On the other hand, if it was shown to an Elizabethan audience, their views may be different. As standards change, an Elizabethan audience may see two young people of around the age of thirteen as old enough to marry. Lady Capulet attempts to make Juliet agree to marry Paris when she declares “That shall she, marry”. However, Juliet again appears young as she responds with “an honour that I dream not of.”

A modern audience would then feel sorry for Juliet as she is being pressured into marrying someone she doesn't know at a very young age, although an Elizabethan audience may judge her as disrespectful or insolent as she is

going against her parents will for her to marry. This is because it was seen as perfectly normal for arranged marriages in the Elizabethan era. This is shown when Lady Capulet states “ Younger than you...already made into mothers”. Sympathy created in the audience may also depend on the directors’ influence. If Juliet was seen wearing revealing clothes, she may not appear as innocent as she would if she was wearing clothes that made her appear young, Romeo however, as well as being seen as young, is presented as amorous. This is shown when he states “ This shows in sadness cousin, I do love a woman.” Here, he is telling his friend that he is broken hearted, as he loves a woman, Rosaline, but she does not love him back. Sympathy is created when Benvolio begins to laugh at him and mock him. This may make the audience feel sorry for Romeo as his best friend does not understand and does not show care or concern towards him when he is heartbroken.

Romeo later says “ Do I live dead that live to tell it now.” Here, he is explaining to Benvolio that he is living as if he is dead, this, this causes sympathy in the audience as he is foreshadowing his own death, this also includes dramatic irony and is an example of juxtaposition as “ live” and “ dead” are two opposite words. Before Romeo and Juliet have met, and even know that each other exist, Romeo is spotted as a Montague by Tybalt, a Capulet. The audience immediately sense that something bad is going to happen, or that Romeo and Juliet are going to get caught. This is because Tybalt is presented as a violent and aggressive, as well as having a strong dislike towards the Montague family. When Tybalt says “ To strike him dead”, the audience have great feelings that Romeo is going to get caught.

Additionally, the audience know that Romeo dies, which makes them even more tense. When Romeo and Juliet first meet at the party in Act 1, Scene 5, Sympathy is created as they fall in love immediately.

The audience feel sorry for them, as they know that Romeo and Juliet are both going to die, and they are completely unaware. The romance between the couple is emphasised by the use of sonnet form. This is effective as poems are seen as romantic. They start off by saying one quatrain each, but begin to say a line each and eventually they are finishing off each other's sentences. This shows that they are bonding; or falling in love. " Give me my sin again" shows that Romeo is eager, yet the word " sin" implies that they should not be kissing, this makes the audience feel uncomfortable and believe that they are going to get caught. Religious lexis such as " saint", " pray" and " holy" implies that their love is almost like a gift from god, or that it is sacred. Likewise, words such as " kiss" and " touch" shows devotion, and may also imply the two lovers are young, and naïve. This terminology also connotes physical act, which reinforces the emotional connection, similarly to when Romeo kisses Juliet. Despite this, when the nurse interrupts, they no longer speak in sonnets.

This is as if a spell has been broken, and the fantasy is all over. The audience are again made to feel sympathy for Romeo and Juliet when Romeo discovers that Juliet is a Capulet " My life is my foes debt" shows that his life is then down to Lord Capulet, whether he lives or dies because he is a Montague. By now, the audience are sure that Romeo is going to be killed but to their surprise he is not. Later, Juliet orders her nurse to ask for

Romeo's name. Juliet says "Go, ask his name. –If he be married, my grave is to be like my wedding-bed." This makes the audience feel sorry for Juliet again as she is foreshadowing her own death, this also causes a sense of dramatic irony. As the course of action becomes more complicated in Act 2, the audience begin to feel even tenser and in some cases confused. Romeo is left gazing up in lovesick rapture at Juliet's window, when Romeo refuses to leave with Benvolio and Mercutio the audience again, think that something bad is about to happen. When Mercutio describes Cupid as "Young Abraham Cupid" the audience feel sympathy towards Romeo as the Abraham Men were beggars and thieves. This implies that Romeo's heart is, in a way stolen.

This however, may not be a good thing. After that, Mercutio compares Romeo to "King Cophetua" which could make the audience feel hopeful or optimistic for the two lovers. This is because King Cophetua was a hero of a romantic poem, who fell in love with a peasant girl and married her. This may also lead the audience to believe that Mercutio is foreshadowing Romeo and Juliet's future giving the audience hope for them to marry. Romeo is once more seen as naive and romantic when he says "He jests at Scars, that never felt a wound." By this he means Mercutio will laugh at him for his pain caused by his love for Juliet, yet he has never felt love inflicted injuries himself. When Juliet appears on the balcony, tension builds as Romeo should not be wit Juliet. As Juliet leans to reach Romeo, the audience know that they are desperate to be with each other. On the day of Romeo and Juliet's marriage, sympathy is created as the two protagonists should be happy, yet

emotive lexis such as “ death” and “ violence” is used. Romeo foreshadows his and Juliet’s death when he says “ Love-devouring death”