

West side story spin on romeo and juliet

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Fiction, whether it is a movie, play or a story depicts an assortment of human emotions. Although humans experience a variety of emotions, the most influential among them is the feeling of love. Love has varied forms, it can be the tenderly love of a mother, the affectionate love of a friend or the passionate love of a young person for his/her lover. Numerous stories and plays have been written depicting this passionate love. This form of love is a favorite subject of filmmakers; lovers are portrayed in the movies time after time. The audiences are attracted to the romantic portrayal of love in these movies.

One such tale of love is “ Romeo and Juliet”, a play written by William Shakespeare. The central characters in the play are the young lovers, Romeo and Juliet who have become the quintessence of young lovers all over the world. This tragical love story has been the subject of many movies. The most famous movie which is a version of the romantic tragedy of Romeo and Juliet is the “ West Side Story”, directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Although the plot of the movie “ West Side Story” is based on the play “ Romeo and Juliet”, there are differences as far as the styling and the end of the movie is concerned.

Portrayal of Romeo and Juliet The play “ Romeo and Juliet”, a romantic tragedy by Shakespeare, depicts the story of two lovers who meet a tragic end in the course of their love story. The play is set in the city of Verona, where families of Capulet and Montague are frequently fighting against each other. Amidst this animosity, Romeo, the son of Montague and Juliet, the daughter of Capulet fall in love the very moment they see each other in a party. But fate leads them to their tragic end, as both the lovers kill

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themselves. West Side Story” by Robert Wise, is an adaptation of the classic love story, Romeo and Juliet. The story has been altered according to the needs of modern times. The feuding families are replaced by the American gang, the Jets and the gang from Puerto Rica, the Sharks. The Jets hate the Sharks, for they think that the Sharks have invaded their territory. The young lovers in the movie are Tony, a member of the Jets gang and Maria who is the sister of Bernardo, the leader of Sharks gang. Tony and Maria fall for each other when they meet at a dance party.

They love each other passionately, forgetting the feud between their respective gangs. In a fight between Riff and Bernardo, Riff is killed by Bernardo. Infuriated at the death of his best friend, Tony kills Bernardo. When Tony explains the situation to Maria, she forgives Tony for killing her brother as she is deeply in love with him. But Tony is killed by Chino, a member of Sharks gang when Tony comes out in the streets, upon hearing the wrong message of Maria’s death. Maria is shattered by the death of Tony as fate snatches away her love from her.

The classic tale of love of Romeo and Juliet is portrayed in the movie in a different setting and manner. Styling The style adopted by Robert Wise in the movie differs from the play “ Romeo and Juliet”. The romantic tale of Romeo and Juliet is depicted in the movie in an urban setting and in different circumstances. The modern society in the movie is in tune with the present times. The movie with its story of romantic love, excellent music and vibrant dance catches the attention of the audiences. The movie succeeds in capturing the fervor of the youth through the lively dancing.

The tender love which blooms amidst the hatred and rivalry of the gangs touches the heart. The passion depicted in the movie is similar to the passion of Romeo and Juliet but the expression of their love and the surroundings in which Tony and Maria meet are different. The modern style presented in the movie brings forth the old story of Romeo and Juliet in a new and attractive form. The songs and dances in the movie make the story more vibrant and vivacious. The movie is altered to suit the tastes of people in the modern times who view movie as a source of entertainment and leisure.

The environment and the characters in the movie reflect the society in which the audiences are leading their lives. The setting of the play “Romeo and Juliet” is far different from the environment of the modern society. Changes There are numerous changes in the movie when compared to the plot of the play “Romeo and Juliet”. The rivalry between the families of Romeo and Juliet is depicted through the animosity of the Jets gang and Sharks gang. The plot is also changed according to the needs of a movie.

In the play “Romeo and Juliet”, Romeo and Juliet marry secretly but in the movie Tony and Maria never get married. Fate plays an important role in the tragic story of Romeo and Juliet. It is this fate that leads to the death of Romeo and Juliet. But in the movie, the death of Tony is caused, owing to the rivalry of the Jets gang and the Sharks gang. “It is not a cosmic misunderstanding but angry gunfire that kills Tony, and Maria doesn't die at all; she snatches the gun and threatens to shoot herself, but drops it -- perhaps because suicide would have been too heavy a load for the movie to carry. (Ebert). The ending of the movie is also different from the ending of

the play “ Romeo and Juliet”. Ending The play “ Romeo and Juliet” ends with the suicide of Romeo and Juliet. To save Juliet from marrying another man, Lawrence devises a plan according to which Juliet will drink a potion that will make her appear as if she is dead. Juliet drinks the potion on the night before her wedding and her family mourns her death, as the effect of the potion makes them to believe that Juliet is dead. But Romeo, oblivious of the plan, is shocked when he hears about Juliet’s death.

Heart-broken and dejected, he ends his life at the tomb of Juliet, by consuming poison. Upon awaking Juliet finds Romeo dead, she also kills herself with the Romeo’s dagger. In the movie, Tony is killed by a member of the Sharks gang. Although Maria is devastated by Tony’s death, she is not shown as committing suicide. The death of Romeo and Juliet is caused by a misunderstanding; this element makes the story of Romeo and Juliet more tragic. Tony dies in the movie, owing to the gang rivalry.

In spite of being shattered by the death of her lover, Maria holds herself from killing herself. Conclusion The movie “ West Side Story” is adapted from the play “ Romeo and Juliet”. The style and setting in the movie has been changed according to the needs of the modern society. The plot of the play “ Romeo and Juliet” is more tragic compared to the story of the movie “ West Side Story”. Romeo and Juliet end their lives in the play whereas Tony is killed by a member of Sharks gang. Maria is grief-stricken by Tony’s death but she stops herself from taking her own life.