

# How does shakespeare show conflict, violence and build tension in act 1 scene 1 a...

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How does Shakespeare show conflict, violence and build tension in act 1 scene 1 and act 3 scene 1 of Romeo and Juliet? Romeo and Juliet believed to be a play which uncloaks the true emotion of love. A play which portrays the tragedies, tensions and disagreements that arise between the families of two lovers, and how platonic love can be mitigated with loathsome feelings resulting in death. Is it fair for a feeling like love, so pure to result in death? Before act 1 scene 1 starts, the opening lines of the prologue are salient because they tell the audience of what could be and what should be fairness and dignity, the words 'ancient grudge break to new mutiny' sets up a powerful contrast to what is the violence, hatred and bloodshed to be shown in the first scene. Also Shakespeare refers to historical context by using the word 'ancient' and how an ancient grudge evolves into new mutiny, this shows that an old disagreement is now a fight which is characterized by the animosity of the citizens, this is stated by the phrase 'civil blood makes civil hands unclean' which further suggests that even the ordinary citizens who have nothing to do with the grudge of the two families are becoming murderers. Adding on, the audience become aware and realise the fact that violence will definitely occur. Due to this fact the tension begins to build right from the start. In addition to this, the prologue gives a brief summary of the play and includes an oxymoron 'death-marked love' this gives the audience a contrast because they would not expect love and death to be associated with each other which furthermore increases the conflict as they realise that the play will not be the usual happy love story but will involve death. In the beginning of act 1 scene 1 Gregory and Sampson, the servants of the house of Capulet are shown. The first manifestation of anger is shown to the

audience by the character Sampson who says 'I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw' the word 'choler' implies a sign of anger and Sampson is talking about drawing their swords and fighting which evidently suggests that a fight may be likely to transpire; this also indicates that the character of Sampson may be dictatorial in nature which also suggests that he may be dominating and likely to cause a fight. The tension builds as the audience are aware that the characters are talking about a fight. Shakespeare has deliberately done this right from the start of the play so that the tension begins to gradually build on because the audience would have not expected a play based on the theme of love to contain such violence, taunting and the talk of rape; these things would disarm the audience and make them curious as to what the fighting may result as and how love will be portrayed within all the tension and violence which makes the audience feel engaged in the growing action and tension which gradually increases. Adding on Shakespeare has used sexual remarks and talks about rape, this is shown where Mercutio says 'make it a word and a blow.' which shows the use of sexual imagery. Similarly Sampson says 'I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.' An audience of that time would have understood the fact that raping a maid would be an extremely vile act because in Shakespearian times a woman who was not a virgin would not have been allowed to get married this fact would consequently degrade and asperse the character of the maid evidently making the audience feel the pugnacity on stage and as a result the tension would rise. This fact would make the audience realise that the fight is not only between the two families but is between other people as well. This relates to the prologue to the line 'civil

blood makes civil hands unclean' which shows how civilians are fighting. Also it would relate to the line 'ancient grudge break to new mutiny' which shows how the grudge has caused the civilians who are not related to the families but are fighting due to the grudge which has now evolved into a mutiny.

Similarly in act 3 scene 1 anger and tension is built by the use of pathetic fallacy which is used by Shakespeare to create a powerful start to the scene.

Benvolio enters and says 'The day is hot' instantly the word 'hot' reminds the audience of emotions such as: anger, hatred and violence which continue to add tension and makes the audience curious to know what happens next.

Furthermore Benvolio is says 'And if we meet, we shall not scape a brawl;' here Benvolio is saying to Mercutio that if they meet the Capulets, they will not leave without a fight. This increases the tension as the audience are aware that if they meet then a fight will occur and also the tension increases as the audience think of the consequence of the fight if it does occur.

Relating back to act 1 scene 1 the audience remember the speech given by the Prince which warned the two families that if they fight again then they will be executed, this can be seen where the prince says ' If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace'. Adding on, Shakespeare uses repetition of the word 'hot' in act 3 scene 1 to emphasize the violence and anger within Benvolio, following on the words 'mad blood stirring' are used by Benvolio which implies the fact that Benvolio has lost control this is explicitly shown by the word 'mad' which relates to the word 'crazy' which shows the audience how Benvolio is provoked by seeing the Capulets. The fact that 'the mad blood is stirring' also indicates how violent emotions are running through Benvolio's blood. These first lines used by

Shakespeare to start act 3 scene 1 are very powerful in exhibiting violence and conflict through emotions and the use of pathetic fallacy which culminates in building tension. Visually this scene would be very dramatic by showing how hot the day is and the characters would be seen to act accordingly. In act 1 scene 1 Sampson is shown to insult someone in the house of Montague, this is exposed by the line 'A dog of the house of Montague moves me' the fact that someone 'moves' him conveys the idea that someone is provoking Sampson. Furthermore 'dog' was contextually a big insult in that period of time. Adding onto this, Sampson is of a low status himself being a servant but is shown to insult someone more prominent than himself which is emphasizing the hatred and violence the families have towards each other. In addition to this in act 1 scene 1 Gregory is presented as a cunning character and is also shown to be a provoker. 'To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand: therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.' in this line Gregory has cleverly turned Sampson's words back on him by saying: to move means that you are running away, to be brave you must stand which means that you are running away and are scared. In addition to this Gregory is provoking Sampson to stand and fight the Montagues which is displaying the fact that the 'grudge' is not being resolved but is evolving further into a 'mutiny' the audience have already been told this in the prologue.