

Adolescence in romeo and juliet essay sample



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Adolescence is the winding dirty path littered with obstacles of change, growth, pressure, guilt, love, regret, loss, fear, ignorance, solitude, hatred, and insecurities. This rocky trail, defined by both peaks and troughs, eventually leads to the smooth pure threshold of maturity. The period of adolescence is characterized by three different stages. The youth typically enters his first stage, the baby phase, at the age of twelve or thirteen. This phase is usually typified by an innocence, a strong dependence on parents, and a general obedience and compliance to rules. The dissenter period is a time of rebellion and vulnerability; youths become self-centered and argumentative. The youth transcends the border of adolescence after entering the leader phase, in which they develop a sense of security, confidence and capability. In Shakespeare's, *Romeo and Juliet*, love, in essence Romeo, is the guiding force which brings Juliet through these stages of adolescence to the onset of maturity. As she stabs herself with the dagger, she has become a self-assured, capable and loyal woman; ultimately she has come of age. "What is your will?" Juliet replies to her mother's call. (18, In 6)

Shakespeare first introduces us to Juliet in her most innocent and sheltered form, her baby phase. She begins the play as an immature naïve character, completely dependent on her parents. Her youthfulness is seen through her childish dealings with marriage. In response to the question of marriage she claims "it is an honor [she] not dreams of." (20, In 66) Her stance on marriage does not change even as Lady Capulet tells Juliet off Paris's love for her. As steadfast as she is on the issue of marriage and her disinterest for Paris, however, she agrees to "look to like, if looking liking move." (21, In

98) Juliet's response truly exemplifies her adolescence as she does not act independently but rather obeys her mother's wish. Her immaturity is also portrayed here with her childish concept of love. She agrees to try to love Paris though she has no affections or emotions towards him. This love that she claims she will try to develop with Paris serves as a sharp contrast later on in the play with the love she truly does experience with Romeo.

Upon meeting Romeo, Juliet's journey through adolescence commences at the stage of the dissenter. She departs from the loyal, obedient youth into a character defined by rebellion and defiance. Her interactions with Romeo and their forbidden love illustrate this transition. Romeo and Juliet's scene in Capulet's Orchard is a compelling emotional stage in the play, in which Shakespeare manipulates to foreshadow the dark scenes of the end of the play. This scene is where we are first introduced the notion of rebellion for Juliet, and through this introduction it is clear that this unruliness will not be met without grave reciprocations. From her chamber, Juliet not only disobeys her parents in her association with a Montague, during the night nonetheless, but she also secretly urges Romeo to rebel against his identity; "deny thy father and refuse thy name" (37, In 34) Juliet's defiant attitude is tested with the death of Tybalt.

As she is faced with the conflict of family versus love she protests to the Nurse, "Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?" and flouts her family relations for her relationship with Romeo. (71, In 98) Juliet's final and most revealing dissent is with Capulet and Lady Capulet as she protests her marriage to Paris. It is in this scene that Juliet dismisses all notions of obedience and openly rebels out of her absence of love for Paris, and her

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intense forbidden love for Romeo. As she swears that she “ will not marry yet” and that when she does it “ shall be Romeo” she not only challenges her parents orders but reveals her sense of independence and self-confidence that this stage of rebellion has spurred. As Juliet parts with Romeo she is overwhelmed with the truth that they may never physically be together again. Their relationship is destined to be one of emotional attachments and not physical connections. As Juliet questions the future, “ O, think’st thou that we shall ever meet again” she has entered into the last stage of adolescence, the leader phase.

Her separation from Romeo initiates this period and stimulates her final stages of maturity and growth. Romeo’s exile leaves a gaping hole in Juliet’s life as she is forced to let go of the love that has transformed her from a young girl to a mature woman. The naïve, childish Juliet of the first few acts would free herself from this ordeal in an act of suicide. Though at the end of the play Juliet does take her life, it is not an act out of desperation or fear, rather that of passion and courage; traits born through her love with Romeo. Her newly acquired self confidence and understanding deter any irrational acts and lead her to seek remedies through Friar Lawrence. Juliet’s frantic speech before she takes the mixture that Friar Lawrence has given her becomes a symbol of her maturity. On the brink of madness, Juliet’s fortitude of mind and fidelity to Romeo bring her back to sanity as she toils with the idea of “ playing with [her] forefathers’ joints” yet swallows the mixture.

Friar Lawrence dwells on the intensity and extremeness of the situations in this play; the love that Romeo and Juliet have for one another, the hatred the Capulets and the Montagues feel towards each other. Juliet’s steadfast

innocence is one extreme in this play. Though innocence is a pure, wholesome quality in Juliet's case it proved to be "loathsome in its own deliciousness" and became fatal. Perhaps had the evil (society) not corrupted the good in her innocence she may still be alive. Clearly, the evolution of Juliet's character in this Shakespearean tragedy is remarkable.

She begins as a young naïve adolescent and develops into a mature capable woman. Juliet ultimately "comes of age" as she takes the "happy dagger" and proclaims, "this is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die." (116, ln 167) This heroic act exemplifies Juliet's security and wholeness and truly reveals her as the most courageous character in the play. You have many good ideas at work here. As you and I discussed earlier, this is far, far too long and involved for what the assignment calls for. Focusing on one of your ideas, such as J's "fortitude of mind," would lead to a more appropriate response. But certainly this shows a good understanding of the play, and of J's character. Do try to make your writing more concise, less wordy.