

Romeo and juliet by william shakespeare

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The gender roles in the Shakespearean era were very stereotypical and expected, especially for wealthy families such as The montagues and capulets. However disregarding the expectations that were made, Romeo and Juliet followed no rules but their own, setting aside all the assumptions that were made for them and following their own individual paths.

Shakespeare defies most traditional gender roles in the play by allowing his characters to surpass the stereotypical expectations and allowing them to be true to themselves, Juliet does so by rebelling against her family and the conservative ways that come along with being her, meanwhile Romeo sulks around and waits for things to fall into place instead of taking matters into his own hands like a man would. Bravery, courage, and perseverance are just a few of the multiple traits that a high class young man should have. Unfortunately throughout the play Romeo demonstrates close to none of these important characteristics that are needed to make him a man. Instead Romeo spends his days crying over a nun whom he has never even talked to, and who has not even the slightest chance with. As mercutio says “ Why, is not this better now than groaning / for love? now art thou sociable, now art thou / Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as / by nature: for this drivelling love is like a great / natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his / bauble in a hole” (2.

4. 90-95). In addition to acting melodramatic, Romeo allows Juliet, a girl who of which he just met to affect his view on his opponent and allowing his best friend to die in battle. A man does not earn his bravery by allowing such minor interactions to affect their fighting abilities, especially if it can damage the family name and harm a close friend whose name is not involved in the <https://assignbuster.com/romeo-and-juliet-by-william-shakespeare-essay-samples/>

family feud. Bravery is earned by fighting for what you believe in, and only after losing Mercutio to a battle in which could have been prevented. Romeo realizes that his feelings towards Juliet has affected his masculinity for he states, " This gentleman, the prince's near ally, / My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt / In my behalf; my reputation stain'd / With Tybalt's slander,- Tybalt, that an hour / Hath been my kinsman! O sweet Juliet, / Thy beauty hath made me effeminate / And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!" (3.

1. 114-120). After this terrible battle that ends with the death of Juliet's cousin, Romeo gets exiled to Mantua, and may never lay foot in Verona again. However most would assume that being away from his love would trigger Romeo into doing something bold, and finding a way for him and Juliet to be together forever, or that he would move on with life and be grateful to be alive. However none are the case with Romeo, instead he obeys the rules and spends his days weeping and sulking over a former love that he predicts is now over.

Friar Lawrence begins to question Romeo's goals in doing so, " Hold thy desperate hand. / Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art. / Thy tears are womanish. Thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a beast. / Unseemly woman in a seeming man, / And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both! / Thou hast amazed me.

"(3. 3. 118-124). By now the pattern is simple, Romeo's solution to any of his problems is to mope around and wallow in his sorrow, assuming that a miracle will magically happen and that fate will do its part, a clear indication of his feminine characteristics. Expectations for ladies in society throughout

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this time were set quite low, their traditional roles was to do what their told and wait to be married off into another family. Although Juliet is a lady in a traditional family, she meets none of these stereotypical aspects expected by a women.

Juliet is assertive, fearless, and embraces every bit of her unique personality. When Romeo and Juliet first meet, Romeo begins flirting with Juliet and jokes around about her hand being so holy that he would be sinning her by touching it " If I profane with my unworhiest hand / This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this: / My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand / To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss."(1. 5. 104-107). However Juliet plays along showing off her boldness and responds by telling him to give himself more credit " Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, / Which mannerly devotion shows in this, / For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, / And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

" (1. 5. 107-111). The whole concept of Juliet playing along to Romeo's flirtatious remarks already detaches her from the typical woman behavior. In addition to her audacious behavior Juliet finishes the night with a kiss, breaking the Petrarchan model and any chance she has in being a traditional woman. Throughout the play Juliet always seems to be the leader in a situation and in control, a truly masculine trait.

The balcony scene is a great time where she gets to advocate her power. Later on that night when Romeo visits her, Shakespeare demonstrates that Juliet is in charge by allowing Juliet to control Romeo. During their conversation Romeo makes it obvious that without Juliets approval he will

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not move forward with his plans. He asks her how he can prove his love to her, and waits for her approval on the wedding plans, meanwhile Juliet brushes off his concerns and simply states that he must prove his love to her. During this scene Juliet also admits to Romeo that she is unlike most girls, and that when they first met she should have been more distant, the traditional reaction as she says here “ But trust me, gentleman, I’ll prove more true/ Than those that have more coying to be strange.

/ I should have been more strange, I must confess,”(2. 2. 105-107).

Disobeying a familys command is a very rare and unusual thing to do especially when its done to be able to marry the enemy. Juliet demonstrates rebellious behavior while rejecting her fathers demand to marry Paris. Such behavior is very unlady like and caused a rather large commotion when her father finds out “ How now, how now, chop-logic! What is this? / ‘ Proud,’ and ‘ I thank you,’ and ‘ I thank you not;’ / And yet ‘ not proud,’ mistress minion, you,/ Thank me no thankings, nor, proud me no prouds,/ But fettle your fine joints ‘ gainst Thursday next,/ To go with Paris to Saint Peter’s Church,/ Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.

/ Out, you green-sickness carrion! out, you baggage!/ You tallow-face!” (3. 5. 154-162). Such rebellious behavior is truly an embarrassment towards the family and quite baffling, for it is not common in most households.

Throughout the play Romeo and Juliet demonstrate very unique characteristics that help them defy the traditional roles of men and woman.

In 1500’s a woman’s role was to be subservient to their men and elders, and a man’s role was to defend their honor by leading, and remaining powerful.

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Romeo is very feminine and emotional while Juliet is rebellious and masculine. Although it is hard to grasp others agree that Juliet's masculinity is noticeable, as Mansour writes " Contrary to all conventional assumptions that see Juliet as Romeo's passive beloved, I believe Juliet demonstrates her independence and masculine mind-set through her words and deeds."

(Mansour. 206). Juliet's dominant behavior is what makes her stand out from the stereotypical woman, and her rebellious attitude allows her to follow her heart, something that most women don't have the courage to do.

Shakespeare wrote the play and primarily switched the gender roles making Romeo more feminine and Juliet the masculine one. Even their deaths represent their role distinctions. Romeo drinks a potion and dies peacefully while Juliet stabs herself, and dies with pain. In most situations the man would stab himself and die heroically, however in this play Juliet is the one who finds herself willing to undergo pain in order to be with her love, a sincerely heroic act. Virtually every event that unfolds after the death of Mercutio could have been avoided if Romeo was more masculine.

Throughout the play Shakespeare is able to defy the roles of the star crossed lovers in society's aspects by allowing Juliet to be rebellious and independent while Romeo is effeminate and emotionally unstable.

Their roles throughout the play contradicts any near resemblance to a somewhat traditional situation and leads to their early death. By following her heart Juliet represents a fierce, confident woman, instantly challenging the stereotypical roles of a woman, and by allowing his impulsive emotions

to control his way of thinking Romeo represents the traits of a woman, and which goes against everything a man would normally embody.