

# [The friar’s responsibility of the tragedy](https://assignbuster.com/the-friars-responsibility-of-the-tragedy/)

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Novelist Napoleon Hill once wrote, “ Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in another.” His opinion compels people to reconsider and reflect on the consequences and effects of their decisions. However, in Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, Friar Lawrence fails to notice the harm he is causing to the young lovers. He plays the most pivotal role in the midst of their insane love, because his great influence over them plants the seed of failure. His advice and personal motivation to end the family feud cause him to make unwise choices that result in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

As the key character who draws Romeo and Juliet together, the Friar has a pressingly influential power over them and their love story through his aid. Throughout the play, the only two characters aware of the blossoming love between Romeo and Juliet are the Friar and the Nurse. However, Juliet quickly loses her trust in the Nurse, leaving the Friar as the sole source of help and advice. From the beginning, Romeo and Juliet have been continually depending on the counsel of the Friar to help regain their security and confidence during rough times or after tragedy. For example, after Romeo is banished and Mercutio dies, Romeo hides in the Friar’s cell, and confesses that he bears the thought of suicide due to the separation from Juliet. The thoughtful Friar responds with, “ There art thou happy” (III. 3. 147). He forces Romeo to reconsider his options, convincing Romeo he is better off alive in banishment than dead under his own hand or under the decree of the Prince. In doing so, the Friar gives Romeo a rebirth of hope when all seems lost. Not only does the Friar influence Romeo’s decisions, he also gives advice to Juliet. Later, after Romeo leaves, Juliet arrives at the Friar’s cell and demands, “ If in thy wisdom thou canst give me no help./ Do thou but call my resolution wise,/ And with this knife I’ll help it presently” (IV. 1. 53-55). It is obvious by this act that Juliet is heavily influenced by the Friar because she puts her life in his hands if she cannot reach the banished Romeo. Both of the lovers seek the Friar after tragedies to regain confidence through his opinions and advice. Without the Friar’s input, major events and plot twists in the play would not be set into motion.

In addition to influencing the major characters, the Friar harbors personal motivations that are the true reasons behind his decisions. When Romeo initially talks of his love for Juliet, the confused Friar Lawrence replies, “ Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,/ So soon forsaken?” ( II. 3. 70-71 ). The Friar refuses to believe how Romeo can suddenly change his attitude of love so quickly from Rosaline to Juliet within one day. Though the Friar is reluctant, he still agrees to Romeo’s requests because he had long wanted to stop the long feud between the two families. He hopes that, “ This alliance may so happy prove/ To turn [The Capulet] household’s rancor into pure love” (II. 3. 98-99). The Friar secretly hopes that the marriage symbolizes an alliance that will end the family feud and bring the Capulets and Montagues to peace. By consenting to Romeo, the Friar is also fulfilling his own personal desires because the love affair presented him with the perfect opportunity. However, once Romeo is banished , the Friar realizes the impossibility of uniting the two families. From then on he is motivated to help the actual love affair between Romeo and Juliet because he eventually sees that they do hold a strong, at times idolatrous love for each other. He shows his commitment when he devises a clever plan for Juliet to foil her family, the Capulets, into thinking that she is dead, with a potion that will give her “ no warmth, no breath,” and “ no pulse” ( IV. 1. 99-100). Throughout the play, the Friar’s motives play a definite role in determining the sequence of events by controlling his advice over Romeo and Juliet.

Combined with his influence and motives, the Friar’s terrible decisions ultimately render him responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. The first crucial dialogue in this respect occurs when the Friar says to Romeo, “ But come, young waverer, come, go with me./ In one respect I’ll thy assistant be” (II. 3. 96-97). In agreeing to marry Romeo and Juliet, the Friar does so out of his own will, rather than consenting to Romeo’s. Therefore he is responsible for the marriage’s outcomes for basing the decision on selfish reasons; the requester himself may be relatively innocent. The Friar’s decision to marry the lovers leads to the deaths of Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin, and also Mercutio, Romeo’s friend. Had Romeo not been married, the events would have occurred differently, because he would not have the same “ love” for Tybalt becoming his cousin (III. 1. 63). From here forward, the choices of the Friar lead to the downfall from the height of the story to the gloomy tragedy. Events seem to still be occurring in the lovers’ favor when the Prince banishes Romeo instead of enforcing the death sentence, but the Friar makes a huge pitfall when he devises a plan for Juliet to escape in Act IV. He says he does “ spy a kind of hope,” but he never truly sees the plan’s potential disaster under the pressure of Juliet threatening to commit suicide. (IV. 1. 69). He could have talked Juliet out of such a risky trick, but instead he chooses to help her without much consideration. Since Juliet trusted him with her life, he obviously should have been more careful in considering consequences. Predictably, his plan to deceive the Capulet House fails utterly as miscommunication runs riot. Though the deaths of Romeo and Juliet seem fated to be, the reason behind their demise is actually the unwise decision made by Friar Lawrence.

Although the Friar is presented in a positive manner throughout the play, he is the character responsible for the chaos and tragedy that occurs. While he has many different chances to tackle the problem Romeo and Juliet present to him, he still chooses the path of giving them a false hope in their unsanctioned love. In giving advice powered by his own selfish motivations, he ultimately plants the insidious seed that grows without control and takes over the lives of the lovers. In his play, Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare delivers the message of how easily listening to advice and accepting help can turn into disaster when one’s own emotional involvement and goals block sight of the consequences.