

West side story and romeo and juliet

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West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet both revolve around two rival groups and/or gangs. The film Romeo and Juliet (1968) is about two rival families, the Montagues and the Capulets, whose family feuds have gone so far back in their history that they forget the fuel behind their disputes. In West Side Story, the film involves two rival gangs: The Jets, a gang of Caucasian teenagers, and the Sharks, a gang of Puerto Rican immigrants.

Their feud begins when the Sharks try to invade the Jets' territory in Manhattan, New York. In both storylines, a boy and a girl of opposing groups fall in love with each other despite the groups differences; But in return, their love results in their death. Between the two films, a direct comparison between the characters can be clearly observed. Tony, from West Side Story, matches Romeo's character, while Maria matches the character of Juliet.

Bernardo can be portrayed as Tybalt with his temper and need to fight, while Riff is compared to Mercutio's personality similar to that of a jester. From West Side Story, Anita can be seen as the nurse, watching over Maria/Juliet, and Chino is in direct comparison of Paris; They are supposed to marry the key girl. Maria is set up to marry Chino, exactly like Juliet is supposed to marry Paris. In the films, the meeting of the lovers ultimately starts with a dance in which both Romeo/Tony are convinced by Mercutio/Riff to come, but for different reasons. Mercutio wants Romeo to go and forget about Rosaline by seeing the other women, while Riff needs Tony to go to help with the rivalry of the Sharks. Tony and Maria meet and experience "love at first sight" just like Romeo and Juliet at the dance. They dance together and share a kiss before they are separated and realize that they are from rival families. In both cases, a balcony scene is present. In West Side Story, Tony

actually climbs the balcony and makes physical contact with Maria. Those are the major similarities between West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet.

In addition to the plot structures, similar themes are present in West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet. The idea that blinded love can lead to rash decisions is highly present in both storylines. It is present in Romeo and Juliet in a sense that within simply meeting each other, Romeo and Juliet believe they fell in love with one another. Romeo proclaims, “ Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night,” forgetting all about Rosaline: the very woman he claims to have loved no less than five minutes prior. Juliet tells the nurse, “ Go ask his name. If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding bed,” showing that she already wants to be married. Because of their love for each other, Romeo and Juliet think they cannot live without one another. Romeo and Juliet both end up killing themselves because they believe that they, themselves, cannot live without each other. Parallelism within the theme of Romeo and Juliet is present in West Side Story. Tony and Maria kiss each and cannot bear to be without the other immediately preceding having just met. Tony, needing to see her again, goes to her balcony and they end up confessing their love for one another. Maria tells Tony to meet her at the bridal shop where she works the next day.

During this time, they practically have their unofficial wedding in that very shop. Tony then goes to find Chino after believing Maria is dead but at the last second, he and Maria find each other and go in for a loving embrace; However, Chino shoots Tony in that very moment. Maria does not end up

killing herself but does grieve over Tony's death and eventually moves on. The demonstration of the thought that blind love can lead to rash decisions is present in both Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story.

On the contrary, West Side Story and Romeo and Juliet have several differences between the two. For example, the actual rivalry is between opposing gangs in West Side Story, not families. The Montagues and Capulets of Romeo and Juliet have been fighting for so many generations that it becomes natural for them to want to fight each other.

They have no purpose behind their feud besides family hate. In West Side Story, the feud begins when the Sharks begin to intrude in the Jets' turf. Another big difference between the two films is the fight scenes. In Romeo and Juliet, Romeo acts impulsive when Tybalt kills Mercutio and proceeds to kill Tybalt right after. In West Side Story, Tony doesn't kill Bernardo after Bernardo stabs Riff with his knife. Tony simply impales Bernardo with the knife and runs off. One of the most critical pieces to the storyline between the two films is that Romeo gets banished, whereas in West Side Story, Tony gets no immediate repercussions for his actions. He is not banished and does not go to jail, ultimately nothing happened to Tony. Without any harsh punishment, Maria does not become quite as depressed and expresses a will to live.

Another significant difference is in the death scenes in each film. In Romeo and Juliet, Romeo kills himself because he believes Juliet is dead, and Juliet also commits suicide with Romeo's dagger because she sees that Romeo is dead. In West Side Story, Tony does not commit suicide because, instead, he

is shot by Chino right before embracing Maria. Since he is shot he does end up dying, yet this does not lead Maria to take her own life. Maria ends up forgiving the two gangs and moving on with her life. That is ultimately the biggest difference between the two films. In addition, Paris also dies along with Romeo and Juliet. In West Side Story, Chino is the one who kills Tony, yet he himself does not die.

As a result, the movies' twists result in a more interested audience for West Side Story due to the contemporary setting as oppose to Romeo and Juliet. It uses an abundance of modern day words and phrases that people can understand better and faster than Shakespeare's English. Also, modern-choreographed dances shown in West Side Story are more common than big formal balls as shown in Romeo and Juliet. The dancing and singing is very entertaining to watch, and it is a good tactic for keeping the audience's attention throughout the film. The fights throughout the dances are humorous and keep the audience's attention rather well. West Side Story is meant to grasp the attention of young adults the most. All the characters are teenagers in the musical. Being a teenager is a big part of one's life; One can experience love, danger, and have many opportunities to make huge choices. The characters of West Side Story encounter all those experiences, which helps in relating to teenagers the most.