

# Romeo + juliet film critique essay



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BUSTER**

The Luhrmann version of Romeo and Juliet starts off zooming into a tv very slowly, which has a news anchor narrating the famous prologue of Shakespeare's world renowned tragedy, Romeo and Juliet. Suddenly, the screen cuts to an intense and out of control scene of gunfire on Verona Beach from all angles, a gang fight involving members of both the Montagues and Capulets. It is here in the first scene that Luhrmann truly successfully captures the viewer's attention by truthfully portraying the two families' raging hatred for the other.

In Peter Travers' Rolling Stone review of Romeo + Juliet, he says, " Shot in Mexico in a style that might be called retrofuturistic, since it encompasses castles and armor, as well as bulletproof vests and boom boxes, the film reworks Shakespeare in a frenzy of jump cuts that makes most rock videos look like MTV on Midol. " I agree. Leonardo DiCaprio, 21 at the time of filming, and Claire Danes, 17 then, give convincing portrayals of the star-crossed lovers, who are just 16 and 13 in the original play. Although the two do get naked in the film, it is not nearly as bad as Zeffirelli's version of the original back in 1969. As Travers says, " Zeffirelli showcased enough codpieces and cleavage to have censors crying kiddie porn.

" Zeffirelli's version was a smash, but anyone who has watched it can agree that it's a little over the top with all that skin showing on camera.

Elizabethan England when the Bard was still alive. Both Zeffirelli and Luhrmann cut the text in the film and even though Travers says, " His [Luhrmann] point is not to distract you from the words, as Zeffirelli did, but to lead you to them. " I don't really think Zeffirelli tried to distract the viewers from the words. Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey who portrayed

the young couple in the 1969 version did well as a desperate couple who could be killed for their love affair.

Now, for the most heart wrenching part of any Romeo and Juliet movie or adaptation of any kind- the suicide scene. Zeffirelli portrays it exactly as Shakespeare tells of in the original play. The tomb, the drink of poison, and having Juliet wake up after Romeo falls dead, continuing to stab herself with Romeo's dagger that he had left behind before killing himself. This scene is poignant and intense.

It really has the potential to bring tears to the viewer's eyes. Luhrmann on the other hand, took a little liberty with the suicide scene. He has 2, 000 lit candles in the background of the church room that Juliet is lying " dead" in. As Romeo sits on her supposed deathbed, he cries and finally decides to drink the poison he bought from a fairly sketchy apothecary, but before he can manage to put it to his lips, Juliet's eyes flutter open. At this point, the audience is screaming for Juliet to say something, for Romeo to look at Juliet, anything, but they don't. Romeo swallows the poison and THEN looks at Juliet, realizing he's made a horrible mistake.

After falling dead, Juliet loses all will to live and holds a semiautomatic to her head, shooting herself. At this point, the audience is screaming or crying or maybe both. It's a powerful scene nevertheless. Comparatively, both versions, Luhrmann and Zefferilli had their pros and cons, and were wonderful adaptations of the famous Romeo and Juliet.