

# [Fate in romeo and juliet](https://assignbuster.com/fate-in-romeo-and-juliet/)

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The concept of fate functions as a central theme in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. In the opening prologue of the play, the Chorus informs the audience that Romeo and Juliet are “ Star ñ cross’d Lovers” (Prologue l. 6). In other words, the Chorus states that Romeo and Juliet are governed by fate, a force often linked to the movements of the stars. Fate manifests itself in all the events surrounding the young lovers: the ancient and inexplicable feud between their families, the catastrophic series of mishaps which ruin Friar Lawrence’s plans, and the tragic timing of Romeo’s suicide and Juliet’s awakening. The structure of the play itself rests upon the fate from which the two lovers cannot escape. The play opens with a brawl which erupts between servants of the Montague and Capulet families. This initial quarrel illustrates that the “ ancient Grudge” between the two families runs so deep that it extends to the servants (Prologue l. 3). Upon their first encounter, Romeo and Juliet remain ignorant to the fact that they are the children of feuding families. Actually, the lovers meet by coincidence. Romeo agrees to attend the Capulet ball because he hopes to see Rosaline, and he consistently claims that no other woman can impress him. On the other hand, Juliet attends the ball to meet Count Paris and to see if she can love him. Before entering the ball, Romeo experiences a sense of dread. He declares, “ my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars / Shall bitterly begin his fearful Date / With this Night’s Revels, and expire the Term / Of a despised Life clos’d in my Breast / By some vile Forfeit of untimely Death” (I, iv, ll. 106-110). During the evening, Romeo encounters Juliet, and the two become enamored with each other. Upon Romeo’s departure, Juliet murmurs to herself, “ If he be married, / My Grave is like to be my Wedding Bed” (I, iv, ll. 249-250). Although Romeo is unmarried, Juliet is unaware of the fact that he is a Montague. For Juliet, loving a Montague may be a more serious crime than loving a married man. As the play continues, the omens of the two lovers prove disastrously true. The morning following the ball, Romeo visits Friar Lawrence to tell of his engagement to Juliet and to ask for the friar’s advice. The friar is at first skeptical of Romeo’s infatuation with Juliet, but then he realizes that the love between Romeo and Juliet presents an opportunity to end the quarrel between the two families (II, ii, ll. 91-92). He agrees to secretly marry them that afternoon. The well-intentioned friar does not realize that by agreeing to assist the young lovers, he has sealed their fate. However, during the previous evening, Tybalt recognized the voice of Romeo, a Montague, and became enraged. Although Lord Capulet refused to allow bloodshed that night, Tybalt swore that he would have revenge for the insult. He hissed, “ I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall, / Now seeming Sweet, convert to bitt’rest Gall” (I, iv, ll. 206-207). Tybalt’s words soon prove true. When Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel, Romeo refuses because Tybalt is now his cousin. Mercutio is embarrassed by his friend’s cowardice and battles with Tybalt. Romeo tries to intervene in their battle, and his intervention provides Tybalt an opportunity to stab Mercutio. Infuriated by Mercutio’s death, Romeo abandons his passive temperament and declares, “ Away to Heaven, respective Lenity, / And Fire end Fury be my Conduct now” (III, i, ll. 130-131). Ultimately, Tybalt is slain at Romeo’s hand. After murdering his cousin, Romeo cries, “ O I am Fortune’s Fool” (III, i, l. 143). Indeed, Romeo is fortune’s fool, for if he had controlled his fiery temper and acted reasonably, he would not have jeopardized his chance for happiness with Juliet. The death of Tybalt at Romeo’s hand further complicates the situation between the two lovers. Romeo is exiled to Mantua, and Juliet is devastated because her husband is banished. However, Lord and Lady Capulet believe that their daughter’s sorrow is for her cousin’s death. To end Juliet’s woe, they arrange for her to be married to Paris immediately. When Friar Lawrence hears of these plans, he gives Juliet a potion which will give her the appearance of death. This way, she will avoid adultery and will awaken two days later to be united with her lover in Mantua. Friar Lawrence writes a letter which explains the situation to Romeo. The letter is then given to Friar John, another Franciscan, to deliver to Romeo. However, Friar John is quarantined along his way to Mantua, so Romeo never receives his letter. Instead, Romeo is informed that his wife is dead. This horrible mishap propels Romeo to take his own life. Tragedy continues to unfold when Romeo firmly decides to commit suicide. He acts with a decisiveness and a swiftness which are uncharacteristic of him. With unfaltering resolution, Romeo purchases a dram of poison and arrives at the Capulet tomb. There, he slays Paris, and claims that both of their fates were “ writÖin sowre Misfortune’s Book” (V, iii, l. 83). In Juliet’s tomb, Romeo states that “ here / Will I set up my Everlasting Rest / And shake the Yoke of inauspicious Stars” (V, iii, ll. 111-113). Romeo then swallows the poison and dies next to his beloved. Moments later, Juliet awakens to discover that her husband is dead, and furthermore, his lips are still warm. Distraught, she stabs herself through the heart. Had Romeo not acted with such sudden certainty, he would have lived to watch his wife awaken. However, fate had determined that neither of the lovers would obtain happiness during their lifetime. Both Romeo and Juliet are controlled by an unalterable set of tragic events. In the opening prologue of Romeo and Juliet, the Chorus warns the audience that the lovers’ brief romance ends with tragedy. The age-old feud between their two families prevents Romeo and Juliet from announcing their love publicly. Friar Lawrence agrees to marry them secretly, for he feels that their marriage would unite the quarreling families. However, the death of Romeo and Juliet is what ultimately ends the grudge. From this point, a series of tragic mishaps prevents the lovers from experiencing happiness. The death of Tybalt, the exile of Romeo, and the unread letter propel the tragic plot forward. Fate, from the beginning, had resolved that the story of Romeo and Juliet would culminate in heartbreak. Works CitedShakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. Ed. John F. Andrews. London: Doubleday, c. 1989.