

# The contrast of love and violence in romeo and juliet

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Throughout the play, *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, love, and violence have come in contact with each other multiple times. Through the few scenes where these two meet, Shakespeare shows his audience, or readers, that the differences may not be so far apart. The contrast introduces the audience to the theory that love can be violent, and in the midst of violence, there can be love.

The juxtaposition of the two elements helps move along the thematic tension of the two houses, the Capulets and the Montagues. The first time that Romeo and Juliet meet, the contradiction begins. It sets the stage for the rest of the comparisons and eventually foreshadows the two lover's end. Shakespeare does a good job of introducing the juxtaposition early on.

In act, I, scene v, Romeo says something flattering about Juliet, and Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, overhears him and know right away that he is a Montague. Tybalt then wants to kill him on sight and asks for his sword. But love conquers hate, and Lord Capulet says that Romeo is a dignified man known around Verona for his virtue and that he would not start a fight so it would be disgraceful if Tybalt started a fight with him. The first time that Romeo sees Juliet, he is blown away by her beauty and completely forgets about Rosaline. He says, " Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear, beauty to rich for use, for earth too dear. So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows as yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.... Did my heart love till now? Foreswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night." (I, v, 42-50) This is the love half of the dynamic duo.

The hate comes from Tybalt when he says, " This, by his voice, should be a Montague. Fetch me my rapier, boy. What, dares the slave come hither, covered with an antic face, to fleer and scorn at our solemnity? Now, by the stock and honor of my kin, to strike him dead I hold it not a sin." (I, v, 51-57)

From these two quotes, the audience is exposed to the notion of love vs. violence, or love vs. hate. In Shakespeare's contrast, love does not always have to be for one's romantic partner. It can be for a friend or relative, too. In act III, scene i, the audience sees the love for a friend guide Romeo to partake in violent actions. Romeo and Juliet have just been married, and Romeo is with Benvolio and Mercutio when they run into Tybalt, Petruchio, and other Capulets. Mercutio and Tybalt end up in a sword fight, and Romeo tries to break up the fight for the love of his new cousin in law and his friend. But Tybalt ends up killing Mercutio. Romeo is determined not to get in a fight with Tybalt, his new cousin in law.

He sees his love for Juliet spread to her family, even if it is not a reciprocated feeling. Romeo hints to Tybalt that he married his sister, but very subtly. He says, " Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee doth much excuse the appertaining rage to such a greeting." (III, i, 58-60) Romeo also says, " I disagree. I've never done you harm. I love you more than you can understand until you know the reason why I love you." (III, i, 64-66) Romeo lets his love for Tybalt overweigh his anger from the things that Tybalt said to him. Romeo's first defense is love and trying to talk things out. But when Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo snaps and lets love guide his anger. When Tybalt returns to the scene of the crime, Romeo says, " Alive in triumph-and

Mercutio slain! Away to heaven, respective lenity, and fire-eyed fury be my conduct now. Now, Tybalt, take the 'villain' back again that late thou gavest me, for Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads, staying for thine to keep him company. Either thou or I, or both, must go with him." (III, i, 118-125) Translated to a more modern dialect of English, Romeo says, Tybalt is alive and victorious, while Mercutio is dead? Enough with mercy. It's time for rage to guide my actions. Now, Tybalt, go ahead and call me a villain like you did before.

But know that Mercutio's soul is floating above our heads. He's waiting for you die and keep him company up in the heavens. You, or I, or perhaps both, must accompany him. Romeo and Tybalt proceed to fight, and true to his words, Romeo kills Tybalt. In the end, Romeo and Juliet's love for each other lead to their death. Juliet has been promised to Paris, but she is already in love with Romeo, so she fakes her death. Romeo thinks that she is dead so he buys a poison that he plans to kill himself with, but first, he goes to Verona. While visiting Juliet's tomb, Romeo says, "Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death, gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth..." (V, iii, 45-46) Romeo calls the tomb a horrible mouth of death and says that it has eaten up the dearest creature on Earth, which would be Juliet. His love for his wife has led him here so that he can be with her in his final moments.

He could not bear to live without her, so violent ideas came into his mind. When he encounters Paris, those ideas transfer to actions. Romeo knows that he is on a short fuse already when Paris comes along, so he warns him, "...tempt not a desperate man...put not another sin upon my head by urging

me to fury. O, be gone!" (V, iii, 59-63) He tells Paris not to anger a desperate man, and that he should leave before he tempts Romeo to commit another crime. But Paris does not heed his advice and tempts him. The two fight and Paris ends up dead. But Romeo recognizes his actions and quickly dispels the anger. He goes into the tomb to do what he came there to do. When he sees Juliet, he says, " A lantern...for here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes this vault a feasting presence full of light." His love for his wife has replaced the anger that persuaded him to kill Paris just a few moments ago.

He says that she is still beautiful, even in death, and that her beauty makes the tomb shine with light. It was not a coincidence that when Romeo first saw Juliet, he said that she teaches torches how to shine bright because she was so beautiful that she outshone them. From their first breath shared, to their last, Juliet will always be the light in Romeo's life. As the audience knows, Romeo and Juliet kill themselves in the end. Their love for each other was so strong that they couldn't be without the other. When Juliet found Romeo dead, she killed herself with his dagger. Ultimately, it was their decisions that lead to their downfall. Throughout the play Romeo and Juliet, the audience becomes familiar with the theory that love can be violent, and in the midst of violence, there can be love. In moments of violence, Romeo used his love to fuel his anger. Like when he killed Tybalt, his love for his friend Mercutio could be found in the midst of the violence. And just like the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, love can lead to violence. A rose has thorns, after all.