

Romeo and juliet

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



For those not familiar with this storyline, Romeo + Juliet is just your average boy-meets-girl, boy-and-girl-fall-hopelessly-in-love, boy-kills-girls-cousin, girl-feigns-death, boy-and-girl-commit-suicide plot. Not one to watch with a box of chocolates and a boyfriend bonfire, but a box of tissues may well be needed. Director Baz Luhrmann chooses to set this epic in Mexico, a perfect modern backdrop for the violent gangland culture Shakespeare's script conveys in a modern context.

The two families-the Capulets and the Montagues- are beautifully contrasted; the lighthearted Montagues in open Hawaiian shirts, against the tight black clad Capulet boys sporting many gold accessories. These two groups of arch nemeses are, however, united by their mutual habit of openly wearing guns with such flair and style they could easily pass as a fashion accessory, rather than an accessory to murder. In the prologue the role traditionally played by the chorus is adopted by a real life U. S anchorwoman.

The prologue is so turned into a news bulletin. You are literally drawn in to the film as the shot slowly zooms in on the television showing the newsreader, before the shot hurtles down a metropolitan street, dragging the audience, with trailing stomachs, behind it. Luhrmann captivates his audience from the outset with a visually stunning repeat of his prologue, utilising imagery from the whole film and conveying the entire storyline in under a minute. Contrary to what you may think, this in fact draws the viewer into the film.

The imagery used in the prologue directly links to and supports the words in the scripted opening, and translates them into the modern context. " Two

houses, both alike in dignity" is represented by two giant skyscrapers either side of a road, one bearing a huge sign saying Capulet, the other Montague. As Romeo, Dicaprio shows the full depth of his acting ability. From lovelorn-" Did my heart love 'til now? " to murderous " Either thou or I or both must go with him" and back down again through all the levels of shock, anxiety, and of course suicidal.

Clare Danes gives a beautiful portrayal of young innocent Juliet. Her facial expressions are convincing and manage to wordlessly express every feeling perfectly. Her lines are also delivered with huge compassion and emotion. Danes along with Dicaprio shows a huge variety in her performance, keeping a wide audience interested in a script labelled by many as " boring". This is not the first time modern directors have messed around with the " star cross'd lovers". Most notably Bernstein's all singing all dancing West Side Story, but also China Girls and-more loosely- Romeo Must Die.

However, this is the first modern adaptation to stick with Shakespeare's script. Lehrmann has obviously had to make cuts in the text for the sake of the length of the film, but the dialogue he leaves in is fantastically effective. This spunked up version a timeless classic engrosses a viewer of any age from the outset, and keeps its grip almost complete through to hugely moving finale. Even staunch traditionalists must see that dragging this dusty play kicking and screaming in to a twentieth century riddled with guns, drugs, and rock n roll has revived it in a way no amount of Lawrence Olivier ever could.