

The two most prominent themes in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* are the juxtaposing themes of love and hate. *Romeo and Juliet* was an original play by Shakespeare set in 16th Century Verona. Luhrmann has cleverly transformed this play from the renaissance period to the modern day, showing the contrast between Verona in the two eras. Themes of love and hate through use of filmic techniques such as camera angles, montages and costume have been employed throughout the film.

The prologue opens the film and is immediately confronting to the audience. It depicts a presenter who reads the prologue as if it were a news report. The words are then repeated through a montage of urban violence. In this way, Luhrmann has recontextualised the film from a strongly auditory to a visual presentation, fit for a modern audience contrasting to that of 16th Century Shakespeare. This scene introduces hate in an exciting way which will stimulate the audience including fire which is used repeatedly as a pathetic fallacy associated with this theme.

Love is introduced much later in the film, when Romeo meets Juliet at the Capulet's party. 'Love at first sight' is there presented in a fully legitimate way. As love develops through the film it endeavours to conquer the barriers of hate, however is unsuccessful. Although love would traditionally be juxtaposed to tragedy the two themes find themselves side by side for the duration of the film, finally ending with the greatest tragedy of all, the death of four young people including Romeo and Juliet. Death is the most tragic human experience and some would say it was cruel for Shakespeare to associate love and hate with each other so strongly.

The two themes are then fused at the climax of the film, when Friar Lawrence agrees to unite the couple. A close up of his eyes is presented, to show cognitive function, followed by a repeat of the montage from the prologue; representative of hate, which overlaps with a montage representative of love. Will love end the feud? Will hate conquer all? Will both families find a happy medium? Luhrmann does, as did Shakespeare, leave these questions unanswered by the play itself so that, perhaps, the audience can answer them for themselves.

As humans, possibly the two most relatable emotions to us are love and hate. Love creates and hate destroys. In Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* these are both demonstrated extensively through the use of filmic techniques such as dialogue, costuming and camera angles. These themes appeal to us as they are highly emotive and the audience can relate them to personal experiences. The question you must now answer is 'how does the story end?'