

- → 'my life is my foe's debt' the feud is created by the parents, cause of all their problems
- Romeo + Juliet get married so their allegiance shifts
- 'The reason I have to love thee' → is this love?
- Marriage supersedes birth

Romeo and Juliet's love is, arguably, not true and pure like the play claims.

'The course of true love never did run smooth'

- A Midsummer Night's Dream

Throughout the play, Shakespeare explores the greatness of romantic love through the relationship between his protagonists, Romeo and Juliet. In the prologue of the play, Shakespeare tells the audience that the performance is not just one of tragic passion, but of tender, 'death-marked love'. The best display of this is in Romeo's unconventional submission to Juliet in the patriarchal world that they live, shown in both the physical raising of Juliet above Romeo on a balcony, and in Romeo's declaration that Juliet 'doth teach the torches to burn bright', giving her knowledge and authority. Later, he expands on this line, describing Juliet as 'the sun' (despite the fact that women are usually associated with the moon, due to their monthly cycles), not only admiring her radiant beauty, but showing that everything he does revolves around her. She also feels that he is everything to her, describing Romeo as her 'love, lord, ay husband, friend', and does not weep in Act 3 Scene 5 for her 'cousin's death' - as her mother believes - but for Romeo 'the villain which slaughtered him'. Shakespeare gives the audience signs to the extent of Romeo's devotion to Juliet (foreshadowing his death for her at the end of the play) when he would rather stay with Juliet in the morning after he has been exiled, than he would 'be gone and live'; he says 'farewell' and 'adieu' to Juliet five times before leaving her, so unwilling is he to go. Shakespeare gives further proof of the deepness of their love lies in Romeo's character development across the play, alluding to the phrase 'simplex sigillum veri'. From the meaningless drivel of oxymorons ('O heavy lightness, serious vanity') that he initially utters when infatuated with Rosaline, Romeo's speech transforms to simple poetry about Juliet; and excellent example of which, is when he exclaims: 'it is my lady, O it is my love'. The alliteration here marries these two words together, making it pellucid that Romeo's 'love' lies with this 'lady'. The great force of this adoration also causes transformations in the lovers' characters, transforming Juliet from an 'impatient child' who utters only four out of a hundred lines in Act 1 Scene 3, to a commanding wife, and Romeo from a 'sick man in sadness' to one who 'leaps orchard walls' with 'love's light wings'.

Despite it perhaps being not as pure, from the start of the play Shakespeare presents familial love as a force that is far more common, but still strong enough to provoke the characters to overcome social constructs.

- What's in a name?

- Violence against Juliet and abandonment

In Act 1 Scene 2 Capulet is shown to dispel the common ideas of the patriarchy as he declares that his 'will to [Juliet's] consent is but a part'. Indeed, in the original production Juliet would have been played by a man, making this submission highly controversial. Even the Prince is swayed by the power of familial love, as in Act 3 Scene 3 - as he laments over his relative's 'dear blood' - he acknowledges that 'mercy but murders' (the alliteration serving to emphasise the passion with which he delivers this line) as he, despite the consequences, perhaps unjustly spares Romeo's life. While the deepness of this love can be a great force for good, Shakespeare also tells of how it can wreak havoc and cause violence from the very start of the play. The subtle use of a sonnet in the prologue - as, of course, this structure is traditionally associated with love as well as debate - tied with the rich conflicting language ('grudge', 'strife', 'two foes') communicates to the audience that the nature of familial love in this play will be far from unifying. Confirmation of this comes in the initial scene where Shakespeare tells how the 'parents' rage', despite simply sprouting from an 'airy word', is enough to induce even the servants of the 'two households' to engage in 'fatal brawls' and break the laws set out to them by Prince ('throw your mistempered weapons to the ground'), so deep are their feelings of loyalty. By Act 1 Scene 5 it is made pellucid that familial love is the direct cause of this violence - 'by the stock and honour of my kin/ I to strike him dead' - as Larkin's observation. However, the trueness of this love is called into question when Romeo unites to his parents 'great enemy' as he refuses to fight the 'good Capulet' Tybalt after wedding Juliet. Romeo's use of the imperative when he declares: 'I have to love thee' suggests that perhaps this familial loyalty has more to do with duty than love.

Lust (a form of sexual abuse/rape)

In the face of all these different versions of love, Shakespeare also puts it to the Tudor audience that lust is perhaps the more prevalent emotion in our society.

'women being the weaker vessel are ever thrust to the wall'

→ vessels: objectifies them, vessels are always considered female and always have male captains- women need to be controlled and guided

→ violent imagery

→ first scene- first view of love, how would they survive? Prologue = great love story

Love-sick for Rosaline

→ oxymorons, speaking nonsensical, speaking of beauty

'seek happy nights to happy days'

→ sexual humour shows how lust is normalised and is more prevalent in society than true love

'thou wilt fall backwards'