

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## PART ONE

### SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE - THEN AND NOW

#### Act One, Scene One

Enter Sampson and Gregory, with swords and bucklers, of the house of Capulet.

The first instructions given in *ROMEO AND JULIET* to the actors are very brief: "Two actors enter". But what do they enter? A house? A street? A tavern? Is it important for us to know?

For Shakespeare's audience it would not have been important. From what the Chorus has already said they would know that the play was set in Verona and so they would have an idea of the general location of the play. The two actors would have entered onto a stage. And that was all. No backdrops, no complicated scenery. Just a stage, probably bare. It is perhaps difficult for us to understand that audiences would accept this because we are so used to seeing television and film where directors try to make settings as realistic as possible. Our visual expectations when we go to see a play are very different from those of audiences 400 years ago.

#### RESEARCH TASK

Find a drawing of the original Globe Theatre. How is it different from a modern theatre?

What sort of costumes did the actors in Shakespeare's time use when they were performing?

What sorts of people used to go to the theatre in Shakespeare's time?

Today, we expect 'realistic' performances of Shakespeare's plays - if it says in the text that *ROMEO AND JULIET* takes place in Verona, then what do we expect? Probably Italian style town settings and carefully designed house interiors. We will expect different costumes which are appropriate to the period of the play. This becomes even more obvious if we take a play such as *JULIUS CAESAR*. Set in ancient Rome, we would expect the actors to be dressed in togas, lots of columns on the set, strange haircuts. We would expect what we look at to fit in with the ideas that we have about ancient Rome.

Because Shakespeare and the other dramatists of his time did not have to worry about realistic settings, it was possible to change the scene as often as desired.

#### TASK

Look through *ROMEO AND JULIET*. Working in small groups, and dividing the play between your class, write down, scene by scene, where you think the action is taking place. It is not always easy to do this but you should be given some clues from the text. When you have done this, list how many different locations you think there are in *ROMEO AND JULIET*.

We think you will find that there are a large number. As we have said, this did not present any problem for Shakespeare. He would suggest, through words, where the action was taking place. However, for the modern theatre producer or for the film director, there are problems aplenty! If the director wanted to depict each location in a way that would meet the audience's prior expectations, a great deal of expensive research, design and construction work would have to be done.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

This is not to say that Shakespeare's audience were not given any clues about the nature of the characters they were seeing on the stage. One critic has described the sorts of costumes that were worn by certain types of characters:

“Characters of high degree wore robes with heraldic or ecclesiastical emblems...doctors’ gowns were of scarlet, lawyers’ gowns of black, rustics and clowns wore ‘startups’ (boots that reached to mid calf), fools wore long coats of motley woven of coarse wool and part coloured green and yellow...virgins wore white...shepherds wore white coats and carried staff and bottle, sailors wore canvas suits, servants bluecoats or slops.”



Romeo & Juliet, dir Cukor, 1936

Thus, a character could be identified by the type of clothing they wore. We still do this today. We judge characters by the costume that they wear. At times this can be very basic - the ‘goodie’ in a western wears white, the ‘baddie’ black. At other times it can be more complex.

## TASK

Think of a number of different types of film or television programme that you watch. How is costume used to tell us what type of character we are looking at?

Using the examples given in the quotation above, how would you dress some of the characters in ROMEO AND JULIET so that a Shakespearean audience would instantly understand what type of character they were? How will you identify the hero/heroine or suggest a comic character? What about suggesting the age of a character, or whether they are servant or the head of a household? Choose four characters and describe how you would costume them.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

No doubt you are beginning to realise that when a film maker wishes to make a filmed version of ROMEO AND JULIET, he or she will face many challenges. The first challenge is that most people are familiar with the story, and may already have certain expectations.

- In what period would we expect the story to take place?
- What are our expectations concerning settings, music, costumes and, more generally, the overall look and feel of the play?
- What might our expectations be concerning the characters? (This might well affect the way in which the director casts the film: i.e. who is chosen to play the various roles.)



Romeo & Juliet, dir Cukor, 1936

As you are studying ROMEO AND JULIET you will probably have read all or at least some of the play. So, you will already have some ideas about what you would expect to see, either on the stage or in a film.

## DESIGN TASK

How would you re-create the location of the play?

What would the scenery look like in Verona? What would the buildings look like? How would the houses be furnished? If one of the scenes that you identified earlier was a church, then what did church interiors look like in those days? What sort of building materials, fabrics and paints were used 400 years ago?

Using your ideas, collect together a design portfolio which illustrates the 'look' that you would create for a film version or stage production of ROMEO AND JULIET.

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

## PART TWO

## ADAPTING FOR THE CINEMA

“This tragedy of ROMEO AND JULIET was made some time after into a tragi-comedy by Mr. Howard Jones, he preserving Romeo and Juliet alive; so that when the tragedy was revived again it was played alternately, tragically one day and tragi-comical another, for several days together. “

John Downes, 1708

Whenever a Shakespeare play is adapted for the cinema, there are always those who will complain that a certain scene has been missed out, that certain characters are not ‘as they should be’. It is rare that film makers take the liberty which Mr. Howard Jones did in the seventeenth century by completely rewriting the end of ROMEO AND JULIET in order to give it a happy ending! But since they are adapting the play for film - and because there are certain things that they can and cannot do on film - then changes do occur. It is also worth remembering that, like any stage production, a film is one person’s interpretation of the play. It is a possible re-telling of the story.

Shakespeare wrote his plays to be acted. They should therefore be viewed as scripts for actors, not necessarily as texts to be studied. Ever since they were written, they have been adapted, altered and rewritten by other people.

When ROMEO AND JULIET first appeared there were probably those who knew the original text on which it was based - Brooke’s ROMEOUS AND JULIET. Even this text was based on an earlier novel by an Italian, Bando. Imagine some of the criticism that Shakespeare might have received: “SHAKESPEARE RUINS BEAUTIFUL POEM”, “SHAKESPEARE ‘S ROMEO AND JULIET NOT A PATCH ON THE ORIGINAL”.

Here is the opening of Brooke’s poem\*, where he sets out the story that he is going to tell:

**THE ARGUMENT**

Love has inflamed two by sudden sight.  
 And both do grant the thing that both desire.  
 They wed in secret by counsel of a friar.  
 Young Romeus climbs fair Juliet’s bower by night.  
 Three months he does enjoy his chief delight.  
 By Tybalt’s rage, provoked to ire  
 He past death to Tybalt for his hire.  
 A banished man, he escapes by secret flight.  
 New marriage is offered to his wife:  
 She drinks a drink which that seems to stop her breath.  
 They bury her, that sleeping yet has life.  
 Her husband hears the tidings of her death.  
 He drinks his bane. And she with Romeus knife,  
 When she awakes, herself (alas) she slayeth.

\* N.B. Modernised version.

(For original see Romeo and Juliet, The Arden Shakespeare, Ed. Brian Gibbons, Routledge 1983.)

- What has Shakespeare taken from the poem and used in his play?
- What has he added?

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

In adapting the poem for the stage, Shakespeare had to take into account what could and could not be done theatrically and also that he needed to make the story as dramatic as possible. He had an audience to please, a theatre to fill.

In a similar way, anyone adapting Shakespeare's play for the cinema has to take into account what can be done on film, the possibilities that the medium offers and the expectations of an audience.

## WHY FILM SHAKESPEARE?

One of the earliest filmed versions of ROMEO AND JULIET that you will be seeing was made in 1905. This was part of a whole series of short (very short!) adaptations of Shakespeare's plays for the screen. So, from almost the very birth of cinema, Shakespeare's plays have been adapted into films.

- What do you think the attraction is for film makers of Shakespeare's plays?
- Considering the play that you are studying, try to say what a filmed version could add to the play which a stage production could not.
- What do you think could be lost from a Shakespeare play when it is filmed?

## TASK

Imagine that you are a film producer and are trying to raise money for a film version of ROMEO AND JULIET. Write a letter explaining to investors why you want to make the film and why you think people would want to come and see it. You should also say what the story is about and what aspects of the story you think would attract audiences.

## TEXT / PLAY / FILM

Because you will be studying the text and filmed version of the play it is worth looking at some questions which deal with the idea of adapting, or performing the play itself. This will give you some ideas about what to look out for when you are working your way through the different tasks in this guide.

You will have been reading the story of ROMEO AND JULIET in written form. In this form, the words on the page have to do all the work. In the theatre, the words are brought to life by actors and actresses. In the cinema, the director can do many more things which can help bring the words to life.

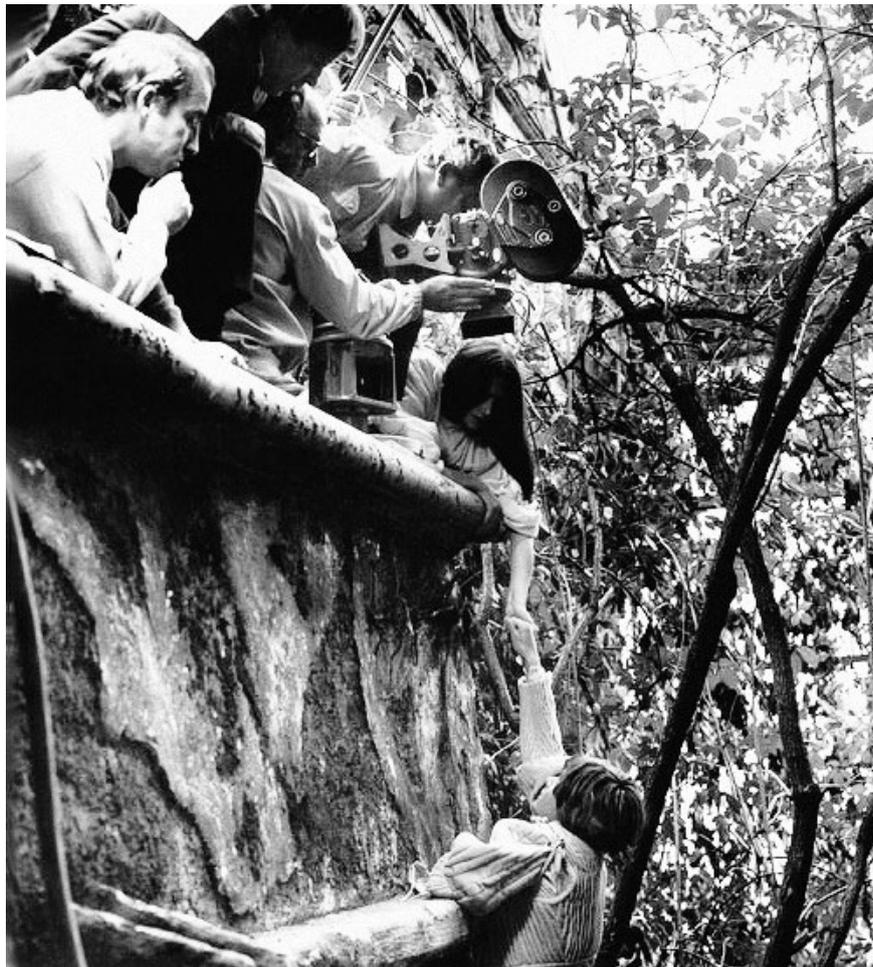
But what are the differences in the ways that the story is told? If we are reading, it is up to us to try to imagine what a character would look like. This is obviously not the case with a theatre production or a film. We can actually see someone playing the role. What are the other differences between the three ways of telling stories in the different media?

In chart 1 (page 21), try to write down as many things as possible about the ways in which we understand a story in each medium. What are the techniques available in each medium which help us to understand what is happening? You might include such things as costumes or lighting, bearing in mind their relevance to each of the media concerned.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## FILMING SHAKESPEARE?

When a director and scriptwriter choose to film a Shakespeare play (or for that matter, any written text, such as a novel for example) they have to make a number of decisions. Having read the original play they have to work out how to show the action on screen.



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Zeffirelli, 1968

In any one scene there are choices that a director can make. In chart 2 (page 22) we have given you some of the choices with which a director is faced. Try to fill in the details of each 'choice'. We have given some examples to start you off. For instance, a close-up is a type of shot: can you list all the other possibilities?

Clearly, filming any scene requires decision-making, and every decision that is made will affect the way an audience understands what is going on. Thus the use of a close-up will make us realise that what is happening in the shot is very important. A long-shot will establish what is happening in a scene.

Can you think of examples from films that you have seen which illustrate the shot details that you have written down in chart 2?

(Don't lose your work from this section as you will need it later when you come to work on the extracts from the films.)

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## PART THREE

### THE PLAY - STORY AND CHARACTERS

To state the obvious, every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. An audience for any story, even in Shakespeare's time, expects this. However, each of these three sections has a function in keeping the audience interested in the story. We have put these functions in the diagram below:

#### BEGINNING

#### MIDDLE

#### END

#### SET-UP

#### CONFRONTATION

#### RESOLUTION

- THE SET-UP - as its name suggests, is the part of the story where we are given the first details of the characters, what the story may be about, the setting.
- CONFRONTATION - all stories deal with conflict, even comedies. The confrontation is the working out of the ideas which are given to us in the set-up part of the story.
- RESOLUTION - here the conflict is solved, either happily or sadly, depending on what type of story it is.

Let us try to apply this to ROMEO AND JULIET.

- One thing we ought to consider is the moment when the set-up ends and the confrontation begins. In other words, when does the story really get under way?
- At what point do we know enough about the characters for the story to start?
- What moment marks the beginning of the confrontation in the play? When do the 'problems' really begin?
- Similarly, when does the confrontation end and the resolution start to take place? What are the two moments in the plot that mark these changes?
- What are the conflicts which are set up?

Answering these questions should give you some idea of the key narrative moments of the story. As well as the story we also need to consider the characters.

### INTRODUCING THE MAIN CHARACTERS

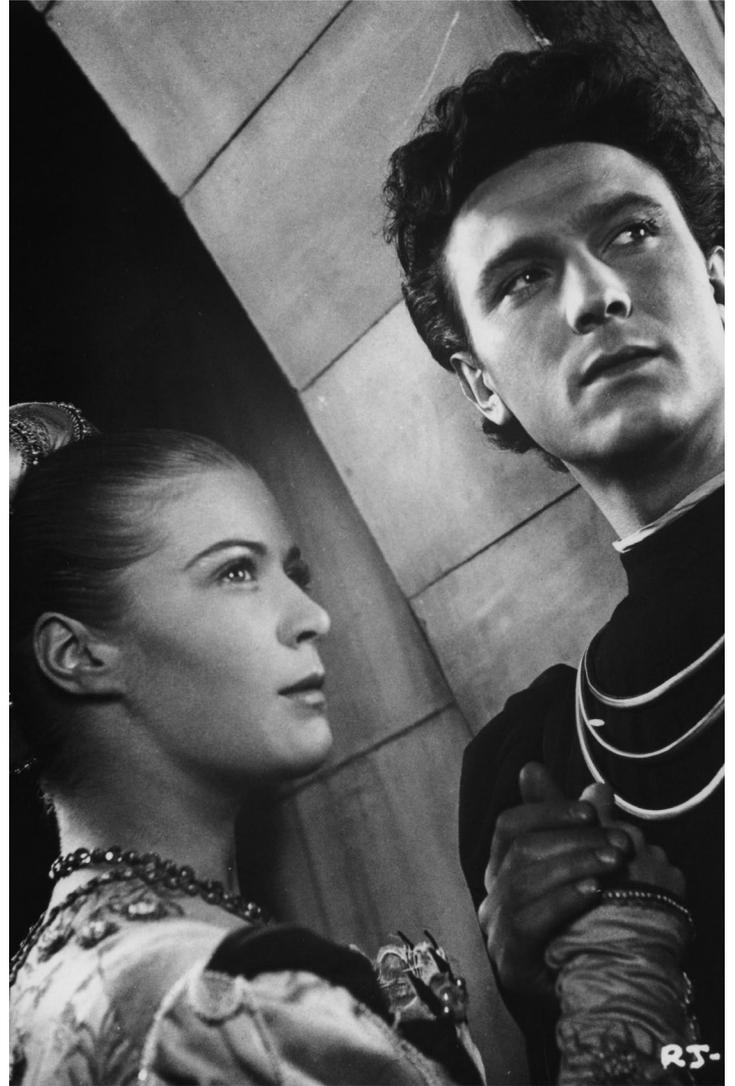
There are different ways of introducing the main characters in a film or a play. They can just appear and we get to know them gradually or we can be prepared for their first appearance. One of the ways of doing this is for other characters to talk about a character before they appear on stage. This happens before both Romeo and Juliet appear.

- What do we learn about them, especially their ages and outlook?
- Have you any ideas about how they might look physically?
- Look at the pictures of the different actors on the following page. Compare and contrast their 'look'.
- Why do you think they are so different?
- How much do you think their look has been influenced by the period in which the films were made?

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Cukor, 1936



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Castellani, 1954



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Zeffirelli, 1968

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

## PART FOUR

## SELLING ROMEO AND JULIET

Before we see a film or a play it is usual to know something about it - we will have read reviews, seen advertising or know someone who has seen the play or film and who will have told us something about it.

The fact that ROMEO AND JULIET is a tragedy would have told Shakespeare's audience a lot. It would have told them what to expect from the story, for example. Tragedy, by its very nature, would mean that the main character or characters die at the end of the play. The fact that the title includes the name of a man and a woman would suggest that it is a love story and therefore that the love between the two people has a sad ending.

We do exactly the same nowadays. If we say that a film is a 'horror story' or a 'police film' we will have a number of expectations about what will happen and how it will end. Advertising helps us to predict further what will happen. Look at the three posters advertising two versions of ROMEO AND JULIET. One is for the 1954 version, the other two are for the 1968 version.

- What information are you given?
- How do they portray the film?
- Why do you think that the images on the posters have been chosen?
- What do the images tell us about the story?
- In what ways are the posters different and similar?
- What wording is on the posters?
- What additional information does it give? Look at the two versions of the 1968 poster.
- The main image is the same. But what is the effect of including the sword in the Polish version?
- How does this affect our image of the film?

If you were to draw a poster for a modern film version of ROMEO AND JULIET what would you include in it both to attract an audience and to give them an idea of what the film will be about?



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Castellani, 1954

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET



ROMEO AND JULIET , dir. Zeffirelli, 1968



ROMEO AND JULIET , dir. Zeffirelli, 1968

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## PART FIVE

### FILMING ROMEO AND JULIET

#### SECTION ONE - ROMEO AND JULIET IN FIVE MINUTES

##### CLIP ONE

The first clip is in fact a whole short movie. It was made in 1905 by an American company called Vitagraph.

When you have seen the clip, look again at your list of expectations about the story of ROMEO AND JULIET. Did this 1905 short film manage to put across all you would expect of the plot of ROMEO AND JULIET?

#### TASK

In chart 3 (page 23) we have listed all of the acts and scenes which are in the actual play. We have inserted the details of the scenes used in the Vitagraphfilm. Complete the whole chart, putting in details of what happens in every scene. If you have two pens with different coloured inks then you could also highlight the events which are given in the Argument to Brooke's ROMEO AND JULIET.

#### TASK

Both the Vitagraphfilm and Brooke's version 'miss out' scenes which Shakespeare includes. In groups, imagine that you are making a film of ROMEO AND JULIET. You have enough time and money to select fifteen scenes. Which fifteen would you select from those listed in chart 3? When you have selected your scenes, write down why you selected them. Then, you should compare your group's version to those of other groups. How many scenes do you have in common? How many are different?

Look at the film again and then try to answer the following questions:

- What are the elements of the play which are missing?
- Which characters do not appear at all?
- Do you think you already needed to know something about the story in order to make sense of the Vitagraph production?

Finally in this section, you should look back at the work you completed on the differences between texts, plays and films. In what ways was this Vitagraph filmed version of the play different to modern films? Obviously it was in black and white and there was no sound. But what other differences are there? Think about the types of shots used, for example.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## SECTION TWO - FILMING SHAKESPEARE

In your final piece of work on the Vitagraph version of ROMEO AND JULIET you looked at the ways in which that film was different to modern films. You probably decided that not only was it very short, it was also all filmed from directly in front of the action. There were no changes of camera angles, no movement of the camera. In many ways it was as if we were sitting in a theatre watching the play being 'performed' on stage.

As you will have seen, a modern day film director has many more decisions to make about how to film one particular scene. Camera angles, music, sound, editing - all of these help us to understand what is happening and also allow the director to point our attention towards significant actions. In order to study this further, you are going to look at a passage from ROMEO AND JULIET and try to decide how you will film it.

[1. 2] The same; later in the day

*Enter CAPULET, PARIS, and a Servant.*

Capulet. But Montague is bound as well as I,  
In penalty alike, and 'tis not hard, I think  
For men so old as we to keep the peace.

Paris. Of honourable reckoning are you both,  
And pity 'tis you lived at odds so long.  
But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?

Capulet. But saying o'er what I have said before.  
My child is yet a stranger in the world,  
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.  
Let two more summers wither in their pride  
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

Paris. Younger than she are happy mothers made

Capulet. And, too soon marr'd are those so early made.  
Earth hath swallow'd all my hopes but she;  
She is the hopeful lady of my earth.  
But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart,  
My will to her consent is but a part,  
And she agreed, within her scope of choice  
Lies my consent and fair according voice.  
This night I hold an old accustomed feast  
Whereto I have invited many a guest  
Such as I love, and you among the store:  
One more, most welcome, makes my number more.  
At my poor house look to behold this night  
Earth-treading stars that make dark heaven light.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

Capulet.      Such comfort as do lusty young men feel  
When well-apparell'd April on the heel  
Of limping winter treads, even such delight  
Among fresh female buds shall you this night  
Inherit at my house. Hear all, all see,  
And like her most whose merit most shall be;  
Which, on more view of many, mine, being one,  
May stand in number, though in reckoning none.  
Come go with me. [To servant. J Go sirrah, trudge about  
Through fair Verona, find those persons out  
Whose names are written there, and to them say,  
My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.

The first thing to do is to underline anything in the passage which will help you understand what is taking place.

- How many people are in the scene?
- Where is the scene taking place?
- Who and what are Capulet and Paris talking about?
- Where might they be talking?
- What might they be doing as they talk? Standing still?
- What 'props' (things) would you need to show which are mentioned in the passage?

You could film this passage by simply showing the two of them talking to each other in one shot. It would not be very interesting, however, as they talk for quite a long time. The audience might get bored. So how can you make it interesting? Let us think about what the text does not tell us.

- How could you cut from one man to another?
- At what moments in the passage would you go from one to the other?
- Are there any important moments when only one of them should be shown on the screen?
- Are there moments when it is important for both of them to be shown on the screen?
- Who else might be around when the two men are talking?
- How and when could you show these characters?
- How could you show what they are talking about?
- At what point could you show this?
- Think about what has happened in the scene before this (Act One, Scene One). How could you link this scene with the previous one?

Now you must decide how you are going to film the sequence. In order to do this you will need to make a storyboard. A storyboard is basically a series of drawings which represent what will appear on the screen. Each drawing shows the type of shot that the director will use - a close-up, long-shot or high angle shot for example. It will also give details of what will be heard - both the words spoken and also any sound effects.

You will need to consider what kinds of shots you would need to capture the atmosphere, convey the setting, portray the characters? How would you use sound? Are there lines which can be missed out of the speech?

When you have finished your storyboard, give reasons for the decisions that you have made in selecting your shots - for example why you used a close-up in certain places.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## CLIP TWO

You are now going to be shown the way in which Franco Zeffirelli shot Act One, Scene Two in his filmed version of the play. Look at it very carefully.

We have reproduced the scene in storyboard form (pages 27 and 28). Next to each shot write down the lines that he has used from the play. Has anything been missed out? For each shot explain:

- why you think that Zeffirelli chose to shoot it in the way that he did;
- why a certain line or lines are spoken at that particular moment.

In this clip we are introduced to a very youthful Juliet, and most of the other main characters of the Capulet household. Look for all the information given to you on how the different characters feel about each other. If you can, make a note of:

- Juliet's exact age;
- any references to time - dates, time passing, age etc.

When you have seen the clip, list all the other characters you have been introduced to in this sequence.

Shakespeare and Zeffirelli manage to get a lot of information across to the audience in this short extract. Not only do they give us information to move the story on, but also information about the relationships within the Capulet household.

In chart 4 (page 24) use each box to fill in what we know about what the characters feel about each other, and if possible make a note of how we gain this understanding: words, expressions, music, camera work, etc.

## SECTION THREE - THE OPENING

So far we have looked at the play as a whole and at the ways in which any one scene can be filmed. Let us now consider the opening of the play/films .

All three versions that you are going to be shown use the Prologue written by Shakespeare. Read the Prologue. What does it tell you about what is going to follow?

### THE PROLOGUE

[Enter CHORUS]

Chorus. Two households both alike in dignity  
 (In fair Verona, where we lay our scene)  
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,  
 Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows  
 Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.  
 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love  
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
 The which, if you with patient ears attend,  
 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

Why does Shakespeare give us so much information about the play before we see it?

We have to bear in mind that Shakespeare's audience had to imagine much more than a modern audience does. There was no scenery or lighting and the small company of actors would play several parts. Therefore, all the information is in the text. By giving the audience an outline of the piece before it starts, the author puts the right atmosphere and plot details in their minds. As he goes through the play each scene is set and each character introduced so that there is no confusion in the audience's mind.

We can understand this further if we think of listening to a play on the radio. Because we have no visual information the playwright has to set the scene in words and make sure we understand which characters are speaking.

Shakespeare sets the play in Italy. The audience would know roughly where it was but very few, if any, would have been there. It is almost the equivalent of setting the play in a mythical country. Although he was dealing with appropriate and contemporary themes, by setting it in a foreign country he could not offend any of the nobles in the audience who might think the piece was based on them.

We are thus given a lot of information here about what will happen in the play. Let us now look at the ways in which three different film makers from different periods have approached filming the Prologue.

## CLIPS THREE, FOUR AND FIVE

Watch these clips very carefully and then fill in chart 5 (page 25).

You should now have some idea of the similarities, and the differences, in the three film makers' ideas on how to start the story.

- What do they do to set the mood of the piece? Consider the use of music, colour and the use of the camera.
- How do they establish the period in which the film is set? Look at the costumes and the setting.
- What do they do with the text of the prologue?
- The Castellani version is very theatrical. Why do you think this is so? How effective is the change from the theatrical delivery of the text to the filmic visuals of the opening shots of the city?

Using Shakespeare's Prologue, think about how you would introduce the filmed story of ROMEO AND JULIET.

- What would you choose to show and why?
- How many different shots would you want?
- What would they be? Explain why you would use them.
- How do these pictures complement, or even illustrate the Prologue?
- Will we see the Chorus - who is she or he?
- How might you begin to explain the feud, or the world Romeo and Juliet live in?

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## SECTION FOUR - THE LOVERS MEET AT CAPULET'S FEAST

We all get invited to people's special occasions: weddings, birthdays, etc., or are invited to celebrate a religious festival, but it is unusual for people to have a party for the sake of it.

In Renaissance times a nobleman would entertain his friends as a matter of courtesy and to enhance their standing within the Community. There were strict rules of social behaviour and one of the strangest features was that it was common practice to 'gatecrash' someone else's party and 'pay' for the misdemeanour by entertaining the guests. Added intrigue was provided by the guests being masked. The way that Tybalt reacts to seeing Romeo at the feast would not be acceptable to Capulet. Even though the son of his 'enemy' is in his own house he would not betray the laws of hospitality. Tybalt, however, feels that the honour of his family has been insulted. This is very important because it sets up the violence of the fight later on and explains why it gets out of control.

A social gathering is a very good dramatic device; it allows all kinds of people to meet whose only real connection is that they are all at the same function. This is still used today, e.g. having a pub or cafe in a soap opera enables any of the characters to meet.



Romeo & Juliet, dir Cukor, 1936

Shakespeare's audience would all know of such gatherings - some of them may have even been to one. This type of scene also provides a natural opportunity to use music which allows dramatic contrast in sound quality. One of the few effects that Shakespeare had at his disposal was the use of live musicians. There was a balcony on stage and an inner area behind that on which they could play. How much better that the music should be an integral part of the scene!

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

## SECTION FIVE - THE BALCONY SCENE

This is one of the most famous scenes in all of Shakespeare's works. Two people in love are talking to each other. It is night. She is on the balcony of her bedroom; he on the ground. They cannot express their love physically; it is difficult even to take hands and in some productions they cannot touch at all. They cannot even see each other properly so all they can do is express their emotions in words.

## TASK

Here are six stills from various film versions of the balcony scene. You will need a copy of the text from Act Two, Scene Two in order to carry out this task. First, working with the text, put them in the order in which they might come in the scene. Try to link as many as possible to a particular line. Some are 'point of view' shots. Whose point of view could they be? Are there still lines that could go with the picture?



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Zeffirelli, 1968



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Zeffirelli, 1968

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Cukor, 1936



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Cukor, 1936



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. CUKOR 1936

ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Zeffirelli, 1968



ROMEO AND JULIET, DIR. CASTELLA

ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Castellani, 1954

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

As we have said earlier, a director is always looking for clues within the text in order to help him/her come to decisions about how to film a scene. Read the whole of the balcony scene and then answer the following questions:

- To what does Romeo liken Juliet when he first sees her?
- Can you see in any of the stills how this has been highlighted as an idea?
- Is there a recurrent idea of what Juliet should be wearing? Can you think why this might be?
- Try to spot all the references - on the page - to light (suns, moons, stars, fires, lightning, etc.)
- Do you think it is important that Juliet is on a balcony, and if so, why?

As well as light and dark, we hear a lot in this scene about things not being what they seem or are called, or turning out other than how we might hope. Try to find some examples.

## CLIPS SEVEN & EIGHT

- How have the two directors used all of the above references when they have come to shoot the sequence?

These two extracts also highlight the difference it makes having actors and actresses who are close to the age of Romeo and Juliet.

- In what ways does having young people play the roles give a different sense of the scene?
- How does the mood of the scene change? How does the director's use of the camera reflect this?
- Compare the two sequences from the balcony scene. Which sections work and which do not.

## SECTION SIX - THE DEATH OF MERCUTIO

If the ball is a ritual of love, the duels could be seen as rituals of hate; the actual expression of the bitter feud. It is the fights too which propel the story to its tragic conclusion; this is where it all goes wrong.

There are many violent deaths in *Romeo and Juliet*. This again reflects the age in which Shakespeare was writing. Life was much more hazardous and precarious and society in general was much more violent and cruel. The fights in Shakespeare's theatre had to be very graphic. The audience would have crossed London Bridge on the way to the theatre and seen the heads of the executed displayed there. They could witness public executions and lived in an age of violent brawls and skirmishes. We know from contemporary accounts that the actors used to put entrails of dead sheep inside their costumes so that they could literally bleed before the audience.



ROMEO AND JULIET, dir. Castellani, 1954



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On stage complicated fights are difficult to perform especially when the scene has many characters and dialogue to incorporate. On film this can be very effective because the sequence can be shot from different angles and made very exciting by quick edits.

The death of Mercurio is a very effective piece of writing because the rest of the characters think that he is continuing with his usual humour. It is very difficult to incorporate the violence and the irony on stage. If you look at the play text you will see that all that appears on the page is “*Theyfight*”. As you look at the extracts see how the directors have built on this short stage direction in order to give us more information.

## CLIPS NINE, TEN & ELEVEN

In small groups discuss the different settings and how they make sense of the fights and style of fighting. Describe the camera work and editing in one of the clips. How is tension built up, and how does the camera help to tell the story?

The 1936 version uses a much older cast. How does this change our understanding of the violence? Look at the extract from the Zeffirelli version and see how well it works.

- How do people’s attitudes during the fight change?
- What brings about these changes?
- From what you are shown, how does Mercurio view the fight?
- Is it a matter of honour to him that it takes place?
- What causes Tybalt to change his attitude?
- What colours predominate? Why do you think these have been chosen?
- Do they help to define a particular atmosphere, and if so what is it?
- What do you notice about the way the camera moves?
- How does it help you to feel ‘part of the action’?
- Why is it important for the story that we the audience and some of the characters are caught up in the action and pace of events?

What are the key points that have to be put across in the fights? How can this be done? Working in groups of four or five, work out the problems of choreographing and filming these fights.

## SECTION SEVEN - THE DEATH OF JULIET

The two extracts that you will see both focus on the death of Juliet. In the text this only takes a few lines, from her waking to her death. However, in both of these extracts, a long time is taken over the death.

## CLIPS TWELVE & THIRTEEN

Look carefully at the two clips.

- How does each try to suggest the intensity of what is happening on screen?
- What does the tomb look like in both versions?
- How important is the look of the setting to what is actually going on?
- How is the sense of passion that Juliet feels for Romeo shown in the two versions?
- How is the camera used in either version to reinforce her feelings?
- Friar Lawrence is obviously worried about being found in the tomb. How do the two directors show and use his concern?
- How do the two directors show us the two bodies after Juliet is dead?
- What does this suggest to us?

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

CHART 1

PLAY TEXT	THEATRE PRODUCTION	FILMED ADAPTATION

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

## CHART 2

<b>TYPE OF SHOT</b>	<i>Close-up</i>
<b>LIGHTING</b>	
<b>COLOUR</b>	
<b>CAMERA ANGLE</b>	<i>low angle</i>
<b>CAMERA MOVEMENT</b>	

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

## CHART 3

ACT ONE	Scene 1	
ACT ONE	Scene 2	
ACT ONE	Scene 3	
ACT ONE	Scene 4	
ACT ONE	Scene 5	<i>The ball scene - Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time</i>
ACT TWO	Scene 1	
ACT TWO	Scene 2	<i>The balcony scene</i>
ACT TWO	Scene 3	
ACT TWO	Scene 4	
ACT TWO	Scene 5	
ACT TWO	Scene 6	<i>The marriage of Romeo and Juliet</i>
ACT THREE	Scene 1	
ACT THREE	Scene 2	
ACT THREE	Scene 3	
ACT THREE	Scene 4	<i>Juliet is promised in marriage to Paris</i>
ACT THREE	Scene 5	
ACT FOUR	Scene 1	
ACT FOUR	Scene 2	
ACT FOUR	Scene 3	<i>Juliet takes sleeping potion and feigns death</i>
ACT FOUR	Scene 4	
ACT FOUR	Scene 5	
ACT FIVE	Scene 1	
ACT FIVE	Scene 2	
ACT FIVE	Scene 3	

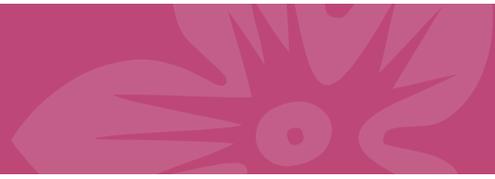
# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET



CHART 4

	JULIET	LADY CAPULET	LORD CAPULET	PARIS
JULIET				
LADY CAPULET				
LORD CAPULET				
PARIS				

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET



## CHART 5

	CLIP 3	CLIP 4	CLIP 5
Opening image			
What time of day is it?			
What sort of place do you see?			
What other images are used?			
What do these images suggest?			
Why are they there?			
How much of the situation or story are you told in words?			
How much of the story are you told in pictures? Give examples.			
How are the clips similar?			
How are they different?			

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

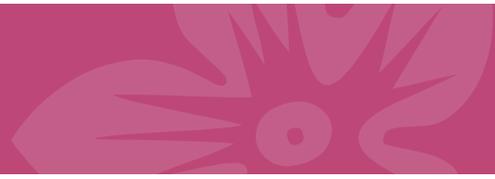


## CHART 6

### THE BALL

<p>How is Juliet 'described' in the film? (Costume, relationship to others, casting, etc.)</p>	
<p>Describe the setting</p>	
<p>Give two examples of Capulet wealth</p>	
<p>Style of dancing</p>	
<p>Who dances?</p>	
<p>Who is keen to fight?</p>	
<p>Who tries to keep the peace?</p>	
<p>How is 'love at first sight' shown? (Camera/positioning.)</p>	
<p>Compare to the text. (You can look up the cuts from Act 1, Scene 5.)</p>	

# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

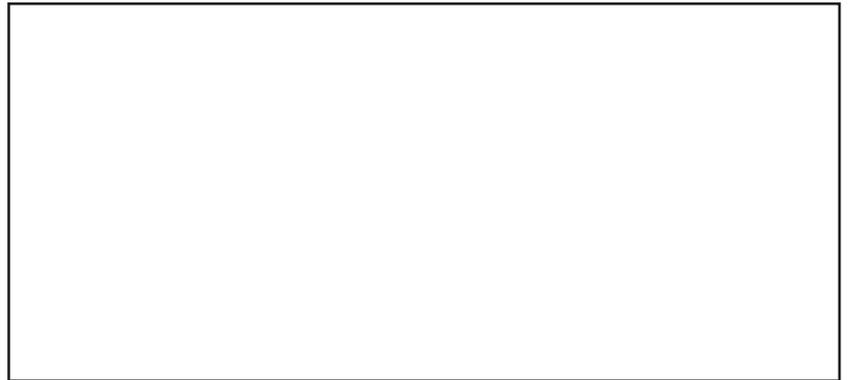
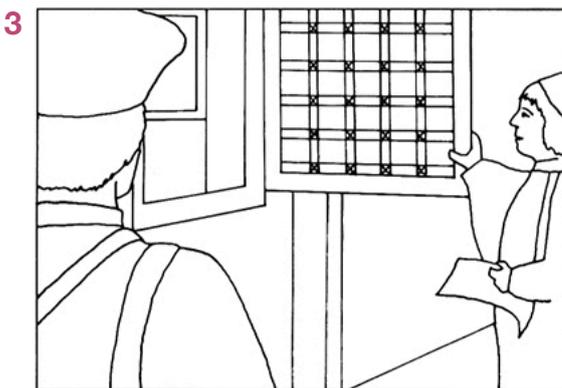
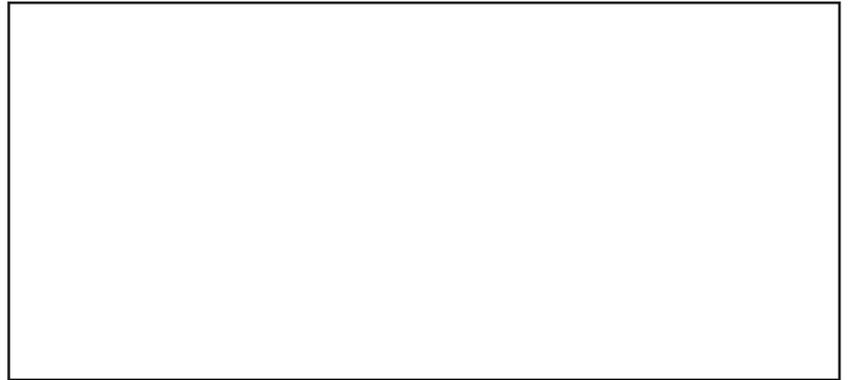
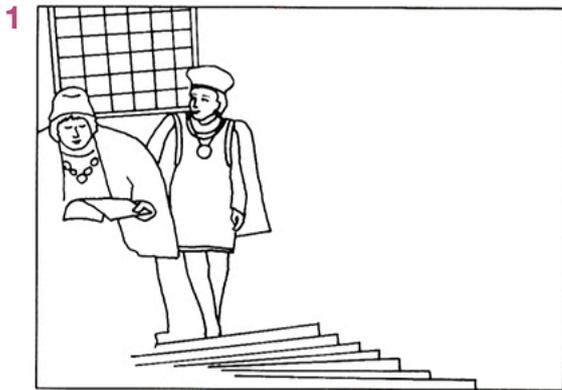


## STORYBOARD

Page 1 of 2

SHOT

DIALOGUE



# SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO & JULIET

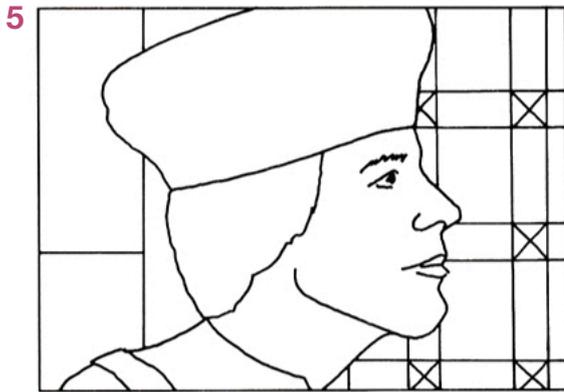


## STORYBOARD

Page 2 of 2

SHOT

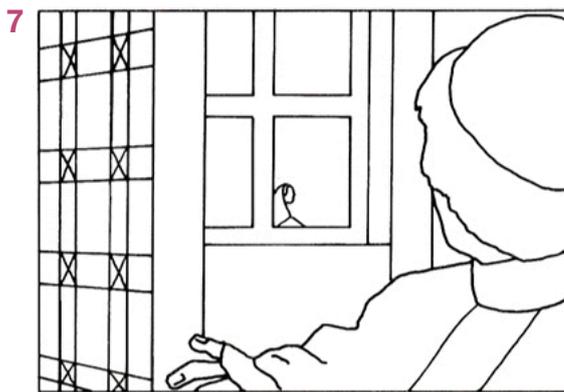
DIALOGUE



Empty rectangular box for dialogue.



Empty rectangular box for dialogue.



Empty rectangular box for dialogue.



Empty rectangular box for dialogue.

## SHAKESPEARE CINEMA: ROMEO &amp; JULIET

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following for their help in putting together this pack: British Film Institute  
CIC Video Glenbuck Films, National Film and Television Archive Paramount Pictures  
Rank Film Distributors Limited Turner Entertainment Co., UIP, BFI Stills Library

Flicker Flashbacks , No. 18: Romeo and Juliet, 1905 Courtesy of Glenbuck Films

Scenes from Irving Thalberg's Romeo and Juliet, directed by G. Cukor, 1936 Courtesy of  
Turner Entertainment Co. and the National Film and Television Archive

Scenes from Romeo and Juliet directed by R. Castellani, 1954 Courtesy of Rank Film Distributors Limited

Scenes from Romeo and Juliet directed by F. Zeffirelli, 1968  
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Written by Ian Wall with additional material by Crispin Hanis and Ian Kelly. Produced by Filia Education. Designed by Cathy Johnson.  
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## DETAILS OF FILMS

**Flicker Flashbacks, No. 18: ROMEO AND JULIET, 1905**

Production company: Vitagraph  
Country: USA  
Director: Stuart Blackton  
Cast: Florence Lawrence; Paul Panzer  
Running time: approx. 5 mins

**ROMEO AND JULIET, 1936**

Production company: MGM (Irving Thalberg)  
Country: USA  
Director: George Cukor  
Cast: Leslie Howard; Norma Shearer; John Barrymore; Basil Rathbone.  
Running time: 127 mins

**ROMEO AND JULIET, 1954**

Production company: Rank; Verona Productions  
Country: Italy; UK  
Director: Renato Castellani  
Cast: Laurence Harvey; Flora Robson; Susan Shentall; Bill Travers.  
Running time: 138 mins

**ROMEO AND JULIET, 1968**

Production company: British Home Entertainment ; Dino De Laurentiis Cinematografica ; Verona Productions  
Country: Italy, UK  
Director: Franco Zeffirelli  
Cast: Leonard Whiting; Olivia Hussey; John McEnery ; Michael York.  
Running time: 139 mins