

## Kids Love Shakespeare's ROMEO & JULIET - Quick Summary for Kids

This story takes place in Verona, Italy - where two families are fighting. The families are named the Montagues and Capulets and they have hated one another for a long time. At the beginning of the play the Prince of Verona warns both families that anyone caught fighting in the streets of Verona will be sentenced to death.

One of the main characters is named Romeo Montague. Romeo is usually peaceful and interested more in love than in fighting. At the beginning of the play Romeo tells his cousin Benvolio and his friend Mercutio that he is sick with love for a girl who won't love him back. Benvolio and Mercutio encourage him to forget about her and go with them to a costume party at the house of Capulet. They know it will be dangerous because they are Montagues, but they think it will be fun.

Old Capulet has one daughter named Juliet. He is hoping Juliet will agree to marry Count Paris and is excited for them to spend time together at the party. Capulet wants his party to be a happy place for love to blossom. When his nephew, Tybalt, tells him that there are Montagues at the party, Capulet demands that Tybalt leave them alone to enjoy the party.

While Romeo is at the party he meets Juliet. He falls instantly in love with her and is sad to hear that she is the daughter of his family's enemy. Romeo decides to risk his life and sneaks to Juliet's bedroom window to speak with her. While he watches and listens to Juliet, Romeo learns that she is in love with him too. They speak at the window and make plans to secretly get married even though their families are enemies. The next day Romeo and Juliet go to Friar Lawrence who agrees to marry them. Friar Lawrence hopes their marriage will help to bring peace to the families.

On the way home from the wedding Tybalt, who is still angry that the Montagues came to the Capulet party, challenges Romeo to a duel in the street. Romeo refuses to fight him. Mercutio agrees to fight Tybalt instead. Romeo tries to stop the fight and accidentally gets in the way. Tybalt stabs Mercutio and Mercutio dies. Romeo is so angry and sad the Mercutio is dead that he agrees to fight Tybalt and then kills him. Benvolio begs Romeo to run away from Verona so that the Prince of Verona can't sentence him to death.

Juliet is sad to hear of her cousin's death, but she is even more sad to hear that her husband Romeo must leave Verona. She has another problem, too. Her father is forcing her to marry Count Paris. She goes to Friar Lawrence for advice. Friar Lawrence gives Juliet a special type of poison. The poison will make her fall into a very deep sleep, but everyone will think she is dead. Friar Lawrence plans to send a message to Romeo so that he can come back to Verona and meet Juliet when she wakes up in her family's tomb. Then they can leave Verona and be together.

Juliet follows her part of the plan, but something goes very wrong. Friar Lawrence's message never makes it to Romeo. Instead, Romeo hears that Juliet is dead. Romeo returns to Verona with a very strong poison. He goes to Juliet in the tomb, drinks the poison, and dies. When Juliet wakes up she finds Romeo laying next to her. She is so sad that she takes his dagger and kills herself.

This story is a tragedy because the ending is so sad. There is one good thing that comes of Romeo and Juliet's deaths. When the Montagues and the Capulets learn what happened with their children they agree to end the years of fighting. The Prince of Verona hopes the story of Romeo and Juliet will help to keep Verona a peaceful place.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



William Shakespeare was born in April of 1564. There is no specific date of birth because at that time the only date of importance was the date of baptism, though infants often were baptized when they were three days old. Shakespeare's baptismal date was April 26, 1564.

Shakespeare was born in the village of Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. At the time of his birth, the village had a population of 1500 people, and only 200 houses. Shakespeare's father came from a family of yeomen, and he gained many prestigious positions in the community. Shakespeare's mother came from an ancient family of landed gentry. The whole family

was Anglican. The family's financial situation was well off. Not much information is known about Shakespeare's youth, although undoubtedly he was educated in the local school, where he studied Latin and Greek, among other subjects, during a school day that often lasted from dawn to dusk.

Shakespeare's first exposure to the theatre probably occurred when he was young. As a child his father probably took him to see plays when travelling troupes of actors came to town, although that was not often.

Shakespeare was married to Anne Hathaway in 1582, when he was 18; she was 26, eight years his senior. The exact wedding date is uncertain, but the marriage certificate was issued on November 27, 1582. William and Anne had their first child, Susanna, in May of 1583. This was followed by the birth of twins, Hamnet and Judith, in January of 1585. Most historians believe that Shakespeare was not often around his family in Stratford after that because historical records show him in London during the following years.

The first written reference to Shakespeare's existence in London occurred in 1592, when Shakespeare was in his late twenties. He seems to have been fairly well established in the theatre by that point, since the reference, written by another playwright, hints of jealousy at Shakespeare's success.

With his two patrons, the Earls of South Hampton and Pembroke, Shakespeare rose quickly in the theatre as both an actor and an author. He joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company which was protected by the Queen, becoming a shareholder and senior member in 1595. Because of his success in London, he was able to purchase New Place, the largest and most elegant house in his home town of Stratford, when he was in his early thirties (1597).

In addition to his popularity as both an actor and playwright, Shakespeare became joint owner of the famous Globe theatre when it opened in 1599. His share of the company's management added heavily to his wealth.

Shakespeare's financial success in the London theatre enabled him to retire and return to his home in Stratford around 1610. He lived there comfortably until his death on April 23, 1616 (it is popularly believed that he died on his birthday). He is buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Though Shakespeare is most closely associated with the Elizabethan period, his career can be categorized as both Elizabethan and Jacobean, as several works were completed after James I became king in 1603.

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# 10 Oral presentation



## Culture Shakespeare's Globe

- 1 **5.18** Osserva la foto del Globe Theatre a Londra. Ascolta e leggi il brano, poi abbinia le parole nel riquadro ai numeri nelle foto.

the columns — the galleries —  
the 'pit' — the roof — the stage —

## Elizabethan theatre



It's the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in London. Elizabeth I is Queen of England. There's no television, there are no cinemas, no films and no DVDs. Computers and video games don't exist. What do people do in their free time?

During the time of Elizabeth I, the most popular form of entertainment in England was the theatre. Companies of actors travelled around the country and performed plays. People didn't think acting was a respectable profession for women, so the actors were always men. Young boys usually played the female roles! Each theatre changed its plays regularly. Sometimes they had performances of ten different plays in two weeks, so the public was never bored!

Everybody loved watching plays: rich and poor, men and women. Elizabeth

I also loved the theatre and often invited groups to play for her. She invited William Shakespeare more often than others.

In 1599, William Shakespeare and other men he worked with built the Globe theatre in South London, near the River Thames. Shakespeare acted in many of plays at the Globe, including some of his plays: *Hamlet*, *As you like it* and *Macbeth*. The Globe was a type of amphitheatre and it was made of wood. It had a rectangular stage where the actors performed. The stage had two columns, and a roof covered it.

There was space for between 1,500 and 3,000 people in the Globe. Poor people stood in front of the stage. This area was called the 'pit', and tickets cost one penny. Richer people sat in three levels of galleries around the pit. They paid an extra penny.

Very rich people sat on chairs next to the stage.

Unfortunately, in 1642 the Puritans closed all the theatres in London, including the Globe. The Puritans were a political and religious movement. They hated theatre, music and dancing. In 1644, they demolished the Globe.

More than 300 years later, in 1969, an American actor and director called Sam Wanamaker decided to rebuild the Globe. It took a long time and there were a lot of problems. But finally, in 1997, the theatre reopened near its original location. Every year, thousands of people visit the rebuilt theatre. They watch Shakespeare's plays, and visit the museum and souvenir shop. Unfortunately, Wanamaker died in 1993, so he never saw his dream come true.

- 2 Rileggi il brano e rispondi alle domande.

- Who was Queen of England at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century?
- Why did boys play the role of women in plays?
- What type of people went to the theatre?
- Name two plays by Shakespeare.
- How many people could watch plays at the Globe?
- How much did tickets cost in the 'pit'?
- Who closed the Globe in 1642, and why?
- Who was Sam Wanamaker and what was his dream?
- When did the modern day Globe Theatre open?
- What can you do at the Globe today?
- Is there a theatre in your town or city? What type of plays can you see there?
- When did you last go to the theatre or cinema? What did you see?

### Glossary

come true      avverarsi

