

# Romeo & Juliet Revision lesson 1. Study focus: character and characterisation

## Learning context

Students sometimes focus their attention on a character by describing attributes, behaviour and motivation, usually accurately and with effective use of textual detail. However, they may forget that the focus of attention should be on the author's craft in creating characters so believable they seem real. They need to distinguish between created *character* and the craft of *characterization*.

## Teaching focus

This revision lesson reinforces the skills progression from the core skills of *select and retrieve* to the more developed skill of *explain*, then to the more sophisticated skills of *exploration, interpretation and analysis*.

By highlighting the key skills of the assessment objectives, the lesson prepares them to answer examination questions on character and characterisation. It prompts students to switch attention from the *characters* to the *writer*.

## Lesson sequence

- 1 Read the passage silently, annotating anything hard to understand, then aloud (Teacher first, students next)
- 2 Discuss in pairs/groups the bits found hard to understand.

Rom. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear-  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows  
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.  
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand  
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.  
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Tyb. This, by his voice, should be a Montague.  
Fetch me my rapier, boy. What, dares the slave  
Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,  
To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?  
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,  
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

Discuss or Write about the following:

## Select and retrieve

- 3a) Which phrase in Romeo's description of Juliet make her contrast with all the other young women at the ball?
- 3b) Which phrase tells you that Romeo is wearing an old-fashioned mask?

## Explain (a textual detail)

- 4a) How do the words on your selected phrase (3a) create more than one kind of contrast?
- 4b) What does Romeo mean when he says "the measure done"?

## Explain (a motive, relationship, situation, idea)

4b) What are Romeo's feelings in this passage?

4c) What are Tybalt's feelings in this passage?

### Explore, interpret, analyse

#### 5a) Character

Compare Romeo's feeling in this passage with his feelings a) before and b) after meeting Juliet for the first time.

- Interpret Romeo's feelings about Juliet from what he says about her

#### 5b) Characterisation

How does Shakespeare present the feelings of Romeo and Tybalt in this passage?

- Explore – what Shakespeare may think about young love and what young lovers are like.
- Analyse – collect the words and phrases Shakespeare uses to present the contrast in feelings between the two young men in this passage.

### 6 Performance

Annotate the script with detailed actor prompts to words to be emphasized and gestures to accompany the speech throughout. *Would you have Romeo watching from behind a pillar or through a window?*

#### Support (knowledge & understanding)

*Gloss:* Ethiop – very dark-skinned person from Ethiopia in East Africa, trooping – walking in procession, measure – a dance, forswear – deny, rapier – a sword, antic – old-fashioned, flier – laugh mockingly, kin – family.

*Fill background:* Although Romeo says he “never saw true beauty till this night”, remember that he only recently thought Rosaline was the most beautiful young woman he had seen. Does make him seem impressionable or sincere?

*Reinforce:* Watch a clip from a screen version of this scene and discuss/make notes of actors' pause, emphasis and gesture. How does Tybalt realise it is Romeo under the mask?

#### Stretch (independently developed knowledge & understanding)

How does Shakespeare contrast Romeo's feelings with Tybalt's feelings in this extract?

Watch a clip from a screen version of this scene and discuss/makes notes of the Director's interpretation of character and context. How are long-shots and close-ups used during the scene?

What else is going on around them?