

**Research Article**

## **Romeo and Juliet is as a Tragedy of Universal Interest**

**Apolinaire Nsinga Telema**

Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Department of English Letters and Civilization, University of Kinshasa,  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Email: [wakeupnsinga@gmail.com](mailto:wakeupnsinga@gmail.com)

**Received:** October 13, 2025

**Accepted:** November 03, 2025

**Published:** November 09, 2025

### **Abstract**

Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of universal interest. The conflict and enmity between the Montagues and the Capulets are commonplace and cross-cultural. The love adventure between the two adolescents are cross-cultural. The final reconciliation of the two families is all commonsense for which we enjoy this play. A question is why did they wait until so many died to reconcile. The Montagues and Capulets could have resolved this problem before rather than waiting until many people die. <sup>1</sup>This play has been adapted several times for stage, film musical and opera venues because of its intrinsic value. <sup>2</sup>Romeo and Juliet has been performed until 2018 to show how interesting the tragedy is to the world.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Love, Fight, Death, Arrestation, Reconciliation.

### **Introduction**

This article assumes that Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of universal interest. It focusses on the plot, the main problem, the feelings aroused, the writer's intention and on its artistic and literary values.

### **The Plot**

"Romeo and Juliet" is, as the title suggests, a story of a pair of young lovers from two families in conflict for years. They happen to fall in love with each other and manage to get married in secret with Friar Laurence agreement and help, without their parents' consent.

At Christmas, the Capulets organizes a feast and invites almost everyone except, of course, the Montagues. Romeo and his five friends just decide to disguise themselves in order to access to Capulet's feast where Romeo meets Juliet, dances with her and eventually falls in love with her at the first sight. Both declare their love to each other, and decide to get married despite their parents' conflict. Juliet decides that she would serve Romeo and be her wife if he will make her his lawfully wedded wife.

From that moment, Romeo will often pass by Juliet's bedroom to visit her on the moonlight night, he will climb out of the house, and he visits her with the aid of her nurse. Juliet consents and promises to follow Romeo if he will really like to marry her.

One day, Juliet sends her nurse to Romeo to tell him that she needs him. Both Juliet and Romeo meet and talk about their wedding and eventually plan the date. When Romeo realizes that Juliet loves him, he decides to marry her.

Soon after their meeting, Romeo decides to meet Friar Laurence, one of the Franciscan monks to tell him about his love with Juliet and to discuss their wedding project. Friar Laurence agrees and eventually decides to marry them, but in secret. The two families are not aware of at all. Romeo gives the nurse a ladder in cord so that when the night comes, he could easily climb up to the Juliet's bedroom. For few weeks, Romeo continues to do so during the night by using it. It happens, one day that Tybalt who is Juliet's cousin stirred

<sup>1</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo\\_and\\_Juliet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet) retrieved on August 10, 25.

<sup>2</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco\\_Zeffirelli's\\_1968\\_film\\_Romeo\\_and\\_Juliet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco_Zeffirelli's_1968_film_Romeo_and_Juliet).

up a fight with Montague's family. He insults Mercutio's, kinsman to Prince Escalus and friend to Romeo, which generates a fight between the two families who were already in conflict.

Romeo tries to stop the fight in vain, and he is offended by Tybalt who already killed Mercutio. The fight started between them during which Romeo killed Tybalt. Prince Escalus decides to send Romeo into exile for his crime.

Juliet is completely upset because of Romeo's exile while she is in love with him. When Juliet hears that Romeo is to be exiled, she sends her nurse to the convent to see Friar Laurence, who asks Romeo to meet her before going to exile. Romeo is a bit desperate and anxious with all that has just happened. Thus, Friar Laurence often advises him to visit Juliet often. And that night, Romeo goes to Juliet's house and they spend the night together.

The next day, before leaving her Romeo promises to keep her informed about the situation. Juliet suffers Romeo's absence and her attitude changes. When lady Capulet notices the change in her daughter, she informs her husband that Juliet is not in good mood because she probably wants to get married as most of her friends; which is why Paris is encouraged to ask Juliet's hand. County Paris, who is a nobleman and a relative to Prince Escalus, is recommended by Juliet's mother to take her daughter in marriage. Unfortunately, Juliet refuses everybody who offers to marry her because she is secretly married to Romeo, whom she loves.

The Capulet's family promises to put their daughter away if she disobeys them. When Juliet hears that, she returns to Friar Laurence and tells him about it. She also tells him that she would like to commit suicide because her parents have obliged her to marry Paris while she is in love with Romeo. Friar Laurence gives her a magic potion which would make her deeply asleep, and make her appear dead on the day of the wedding with county Paris so that the wedding could not take place. Friar Laurence also assures her saying that she will wake up in the tomb, and Romeo will then take her away.

When Juliet goes back, she lies her mother that she will obey them and marry county Paris. The Capulet's family is very happy and commands great preparations for their daughter's wedding feast, although, Juliet has prepared something strange to disappoint them. That night before Juliet's wedding with county Paris, Juliet prepares the magic potion and drinks it to escape that wedding, and the next morning, the nurse comes and finds her apparently dead.

Meanwhile, Friar Laurence sends Friar John to Mantua with a letter for Romeo, telling him the plan that is made up to avoid Juliet's wedding with county Paris. Unfortunately, the letter did not reach Romeo on time because Friar John entered first in the church to pray for his journey. The point was that one of the brothers died of a plague and the corpse was in the church.

Peter, who is a servant to Juliet's nurse watches Juliet's funeral, and he rushes to Mantua to inform Romeo about Juliet's death. As soon as Romeo gets the news about Juliet's death, Romeo bought a magic poison from the apothecary. Romeo wrote a long letter to his parents, telling them the whole story, and by the night, he returned to Verona and rushed to the tomb.

Balthazar helped Romeo open Juliet's tomb. When Romeo saw Juliet's corpse, Romeo cried over Juliet's body, and after that he drank the magic poison and died of grief by her side without knowing that Juliet was not dead actually. Romeo never got the letter that Friar Laurence sent him via Friar John because Friar John never reached Mantua, he was stopped by his brother's death.

When Friar Laurence realized that he decided to go to the tomb the next day to inquire about Juliet who was supposed to wake up. When he got to the cemetery, he found Romeo dead. In the meantime, Juliet wake up from her deep sleep as it was planned, and she found Romeo actually dead, and she refuses to leave him. Soon after that, Juliet drank from the same poisoned mug that killed Romeo and she died too. Friar Laurence and Friar John heard a noise and they ran away.

The watchmen saw lights in the tomb. When they went on, they found Friar Laurence and Peter being arrested. The next day, the prince is informed of everything. Everyone rushed to the tomb and the whole story was disclosed. Finally, the Capulet's family and the Montague's decided to make peace after their children's death. They reconciled and the two bodies were buried in the same stately monument.

### **The Central Theme**

The central theme of Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet" is passion. It could be explained by the fact that Romeo and Juliet fell in love with each other passionately during their first encounter at the Capulet's feast and also died for each other while their parents were in conflict for years.

"Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite,  
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay  
And follow thee my lord throughout the world".  
(Romeo and Juliet 1597:79)

### **The Main Problem and Its Resolution**

The main problem in Romeo and Juliet is the long-lasting conflict between their two parents, which will result in their children's death. This conflict could have been settled in a friendly manner before, instead of waiting until so many people and then reconcile after.

"By thee, old Capulet, and Montague.  
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets  
And made Verona's ancient citizens"  
Romeo and Juliet (1597:15)

### **The Feelings Aroused**

The play arouses mixed feelings such as love, sorrow, unhappiness, regret and happiness at the same time.

### **Author's Intention**

The author's intention, beside entertaining, must have also been to ridicule the vain long-lasting enmity between the two families for no serious reason. After all they did reconcile but quite late causing so many people death. They should have done it before their children died. We wish the reconciliation took place before.

Another possible lesson to learn in this play is that our children are not ourselves. We bear them, but they are quite different people from ourselves or how could we explain the fact that Romeo and Juliet just deny their origin. We wish their parents gave them a chance.

### **Artistic and Literary Values of the Play**

The reader enjoys reading this play, because it teaches a great moral lesson to parents through the death of the two young lovers from two families in conflict.

As a play Romeo and Juliet has resisted because it demonstrates craft and artistry by the fact that it has the power to raise questions, provide fresh points of views, expand understanding of self, the world, and continues to stimulate imagination.

*"It debates fundamental values such as commonsense, love, mutual, understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation.*

"But Montague is bound as well as I,  
In penalty alike, and it is not hard, I think,  
For men so all as we to keep the peace"  
(Romeo and Juliet 1597: 27)

<sup>3</sup>Romeo and Juliet" has been performed until 2018 to show how interesting the tragedy is to the public.

In any case, love is certainly better than hatred, which is why Romeo and Juliet eventually got married, despite their parents' enmity, which they simply ignore. They certainly realized that their parents conflict was not their business. It is this reconciliation that matters most in this play. We wish that this reconciliation happened earlier to avoid the worse that happened in the play. The plot of this tragedy is meaningful and complex and its storyline is coherent.

---

<sup>3</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco\\_Zeffirelli's\\_1968\\_film\\_Romeo\\_and\\_Juliet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco_Zeffirelli's_1968_film_Romeo_and_Juliet).

Part of the author's craft lies on the beautiful use of language used to entertain the audience and at the same time educate people, which is one of the main purposes of literature.

### **Conclusion**

« Romeo and Juliet is certainly as a tragedy of universal interest across ».

The analysis focused on the nature of conflict between the two families and its impact on both families and their kinsmen. Passion is what took Romeo and Juliet to love each other to death. It is to ridicule the vain long-lasting enmity between the two families and at the same prevail their reconciliation and peace in the end that plays is there for.

The reader enjoys this play in many ways considering its subject matter, and themes, as well as its artistic and literary values for which literature students across culture continue to read and enjoys it, beside Shakespeare's beautiful use of language and style.

### **Declarations**

**Acknowledgments:** I owe a great debt of gratitude to my mentor, Professor Ngwaba Bimbala Ferdinand, for accepting to supervise this work. His insightful remarks and valuable suggestions have been extremely helpful in shaping this study. My sincere thanks also go to all the professors and teaching staff for the knowledge they imparted to me during these past two years of the program. Special gratitude is due to Professor Mafuta Kidiese and Professor Lydy Mumbembe, the Head of the Department of English Letters and Civilization, for their care, assistance, and guidance. Finally, my warmest thanks go to my brother Gedeon Lobonza and to my family for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey.

**Author Contribution:** Definition of intellectual content, literature survey, prepared first draft of manuscript, implementation of the study protocol, data collection, data analysis, manuscript preparation and manuscript revision.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Consent to Publish:** The author agrees to publish the paper in International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data are contained within the article.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The proposal for the study was approved by the University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Research Content:** The research content of this manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

### **References**

1. Cook, G. 1994. Discourse and literature. Oxford: OUP.
2. Culler, J. 1997. Literary theory: A very short introduction. Oxford: OUP.
3. Harding, H.E. 1966. Hamlet: Electra beyond the horizon. New York: Noble and Noble Publishers, Inc.
4. Richards, I.A. 1925. Principles of literary criticism. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, Inc.
5. Shakespeare, W. 1597. Romeo and Juliet. In: Mowat, B.A. and Werstine, P., (Eds.), With detailed notes from the world's leading centre for Shakespeare studies. Simon and Schuster, Inc.
6. Shakespeare, W. 1908. Life and work (Vol. 40). Cassell and Company.
7. Short, M. 1988. Reading, analysing, and teaching literature. London: Longman.
8. The World Book Encyclopedia. 2023. Chicago: Volume 1-2. World Book, Inc.
9. University of Kansas. 2015. What is the formalism approach? Retrieved May 15, 2015, from <http://www.kuce.org>
10. Van Dijk, T.A. (Ed.). 1997. Discourse as structure and process (Vol. 1). Sage.
11. Van Peer, W. 1982. How to do things with texts: Toward a pragmatic foundation for the teaching of texts. Tilburg University, Department of Language and Literature.
12. Wikipedia. 2025. Romeo and Juliet. Last updated 25 October 2025.

13. Wikipedia. 2025. William Shakespeare. Last updated 9 October 2025.

**Citation:** Apolinaire Nsinga Telema. 2025. Romeo and Juliet is as a Tragedy of Universal Interest. *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research*, 9(4): 136-140.

**Copyright:** ©2025 Apolinaire Nsinga Telema. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.