*Romeo and Juliet* Literary Essay

Language Arts 4

Mrs. MacDonnell

Topics:

1. In the Prologue, Romeo and Juliet are described as "star-crossed lovers" and reference is made to their "death-marked love". They themselves speak like this. Do you think that Shakespeare wants to create the impression that their death is [brought](http://resources.mhs.vic.edu.au/romeojuliet/essay.htm) about by a cruel overwhelming Fate, by sheer accident or by their own willfulness — or by some or all of these?

2. Friar Laurence serves many dramatic purposes in the play. Examine the Friar and his role in *Romeo and Juliet*

3. Name the two other people in the play who know about the love between Romeo and Juliet and explain how they help the lovers achieve their goals.

4. At the end of *Romeo and Juliet* the Prince says: 'Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished' (5.3. 307). Whom do you think should be pardoned and whom punished?

5. "The Nurse fills the role of Juliet's mother, and Friar Laurence acts as Romeo's father." Discuss the importance of these characters in *Romeo and Juliet*.

6. "*Romeo and Juliet* is a play about two silly, immature teenagers who lack common sense. Therefore, the play expresses the danger of a love in which two people become the whole world to one another." Do you agree?

7. ' A plague on both your houses!'
"Mercutio's dying curse reminds us that, in the end, it is the adults who need to be condemned and punished for their irresponsibility and senseless feuding. Romeo and Juliet are merely innocent victims of their parents' rage." Discuss.

8. Write a character sketch of one of the main players in *Romeo and Juliet.*

9. What roles do the two characters of Mercutio and Tybalt play in *Romeo and Juliet?* How do their personalities add to this role?

10. "Romeo and Juliet's love is doomed not just by the world around it, but by its own intensity." Do you agree?

**A**ssuming that it is clear from the context of your paper which play you are quoting from, you need not identify the work by its title. At the end of the quotation from Shakespeare, place parentheses, in which you put three numbers, separated by periods. The first number is the act; the second is the scene, and the third the line numbers quoted, the first one and the last one, separated by dash. The parentheses locating the quotation come after the quotation mark and before the punctuation of your own sentence. Here are three examples:

1) "So shaken as we are, so wan with care," Henry announces to his court (1.1.1).

2) Henry appears infirm from the very beginning of the play: "So shaken as we are, so wan with care" (1.1.1).

3) Henry thinks of the terrain of England as a thirsty mother perversely feeding on the blood of her sons: "No more the thirsty entrance of this soil / Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood" (1.1.5-6).

Note the use of the slash (/)--preceded and followed by a space--to separate lines of poetry in example #3. This is standard [practice](http://web.presby.edu/writingcenter/guides/eng1.html) when you are quoting blank verse from Shakespeare into your own text.

Sometimes--though not often in short essays--you will want to quote a larger block of verse, four verse lines or more, which you then should discuss in [close](http://web.presby.edu/writingcenter/guides/eng1.html), careful detail. Usually this sort of quotation will be introduced by a full colon (:) and then indented ten spaces from your left-hand margin. You will no longer need slashes to separate lines nor quotation marks; instead, the quotation should appear as it does on the printed page.

4) Henry's first speech is full of metaphors of physical distress:

So shaken as we are, so wan with care,

Find we a time for frighted peace to pant

And breathe short-winded accents of new broils

To be commenced in stronds far remote. (1.1.1-4)

In this instance, the parentheses locating the quotation follow the [final](http://web.presby.edu/writingcenter/guides/eng1.html) punctuation mark. Note that all citations in parentheses are in Arabic rather than Roman numerals.

* Don't leave a quote or paraphrase by itself-you must introduce it, explain it, and show how it relates to your thesis.
* Block format all quotations of more than four lines.
* When you quote brief passages of poetry, line and stanza divisions are shown as a slash (Ex. "Roses are red, / Violets are blue / You love me / And I like you").