



## **Takes on Romeo and Juliet Curriculum**

Created by Rebecca J. Ennals from a concept by Chris Steele  
with assistance from Ella Francis and Edmund Campos

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*For teachers and homeschooling parent-teachers:*

## **How to Use this Curriculum**

Takes on Shakes was developed for virtual distance learning during the 2020 pandemic, but we hope it can be useful for schools, teachers, and parents for years to come. The 30-minute video can be used in multiple ways: shared in a virtual or in-person classroom by the teacher or viewed asynchronously at home with a parent or caregiver. Teachers can work through the curriculum live virtually or in-person, or students can record their responses in text or via audio or video, then upload them to a shared learning platform such as Canvas, Seesaw, Flipgrid, or Google Classroom.

Because each school's learning platforms are different, we are providing curriculum as a pdf, expecting you to cut-and-paste into your platform or share on your screen in whatever way works best for your classroom and your students. The video and curriculum are divided into three approximately 10-minute sections, which can be viewed back-to-back or on separate days, and self-led lesson plans to be completed at the end of watching each section. It's possible to complete the whole curriculum in 1-2 hours, or to expand it over the course of multiple days.

Because California 9th graders study *Romeo and Juliet* as part of the common core, we have designed this lesson with them in mind, though we feel it can also be used with younger or older students. If you are teaching the whole play and would like a longer curriculum with lesson plans for more than one scene, we are happy to provide access to our 3-week lesson plan indexed to state standards. (Please note that it was created in 2017 to accompany our in-person tour, and has not been adjusted for distance learning, but much of the material will still be useful.)

Each lesson plan includes a discussion of gender and performance, the major theme of this episode, as well as a close read of some of the text of the scene. We haven't provided an "answer key" because we believe there are no "right" answers to the questions we've posed. With this curriculum, we have identified three major learning goals. Students will:

- Think critically and develop personal aesthetics, using self-reflection to create ownership of the material. We believe this is the best way to inspire a lifelong love of Shakespeare and poetry.
- Challenge heteronormative assumptions about this tragic play by exploring different performance norms throughout history, including Shakespeare's own day.
- Interrogate gender roles in Shakespeare's England and better understand the surprising performance history of this play.
- Use textual clues in verse structure and word choices to better understand how actors use language to create characters.

We haven't included a glossary of unfamiliar words since the internet is readily available for that purpose: we recommend referring your students to <https://www.shakespeareswords.com/>

This is a new program for the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, so we value your feedback and look forward to serving your needs with future episodes of Takes on Shakes. If you have any questions or suggestions, you can reach out to us at [sfshakes@sfshakes.org](mailto:sfshakes@sfshakes.org).

Very best -  
The Takes on Shakes Team

For students:

## Introduction

Welcome! Today you're going to have an experience with Shakespeare. Whether or not you've ever read or studied Shakespeare before, you've probably heard his name – he has a very strong hold on English-speaking cultures.

You may be looking forward to this class, or you may not be, based on some things you've heard about Shakespeare – that his plays are boring, hard to understand, or only interesting to scholars. We hope to change your mind.

At San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, we believe that the best way to appreciate and relate to Shakespeare's stories, language, and themes is to watch them in performance, not just read them off a page. We hope that by watching the scene and not just reading it, the performances and choices of the actors will help you better understand what's happening in the scene.

We also believe that Shakespeare only matters if the plays matter to you, and if you find meaning in them now, whoever you might be. So we're not very interested in the "right" way to perform Shakespeare, or the "right" answers to the questions in this curriculum – there are none! What has kept these plays vibrant over 400+ years is that people from many cultures, backgrounds, and levels of education have discovered in them something about what it means to be human. If, as you watch the scene today, you make a discovery in a way that applies to you and your experience, no one can tell you their discovery is more correct.

Today's lesson will cover just one scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. You're going to watch a video and pause a few times to reflect on what you're seeing and hearing. Your teacher may provide additional assignments based on other parts of the play, but for now, we're just going to focus on one scene – a scene that has traditionally been called "the balcony scene" – although, as you're about to learn, even that name is misleading.

The balcony scene happens in the first half of the play, in what modern editors have chosen to call Act Two, scene two. We've learned that Romeo is a Montague, and that his family has a long-standing feud with the Capulet family. He's also in love with a girl named Rosalind, and he finds out she's going to be at a party thrown by the Capulets. He and his friends decide to crash the party in disguise. Also at the party is young Juliet Capulet, who we've learned is about to become engaged to County Paris, another nobleman. Once Romeo and Juliet see each other, Rosalind is forgotten and Paris doesn't have a chance. The two flirt and kiss, before Romeo's cover is blown and he has to leave quickly with his friends. But he can't resist trying to see her one last time - he slips away from his pals, sees Juliet at her window... and the scene begins.

If there are words you don't understand as you're watching and completing the lessons, we suggest using <https://www.shakespeareswords.com/> to look them up. Remember that Shakespeare invented a lot of words, so his audience may not have known them either - they figured out the meaning from the context and even the sound of the word.

## **PART ONE (0:00-9:10)**

Watch the first part of *Takes on Shakes: Takes on Romeo & Juliet*, through 9:10 (you'll be given a chance to pause.)

***THEMES*** (continued in full document that comes with *Takes on Shakes*)