

Romeo and Juliet

Sample Analytical Paper Topics

The following paper topics are based on the entire play. Following each topic is a thesis and sample outline. Use these as a starting point for your paper.

TOPIC #1

Impetuosity is a tragic flaw that affects character and action. This flaw within a character will ultimately cause the death of the protagonist. Write an essay in which hasty decisions or actions result in the final tragedy of the play.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Impetuosity is a tragic flaw present in the characters of Romeo, Juliet, Lord Capulet, and Friar Laurence.*

II. Impetuosity of Romeo

- A. Love
 - 1. Instant love for Juliet
 - 2. Decision to marry
 - 3. Preference to death rather than be parted from Juliet
- B. Relationship with others
 - 1. Reaction after he is banished
 - 2. Kills Tybalt
 - 3. Kills Paris
 - 4. Purchase of poison from the apothecary

III. Impetuosity of Juliet

- A. Love
 - 1. Instant love for Romeo
 - 2. Decision to marry
 - 3. Her death
- B. Relationship to others
 - 1. Reactions after learning that she is to marry Paris
 - 2. Her attitude toward her parents

IV. Impetuosity of Lord Capulet

- A. Decision to give consent for Juliet to marry Paris
- B. Reaction when Juliet refuses to marry Paris
- C. Decision to move the date up one day

V. Impetuosity of Friar Laurence

- A. Willingness to marry Romeo and Juliet
- B. Sending Friar John with the letter to Romeo instead of Balthasar
- C. Leaving Juliet in the tomb after she awoke

VI. Conclusion: Romeo, Juliet, Lord Capulet, and Friar Laurence all acted hastily at some point in the play which contributed to the final destruction of Romeo and Juliet.

TOPIC #2

Because the entire play represents only five days in the lives of Romeo and Juliet, the time line is an important element. Write an essay explaining the happenings on each of these days and explain how these influenced the outcome of the play.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *Important situations occur in each of these five days of the protagonists' lives that influence the outcome of the play.*

II. Day One—Sunday

- A. The quarrel among the Capulet and Montague servants
 - 1. Tybalt fights Benvolio
 - 2. Prince issues warning
- B. Romeo's romantic nature
 - 1. His infatuation for Rosaline
 - 2. His love for Juliet is established
- C. Paris asks to marry Juliet
- D. Lord Capulet's ball
 - 1. Romeo and Juliet meet
 - 2. Tybalt's anger is ignited against Romeo

III. Day Two—Monday

- A. Romeo incorporates Friar Laurence's help
- B. The Nurse meets with Romeo to get the wedding plans
- C. Romeo and Juliet are married
- D. The fights on the streets of Verona
 - 1. Tybalt kills Mercutio
 - 2. Romeo kills Tybalt
- E. Romeo is banished
- F. Friar Laurence devises a plan for Romeo and Juliet
- G. Paris is granted permission to marry Juliet

IV. Day Three—Tuesday

- A. Juliet refuses to marry Paris
- B. Friar Laurence devises another plan for Juliet
 - 1. Juliet drinks the sleeping potion
 - 2. Friar Laurence sends a message to Romeo

V. Day Four—Wednesday

- A. Juliet is found “dead”
- B. Juliet is buried in the Capulet monument

VI. Day Five—Thursday

- A. Romeo learns of Juliet’s death
- B. Romeo buys poison
- C. Romeo kills Paris and himself
- D. Friar Laurence learns that his message to Romeo was not delivered
- E. Juliet kills herself

VII. Conclusion: The plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is developed in the course of five days in the lives of the protagonists.

TOPIC #3

The structure of a play is important to the development and ultimate resolution of the conflict. Write an essay in which the five stages of a tragedy are examined showing a relationship to the story and its development.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *A tragedy can be organized by the dramatist into five components of dramatic structure which enable the play to progress smoothly and logically to a conclusion.*

II. Introduction or exposition

- A. Tone is established.
 - 1. Feud between the families
 - 2. Love of Romeo and Rosaline
 - 3. Love of Romeo and Juliet
- B. Setting is evoked.
 - 1. Streets of Verona
 - 2. Capulet household
- C. Characters are introduced.

III. Complication or rising action

- A. Love between the children of the two feuding families
- B. Marriage of Romeo and Juliet
- C. Tybalt’s challenge to Romeo

IV. Climax or Turning Point

- A. The murders
 - 1. Mercutio
 - 2. Tybalt
- B. Romeo’s banishment
- C. Lord Capulet’s decree that Juliet is to marry Paris

V. Falling Action

- A. Juliet's internal conflict
 - 1. Conflict with her parents
 - 2. Conflict with the nurse
 - 3. Conflict concerning the compulsory marriage to Paris
 - 4. Fears concerning the potion
- B. Friar Laurence's plan for Romeo and Juliet

VI. Conclusion or catastrophe

- A. Friar Laurence's message does not reach Romeo
- B. Deaths
 - 1. Paris
 - 2. Romeo
 - 3. Juliet
- C. Feud ends with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet

VII. Conclusion: The introduction, the complication, the climax, the falling action, and the conclusion are components of dramatic structure which enable the play to progress smoothly and logically to a conclusion.

TOPIC #4

Fate and coincidence are used extensively in *Romeo and Juliet*. Both these elements helped to bring about the tragedy or destruction of the protagonists. Write an essay in which you give examples of how each element is used.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: *The elements of fate—chance, circumstance, and coincidence—are used in Romeo and Juliet to advance the plot and bring about the ultimate deaths of the protagonists.*

II. Examples of chance and circumstance

- A. Romeo and Juliet are children of parents who hate one another
- B. The servant given the list of names for Lord Capulet's ball cannot read
- C. Benvolio is able to talk Romeo into attending the ball to look at Rosaline
- D. Lord Capulet allows Romeo to remain at the ball
- E. Romeo meets and falls in love with Juliet
- F. The lovers are separated because of an accidental fight
- G. The Prince decrees that Romeo is to be banished instead of put to death

III. Examples of coincidence

- A. Romeo is asked to read the invitation list for the illiterate servant
- B. Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice at the ball
- C. Lord Capulet moves the wedding day from Thursday to Wednesday
- D. Balthasar happens to see Juliet's funeral and tells Romeo of her death
- E. Friar John is quarantined and Friar Laurence's message never reaches Romeo
- F. Friar Laurence arrives too late at Juliet's tomb

- IV.** Conclusion: The elements of fate work hand in hand with each other to bring about the inevitable deaths of the protagonists.

TOPIC #5

Comic relief is used by Shakespeare to delight his audiences. It is often used after an intense scene to relieve the tension brought about by the extremely emotional dialogue or actions in the play. Write an essay describing the situations when comic relief or humor was used by different characters in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Outline

- I.** Thesis Statement: *The use of comic relief or humor is used predominately by three of Shakespeare's characters to relieve some of the moments of tension in Romeo and Juliet.*

II. Nurse

- A. Her compulsion to talk
- B. Her use of malapropisms
- C. Her teasing of Juliet

III. Mercutio

- A. His Queen Mab speech
- B. The exchange between Benvolio and Mercutio in Act II, Scene 1
- C. His use of puns and figurative language

IV. Lord Capulet

- A. His remarks toward the young ladies at his ball
- B. His behavior at the ball
- C. His preparations for the wedding

- V.** Conclusion: Humor is used as a comic relief by the nurse, Mercutio, and Lord Capulet in order to relieve the tension brought about by more intense scenes or situations.