

Key themes

**Conflict/
violence**

Physical conflict such as the street fighting and the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. Conflict can also be viewed with the inner conflict of Romeo with his thoughts of love at the start; the emotional conflict of the lovers, torn between their love and their loyalty to their families.

Family

Importance of family name. Seen with Tybalt and his desire to maintain the family honour. Capulet's hurry to marry Juliet to Paris after Tybalt's death to secure the family lineage.

**Parents/
children
relationships**

Parental love can be seen at the start where Lord Montague is concerned about Romeo's isolation, in Lord Capulet's attitude to Paris' marriage proposal in Act 1, and how it is contrasted in Act 3 with threatening to disown Juliet. The Nurse and Friar Lawrence adopting roles as confidantes to Romeo and Juliet.

Fate

From the servant who cannot read the names on the invitation list for the Capulet party, to the late delivery of Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo. Romeo and Juliet both belittle the role of fate but many of the events are a direct result of Romeo's impulsive nature.

Coverage

Your NEA question may direct you to look at particular scenes, but you must show knowledge of the whole text. For example, you may be considering the presentation of Juliet in Act 1 scene 1, you should also refer to what happens to her at the end of the play.

If your question has bullet points, remember to address all of them.

If there is evaluative approach, for example, 'How far do you agree that ...?' remember to answer the question.

Key quotations

'O brawling love, O loving hate
O anything, of nothing first
created'

'I'll look to like, if looking liking
move'

'O, she doth teach the torches to
burn bright!'

'Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical,
Dove-feathered raven'

'Out you green-sickness carrion!
Out you baggage!
You tallow face'

'For saints have hands, that
pilgrims' hands do touch
And palm to palm is holy palmers'
kiss'

'Then I defy you stars!'

'O true apothecary
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a
kiss I die'

'O happy dagger.
This is thy sheath, there rust and
let me die'

'It seems she hangs upon the
cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear'

'If I profane with my unworthing
hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is
this'

'O dear account! My life is my
foe's debt'

'My only love sprung from my
only hate'

'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art
thou Romeo?'

'Deny thy father and refuse thy
name'

'A plague o' both your houses!
They have made worms' meat of
me'

'O I am Fortune's fool!'

Context

**Shakespeare's
time**

Shakespeare wrote this play at the time of Queen Elizabeth I. Shakespeare borrowed heavily from two texts: The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet (1562) and Palace of Pleasure (1567).

Religion

There is a heavy religious presence across several parts of the play. Society at the time, right across Europe was deeply religious. Several characters demonstrate their commitment to the church, such as Romeo and Juliet who choose to marry, and the Capulets, who are quick to believe that Juliet is in a better place (Heaven) after she is found 'dead'.

**Patriarchal
society**

Society at the time was patriarchal. Women belonged to their fathers and then their husbands, so Juliet would be expected to obey her father. Women were not permitted to own land or enter most professions. They were instead expected to bear children, be gentle and womanly.

**Healthcare
and medicine**

Healthcare and medicine were not very advanced in 1500s – there were numerous diseases that were not understood. This makes it much more believable that Juliet could have died so suddenly and so young.

NEA – 24 marks, 2 hours

Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations: 12 marks.

In simple terms, this means:

AO1

How well do you know the events of the play?

- Can you show understanding of characters and relationships?
- Can you use evidence and/or quotations to prove your points?

Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes, and settings: 12 marks.

In simple terms, this means:

AO2

- Can you explain and analyse the effects of words and imagers?
- Can you explain why Shakespeare chose to use certain words?
- Can you explain how a word/image creates a particular mood/atmosphere?

Some useful phrases

Shakespeare presents / hints / creates ...

Through the character of ... Shakespeare explores/questions ...

Shakespeare challenges the belief that ...

Shakespeare asks the audience to question/consider ...

Shakespeare reinforces this idea earlier/later in the play when ...

Quotations

Decide which quotations you want to use to prove your points.

Remember that using short, integrated quotations is more effective than writing out large chunks of text.