


Education Pack

Exploring the Balcony Scene

The following practical exercises are designed to accompany video extracts of Act 2 Scene 2, the 'Balcony Scene' in rehearsal which you will find at:

www.rsc.org.uk/explore/engage/romeo_2008.html

You will need to access these extracts where you see this icon: 

This rehearsal video was recorded with Laura Rees playing Juliet. She later had to withdraw from the production due to illness.

Try the practical exercises with your group, then ask them to watch the actors working on the same piece of script in the rehearsal room.

For some of the activities, you will need a large space to work in. The activities are differentiated by outcome and most of them would work from Key Stages 3 to 5.

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Exploring Romeo's soliloquy

First **watch the first two clips** which set up the context for this scene:



What's happened to Romeo and Juliet before the start of this scene?
What do Romeo and Juliet want?

Then hand out copies of Romeo's soliloquy (see page 3).

- In a circle, **read the scene out loud** around the group, changing reader at each punctuation mark.
- Then ask the group to **close their eyes** while you read the scene through again. This time ask the group to listen carefully to all the words that they can hear to do with **light**. Ask them to **echo** those words out loud.

What words did they hear?

Why does Romeo use so many words to do with light?

What is Romeo describing with these words?

- Now ask half the group to keep their eyes closed while the other half speak the text by pronouncing only the **vowel sounds**.

What do they hear?

What **emotion** is described by the vowel sounds?

What is Romeo feeling here?

Do the sounds of the words give us information about how he feels?

- Characters who speak words with many vowels in them often have **vivid imaginations**. Ask the group:
Does the language Romeo uses in this speech suggest that he is imaginative?
What images stand out?
What do these images tell us about how Romeo feels about Juliet?
- Working in pairs, ask the group to take it in turns to **read the soliloquy** to the other person. Ask the group:
Who is Romeo talking to in this speech?
Does he speak directly to the audience?
Are any of the lines addressed to Juliet herself?
(Juliet cannot hear him but he can still address line of the text to her.)



- Now **watch the clip** showing Neil and David rehearsing the same soliloquy:
Romeo's soliloquy

Discuss: What did they notice about how it is rehearsed?

Who is he talking to?

What words stood out now?

How does Romeo feel as he says this speech?

Did you notice anything new - either words or images, when you watched an actor rehearsing this soliloquy?

Extract from Act 2 Scene 2 : Romeo's soliloquy**ROMEO:**

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief

That thou her maid art far more fair than she.

Be not her maid, since she is envious.

Her vestal livery is but sick and green,

And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

It is my lady. O, it is my love!

O that she knew she were!

She speaks. Yet she says nothing. What of that?

Her eye discourses. I will answer it.

I am too bold. 'Tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars

As daylight doth a lamp. Her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek



Playing As Ifs:

When does Juliet know it is Romeo in the orchard garden?

Ask the group to get into pairs and decide who will be Romeo and who will be Juliet. Recap on where the characters have just come from and what has just happened – see page 2.

- Ask the pairs to stand back to back to **read aloud** the edited version of the Balcony Scene (see page 5).
- After they have read the scene, discuss:
 - Where are Romeo and Juliet standing at the start of this scene?
 - How close together should they be?
 - How loud should they be speaking?
 - Should Romeo be there?

Explain that you will now explore at which point Juliet recognises that it is Romeo who is in the garden. Does Juliet recognise Romeo straightaway or is she scared by the intrusion of a stranger into her private world?

- Firstly, Juliet plays the first page of the scene **as if she is angry** that a stranger has intruded. Romeo plays the scene **as if he is trying to reassure her** that it is him.
- Next, ask the group to try it again with Juliet playing it **as if she recognises Romeo immediately** and is being **playful** with him and Romeo **as if he is also playful**.
- Discuss: How does this alter the beginning of the scene?
 - What significance do the words "dear saint" have?
 - Are there any words/lines that stand out?

Now ask three pairs to work together while the rest of the group watch.

One pair remains as Romeo and Juliet, the other four in the group become the guards who protect the Capulet property at night.

Place four chairs in a large square around Romeo and Juliet and ask a student to be a guard on each chair.

- Romeo and Juliet must speak the edited text of the scene **as if they don't want to be overheard**.

The guards must pace along the four sides of a square. When two guards cross paths Romeo and Juliet must be silent. Explain that if they are talking when the guards cross, they could be killed. When the guards pass each other, they can begin to speak again.

Discuss: How does this element of risk change the playing of the scene? What are the risks? How high are they? Is one of the characters more aware of danger than the other? What lines suggest this? Are there any other lines that you heard differently playing the scene in this way?



- Now watch the video clips on the website of the actors rehearsing the scene:

Juliet's famous lines
Who is it?

- Discuss:
 - Did they notice anything new about this extract after seeing the actor rehearse it?
 - How do you think the scene should be played – as if Juliet recognises Romeo straightaway or as if she doesn't?
 - Romeo refers to Juliet as "dear saint" in the ball scene before they kiss – is he giving her a clue to his identity here, or playfully reminding her of their first kiss?
 - How does Romeo feel when he hears Juliet talking about him?

Extract from Act 2 Scene 2: When does Juliet know Romeo's in the orchard?

- JULIET** O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo
Deny thy father and refuse thy name
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet
- ROMEO** Shall I hear more or shall I speak at this?
- JULIET** Tis but thy name that is mine enemy
- ROMEO** Call me but love, and I'll be new baptised
Henceforth I never will be Romeo
- JULIET** What man art thou that thus bescreened in night
So stumblest on my council?
- ROMEO** My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself
Because it is an enemy to thee.
- JULIET** Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?
- ROMEO** Neither fair maid if either thee dislike.
- JULIET** How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any kinsmen find thee here.
- ROMEO** With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
- JULIET** If they do see thee, they will murder thee
- ROMEO** I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes
And but thou love me, let them find me here;
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love
- JULIET** Oh gentle Romeo
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
In truth fair Montague I am too fond....
I should have been more strange, must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love passion; therefore pardon me,

ROMEO Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow

JULIET O Swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon,

ROMEO What shall I swear by?

JULIET Well do not swear. Although I joy in thee
I have no joy of this contract tonight,
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say 'It lightens'. Sweet, good night;

ROMEO Oh wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?

ROMEO Th'exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine

JULIET I gave thee mine before thou did'st request it;
And yet I would it were to give again

ROMEO Would'st thou withdraw it? For what purpose love?

JULIET But to be frank and give it thee again

NURSE *calls within*

JULIET I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu!
Stay but a little I will come again. *Exit*

ROMEO Oh blessed, blessed night! I am afeared,
Being in night, all this but a dream,
Too flattering to be substantial.

JULIET *re-enters*

JULIET If thy bent of love be honorable
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay
And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

NURSE *calls*

JULIET I come anon.....

What o'clock tomorrow shall I send to thee?

ROMEO By the hour of nine...

JULIET I will not fail.
Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say good night till it be morrow!



Exploring differences in language: Romeo and Juliet's language in the Balcony Scene

- Ask two people to volunteer to be Romeo and Juliet and read the edited extract of the Balcony Scene (see page 8).
- Ask half of the rest of the group to stand behind Romeo - they will be his echo. The other half of the group stands behind Juliet – they will be her echo. Every time Romeo says the word '**love**', the students behind him echo the word. Every time Juliet **asks a question**, the students behind her echo the question.
- Discuss: What do they notice from this exercise about the type of language that Romeo and Juliet are using here?

What is the **difference** between their choices of language?

Why does Romeo choose to say the word '**love**' so many times?

Why does Juliet ask so many **questions**?

What does this say about their **characters**?



Now watch the video clip of the actors rehearsing this extract:
How is their language different?

Extract from Act 2 Scene 2: Echoing 'love' and questions

- ROMEO** I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
- JULIET** What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?
- ROMEO** By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.
- JULIET** My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?
- ROMEO** Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.
- JULIET** How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.
- ROMEO** With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.
- JULIET** If they do see thee, they will murder thee.
- ROMEO** Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.
- JULIET** I would not for the world they saw thee here.
- ROMEO** I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.
- JULIET** By whose direction found'st thou out this place?
- ROMEO** By love, who first did prompt me to inquire;
He lent me counsel and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise.



The Parting: How does Shakespeare use repetition to slow a scene down?

At the end of the Balcony Scene in Act 2 Scene 2, Romeo and Juliet reluctantly part company. Try the following exercise to explore how Shakespeare reveals their feelings about this parting through the structure of the language and their use of repetition.

- Ask the group to get into pairs and decide who will be Romeo and who will be Juliet. Hand out the extract on page 10 and ask them to **read it aloud** in their pairs.
- Ask them to read it again paying attention to those lines that are **broken** between the characters. Can they speak them so that there are no gaps (as if one character is finishing off the sentences of another character)?
Shared lines in an iambic rhythm are spoken without a pause.
What do the shared lines tell us about how the characters feel about each other here?
- Now ask the pairs to **underline** all the times the words '**remember**'/'**remembering**' and '**forget**'/'**forgetting**' are said by Romeo and Juliet.

Ask them to stand opposite each other about 10 paces apart. They must then say their lines **pretending to bat a feather** in the air to the other person every time one of these words is said. Tell them they must try to keep the feather - and the words - in the air at all times.

Discuss: What is Shakespeare telling us about Romeo and Juliet through this language? How do they feel towards each other at this moment?
How do they feel about parting?
How does this repetition slow the scene down?

- What other words are repeated in this scene? In their pairs, ask the group to **underline** all the other **repetitions** of words and their opposites such as 'I'/'thee' and 'here'/'there'.

Now stand a distance from your partner and read through the speech taking a step forward every time you come to a word you have underlined.

- Discuss: What do you notice? Where do you end up?
What effect does this repetition have?
What is Shakespeare telling us about Romeo and Juliet through this language?
How do they feel towards each other at this moment?
How do they feel about parting?
How does this repetition slow the scene down?

Explain to the group that when characters repeat each other's words, it is a way of them trying to be closer through shared language. Romeo and Juliet cannot be physically close here (she is on her balcony), so they use language to be intimate.



Watch the following clip of this scene in rehearsal:
The parting

Do you notice anything different when you see the actors playing this game in rehearsals?

Extract from Act 2 Scene 2: The Parting

JULIET Romeo!

ROMEO My neisse?

JULIET What o'clock tomorrow
Shall I send to thee?

ROMEO By the hour of nine.

JULIET I will not fail, 'tis twenty year till then.
I have forgot why I did call thee back.

ROMEO Let me stand here till thou remember it.

JULIET I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Rememb'ring how I love thy company.

ROMEO And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,
Forgetting any other home but this.

JULIET 'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone:
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
That lets it hop a little from his hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gives,
And with a siken thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty.

ROMEO I would I were thy bird

JULIET Sweet so would I
Yet I should kill thee with such cherishing.
Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say good night till it be morrow!



Character choices: What do Romeo and Juliet do after the balcony scene?

At the end of a rehearsal, director Neil Bartlett asks his actors to think about the following questions:

1. What does your character **want** now?
2. What **obstacles** stand in their way?
3. What are they **going to do** to overcome these obstacles?

Divide your group in half - a Romeo group and a Juliet group.

- Within each group, ask them to work in smaller groups (of three or four) to create three tableaux (still images), one for each of the above decisions for either Romeo or Juliet.
- Share images with the whole group and interrogate:
 - How do Romeo and Juliet feel now?
 - What should they do next?
 - What is stopping them?
 - How might they overcome this?

Watch the following video clip to see what the actors say about their characters at the end of this scene:



What happens next?

Do you hear anything that surprises you?
Do you agree with their analysis?