

Romeo and Juliet: Then and Now

Prompt: **How are teenagers of your generation like Romeo and Juliet?** Find something in the play that still makes sense to today's teenagers, something that a teenager in today's world might say or think. Capture attention and make your claim: What is there in this drama that modern teenagers still understand? In the body of your essay, support your claim with specific quotations from the play: no more than two sentences each; do not copy and paste! Warrant your evidence by showing why and how the passage is a truthful representation of modern teenage feelings, conflicts, or issues.

Think about this: How do you write an essay in response to this topic? First you have to address the question. How are you or others you know like some of the characters in the play? For example, do you know anyone who is like Mercutio? You know, one of those guys who is pretty smart and highly verbal, but is often goofing around or teasing his classmates...maybe making life difficult for his math teacher because everyone knows he COULD get better scores if he studied, but he CHOOSES to do other things. Or maybe you know a young couple like Romeo and Juliet themselves: So passionately infatuated with each other that they “hang out” together all the time, alienate their other friends because they are so consumed with each other, and/or begin to lose touch with other aspects of their lives like family or sports or school. Speaking of family, maybe you have witnessed a situation where one person wasn't from a “worthy” family, so parents got involved and prevented a child from seeing someone from that family. Start with the ideas! Generate the examples to support it.

Follow the traditional format:

- Capture attention, but make sure your attention-getter relates to your claim.
- State a claim CLEARLY: Answer the question with a clear, simple sentence! Don't ramble around it; say it!
- Provide evidence to support the claim: short quotes (and paraphrases) from the play with explanation of how the characters were acting and what conflicts were arising
- Warrant the evidence: illustrations from modern life/experience that the quotes also apply to; tell specific stories from your experience. Don't just say, “Teenagers always....,” or “We all know that teenagers....” Give actual examples. Tell stories to support your comparison.
- Conclusion

Helpful Sentence Starters:

One issue from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that modern teenagers still understand is....
The problem of _____ is something that both Romeo and modern teenaged boys understand.
Teenaged girls today would completely understand Juliet's conflict in the scene where....

Questions from the First Day in the Lab:

Q: Should we have just one main way that modern teenagers are like Romeo and Juliet and then support it with lots of different examples, or should we have lots of different ways that modern teenagers are like Romeo and Juliet and support them with separate examples?

A: Either way will work. Consider what you really think and what support you have for your opinion and decide based on that.

Q: Do we name names in our modern examples?

A: It's probably better to use nicknames or aliases just so you don't embarrass anyone (although if you described their behavior well enough, we'd probably know who you're referring to anyway)

Q: Do we need a quote from the play in every body paragraph?

A: Yes. But make them SHORT and to the point! Long, unrelated passages of text do nothing to help your argument, and Utah Write will mark you down for all those Shakespearean words that it doesn't recognize.

Q: How long does it have to be?

A: Can I just pause here to say, yet again, how much I hate this question? It has to be long enough to support your argument with as many warranted examples as you can come up with. The more you have, the more convincing your argument is, and therefore the higher score you will get. So, I'll answer your question with one of my own: How good do you want your essay to be? If you want a *D*, make it about a paragraph long with no specific examples. If you want an *A*, about six fully developed paragraphs is probably the minimum. There is no length requirement, but in order to be a quality argument, there has to be enough substance to your paper to prove your points.

Q: Why were you being so mean to Jordan in 3rd period?

A: Because his writing is full of enthusiastic vapors and unnecessary adjectives. Here's an example: "In Shakespeare's sublime drama *Romeo and Juliet*, the wonderful characters are developed in a most convincing and fabulous way. It is just so super how this magnificent writer can make us feel the same amazing sensations that his characters were feeling even though we are in a completely different time and place. This kind of great and massive talent is especially apparent in Act I when the exceptional Romeo first encounters the exquisite Juliet, who is astonishingly great and wonderful." C'mon, man, you're makin' me puke! Quit trying to pad your writing with effusive adjectives just to make it sound like you are saying something important. Clear, simple statements backed up by clear, simple examples and warranted by clear, simple explanations will get you much farther than this kind of happy crappy.

Q: Can we see an example of a paragraph that does what you want us to do?

A: Yes, but this one is from the parent perspective because if I show you one from the teenager perspective you will steal it and use it in your own papers:

While Capulet is often portrayed as a rage-a-holic who treats his daughter unfairly, most modern fathers understand what he is thinking and feeling. In Act III, Scene 5, he rages at Juliet for defying his wishes: "It makes me mad./Day, night, hour, tide, time, work, play,/Alone, in company, still my care hath been/To have her matched." In other words, he has worried all her life about making sure that when he is gone there would be a good man to take care of his daughter. This man, in his view, is Paris, a noble earl from a nearby town who has shown an interest in Juliet since the second scene in the play. Capulet has chosen Paris for Juliet because he loves her, not because he is being unreasonable. Paris is rich, good looking, and without the family conflicts of the Montague-Capulet feud, but Juliet has already married Romeo (secretly) and her father is angry that his efforts on her behalf have not been recognized. When my own daughter lived at home, I sometimes felt the same way. She would casually assume that it was okay for her to make plans with her teenaged friends instead of spending time with her family. I remember shouting: "You know, young lady, your mom and I work hard to provide you with all the conveniences of your life: a cell phone, a car to drive, a fridge full of food! It isn't too much for us to ask that you eat at home once in a while!" The time period is different, and of course I would never try to force her to marry someone she didn't know, but I completely understand how Capulet feels in this scene. Sometimes fathers get mad because they care about their kids more than the kids can imagine.