



ROMEO AND JULIET: CONTEXTS KS4/5

In these lessons, students will examine the key characters in *Romeo and Juliet*.

This is a lesson that we have taken from our KS4 / 5 *Romeo and Juliet* Scheme of Work, comprised of 30 lessons split into: Text in Performance, Characters, Language, Themes and Context.

We have adapted this lesson to make it suitable for use in a distance learning context. To access the full Scheme of Work for classroom-based learning, click [here](#).

DISTANCE LEARNING ACTIVITIES: CONTEXT

Key Questions for Students

Can I write about the context of *Romeo and Juliet* in a way that enhances audiences' understanding and enjoyment of the play?

Key words: *audience, background, context, cultural, historical, literary, programme, purpose, social*

PROLOGUE

Students should visit shakespearesglobe.com/watch and look at the theatre programme for the featured production (under the heading 'Read'), to browse and borrow ideas from. Students should make notes on the contents of programme. What are the essential items a programme should include? What else is sometimes included?

ENTER THE PLAYERS

1. Theatre Programmes

Having looked closely at the programme, let students know what their task will be: to produce their own programme for a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe. This could be focused around the streamed production. Ensure that students are clear about the audience and purpose for their programme.

Encourage students to think about this as broadly as possible, acknowledging that a programme has a range of purposes: to inform audiences about who is acting in the play, etc.; to explain the context and perhaps the production history of the play; to be an attractive souvenir for audiences (importance of cover, photographs, etc.).

2. Look closely at an article / essay from a Globe programme

Students undertake a close reading of one article from a Globe programme that gives readers valuable insights into an aspect of the play's context.

They could choose from the following programme articles on different Shakespeare plays:

2015.playingshakespeare.org/women-in-othello

2016.playingshakespeare.org/essay/hunting-for-shakespeare-s-sources

2017.playingshakespeare.org/essay/two-plays-many-meanings

2018.playingshakespeare.org/essay/much-ado-about-quite-lot

3. Writing your own programme notes

Students should now draft their own programme for a production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe. Provide students with a list of minimum contents, but students can choose to include other elements to enhance their finished piece. Alternatively, students could collaborate online to produce one entire programme as small groups or as a whole class.

Contents could include:

- a piece about the history of the Globe theatre
- an interview with a member of the backstage team
- a piece comparing the Italian and English source texts with Shakespeare's play
- a timeline of historical events from around the time the play was written
- a collage of images and ideas (sketches, moodboards, etc.) that provide insights into the setting and artistic vision for this particular production
- a cast list and rehearsal images
- a piece about attitudes to love, marriage and the role of women in Elizabethan society
- a retrospective piece about some different productions of *Romeo and Juliet*
- an opinion piece by the director about why this play still resonates with audiences today

EXUENT – Closing questions for students

Ask students to write a response to each of these questions, which they could email to you, or note at the back of their Student Booklet.

Why do people buy theatre programmes?

What should a theatre programme include?

Suggested plenary activity – Students should exchange work in progress online, providing feedback on areas such as:

- How informative it is for audiences;
- How well it explains the context and perhaps the production history of the play;
- How attractive it is in terms of being a souvenir for audiences (cover, photographs, etc.)

ASIDE – Further resource

With this and many other activities in these materials, students could also make links to their local theatres. Perhaps they could visit the theatre's website to find out more about: programmes and publicity, the theatre's history and archives, front of house and box office as well as many other aspects such as the auditorium, technical features of the theatre 'behind the scenes', stage management etc.