



# ROMEO AND JULIET

## Lesson 1: Main activity (25 mins approx.)

Start by asking students to look at Romeo's speech as he sees Juliet for the first time - lines 51-60. In pairs, ask students to take it in turns to speak each rhyming couplet. On each syllable, ask them to tap their chest. What effect does the rhythm have? What does it feel like to speak it? What emotions is Romeo experiencing at this moment in the text and how does the way he speaks show us this? Now ask students to look at the examples of contrast in this scene - Shakespeare's use of binary opposition in looking at images of black and white in reference to Juliet's beauty is worth spending some time talking about in relation to racism within the text (please see Shakespeare's Globe's Co-Director of Education, Professor Farah Karim-Cooper's book *The Great White Bard* for an excellent discussion of this passage from the perspective of race). Romeo is using quite hackneyed tropes here that would have been very familiar to a Shakespearean audience. How genuine do students think his emotions are here, considering how similar this language and its focus on beauty is to the way he speaks about Rosaline in Act 1 Scene 1?

Now give students the Act 1 Scene 5 edit provided, of Romeo and Juliet's first meeting. Ask students to work in pairs for this activity. They will need to stand up and ensure they have some space around them to move. Ask one student in each pair to be Romeo, and the other to be Juliet. As they say their lines, each time they are repeating a word their partner has already said, they need to step towards each other (and then step back again). Once they have done the activity once, ask them to share their findings - how many times did they find themselves moving towards their partner? What did they notice about the language that Romeo and Juliet use and how they pick up and play with the same words and ideas as each other? What might this tell us about their feelings towards each other? Now ask students to say the lines to each other again - perhaps swapping roles this time - but this time, each time they say a word connected in some way to religion, they need to stop and make a noise to represent heaven (a high pitched 'aah' normally works well!).





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Once they have finished, share their findings - they should have heard a lot of 'aahs' around the classroom, which emphasises just how steeped in religion their language is. Why do they think Shakespeare has chosen to make religion such an integral part of the language Romeo and Juliet share in their first meeting? How might this help the audience to decide how genuine Romeo's feelings towards Juliet are?

