

Five key things about Romeo in Acts I and II

1. Romeo is **sensitive** and **more serious** than some of his friends.
2. He is **prone to fall in love easily** and **acts with his heart** rather than his head.
3. He keeps his relationship with Juliet **secret** and **places his trust** in the Friar, seeking **his advice**.
4. He is **honourable** in his promises to Juliet.
5. He **marries Juliet in secret** at Friar Lawrence's cell.

What do we learn about Romeo at the beginning of the play?

- Romeo is the only son of the Montague family.
- He is not involved in the initial fight between the feuding families.
- He is infatuated with a girl called Rosaline who, as he tells his friend Benvolio, does not return his love.
- He has a bad feeling about attending the Capulet feast.
- He is brave in pursuing Juliet when he finds out she is a Capulet.



How does Romeo's character develop?

- Romeo's feelings of infatuation for Rosaline at the beginning of the play show his lovesick nature. (Act I)
- He reveals he is intuitive and sensitive and not as light-hearted as some of the other Montague young men. (Act I)
- His feelings for Rosaline fade away quickly when he meets Juliet. (Act I)
- We see hints of his reckless side when he climbs into the Capulet orchard, knowing this is dangerous. (Act II)
- He shows he can be committed to Juliet and serious about marriage and is not just a lovesick and fickle youth. (Act II)

Five key quotations

1. Romeo, lovesick for Rosaline: **'Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs'** (I.1.184)
2. Showing his serious and sad side to Mercutio: **'You have dancing shoes/With nimble soles, I have a soul of lead'** (I.4.14–15)
3. On first sight of Juliet: **'O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!/It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night/As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear'** (I.5.43–5)
4. In the orchard: **'I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,/And but thou love me, let them find me here'** (II.2.75–6)
5. Serious side, keeping his promise to Juliet: **'And there she shall at Friar Lawrence's cell/Be shriv'd and married'** (II.4.165–6)

Note it!

Note how when Tybalt is enraged at Romeo's presence at the feast, Capulet comments **'Verona brags of him/To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.'** If the lovers had been honest with their parents, perhaps the tragedy could have been avoided.

Exam focus

How can I write about Romeo as a sensitive character? AO1

You can write about your first impressions of Romeo.

In the early part of the play, **Romeo is presented as sensitive and a character who falls in love easily and desperately. He is captivated when he first sees Juliet, who is so beautiful, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!** in his eyes. This reveals his romantic nature and how he is open to love. **He seems very different to some of the young men in the play, who are bawdy and violent.**

Clearly identifies Romeo's key characteristics

Supported by an example of Romeo's dialogue

An inference to make a contrasting follow-up point

Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about Romeo. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

However, we see a serious side to Romeo when

Five key things about the theme of love

1. **Love** is treated and spoken of in **many different ways** in the play.
2. The play represents **courtly love** traditions through the **lovesick actions** of Romeo.
3. Love is also presented as a **distant emotion** through **Paris's proposal to Juliet** which seems to be an **arrangement for status** and increased **power**.
4. This **distance** can also be seen through the **parental love** of the **Capulets** for **Juliet**.
5. **Romantic love** can be seen as **spontaneous** and **dangerous** through the **immediate attraction** of **Romeo** and **Juliet**.

What does love mean to Romeo and Juliet?

- Romeo sees love as something all-consuming and he speaks of both Rosaline and then Juliet in ways that make them seem heavenly or like goddesses.
- Both Romeo and Juliet experience love as a strong emotional and physical attraction to each other.
- Both characters see love as being linked to marriage which they view as the way to make a true vow of love to one another.
- Both characters recognise that their love is dangerous against the backdrop of the family feud.
- Both Romeo and Juliet are prepared to die to protect their love for each other.



What does love mean to other characters in the play?

- Benvolio sees Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline as too serious and foolish and encourages him to meet other young girls.
- The Nurse views love as being linked with marriage and sexual pleasure.
- Mercutio and the young men of the Capulet household seem to view love only in sexual terms as revealed by the many jokes they make and their use of rough humour.
- Friar Lawrence sees love as being the possible source of reconciliation between the families but warns against the speed and which young people can fall in love.

Five key quotations

1. Romeo to Mercutio: **'Under love's heavy burden do I sink'** (I.4.22)
2. Juliet on finding out Romeo's identity: **'My only love sprung from my only hate!/Prodigious birth of love it is to me,/That I must love a loathed enemy'** (I.5.137-40)
3. Juliet to Romeo in the orchard: **'O swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,/That monthly changes in her circl'd orb,/Lest that thy love prove likewise variable'** (II.2.109-11)
4. Juliet makes her vow to Romeo: **'And yet I wish but for the thing I have:/My bounty is as boundless as the sea'** (II.2.132-3)
5. Friar Lawrence to Romeo: **'These violent delights have violent ends, ... Therefore love moderately, long love doth so'** (II.6.9-14)

Note it!

Note how Friar Lawrence warns the young couple about acting in haste once they have fallen in love at first sight. However, he goes on to marry them that same afternoon, in the belief that the marriage may reconcile the feud between the families.

Exam focus

How does Shakespeare present ideas about love? A01

You can comment on the different ways love is presented depending on a character's situation.

Shakespeare presents love in different ways. When Romeo is suffering as a result of unrequited love for Rosaline he tells his friends that, **'under love's heavy burden do I sink'**. Here love is seen in a negative light as an emotion that is draining and has the potential to cause misery.

Comments on the writer's use of the theme

An apt quotation well embedded

An evaluative comment on the effect of the theme

Now you try!

Finish this paragraph showing a different side to love. Use one of the quotations from the list above.

Shakespeare also shows us that love can be dangerous