ROMEO

ROMEO'S ROLE IN THE PLAY

Romeo Montague is the son of a wealthy Veronese family. He is a serious young man, as much inclined to act with his heart as with his head, and completely committed to Juliet. During the play he:

- is infatuated with Rosaline, who doesn't return his love (I.1).
- falls in love with Juliet at the ball (I.5).
- proclaims his love for Juliet in the balcony scene (II.2).
- marries Juliet (II.6).
- kills Tybalt in a duel and is exiled (III.1).
- returns to Verona unaware of Juliet's true state (V.1).
- kills Paris and dies in Juliet's tomb (V.3).

TOP TIP A01

It is important to look at Romeo's actions in Act V Scene 3. Make notes on what he does and why you think he acts as he does (for example, lying to Balthasar and killing Paris in fury). Do these actions match our earlier impressions of Romeo's character? Is Romeo just the sensitive and romantic young man we considered him to be in Act I?

ROMEO'S IMPORTANCE TO THE PLAY AS A WHOLE

Romeo is the male lead in the play and acts as the play's hero. He is central to the plot through his relationship with Juliet, the heroine, and many of Romeo's choices govern the action in the play. For example, his choice to go to the Capulet feast against his better judgement leads to him meeting Juliet. His choice to avenge Mercutio's death leads to his banishment and the desperate plan he and Juliet embark upon to be reunited, which ends in their death.

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT ROMEO A01

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
• He has a good reputation and is held in high esteem.	• 'Verona brags of him/To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.' (Capulet I.5.67–8) • Shows that, somewhat ironically, Capulet himself has heard of Romeo's good qualities.
• Romeo begins the play depressed and lovesick, but Juliet's love transforms and re-awakens him.	• 'Why, is not this better now than groaning/for love? Now art thou sociable; now art thou Romeo!' (Mercutio II.4.81–2) • Through Juliet he learns the value of real love that is returned, unlike his unrequited obsession with Rosaline.
• When he rashly kills Tybalt in revenge he realises he has behaved stupidly and has lost control of his destiny.	• 'O, I am fortune's fool!' (Romeo III.1.132) • Though avenging Mercutio's death, Romeo realises too late that Tybalt's death will make it impossible for him to be open about his marriage to Juliet.
• Romeo is loving, loyal and devoted to Juliet – so much so that he kills himself in order to stay by her side forever.	• '. . . I still will stay with thee/And never from this palace of dim night/Depart again.' (Romeo V.3.106–8) • Though their relationship was short-lived, Romeo honours his bride and chooses to die with her rather than live without her. Juliet chooses the same fate.

TOP TIP: WRITING ABOUT ROMEO A01

Make sure you highlight the ways in which Romeo is both similar to and different from the other young men of Verona. Emphasise how he is presented to us right from the start as a lover – one who becomes mature quickly and overcomes his infatuation with Rosaline to find a soulmate. He has the capacity for deep and sensitive feelings and uses language filled with beautiful images to express his feelings for Juliet. However, you should also comment on his weakness, which is to act in haste and without second thoughts. Much of Romeo's hasty decision-making adds to the inevitable tragedy.

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2**. They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation), and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: • Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response • Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations	You must: • Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!) • Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) • Show you have thought for yourself • Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations	**Don't write:** *Romeo is romantic and handsome and everybody likes him – even Lord Capulet says he is great and he's supposed to be Romeo's enemy. I can see this in the quotation, 'virtuous and well-governed youth.'* **Do write:** *Romeo is presented to us as a gentle, romantic and thoughtful character. He seems sensitive and is thought of as 'virtuous' and 'well-governed', even by Lord Capulet, enemy to his family, the Montagues.*

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects:

Shakespeare *suggests . . . , conveys . . . , implies . . . , explores . . . , describes how . . . , shows how . . .*
I/we (as readers) *infer . . . , recognise . . . , understand . . . , question . . . , reflect . . .*

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Mercutio. Note the difference in the quality of expression.

Student A:

Mercutio is the crazy one out of the Montagues. He jokes with Romeo and tries to stop him being a dreamer. He tells Romeo all about Queen Mab and speaks about dreams. 'I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain.' This means that Romeo has not got enough to think about if he is spending all day dreaming.

Very chatty and informal

This tells us what is happening, but in a very chatty way and does not explore or analyse

It could 'mean' this, but there are other possibilities

Student B:

Shakespeare uses Mercutio as a contrasting character to Romeo. Whereas Romeo is hesitant about going to the Capulet feast, Mercutio is keen to depart and to wear his mask, 'Give me a case to put my visage in.'. He is a lively character and encourages Romeo to join them, saying 'we must have you dance.' However, Mercutio, true to his name, is also quick to change his moods and drift into fantasies.

Shows the contrast in a more formal way and refers to the playwright

Clear and precise language with apt embedded quotations

Good variety of vocabulary

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and Don'ts
Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.	'Analyse' – comment **in detail** on **particular aspects** of the text or language. 'Language' – the choices of vocabulary, imagery, variety of sentences, dialogue/speech etc. 'Form' – how the story is told (e.g. playscript, tragedy). 'Structure' – the order in which events are revealed, whether in verse or prose, the types of speeches that are use, or the ways descriptions are presented e.g. in sonnet form. 'Create meaning' – what can we, as readers or an audience, infer from what the writer tells us? What is implied by particular descriptions, or events? 'Subject terminology' – words you should use when writing about plays, such as 'character', 'protagonist', 'imagery', 'setting', etc.	**Don't write:** *The writing is really descriptive in this bit so I know Juliet is scared of the tomb.* **Do write:** *Shakespeare **conveys** the terror Juliet has at this point, as she feels that 'a faint cold fear thrills through my veins'. The **use** of 'cold fear' has **connotations** of death, and foreshadows Juliet's real death in the tomb.*

THE THREE 'I'S

- Firstly, the best analysis focuses on specific ideas, events or uses of language and thinks about what is **implied.**
- This means looking beyond the obvious and beginning to draw **inferences.** On the surface, the way that Capulet speaks to his wife and organises his household tells us he is older and likes to be in control – but what deeper ideas does it convey about what life was like in a wealthy household at the time, or how the lives of men and women were different?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a person, relationship or idea.