



# ROMEO AND JULIET – THE BIG QUESTION

A Key Stage 3 and 4 PSHE and Citizenship Resource



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**theBigGive.org.uk**

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The logo for 'What you WILL'. It features a bright yellow, sun-like shape with a teal feather graphic. The text 'What you WILL' is written in a playful, rounded font. 'What' is in black, 'you' is in teal, and 'WILL' is in large, bold, black letters. The feather is positioned between 'you' and 'WILL'.

## Curriculum Links

This KS3/KS4 Citizenship, English and Personal Wellbeing teaching sequence provides a scheme of work to help pupils learn about forming and talking through their opinions. It uses Shakespeare's plays to explore a range of topics including:

- *Personal growth and maturity*
- *Responsibility at different stages of life*
- *The importance of the rule of law*
- *Young people and mental health*
- *The power of political rhetoric*
- *Forgiveness and retribution*
- *Religious and other forms of extremism*
- *Cyberbullying and the pressures of social media*
- *The importance of diversity and of respecting difference*

## From the National Curriculum – Citizenship

### Purpose of study

A high-quality citizenship education helps to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. In particular, citizenship education should foster pupils' keen awareness and understanding of democracy, government and how laws are made and upheld. Teaching should equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments. It should also prepare pupils to take their place in society as responsible citizens, manage their money well and make sound financial decisions.

### Aims

The national curriculum for citizenship aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of how the United Kingdom is governed, its political system and how citizens participate actively in its democratic systems of government.



- Develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society and how laws are shaped and enforced.
- Develop an interest in, and commitment to, participation in volunteering as well as other forms of responsible activity, that they will take with them into adulthood.
- Are equipped with the skills to think critically and debate political questions, to enable them to manage their money on a day-to-day basis, and plan for future financial needs.

## Subject content

### Key stage 3

Teaching should develop pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding while developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.

Pupils should be taught about:

- The development of the political system of democratic government in the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, Parliament and the monarch.
- The operation of Parliament, including voting and elections, and the role of political parties.
- The functions and uses of money, including the importance and practice of budgeting, and managing risk.

### Key stage 4

Pupils should be taught about:

- Parliamentary democracy and the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, including the power of government, the role of citizens and Parliament in holding those in power to account, and the different roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary and a free press.
- The different electoral systems used in and beyond the United Kingdom and actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond.



- Other systems and forms of government, both democratic and non-democratic, beyond the United Kingdom.
- Local, regional and international governance and the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world.
- Human rights and international law.
- The legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems
- Diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.
- The different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of their community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity
- Income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and how public money is raised and spent.

## **The Personal Wellbeing Programme of Study – non statutory**

### **The range and content includes:**

#### **Key Stage 3**

- Examples of diverse values encountered in society and the clarification of personal values.
- The knowledge and skills needed for setting realistic targets and personal goals.
- Physical and emotional change and puberty.
- Sexual activity, human reproduction, contraception, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections and HIV and how high-risk behaviours affect the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
- Facts and laws about drug, alcohol and tobacco use and misuse, and the personal and social consequences of misuse for themselves and others.
- How a balanced diet and making choices for being healthy contribute to personal wellbeing, and the importance of balance between work, leisure and exercise.
- Ways of recognising and reducing risk, minimising harm and getting help in emergency and risky situations.
- A knowledge of basic first aid.



- i. The features of positive and stable relationships, how to deal with a breakdown in a relationship and the effects of loss and bereavement.
- j. Different types of relationships, including those within families and between older and young people, boys and girls, and people of the same sex, including civil partnerships.
- k. The nature and importance of marriage and of stable relationships for family life and bringing up children.
- l. The roles and responsibilities of parents, carers and children in families.
- m. The similarities, differences and diversity among people of different race, culture, ability, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation and the impact of prejudice, bullying, discrimination and racism on individuals and communities.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- a. The effect of diverse and conflicting values on individuals, families and communities and ways of responding to them
- b. How the media portrays young people, body image and health issues.
- c. The characteristics of emotional and mental health, and the causes, symptoms and treatments of some mental and emotional health disorders.
- d. The benefits and risks of health and lifestyle choices, including choices relating to sexual activity and substance use and misuse, and the short and long-term consequences for the health and mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.
- e. where and how to obtain health information, how to recognise and follow health and safety procedures, ways of reducing risk and minimising harm in risky situations, how to find sources of emergency help and how to use basic and emergency first aid.
- f. Characteristics of positive relationships, and awareness of exploitation in relationships and of statutory and voluntary organisations that support relationships in crisis.
- g. The roles and responsibilities of parents, carers, children and other family members.
- h. Parenting skills and qualities and their central importance to family life.
- i. The impact of separation, divorce and bereavement on families and the need to adapt to changing circumstances.
- j. The diversity of ethnic and cultural groups, the power of prejudice, bullying, discrimination and racism, and the need to take the initiative in challenging this and other offensive behaviours and in giving support to victims of abuse.



# The Big Question – Romeo and Juliet

<p><b>Learning Objective</b></p> <p>Pupils use a range of balanced and persuasive argument techniques across a range of activities to formulate a viewpoint and argument related to the Big Question for this lesson.</p> <p>Pupils link the themes of violence in this play to the modern world and consider the choices and power we have to resolve conflict.</p> <p><b>Success Criteria (including differentiation)</b></p> <p><b>All</b> can express an initial opinion on the ‘Big Question’ and justify their viewpoint.</p> <p><b>Most</b> can develop their opinion over the course of the lesson sequence by listening and responding to others.</p> <p><b>Some</b> can articulate a clear balanced argument on the ‘Big Question’, using sophisticated argument techniques.</p>	<p><b>Big Question: Is violence ever the answer?</b></p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b> violence, loyalty, trust, knife crime, exploitation, responsibility, love, tragedy, foreshadow, dramatic irony</p> <p><i>To begin: Discover the events of Romeo and Juliet using the SSF 10 Events and the instructions for exploring the story in the Appendix.</i></p> <p><b>Lesson Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen and respond to the stimulus <a href="#">‘Blue Tears’</a> by Bhishma Asare. Which explores knife crime and the impact it has on communities. Class discuss.</li> <li>• Class complete a value continuum of the Big Question <b>‘Is violence ever the answer?’</b> to encourage engagement and discussion.</li> <li>• Read and unpick the prologue to Romeo and Juliet, focusing on the use of language to foreshadow.</li> <li>• Explore the power of words and the impact delivery style can have on a person’s reaction, especially the negative consequences.</li> <li>• Experiment with delivering Shakespearean insults and how words can spark action and, in some cases, violence.</li> <li>• Consider how Mercutio and Tybalt’s conflict could be dealt with in today’s society, and stage a ‘different ending’ with this information in mind.</li> <li>• Return to the value continuum and discuss any changes in opinions.</li> <li>• Written outcome: A newspaper article raising awareness about the dangers of knife crime, gang culture and violence.</li> </ul> <p><b>See Teaching and Learning Activities for full details:</b></p>	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">‘Blue Tears’ music video</a></li> <li>• <b>Prologue from Romeo and Juliet</b></li> <li>• <b>Act 1 Scene 1 extract</b></li> <li>• <b>Romeo and Juliet - SSF 10 events</b></li> <li>• <b>Instructions for exploring the story in the appendix</b></li> </ul> <p><b>National Curriculum Links</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The effect of diverse and conflicting values on individuals, families and communities and ways of responding to them.</li> <li>• Characteristics of positive relationships, and awareness of exploitation in relationships and of statutory and voluntary organisations that support relationships in crisis.</li> <li>• The diversity of ethnic and cultural groups, the power of prejudice, bullying, discrimination and racism, and the need to take the initiative in challenging this and other offensive behaviours and in giving support to victims of abuse.</li> </ul>
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# Romeo and Juliet – The Big Question

## Teaching and Learning Activities

### Starter – Exploring violence in today’s society

- Pupils are organised into groups and given paper and pens.
- Explain that they will be watching a short video and they should write down their initial thoughts/feelings/reactions to it.
- The video is a rap song called ‘[Blue Tears](#)’ by London based rapper Bishma Asare who has started the initiative Rap Therapy. He targets the young people and believes that word play can have a positive impact on this demographic, writing this song about knife crime.
- Pupils share their thoughts and teacher facilitates a discussion about the song’s relevance in today’s society.

### Teaching and Learning Task One - Value Continuum

- Introduce the concept of a Value Continuum by asking pupils to imagine that the room is bisected diagonally, with one corner of the room representing “Strongly Agree or YES” and the other corner of the room representing “Strongly Disagree or NO”.
- Explain to the pupils that you will ask them a question, and that they must stand somewhere on the imaginary line. They don’t have to stand in the corners. Demonstrate where they might stand if they agree quite strongly, or if they disagreed slightly more than they agreed with a question.
- Now give them an example question so they can see how it works. E.g. ‘Is breakfast the most important meal of the day?’ or ‘Are cats better than dogs?’ Take views from different places on the line, encouraging pupils to articulate their feelings.
- Once they are used to how it works, ask them the ‘Big Question’ ‘**Is violence ever the answer?**’ and to move to where they think they should be.
- Ask for responses and the reasoning for their thoughts.





## Teaching and Learning Task Two - Setting the scene

- Teacher asks pupils (based on the starter activity and Big Question) which Shakespeare play springs to mind? Pupils identify Romeo and Juliet.
- Teacher explains that similar to Bhishma Asare, Shakespeare uses the power of words to communicate themes and stimulate a reaction from the audience.
- Class read the **Prologue** together, then ask the following questions; what do we know about the play from this short extract? What do we predict will happen/how it will happen? How does the extract make us feel? Who do we predict the victims of the play will be? Why?
- Teacher introduces the terms *Foreshadowing* and *Dramatic Irony*.
  - **Foreshadowing** - Foreshadowing is a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing often appears at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and helps the reader develop expectations about the coming events in a story.
  - **Dramatic Irony** - Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters don't.
- Pupils highlight keywords in the prologue that are intentionally used by Shakespeare to communicate a sense of foreboding and set the scene.
  - E.g. Ancient grudge/new mutiny/parent strife/death.
- It is important to note throughout the lesson that Shakespeare was under pressure to ensure that his audiences returned. It is key to remember that these are plays and not necessarily accurate representations of 16<sup>th</sup> century life. Shakespeare was manipulating characters' actions and behaviours to serve the play and to keep them interesting/intriguing/comical and this may be important to acknowledge with your class to prevent a disconnection between them, the characters and the events of the play.

## Teaching and Learning Task Three- Power of Words V Power of Action

- Question pupils about how actors add meaning to their lines. Emphasise that until the speaker vocalises words they have limited power and, as actors, we have many tools at our disposal to communicate meaning to an audience and other actors.
- Select a student and give them the line 'Do you bite your thumb at me, Sir?' Ask them to say it as neutrally as possible. Discuss the meaning of the line as a class and the impact of delivering it with no emotion.
  - E.g. doesn't mean anything/don't learn anything about the character/doesn't make sense/could be misinterpreted.



- Ask the class to read using **Act 1 Scene 1 extract**.
  - N.B. You could do this as a class read, where the class is divided into three groups and each group reads a character or ask the groups of four to read it through. Note that although there are four characters in this scene, only three of them speak.
- After doing an initial sense check for what has happened in this short section, ask them to have a go at moving the scene around, in groups of four, making it clear to pupils that they cannot physically touch their partner.
- Class evaluate what changed? How have they used their voices and physicalisation to communicate their intentions?
  - *E.g. raised volume, spoke with an aggressive tone, pushed chest out and stepped forwards.*
- Teacher consolidates pupil's understanding that words become more powerful when delivered in a certain way.
- Ask them what Shakespeare has included in the text to help the actors? He hasn't written specific stage directions but the characters comment on the actions of one another, which suggests that some things happen.
  - E.g. Sampson bites his thumb, they draw their swords.
- Ask the groups to make the best use of these stage directions to build the tension in their scene.
- The groups should now use these physical actions and any discoveries that they have made about their physicality to experiment with different intentions.
- In their fours, they should take it in turns to play the Capulets and experiment with delivering their lines with different intentions.
  - E.g. To insult, to humiliate, to entertain, to understand the person they are speaking to.
- Teacher to question the groups about how they are feeling. Were there any particular ways that the lines were spoken that evoked a strong reaction from the Montagues?
  - E.g. when it was said to humiliate, did they feel like they wanted to turn away or did they want to argue back? What physical and vocal techniques did the Capulets use to make them feel that way?
- Repeat the exercise with the others playing the Capulets and experimenting with other intentions.
  - E.g. To persuade, To upset, To reason with the person they're speaking to.
- Pupils to share their favourite conversation. Can the rest of the class guess the intentions with which the lines were being spoken?
- Did a particular way the Capulets delivered the line lead to an aggressive action? Did a particular way they delivered the line lead to no physical response? Explain that the words stayed the same and the reaction or consequences of those words dramatically changed based on HOW the words were said.
- Ask the class what they think about the impact this sort of behaviour will have on Romeo and Juliet? How could this whole situation have been avoided?
- The students may well benefit from using the second stage of SSF's **Ghosting** exercise, whereby the ghost feeds the line to the actor and then the actor translates the text from Shakespearean to modern English and speaks the lines in their own words. This



can be particularly helpful for students when attempting to physicalise the text. They can then keep hold of these discoveries when they return to speaking the Shakespearean text.

### Teaching and Learning Task Four - Choosing a different ending

- Class is shown the final spoken words of the play and pupils identify key words that illustrate the tragic events that have taken place E.g. gloom/death/punish.
- Explain that in today's society we have the opportunity to change or make informed decisions that could mean that tragedies like Romeo and Juliet's death could be avoided.
- Share the following links and information (see links below).
- Split the class into groups and ask them to each to research the different avenues of support that are on offer for young people who are affected by knife crime.
  - [Dropheweapon.org](https://dropheweapon.org) - Initiative set up by the Metropolitan police in the hope to show real people how to turn away from violent crime.
  - [Childline.org](https://childline.org) - A helpline charity that offers support for young people.
  - [Your choice, your future](https://yourchoiceyourfuture.org) - Campaign set up by a group of 16-19 year olds from South London.
- Explain that they'll now be staging the turning point in the play where Mercutio and Tybalt argue and Romeo tries to intervene but Mercutio ends up being a victim of knife crime.
- They must stage this moment to find a 'different ending' using their knowledge about the power of words, the context of the 'ancient grudge' discussed in task one and include a piece of advice from their research about where a 2019 Mercutio and Tybalt could find support and help.
- Pupils share their short scenes and class discuss their impact. Do they think this is relevant to today's society and an important conversation for young people to have, and why?

### Plenary

- Return to the Big Question and the Value Continuum. **'Is violence ever the answer?'** Has anyone changed their minds? Interrogate how their understanding of the play and the characters has influenced their decision.



## Written Outcome

Pupils write a newspaper article as if the death of Mercutio has happened and they are reporting the events. They need to raise awareness of the dangers surrounding gang culture, violence and knife crime. Share the statistics from the [BBC](#) to support their argument.





Appendix 1

# ROMEO AND JULIET

## THE BIG QUESTION

Resources Pack



## Prologue from Romeo and Juliet

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.



## Romeo and Juliet, Act 1 Scene 1 Extract

**[Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY of the House of Capulet, in conversation.]**

**GREGORY** Here come two of the house of Montague.

**[Enter two other servingmen, ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR.]**

**SAMPSON** I will bite my thumb at them, which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

**ABRAHAM** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON** I do bite my thumb, sir.

**ABRAHAM** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON** **[to GREGORY]** Is the law of our side if I say ay?

**GREGORY** No.

**SAMPSON** No sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

**ABRAHAM** You lie.

**SAMPSON** Draw if you be men.



# Romeo and Juliet

## 10 Events

1. Two feuding families brawl in public and incur the wrath of their city's ruler.
2. Romeo Montague crashes a Capulet party for a glimpse of Rosalind, and meets Juliet Capulet.
3. Tybalt recognises Romeo at the party, and plans to challenge him.
4. Romeo returns to visit Juliet after the party and the couple marry in secret, despite their feuding families.
5. Tybalt quarrels with Mercutio and kills him – in response, Romeo kills Tybalt, and is banished from Verona.
6. Juliet's father arranges her marriage to Paris. She and Friar Lawrence plot her escape.
7. Juliet drinks a powerful sleeping potion, which makes her appear dead, but the truth of the plot fails to reach Romeo.
8. Believing Juliet to be dead, Romeo returns to kill himself at her graveside.
9. Juliet wakes to discover Romeo dead at her side, so she uses his dagger to kill herself.
10. The Capulets and Montagues are reconciled in mutual grief.





## Exploring the story

**Before you start this lesson and delve into the Big Question in the play, you might want to familiarise yourself with the story first.**

- There are lots of different approaches you could take, including using the 10 point summary.
- If you and/or your students don't know the play, then the following process is a great way to introduce them to the story and some of the main characters.
- As with any lesson, do adapt this to suit the needs of your students.
- This is a great way to get the story on its feet quickly and help your students to understand the story arc.

**Firstly, divide your students into groups and give them copies of the 10 point summary to explore the story order.**

- Cut up and remove the numbers from the 10 point summary.
- Give each group a few minutes to rearrange them into the correct order.
  - You could print a large copy of the 10 point summary so that each one is on an A3 page and when you go through the order with the whole class you can stick them up in the correct order around the room.
  - Ensure that you correct misconceptions as you go through the points and ask your students to justify and clarify the decisions they made.
  - This will support with comprehension work across English as there are some key indicators of the story structure (E.g Romeo and Juliet can only get married once they have met, Macbeth can only become King once he has killed the King).



**Once the correct order has been established, give each group two consecutive story points and ask them to create freeze frames to show this moment. Provide them with two rules**

1. Everyone must be involved.
2. Someone/some people must read out the story point.
  - Give them a strict time limit to create the freeze frame, before moving onto their second one.
    - Ask them to consider what else they could be if there are only a small amount of named characters in the scene - could they create the architecture or double up on characters?
  - After the time limit is up, give them a further two minutes to consider how they would adjust their positions so that the rest of the class can see the whole image – ask them to consider their audience.
  - With the rest of the class watching, move from one group to another, seeing each freeze frame in order and hearing the story point. Then jump into the image to ‘Thought tap’ some (or all ideally) of the characters.
    - It is really encouraging for students if they get to share their ideas, whether they are Juliet or Juliet’s wardrobe, Macbeth or one of his soldiers.
  - Ask them open questions about who they are, what they are doing and how they feel about it. Facilitate this in a light-hearted way to avoid the students feeling under pressure.
  - If they struggle with an answer, throw the question out to the rest of the group and the audience.
    - This is a great opportunity to get some interpretations of characters’ thoughts and actions but do use it to clarify facts about the story and the characters too.
    - It is also a great time to show that you don’t have all of the answers either and that you will all find out more as you delve further into the play and rehearsals.
    - You could do this ‘Thought Tapping’ as a ‘Roving Reporter’, using a prop as a microphone to interview the characters as if live in that moment.



**Once you have done this for each of the 10 images, bring the class back together for a plenary.**

This is a good time to recap on what they have learnt about the characters and/or the story and you could do this in a number of ways. E.g.

1. **Tell the story in a circle.** Everyone sits in a circle and adds a bit more information on the previous person's ideas. This means that those that have a good grasp will be able to share their knowledge and those who are still working towards it, will be able to add whatever they can – such as a character name or a setting for the play.
2. **Provide them with Plenary cards.** Use the following examples and ask them to share their response with someone else.
  - Something they have learnt today; a new word or phrase that they have used today; something that they would like to know more about; something that they are looking forward to in the play; a question that they now have about the play.
3. **Learnt and enjoyed.** Simply ask for them to tell a partner something that they have learnt and something that they have enjoyed in this lesson.

