

ACTIVITIES

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Explain how the theme of 'love' and especially 'forbidden love' is established in Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet*. Consider how this emotion (and the curtailment of it by dominant forces) becomes a key struggle for the main characters. Also look at how these struggles are portrayed to the audience, from both a choreographic and design perspective.
Some things to explore include:
 - + The division of genders within the institute
 - + The relationship between Tybalt and the female inmates at the institute
 - + The relationship between Mercutio and his boyfriend Balthasar
 - + The relationship between Senator Montague, Brie Montague and their son, Romeo
 - + The relationship between Romeo and Juliet
- Choose one other contemporary version of *Romeo and Juliet* (from stage or screen) created by a different director or choreographer. Consider the similarities and differences with Bourne's version, in terms of the following elements and give examples to back up your research.
 - + Storyline
 - + Characters
 - + What year/era it is set in?
 - + What location/locations it is set in?
 - + Plot
 - + Key themes
- Analyse the connection between Prokofiev's score and Bourne's choreography in *Romeo and Juliet*. You should provide clear examples from specific sections of the score to exemplify how this connection enhances the choreographic presentation and intention. Consider how the music enhances the storyline and the intention of the characters actions within it. Also think about how it conveys emotion and atmosphere.

WRITTEN TASKS

- With the exception of Sonnet 145 William Shakespeare wrote all his sonnets in a writing style called iambic Pentameter; which means there are usually ten syllables and five "beats" in each line. A simple example of iambic Pentameter would be:

vaVOOM / vaVOOM / vaVOOM / vaVOOM / vaVOOM.

Whilst, some examples from Shakespeare's sonnets would be:

When I / do COUNT / the CLOCK / that TELLS / the TIME ([Sonnet 12](#))

When IN / dis GRACE / with FOR / tune AND / men's EYES
I ALL / a LONE / be WEEP / my OUT/ cast STATE ([Sonnet 29](#))

Using this style of writing create your own 14-line sonnet, to convey part of the storyline from Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet*. Or, if you prefer, you can use it to convey a specific moment or interaction between any two of the key characters.

For more help with this style of writing [CLICK HERE](#)

Matthew Bourne's
ROMEO+
JULIET
Music by PROKOFIEV

- Imagine that you are a reporter for a fictional publication and that you have interviewed one of the characters from the Verona Institute. You will interview them about what has been happening there, so that you can write a headline-hitting article about the abuse of power that has been taking place there. Through your clever line of questioning your mission is to uncover secrets about them and the other people who work and reside at the institute. Deliver your 'exclusive scoop' in a 500-word article aimed at your preferred readership. Consider what you already know from the show and use that to influence your fictional 'expose' of the 'real' Verona Institute.
- Matthew's Bourne's *Romeo & Juliet* is set in the not too distant future. Choose one of the three acts and now re-stage it in the year 3,000 – much, much farther into the future. Detail how this might alter the staging, design, character portrayal and even interpretation of the storyline within that act. Back up your suggestions with theories that support your ideas, such as climate change, advancements in technology and medicine, population growth etc.

DISCUSS

- Using the quotes below as a starting point, imagine your own re-interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*. How would you shake-up this classic tale of teenage romance? Where might you set it? How might these young lovers be kept from one another and by who? And what external influences and powers might they need to overcome to pursue their love for one another?

"Your school memories of Shakespeare's great teenage romance will be shaken up by this iconoclastic re-telling that sees the young people locked up in a secure unit. Medication, medical examinations and exercise regimes are all deployed to keep these emotionally volatile young people in check in the Verona Institute where the action is set." (Source: 'Review: Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet* at Plymouth's Theatre Royal', by David Marsden, Devon Live, 15 June 2019)

"You're not quite sure what it is," says Bourne. "A borstal, a prison, a school, something to do with mental health? An excess of feeling is frowned upon – there may be young people who have too much feeling." (Source: 'Romeo and Juliet as bickering 40-year-olds: how dance is reimagining the lovers' by Lynsey Winship, The Guardian, 13 May 2019)

- Discuss what ideas on morality or 'life-lessons' we can potentially take into our own lives from watching Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet*. What might it be able to tell us about ourselves, society and our views on young people? In what ways do you feel it could influence its audience?
- Are there any celebrities or other famous people (be they alive today or individuals from history) that remind you of any of the key characters within *Romeo and Juliet*? If so, who are they, and what is it about their character, behavior and approach to life that reminds you of them and why? Back up your discussions with direct comparisons between them and the characters portrayed in Bourne's interpretation of the story.