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Young Adult Literature

Dr. Mary Warner

*Romeo and Juliet* Creating Contemporary Connections with Classical Canonical Literature

In considering what piece of canonical dramatic literature to base my unit of study on I couldn’t think of a more classic example than William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. I don’t know of anyone that was not assigned to read this play at some point in their education. With that in mind I am designing this lesson plan in mind for high school freshmen with no previous experience or exposure to Shakespeare’s work. There will always be an outlier student or two that may have been exposed to Shakespeare’s work, but my previous experience has shown that to be the exception rather than the rule. Shakespeare’s writing can be difficult even for adults to understand so it is no small surprise that the average teenager shows next to know interest in reading a play written over four hundred years ago that many of them feel is written in a completely foreign language.

*Romeo and Juliet* is probably the most relevant of any of the Shakespeare’s work with regards to its reliability to teens. The themes of young love, lust, and conformity are extremely relatable to this audience and it is my goal to help them discover and relate this text and its timeless themes to their own lives. The goal of this unit is three part; Firstly students should be
able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the language presented in the text in order to break down the barrier of fear that Shakespeare’s work can create among students to increase confidence when students read more of the bard’s work in the future. Second students should be able to understand the plot, themes, and characters of the play, and thirdly students should be able to creatively demonstrate an understanding of the play to their peers.

Beginning the Unit

Agree/Disagree: students will begin by discussing the themes of the play before the text is even introduced to them. Signs will be placed around the room and labeled accordingly Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. A stamen will be read aloud to the class, and students will move to the section of the room that matches their opinion. Then a discussion / debate of the topic will occur. Sample statements for the discussion: “I believe in love at first sight” “I would date someone that I like even if my family does not approve of him/her” “I would do anything for the person I am in love with”. These are just a sampling of possible statements that can be used to get students thinking about the themes of the novel without even mentioning Shakespeare’s name.

Speaking the Speech: Before beginning the play I would have want to ease students into the language of Shakespeare with the Romeo and Juliet plot summary pre reading activity (See Attached) that we used in this very young adult literature class. The activity was well written, but given more time I would like to rewrite and expand upon the text. I would also stress the importance of punctuation with the students. Punctuation is Shakespeare’s road map to
reading his work. Many students who are unfamiliar with his work or other verse poetry have the tendency to pause at the end of each line even where there is not a period or other indication of a stopping point.

- When in doubt as to how to say a line, remember that the greatest stress of a line usually comes at the end of the sentence. (The ending of each sentence is generally more important than the beginning) A great example of this is the common misconception of “Wherefore art thou Romeo?” Being improperly interpreted as “Where are you Romeo?” as opposed to the correct interpretation of “Why are you Romeo?” In reference to their love being forbidden.

- Pay close attention to punctuation. When a line ends with a period, stop. If it ends with a comma, pause but do not completely stop. If the line does not end with punctuation continue reading without stopping or pausing. Keeping this flow of Shakespeare’s language will improve the sound and enhance the understanding of what is happening when reading aloud.

- When an “ed” is at the end of a word with an accent mark pronounce the “ed” as a separate syllable. This will not change the meaning of the word, but will continue the rhythm of the passage.

- Be sure to examine any provided footnotes or glossary for the meaning of words.

- Any reading that is assigned for home work should be gone over in class. Readers theater activities should be used as often as possible to go over the reading, because this is a play it was written to be seen and heard by its audience.
Reading aloud will increase the students understanding of the play. If reading is assigned for outside off class encourage the students to try and meet in groups to begin reading.

**Shakespeare Insult Game:** The goal of this activity is to ease the nerves that can be had when approaching Shakespeare’s text for the first time. This activity allows students to interact with the language in a light hearted and non-threatening manner. By including a sample insult directly from the text it gives the students a good basis to begin their work with the language.

Materials needed: One large piece of construction paper per student, markers scissors, and one copy of word list per student.

1. Students will be given the paper and art supplies as well as the list of words.
2. Each student will receive one sample insult from *Romeo and Juliet*.
3. Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with "Thou":
4. Students will construct 9 insults using the sample list as a guide.
5. Encourage or give extra participation student if the student can create an insult using iambic Pentameter.
6. Have a pair of students "duel" by trading their insults in front of the class.
7. Tell students to mingle as if they are at a cocktail party, moving around (fill the empty spaces in the room) and chatting. At the sound of your signal (drum or whistle) they will stop, turn to the nearest person and deliver their insult in the most insulting manner.
8. Repeat this a few times so they get to insult a few different people.
9. Pair up students in partners. Have them deliver their insults back and forth a few times.
10. Have students line up in two rows, facing their partner. The "stage" is the space between the rows. The first pair meets in the middle of the space, insults each other, then returns to their lines.
11. Continue down the lines.
12. Students can decorate their poster with an illustration of their insult, and they can then be displayed for the class to see.

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New Media Connections: There are countless songs that reference *Romeo and Juliet* these are just several that caught my ear and I would consider sharing with the class “Romeo and Juliet” by The Dire Straits from the 1980 album *Making Moves* “Check Yes Juliet” by We the Kings from their 2007 self-titled album, or the song “Somewhere” from the musical *West Side Story*. (See attached song lyrics) “Somewhere” could even be used in the beginning of the unit with the Agree/Disagree activity as its direct connection to the play is more ambiguous as it does not directly reference the characters and I feel like the connection will not immediately made except by students that are familiar with musical theater. After reading Act I Scene 1 I would show the class the scene from the 1996 film *Romeo + Juliet* and spur a discussion on how the drastic difference in presentation of the text affected their understanding of the material. This would also be a hint and lead in to the final project for the unit.

Final Project: As a final project for the unit I would task students with creating their own unique take on the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. Using new media I would challenge students to create their own version of the story that can be relatable to a modern audience. The project is only limited by the creativity of the students I would have them work together in small groups. With the class pitching projects and then students forming groups based around ideas that interest them. One group if they were so inclined could also present a scene from the play classically with traditional text intact. As an example I would show them the trailer for the project currently in touring film festivals *Romeo and Juliet a Love Song*. (See attached mission statement from the projects website. I would be challenging the students to really “show me something” that truly demonstrates their understanding of themes and characters of the text.
Another suggestion how would the story be told from another character’s perspective (Tybalt, Mercuctio, Benvolio, Paris, Friar Laurence or one of the other character)

Connections with New Media and Young Adult Novels

*West Side Story*

[Image of the West Side Story poster]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:West_Side_Story_poster.jpg *West Side Story* is a modern retelling of the story *Romeo and Juliet* the conflict between the Jets and Sharks is very similar to the feud between the Montague’s and the Capulet’s. And the romance between Tony and Maria is very similar to the titular characters of Shakespeare’s play and both shows end tragically.

[Image of the Saga cover]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Saga1coverbyElonaStaples.jpg *Saga* (2013 Eisner award winner Best Writing, Best New Series, Best Continuing Series) is a current ongoing comic series written by Brian K. Vaughan. The story gives new meaning to the term Star-crossed lovers. The story is of Alana and Marko who are from separate alien races that grew up on neighboring planets and have been locked in
everlasting war since they discovered each other. Both characters were soldiers for their respective worlds. Marko was captured and he Alana fell in love while she was a guard in the prison where he was being held. The story begins with them having been on the run since escaping and Alana giving birth to a baby. The governments of both planets are out to capture them as they don’t want it the general populous to discover that they are genetically compatible. The war has become so vast that proxy battles are fought throughout the galaxy. There is even a character named Isabel who is a teenager whose planet was engulfed by the war that watches over the young family as a spirit in much the same way Friar Lawrence helps out Romeo and Juliet.

[Image]

*Warm Bodies* by Isaac Marion is a Supernatural romance about a Zombie named R and a human girl named Julie. The allusions to the names are just the beginning the beginning of the novel features R and his zombie girlfriend similar to how Romeo begins the play being in love with Rosalyn. The Zombies and Humans have been at war and the fact that R can change and regain his humanity represents a threat to the ancient zombie “boneies” who need the current status quo of the world. The end of the world Zombie Armageddon being necessary for the zombie outbreak

And for students who don’t share my interest in musical theater or fantasy, sci-fi, or the supernatural I found this young adult novel as well;
Sharon Draper's novel *Romiette and Julio* brings the story into a contemporary setting. "When Romiette Cappelle meets Julio Montague, she feels as though she has met the soul mate who can rescue her from her recurring nightmare about fire and water. But like the Shakespearean characters whose names echo theirs, Romiette and Julio discover that not everyone approves of their budding romance. In their case, it is because Romiette is African-American and Julio is Hispanic, and the Devildogs, a dangerous local gang, violently oppose their interracial relationship.

When the Devildogs threaten to teach them a lesson, Romiette and Julio come up with a risky plan to escape from the gang's fearsome shadow. But things go terribly awry, and the two find themselves caught up in a deadly reality more frightening than Romiette's nightmare -- and in a desperate struggle to avoid the tragic fate of Shakespeare's famous young lovers." Summary taken from product description on Amazon.com

These related pieces can be used to prompt the question of relating the story to a modern audience. Were these adaptations successful in conveying the themes? Do they make the story more relatable? Why or why not and explain your reasoning. I would shy away from ending the unit with an essay and prefer going the route of the creative interactive final project. I would encourage the students in their final projects to feel free to explore any aspects of theatrical design as well. How would you set the scene costumes, lighting, sound, etc. I would use this unit as both a way to increase the student's excitement about not only Shakespeare, but theater in general as well.
ROMEO AND JULIET A LOVE SONG

RELEVANT CONTEMPORARY ENGAGING
Who would have thought iambic pentameter was a natural fit for rap? If there was ever an interpretation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet that was going to get all your Year 11s on board with the story, the language, the setting and the characters this is it. Set in somewhere on the New Zealand coast in the grubby "Verona" Campground this "Love Song" version of the play – using the original text, with the occasional sung sonnet thrown in – ticks all the boxes for an "authentic learning context".

Montagues and Capulets are opposing trailer trash families with fierce family ties, coloured bandannas, barbecues and beer bottles. Their extended 'kinsmen' Mercutio and Tybalt could be seen walking down any city street full of hubris looking for a scrap out of boredom on a hot afternoon. You might know the characters well, but I bet you've never seen Lady Capulet as an ageing biker's moll, or the Friar played by a tiny actor of indeterminate gender dubbed with the voice of a black gospel singer.

While the familiar story builds toward its inevitable tragic ending for the two star-crossed lovers, the journey is new, fresh and raw using sung text in every contemporary music style your students could name.

There is much here for teachers of NCEA English, Music, the Visual Arts, and Film Studies. It can stand as film text in its own right, as part of a comparative study with other films of the play, or simply as an engaging way to lift Shakespeare's own words into a contemporary setting – so revealing the universal nature of the story.

PAULINE SCANLAN

EDUCATION CONSULTANT
Pauline has been a secondary English teacher, head of department, secondary adviser, lecturer, educational publisher and consultant specializing in education communications. She now works with NZ company CORE Education as a senior consultant.
“Romeo and Juliet” by Dire Straits (Lyrics from lyricsfreak.com)

A lovesick Romeo sings the streets a serenade
Laying everybody low with a lovesong that he made
Finds a streetlight steps out of the shade
Says something like you and me babe how about it?

Juliet says hey it's Romeo, you nearly gimme a heart attack
He's underneath the window she's singing hey la my boyfriend's back
You shouldn't come around here singing up at people like that
Anyway what you gonna do about it?

Juliet the dice were loaded from the start
And I bet you exploded in my heart
And I forget I forget the movie song
When you gonna realise it was just that the time was wrong Juliet?

Come up on different streets they both were streets of shame
Both dirty both mean yes and the dream was just the same
And I dreamed your dream for you and now your dream is real
How can you look at me as if I was just another one of your deals?

When you can fall for chains of silver you can fall for chains of gold
You can fall for pretty strangers and the promises they hold
You promised me everything you promised me thick and thin yeah
Now you just say oh Romeo yeah you know I used to have a scene with him

Juliet when we made love you used to cry
You said I love you like the stars above, I'll love you till I die
And there's a place for us, you know the movie song
When you gonna realise it was just that the time was wrong Juliet?

I can't do the talk like they talk on tv
And I can't do a love song like the way it's meant to be
I can't do everything but I'd do anything for you
I can't do anything except be in love with you

And all I do is miss you and the way we used to be
All I do is keep the beat, the bad company
And all I do is kiss you through the bars of a rhyme
Juliet I'd do the stars with you any time

Juliet when we made love you used to cry
You said I love you like the stars above and I'll love you till I die
There's a place for us you know the movie song
When you gonna realise it was just that the time was wrong Juliet?

A lovesick Romeo sings the streets a serenade
Laying everybody low with a lovesong that he made
Finds a convenient streetlight steps out of the shade
Says something like you and me babe how about it?

You and me babe, how about it?
“Check Yes Juliet” by We the Kings (Lyrics from AZlyrics.com)

Check yes Juliet
Are you with me?
Rain is falling down on the sidewalk
I won't go until you come outside
Check yes Juliet
Kill the limbo
I’ll keep tossing rocks at your window
There's no turning back for us tonight

Lace up your shoes
Ayo ayo
Here's how we do
Run baby run
Don't ever look back
They'll tear us apart if you give them the chance
Don't sell your heart, don't say we're not meant to be
Run baby run, forever we'll be
You and me

Check yes Juliet
I'll be waiting
Wishing, wanting yours for the taking
Just sneak out and don't tell a soul goodbye
Check yes Juliet
Here's the countdown:
3, 2, 1, now fall in my arms now
They can change the locks, don't let them change your mind

We're flying through the night
We're flying through the night
Way up high
The view from here is getting better with you
By my side

Run baby run
Don't ever look back
They'll tear us apart if you give them the chance
Don't sell your heart, don't say we're not meant to be
Run baby run, forever will be

Run baby run,
Don't ever look back
They'll tear us apart if you give them the chance
Don't sell your heart, don't say we're not meant to be
Run baby run, forever will be
You and me
You and me
You and me
“Somewhere” from the musical *West Side Story* (Lyrics from WestSideStory.com)

There’s a place for us,
Somewhere a place for us.
Peace and quiet and open air
Wait for us
Somewhere.

There’s a time for us,
Some day a time for us,
Time together with time spare,
Time to learn, time to care,
Some day!

Somewhere.
We’ll find a new way of living,
We’ll find a way of forgiving
Somewhere . . .

There’s a place for us,
A time and place for us.
Hold my hand and we’re halfway there.
Hold my hand and I’ll take you there
Somehow,
Some day,
Somewhere!
Jonathan Lovell, PhD, English Education Program, SJSU

ROMEo & JULIET

Individual/Whole Class Oral Pre-Reading of the Play

Note: Using this as an "into" for the play will be especially helpful for ELLs in becoming more comfortable with the language of this play. Prepare for this oral/choral reading by having the whole class recite only the "all" passages together (preferably twice), and having pairs of students, preferably mixed ability, practice their individual #1 through #18 "parts." Good luck!

Teacher: The minute this play begins, you know that there are two families in a town in northern Italy named

All: Fair Verona!

They hate each other, and this hatred is old and bitter. Folks are yelling

All: Down with the Capulets!

while other folks are yelling

All: Down with the Montagues!
There is a brawl so violent that the Prince of the town has to come out and lay down the law.

All: If ever you disturb our streets again,

Your lives will pay the forfeit of the peace!

Then we see Romeo wandering around and learn that he has been staying out all-night and sleeping all day because he is

All: In Love!

with a lady named "Rosaline," who does not love him back. And we meet "the boys" -- Romeo's friends Benvolio and Mercutio -- who are headed for a party at

All: The Capulets!

It's a masked ball, so they can sneak in wearing costumes and no one at the ball will know that they are from the hated

All: Montagues!

Benvolio is excited because going to this ball will give Romeo a chance to get over his infatuation with the proud and aloof Lady Rosaline.
#1: GIVE LIBERTY TO YOUR EYES. EXAMINE OTHER BEAUTIES!

When the boys arrive in disguise, Lord Capulet does not recognize them as his enemies

All: the Montagues!

and so welcomes them.

#2: YOU ARE WELCOME, GENTLEMEN! COME, MUSICIANS, PLAY!

It is at this party that Romeo first sees young Juliet. He does not realize that she is the daughter of his hated host. He is blown away by her beauty!

#3: O SHE DOOTH TEACH THE TORCHES TO BURN BRIGHT!

They dance. They kiss. Juliet says:

#4: YOU KISS BY THE BOOK

Only at the end of the party do they learn that the other is one of the "enemy."

But they don't feel like enemies. After the party, Romeo escapes from his buddies, climbs the wall into the Capulet family orchard, and delivers his famous lines:
#5: BUT SOFT, WHAT LIGHT THROUGH YONDER WINDOW BREAKS?

Juliet comes out on the balcony. Without knowing that Romeo is right below her, she says:

All: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name

And I'll no longer be a Capulet!

They talk passionately of love, but then Juliet hears her mother calling. Romeo says:

#6: WILT THOU LEAVE ME SO UNSATISFIED?

Juliet is no fool. She replies:

All: If that thy bent of love be honorable,

Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow.

You would think that marriage between these two would be unthinkable because of the feud between their families.

All: But Love is Love!
They enlist the help of Juliet's nurse and Friar Lawrence, a local member of the clergy who hopes their union will bring an end to the feud. In secret, Friar Lawrence marries them. But the families, knowing nothing of this marriage, continue their feud. In the town square, Tybalt

All: A Capulet!

and a hot-headed cousin of Juliet's, comes looking for a fight with

All: A Montague!

Romeo's equally hotheaded friend Mercutio takes him on, saying:

#7: TYBALT, YOU RAT-CATCHER, WILL YOU WALK?

Tybalt yells back:

#8: I AM FOR YOU!

They fight. Mercutio dies and Tybalt flees. But look:

All: Here comes the furious Tybalt back again!

Romeo will not let his friend Mercutio die in vain. Even though Tybalt is Juliet's cousin, Romeo kills him, and regrets it almost immediately. In despair over his action, he laments:
#9: O, I AM FORTUNE'S FOOL!

The Prince

All: Of Fair Verona!

banishes Romeo to the nearby town on Mantua, but before Romeo leaves, he spends a night with Juliet.

As he leaves, he says:

#10: THEN WINDOW, LET DAY IN, AND LET LIFE OUT!

But moments after Romeo leaves, Juliet's mother enters to inform her daughter that Lord Capulet has arranged for Juliet to marry an older man named Count Paris, a local nobleman. She expects her daughter will be very happy with this news, telling her that:

All: Early next Thursday morn,

The gallant, young and noble gentleman

The County Paris, at Saint Peter's Church

Shall hap'ly make thee there a joyful bride!

But even though Juliet has been an obedient daughter in the past, she says:

#11: NOW BY SAINT PETER'S CHURCH, AND PETER TOO
HE SHALL NOT MAKE ME THERE A JOYFUL BRIDE!

Her father does not like his daughter's tone of voice one bit. He says:

#12: HANG THEE YOUNG BAGGAGE! DISOBEDIENT WRETCH!

Juliet is desperate. With the help of Friar Lawrence, she comes up with a plan to take a special drink that will make her appear to be dead. That way her parents will put her body in the family tomb, and after that Friar Lawrence will fetch her and take her to Romeo in Mantua.

As Juliet drinks the special potion, she says:

#13: ROMEO, I COME! THIS DO I DRINK TO THEE!

It works. Juliet's nurse and her mother Lady Capulet find her in the morning.

#14 & 15: ALACK THE DAY! SHE'S DEAD! SHE'S DEAD! SHE'S DEAD!

And they put her body in the family tomb, just as Juliet and Friar Lawrence had planned.

Unfortunately, one small detail has been left out. Romeo has not heard of the plan! All he hears is that Juliet is dead.
Many people head for Juliet's tomb. Romeo, who stops to buy some poison, is going there to join Juliet in death. Friar Lawrence is going there to get Juliet and take her to Romeo. Count Paris is going there to mourn for his almost-wife.

Paris gets there first. Romeo finds him there and kills him. Count Paris says:

#16: O, I AM SLAIN!

Then Romeo sees Juliet's body and takes the poison he has brought with him, saying:

#17: HERE'S TO MY LOVE! . . THUS WITH A KISS I DIE!

Friar Lawrence arrives just too late, finding Romeo dead and Juliet just waking up. As usual, he has great advice for Juliet:

All: Come, come away.

Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead

And Paris too. Come, I'll dispose of thee

Among a sisterhood of holy nuns!

This does not sound like any sort of a plan to Juliet. Friar Lawrence then flees from the tomb and Juliet decides to join Romeo in death. Since there is not enough left of Romeo's poison to kill her, she stabs herself, saying:
#18: O HAPPY DAGGER. THIS IS THY SHEATH!

Romeo and Juliet are found in the tomb by their feuding parents, who finally realize that their quarrels have gone too far. They vow to make peace, concluding sadly that:

All: Never was a story of more woe

Than this of Juliet and Romeo
Draw your neck out of your collar.

Romeo and Juliet

O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified.

Romeo and Juliet

Scurvy knave!

Romeo and Juliet

A fan to hide your face, for your
fan's the fairer face!

Romeo and Juliet

Thou wilt fall backward
when thou hast more wit.

Romeo and Juliet

What a pestilent knave.

Romeo and Juliet

Thou detestable maw!

Romeo and Juliet

You rat-catcher!

Romeo and Juliet

You're a man of wax.

Romeo and Juliet

Your wit is something stale.

Romeo and Juliet

You small grey-coated gnat.

Romeo and Juliet

You are not half so big
as a round little worm.

Romeo and Juliet

Thy head is as full of quarrels
as an egg is full of meat.

Romeo and Juliet

You are a braggart, a rogue, a villain!

Romeo and Juliet
ROME ? MUSEUM

I use it?
Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting.
_Romeo and Juliet_

What saucy merchant is this?
_Romeo and Juliet_

I am none of your flirt-jills.
_Romeo and Juliet_

I am none of your skeans-mates.
_Romeo and Juliet_

I had as lief see a toad, a very toad, as see you.
_Romeo and Juliet_

You are fortune’s fool!
_Romeo and Juliet_

You dove-feathered raven!
_Romeo and Juliet_

You wolvish-ravening lamb!
_Romeo and Juliet_

Go, you cot-quean, go.
_Romeo and Juliet_

Mistress minion, you!
_Romeo and Juliet_

Out, you green-sickness carrion!
_Romeo and Juliet_

Out, you baggage!
_Romeo and Juliet_

You tallow-face!
_Romeo and Juliet_

Disobedient wretch!
_Romeo and Juliet_
You are a priccox.

*Romeo and Juliet*

Do you bite your thumb at me, sir?

*Romeo and Juliet*

You heartless hind!

*Romeo and Juliet*

Have at thee, coward.

*Romeo and Juliet*

What ho, you man, you beast.

*Romeo and Juliet*

You peevious, self-willed harlotry!

*Romeo and Juliet*

Go to, you are a saucy boy.

*Romeo and Juliet*

O most wicked fiend!

*Romeo and Juliet*

I pray thee, chide me not.

*Romeo and Juliet*

You Prince of Cats!

*Romeo and Juliet*

You courageous captain of compliments!

*Romeo and Juliet*

You antic, lisping, affecting phantasim!

*Romeo and Juliet*

You strange fly, you fashionmonger!

*Romeo and Juliet*

I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.

*Romeo and Juliet*
Hang thee, young baggage!

*Romeo and Juliet*

Peace, you mumbling fool!

*Romeo and Juliet*

You wretched puling fool!

*Romeo and Juliet*

You borrow'd likeness of shrunk death!

*Romeo and Juliet*

Your foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in.

*Romeo and Juliet*

You whining mammet!

*Romeo and Juliet*

What devil art thou?

*Romeo and Juliet*

More validity lives in carrion flies.

*Romeo and Juliet*

Thou womb of death.

*Romeo and Juliet*

Serpent heart!

*Romeo and Juliet*

What, dares the slave come hither?

*Romeo and Juliet*

Thou hast more of the wild-goose in one of thy wits than I am sure to have in my whole five.

*Romeo and Juliet*

You speak, yet you say nothing.

*Romeo and Juliet*

Despised substance of divinest show.

*Romeo and Juliet*