

# Study Guide Romeo And Juliet Baz Luhrmann

Romeo and Juliet: The balcony scene (Act II, Scene ii)  
Comparison chart

Shakespearean text	Luhrmann screenplay	Meaning
ROMEO He jests at scars that never felt a wound. <i>JULIET appears above at a window</i> But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, Who is already sick and pale with grief, That thou her maid art far more fair than she. Be not her maid, since she is envious; Her vestal livery is but sick and green, And none but fools do wear it; cast it off. It is my lady, O, it is my love! O, that she knew she were! She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that? Her eye discourses, I will answer it: I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks: Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, Having some business, do entreat her eyes To twinkle in their spheres till they return. What if her eyes were there, they in her head? The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars, As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven Would through the airy region stream so bright That birds would sing and think it were not night. See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand! O, that I were a glove upon that hand, That I might touch that cheek!	ROMEO But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, Who is already sick and pale with grief, That thou her maid art far more fair than she. Be not her maid, since she is envious; Her vestal livery is but sick and green, and none but fools do wear it; cast it off. It is my lady, O, it is my love! O, that she knew she were! JULIET Ay me! ROMEO She speaks: O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art As glorious to this night, being o'er my head As is a winged messenger of heaven: Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him When he bestrides the lazy-paced clouds And sails upon the bosom of the air. JULIET O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Dost thou father and refuse the name? O, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet. ROMEO <i>(Aside)</i> Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?	What light is that? It is Juliet. Wake up and kill the jealous moon. Because you are prettier If only she knew I loved her Oh! Why are you Romeo Can't you change your name Or else love me and I'll change mine.

## Study Guide: Romeo and Juliet (Baz Luhrmann)

William Shakespeare's timeless tragedy "Romeo and Juliet" has been adapted numerous times for stage and screen, but Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film stands out as a bold and innovative interpretation. Set against the backdrop of modern-day Verona Beach, Luhrmann's film offers a vibrant and kinetic reimagining of the classic story of forbidden love, family feud, and tragic fate. This study guide aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the film, exploring its themes, characters, cinematic techniques, and cultural significance.

## Film Overview

Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" recontextualizes Shakespeare's original play while maintaining its essential plot and language. The film incorporates contemporary elements such as modern clothing, urban settings, and an eclectic soundtrack, which contribute to its unique visual and auditory experience.

- Director: Baz Luhrmann
- Release Year: 1996
- Starring: Leonardo DiCaprio (Romeo), Claire Danes (Juliet), John Leguizamo (Tybalt), and others
- Setting: Modern-day Verona Beach, a stylized version of the original setting

# Summary of the Plot

The story follows the intense and tragic romance between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet, two young lovers caught in the crossfire of their families' longstanding feud. The narrative unfolds as follows:

1. Introduction: The film opens with a news broadcast summarizing the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, setting the stage for the ensuing chaos.
2. The Meeting: Romeo, a Montague, crashes a Capulet party and meets Juliet, instantly falling in love with her.
3. Secret Marriage: Despite knowing the dangers, Romeo and Juliet secretly marry with the help of Friar Laurence.
4. Conflict: Tensions escalate when Tybalt kills Mercutio, leading Romeo to seek vengeance and ultimately kill Tybalt.
5. Exile: Romeo is banished from Verona, separating him from Juliet.
6. Tragic Conclusion: A series of misunderstandings and unfortunate events lead to the tragic deaths of both lovers, ultimately reconciling their feuding families.

## Themes

The film explores several key themes, many of which are integral to the original play.

### Love and Passion

At its core, "Romeo + Juliet" is a love story that delves into the intensity of youthful passion. The film portrays love as a powerful force that can transcend family loyalties and societal expectations. The chemistry between DiCaprio and Danes captures the fervor and impulsiveness of first love, making their tragic fate all the more poignant.

### Fate and Destiny

Fate plays a crucial role in the narrative, with the titular characters often referred to as "star-crossed lovers." The film emphasizes the idea that their tragic end is preordained, highlighting the powerlessness of the characters against their destinies. The use of religious imagery, such as the recurring motif of crosses, suggests a deeper commentary on divine intervention and the inevitability of fate.

### Conflict and Violence

The feud between the Montagues and Capulets serves as a backdrop for the exploration of conflict and violence. The film vividly illustrates how hatred and vengeance can lead to tragic consequences, as seen in the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. Luhrmann's portrayal of violent street brawls and

confrontations underscores the destructive nature of the family feud and its impact on the younger generation.

## **Cinematic Techniques**

Baz Luhrmann's distinctive directorial style is evident throughout the film, contributing to its dynamic storytelling and emotional engagement.

## **Visual Style**

- Cinematography: The film employs rapid cuts, close-ups, and vibrant colors to create a visually striking experience. The use of wide-angle shots captures the chaotic energy of Verona Beach.
- Costume Design: The modernized costumes juxtapose Elizabethan elements with contemporary fashion, reinforcing the timelessness of the story.
- Symbolism: Various symbols, such as the recurring motif of water (representing love and life), enhance the film's thematic depth.

## **Soundtrack**

The eclectic soundtrack plays a pivotal role in setting the tone of the film. Featuring artists like Radiohead, The Cardigans, and Des'ree, the music complements the emotional landscape of the story and connects with a younger audience. The use of contemporary songs alongside Shakespeare's dialogue bridges the gap between the past and present, making the themes more relatable.

## **Character Analysis**

The film's characters are portrayed with a depth that resonates with modern audiences, making them more than just archetypes of the original play.

## **Romeo Montague**

Romeo, played by Leonardo DiCaprio, is depicted as a passionate and impulsive young man. His transformation from a lovesick teenager to a vengeful killer highlights the tragic trajectory of his character. Luhrmann's portrayal captures the duality of Romeo's nature—his romantic idealism juxtaposed with the violence that ultimately consumes him.

## **Juliet Capulet**

Claire Danes portrays Juliet with a blend of innocence and strength. Her character embodies the

struggle between youthful desire and familial obligation. Danes' performance captures Juliet's evolution from a naive girl to a determined woman willing to defy her family for love, culminating in her tragic choice at the end of the film.

## **Tybalt and Mercutio**

- Tybalt: John Leguizamo's portrayal of Tybalt emphasizes the character's fiery temper and loyalty to the Capulet family. His aggressive demeanor serves as a catalyst for much of the violence in the film.
- Mercutio: Mercutio, played by Harold Perrineau, is a charismatic and witty character whose death marks a turning point in the narrative. His playful yet poignant monologues highlight the themes of love and fate, making his demise all the more impactful.

## **Cultural Significance**

Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" resonated with audiences upon its release, sparking discussions about the relevance of Shakespeare's work in contemporary society. The film's fusion of classic literature with modern aesthetics allowed it to reach a new generation, encouraging young viewers to engage with Shakespeare's language and themes.

Additionally, the film's exploration of love, violence, and family conflict remains pertinent in today's social climate, making it a timeless piece that continues to inspire discussions around the complexities of human emotion.

## **Conclusion**

Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" is a groundbreaking adaptation that breathes new life into Shakespeare's classic tale. With its innovative cinematic techniques, compelling performances, and exploration of universal themes, the film stands as a testament to the enduring power of love and the tragic consequences of conflict. As a study guide, this analysis underscores the film's significance in both the realm of cinema and the broader cultural landscape, inviting viewers to reflect on the complexities of love, fate, and family loyalty.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are the main differences between Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of 'Romeo and Juliet' and the original play by Shakespeare?**

Baz Luhrmann's adaptation is set in a modern-day Verona Beach, using contemporary settings, costumes, and music, which contrasts with the original Elizabethan context of Shakespeare's play. The dialogue remains largely unchanged, but the visual elements and fast-paced editing bring a new vibrancy to the story.

## How does Baz Luhrmann use music to enhance the themes in his adaptation of 'Romeo and Juliet'?

Luhrmann incorporates a diverse soundtrack that blends various music genres, reflecting the film's emotional depth and modern interpretation. Songs like 'Young Hearts Run Free' and 'Love Fool' underline themes of love, youth, and tragedy, enhancing the overall experience.

## What stylistic techniques does Baz Luhrmann employ in his film to convey the intensity of the characters' emotions?

Luhrmann uses a combination of vivid cinematography, rapid editing, and innovative camera angles to create a visually dynamic experience. Close-ups capture characters' expressions, while dramatic lighting and color schemes amplify emotions, making the story's intensity palpable.

## How does Baz Luhrmann's 'Romeo and Juliet' address the theme of violence in the play?

The film escalates the theme of violence through stylized action sequences and modern weaponry, such as guns branded with family names. This portrayal emphasizes the tragic consequences of the feud between the Montagues and Capulets, making the theme relevant to contemporary audiences.

## In what ways does the casting of Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes impact the film's reception?

Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes were both rising stars at the time of the film's release, bringing significant star power and appeal to the project. Their performances resonate with younger audiences, making the characters of Romeo and Juliet relatable and enhancing the film's popularity.

## What role does setting play in Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of 'Romeo and Juliet'?

The modern setting of Verona Beach serves as a backdrop that contrasts sharply with the original play's setting. It reflects contemporary societal issues, such as gang violence and familial conflict, making the story more accessible and relevant to a 1990s audience while maintaining the core themes of love and conflict.

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Unlock the insights of Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo and Juliet" with our comprehensive study guide. Discover how this film adaptation brings Shakespeare's classic to life!

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