

LANGUAGE IN *ROMEO AND JULIET*

This document considers the continued popularity of *Romeo and Juliet* as a play. It also sets out to examine the structure of the play and the role language performs. It covers the following:

on the page and in the theatre

the play and language

- to establish time and place
- to establish character and status
- to determine roles
- to reveal love and passion

imagery

ON THE PAGE AND IN THE THEATRE

Romeo and Juliet has all the ingredients for exciting and rewarding theatre. There are public scenes that involve visual spectacle, such as the street scenes and the Capulet ball. There are also scenes in which the audience is allowed to share the intimacies of first love. There is parent-child conflict, with the older generation intent on imposing its will on what may be seen as rebellious and reckless youth. The State and Church are called upon to intervene in their official capacities. The audience becomes involved in the love and marriage of the young couple, sharing in their frustrations as things go wrong. We are encouraged to sympathize with Romeo and Juliet as they are caught up in the conspiracy of fate.

Essentially the play moves on both a private and public level, with characters having to assume different roles during the course of the action. Thus the characters are revealed with all their strengths and weaknesses as they make the necessary choices to deal with changing circumstances.

Shakespeare also structures the play in such a way that events arise which the audience and the characters could not have anticipated. Romeo's meeting with Juliet is such an event, as are the plans for Juliet's arranged marriage to Paris when she is already married. By using dramatic irony the playwright also allows the audience to be aware of events that are taking place while the characters remain ignorant of what is happening. A good example of this occurs when Juliet is seen to agree with her mother about planning Romeo's death (Act 3, scene 5) or when Romeo thinks Juliet is dead whereas we know she is only drugged.

The play also presents the audience with very real characters. We become involved in the everyday events of their lives and also share their innermost feelings, secrets and emotions. We are called upon to make judgements about the choice they make and the way in which they handle situations. This is very clear when the Nurse changes direction with regard to Romeo as a suitable husband or when the Friar abandons Juliet at a crucial moment.

It is, however, the love story that really makes the play memorable. Shakespeare deals with the developing love in such a sensitive and sympathetic manner that we are once again reminded of the

innocence of first love. He allows us to share in the very intimate behaviour of the two young people as they are initially attracted and then discover the depth of their feelings. Set against the purity of their love is the vicious and senseless feud that rages around them and over which they have no control. The playwright is able to take what was a long poem written by Arthur Brooke in 1562 and transform it into an imaginative and exciting piece for the theatre.

There is a timelessness about the story of Romeo and Juliet. The two young people have become part of the English language and culture, symbols of devotion and enduring love that knows no boundaries.

The play, on account of the many settings and changes of venue, lends itself to staging in different ways. The Shakespearean theatre, with its balcony, broad thrust stage and inner recesses, is ideally suited to producing the play. However, the opportunities for staging Romeo and Juliet are as endless as the ingenuity of the director. Franco Zeffirelli has become known for his productions of this play, first as a revival at the Old Vic in London in 1960 and then in the subsequent filmed version in 1968. What has made these versions of the play successful is their ready accessibility for a modern audience. The basic concept is to see the work as a story of youth in conflict with authority and age - very much part of the then 60s culture. The concept has influenced many subsequent productions and reworkings, the best known of which remains Leonard Bernstein's adaptation set in New York and involving two opposing gangs, *West Side Story*. More recently, Baz Lahrman followed in this tradition by updating the story, using a contemporary American setting, complete with cars and modern clothes. The resultant Americanization of the play is not without problems - not least the spoken text - but the film has proved to be a great success and it does allow new insights into the written text, the characters and themes.

TO ESTABLISH TIME AND PLACE

In writing this romantic tragedy, Shakespeare was very aware of the limitations of staging the play in daylight in a variety of settings, ranging from rooms in private houses to streets and even a tomb. In order to convey the sense of time and place to the audience, it is thus necessary to specify exactly where and when events occur in the dialogue. For this reason there are frequent allusions in order to allow the audience to gain a sense of time and place. On the following page are a few examples . . .

ACTIVITY

Can you identify the time, place and circumstances that prompt these words?

1. In Romeo's opening dialogue the following occurs:

Benevolio: Good morrow, cousin.

Romeo: Is the day so young?

Benevolio: But new struck nine. (Act 1, scene 1)

2. Servingman: *Madam, the guests are come, supper served up, you called, my lady asked for, the Nurse cursed in the pantry, and everything in extremenity. I must hence to wait, I beseech you follow straight. (Act 1, scene 3)*

And a little later:

3. First servingman: *Away with the jointstools, remove the courtcupboard, look to the plate. (Act 1, scene 5)*

4. Friar Lawrence: *The grey-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night ... (Act 2, scene 3)*

5. Juliet: *The clock struck nine when I did send the Nurse;
In half an hour she promised to return. (Act 2, scene 5)*

6. Juliet: *Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day;
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear ... (Act 3, scene 5)*

7. Prince: *A glooming peace this morning with it brings ... (Act 5, scene 3)*

Answers to ACTIVITY

1. Early morning in the streets of Verona. The fight between the Montagues and Capulets has just taken place. Romeo enters. He has been out all night and is still very much in love with Rosaline.

2. and 3: Evening at the Capulet household. This occurs just before the Capulet ball when the servants are busy preparing for the event.

4. Early morning at Friar Lawrence's cell. Romeo has returned from his night out with Juliet (the balcony scene). He has come to the Friar to ask for his assistance.

5. Close to midday. The Capulet home. Juliet is waiting impatiently to hear what Romeo has told the Nurse with regard to the possibility of marriage.

6. Early morning in Juliet's bedroom. Juliet wakes up after spending a night with Romeo, her husband. She is trying hard to ignore the fact that it is already morning, the time when Romeo must be gone.

7. Close to dawning in the Capulet tomb. The bodies of the young lovers have been discovered, the Friar has told his part of the story. All that is left is for the Prince to close the play with these words.

TO ESTABLISH CHARACTER AND STATUS

Romeo and Juliet is a play filled with characters from many of the different classes that made up contemporary society. These range from simple servants to the nobility and even a prince. In order to identify the social class and also to establish the individuality of each character, the playwright varies the language they use. The complexity of the words and the imagery employed will also indicate role, class, intelligence, education and status.

servants A few examples will illustrate this specific use of language. The servants speak in a very specific manner, in prose rather than verse. The language they use relies on allusions and colloquialisms, often spiced with sexual innuendoes. The play opens with the following exchange between the servants of the house of Capulet:

SAMPSON: A dog of that house shall not move me to stand: I take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

(Act 1, scene 1)

the nurse The Nurse also speaks in the mode of the attendant and nursemaid. Her use of language indicates lowborn status and her position as menial in the household. However, she is also a force for life, optimistic and essentially young at heart. This is reflected in the way in which she speaks and the bawdiness that marks her speech. Here is a comical extract from the scene in which she is introduced into the action:

NURSE: And yet I warrant it had upon its brow
A bump as big as a young cock'rel's stone ...

(Act 1, scene 3)

You could also look at the scene in which the Nurse plays games with Juliet who is eager for news of her lover (Act 2, scene 5) to see the woman in action, using language to tease her mistress.

kinsmen and young lovers The young men in the play rely on puns and humour. They establish their intelligence and prankishness by intricate word play and contemporary references. The tone is overall bawdy and the imagery intended to make ideas come alive. Mercutio is the best representative. Here he is talking to Romeo just before the Queen Mab speech:

ROMEO: I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe;
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

MERCUTIO: And to sink in it should you burden love,
Too great oppression for a tender thing.

(Act 1, scene 4)

Even at the moment of death Mercutio cannot resist punning. The following extract shows his wit even at this serious moment:

MERCUTIO: No, 'tis not so deep as a well, not so wide as a church-door, but 'tis enough. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man.

(Act 3, scene 1)

the older generation As befits their age and elevated status, the elders in the play speak in a more conventional manner. Their mode of speech has a certain formality about it, a stateliness that comes with age and status. In particular Lady Capulet shows a constant awareness of herself and her position, even in dialogue with her daughter. Here she introduces the idea of marriage:

LADY CAPULET: Marry, that 'marry' is the very theme

I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet,

How stands your disposition to be married?

(Act 1, scene 3)

the Prince The Prince, as representative of the State, speaks with a marked formality. His tone is authoritative and his choice of words shows his status in the community. Here he concludes the scene in which Romeo is banished: (Note the number of orders he gives in this short speech.)

PRINCE: ... Let Romeo hence in haste,

Else, when he is found, that hour is his last.

Bear hence this body, and attend our will:

Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.

(Act 3, scene 1)

Friar Laurence Friar Lawrence speaks as a man of the Church. There are frequent references to religious imagery as well as the healing influence of herbs and plants. He speaks with dignity and understanding, a basic homeliness, establishing his status as a man truly devoted to God and the restoration of peace in Verona. There is a basic logic and practicality in the way in which he deals with people - and in particular with Romeo and Juliet. Here he advises Romeo just before the marriage:

FRIAR LAWRENCE: These violent delights have violent ends,

And in their triumph die like fire and powder,

Which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey

Is loathsome in his own deliciousness ...

(Act 2, scene 6)

Under pressure when noises are heard outside the tomb, Friar Lawrence still maintains his basic sensibility, his language and use of imagery indicative of the sensibility of the man:

FRIAR LAWRENCE: I hear some noise, lady. Come from that nest

Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep.

A greater power than we can contradict

Hath thwarted our intents.

(Act 5, scene 3)

Romeo and Juliet In marked contrast the lovers speak with an almost breathless, poetic intensity. Their lines are filled with images that relate to light and dark. Allied to this are images that refer to the sun and stars. This complex pattern of love imagery heightens our awareness of the fervour and intensity of the love that has come into their lives. The lovers stand out against the darkness of the rest of the world. The firmament itself palls in comparison as Romeo and Juliet pour out their admiration and devotion for one another. Shakespeare gives new life to the old clichés, often extending the metaphor over several lines. Love itself becomes almost like a religious experience, something precious to be cherished and venerated.

Here are two examples that serve to illustrate the above. The first comes as Romeo, unseen, watches Juliet on the balcony:

ROMEO: 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.
(Act 2, scene 2)

Later in the play Romeo mourns over the body of his supposedly dead wife. His words and vivid images reflect the depth and intensity of his grief:

ROMEO: For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light.
(Act 5, scene 3)

If you look carefully while reading, you will be able to find further examples of the way in which Shakespeare uses language and imagery to define character and status.

TO DETERMINE ROLES

the voice of authority The situation in which characters find themselves also determines the use of language. So in his official capacity at the start of the play the Prince speaks formally and with the authority of the state:

PRINCE: For this time all the rest depart away: You, Capulet, shall go along with me,
And, Montague, come you this afternoon ...
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.
(Act 1, scene 1)

parents In party mood and as host, Lord Capulet speaks jovially and in jest as he welcomes his guests:

LORD CAPULET: Welcome, gentlemen! Ladies that have their toes
Unplagued with corns will walk a bout with you.
(Act 1, scene 5)

However, later and in private with his family, Capulet speaks with the voice of accustomed authority:

LORD CAPULET: Look to't, think on't, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near, lay hand on heart, advise:
And you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets ...
(Act 3, scene 5)

the church At the end of the play, contrite and remorseful, Friar Lawrence addresses the Prince and those who have gathered at the tomb in a formal yet penitent manner, aware of his position as Friar:

FRIAR LAWRENCE: I am the greatest, able to do least,
Yet most suspected, as the time and place
Doth make against me, of this direful murder;
And here I stand both to impeach and purge
Myself condemned and myself excused.
(Act 5, scene 3)

If you pay careful attention while reading the play you will be aware of how language is used to specify the event - be it in jest (as with Romeo, his friends and the Nurse) or spoken in all seriousness (the Friar at the time of the wedding).

TO REVEAL LOVE AND PASSION

Language is also used to heighten the emotions at key moments in the play. Romeo's first words spoken to Juliet are an ideal example of this. Set as a sonnet and drawing its imagery from the world of religion, there is a romantic intensity about the exchange. It begins with Romeo's opening words, "If I profane with my unworhiest hand / This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this," and concludes with, "Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take." (Act 1, scene 5, line 92 onwards). The fact that they share the sonnet shows how, already at their first meeting, Romeo and Juliet think very much the same way.

the balcony scene The balcony scene is one of the greatest outpourings of love written for the theatre. In place of the cleverness and intricate puns of the previous scenes, here Romeo expresses his growing love in poetry that expresses the sincerity of his feelings. In part, the poetry he uses is still elaborate, an extension of the image we have of the character as the romantic hero and in keeping

with the tradition of expressing intense feelings. It is interesting to note, however, that as the play progresses and Romeo's love deepens, his language becomes simpler and more genuine. Note that



throughout the exchange Juliet is more sensible and straightforward, bringing Romeo back to the practicality of the situation.

marriage The marriage scene again sees Romeo's tendency to resort to elaborate poetry whereas Juliet's reply is simple and direct, yet no less impassioned. Here is an example:

ROMEO: Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy
Be heaped like mine ...

... then sweeten with thy breath

This neighbour air ...

JULIET: Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,
Braggs of his substance, not of ornament ...

Act 2, scene 6)

the lovers bid farewell Although poignant and sad, there is also a lyrical quality in the way that Romeo and Juliet

bid farewell to one another. The scene is more moving as we know this will be the last time the two see one another alive. Their interchange is placed against the reality of morning and the threat that the couple might be disturbed. The imagery thus also relates to night and day / light and dark but now there is a simplicity in the way the lovers communicate. Significantly, as Romeo leaves he anticipates events to come:

JULIET: O now be gone, more light and light it grows.

ROMEO: More light and light, more dark and dark our woes!

(Act 3, scene 5)

the tomb scene In the scene in the tomb there is a directness and true sincerity in the way Romeo bids farewell to his wife. Once again there is reference to light and dark, the imagery that runs through the play, but there is also an emphasis on the physical as Romeo takes leave of the mortal world, with the expectation of meeting his wife again after death. This is one of the play's great set pieces. Coming as it does at the end of the text it also offers a challenge to the actor playing Romeo. In quiet yet intense poetry that concludes with an image related to a sea journey, Romeo drinks the poison, his last words still in praise of Juliet:

ROMEO: ...Eyes look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace! And, lips, O you

The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss

A dateless bargain to engrossing Death!
 Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!
 Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
 The dashing rocks thy seasick weary bark!
 Here's to my love! (Drinks) O true apothecary!
 Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die. (Dies)
 (Act 5, scene 3)

The above ties up with Romeo's words spoken early on in the play, just before his meeting with Juliet, as though in anticipation of this final event:

ROMEO: But he that hath the steerage of my course
 Direct my sail!
 (Act 1, scene 5)

In contrast, Juliet's last words are brief, yet equally poignant and moving. There is of course a time restraint, as the audience knows someone is coming, so there is little time for decision making. In a moving reversal of ideas, Juliet sees the poison Romeo drank as something good, a 'restorative'. Practical yet not without sensitivity, Juliet uses an apt image to conclude. For her, the means of death is 'happy', as it will in all probability re-unite her with Romeo:

JULIET: Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger. (Taking Romeo's dagger)
 This is thy sheath; (Stabs herself) there rust, and let me die.
 (Act 5, scene 3)

Paris and language As we have seen, the lovers speak with intensity and a deep-felt emotion. The imagery they use is skilful and imaginative, directly related to their passionate feelings. In contrast, the 'approved' suitor, Paris, speaks with a respectful formality that establishes his role as the stereotypical romantic suitor - sincere but somewhat aloof. We are reminded of Romeo and his 'love' of Rosaline: courtly and formal, if removed from reality.

Look at the respectful and courteous manner in which Paris addresses his betrothed. Although his obvious devotion is apparent, there is still a formality in this interchange with Juliet. Full of double meanings and puns, Paris maintains his image as 'suitor':

PARIS: Happily met, my lady and my wife!
 JULIET: That may be, sir, when I may be a wife...
 PARIS: Come you to make confession to this father?
 JULIET: To answer that, I should confess to you.
 PARIS: Do not deny to him that you love me.
 JULIET: I will confess to you that I love him.
 PARIS: So will ye, I am sure, that you love me.
 JULIET: If I do so, it will be of more price,
 Being spoke behind your back, than to your face.
 (Act 4, scene 1)

By contrasting the rival 'suitors' for the hand of Juliet, the playwright emphasizes through the use of language the essential difference between the two. Whereas Paris woos Juliet as the courtly gentleman and lover, Romeo's impassioned outpouring reveal a depth of passion and commitment sadly lacking in Paris.

IMAGERY

Romeo and Juliet is a play about disorder. A constant threat, its presence is always felt. It is the feud that dominates all that happens in the play. However, the love of Romeo and Juliet brings hope, the expectation that healing might take place. It is the story of love in the face of ancient hatred. In keeping with the themes of the play, you can expect that the imagery will expand and comment on this state of affairs.

Think of imagery as the picture that is brought to mind by words and descriptions. It is very much a part of the diction (language) the playwright uses. This ensures that the point the playwright (poet or author) wishes to make is much stronger and we are encouraged to look more carefully at what is being said. We are given a particular point of view and asked to share and think about what the playwright wishes to foreground or highlight. You will find imagery when there is a simile or metaphor (comparison) used. In sum, think of imagery as a word picture used to bring the themes of the play to life.

Images in the play relate to conflict and disorder. In comparison, using imagery that is associated with light and darkness heightens the love and plight of Romeo and Juliet. There is also reference to disease and sickness, as well as the possibilities of the healing influence of nature and a regenerative process, with plants and their restorative capacity a part of this imagery

light and darkness

The play opens in the early morning and moves to the darkness of night when the lovers are finally reconciled and united in death. Significantly, the story starts in the early morning and ends at daybreak of a new day as the Prince comments: "A glooming peace this morning with it brings, / The sun for sorrow will not show his head."

There is a reversal with regard to how we are asked to respond to darkness and light. In the early scenes Juliet is associated with the light. Even in the darkness of the tomb she still lights up the life of her husband. Romeo starts off by shunning the light. However, once he has met Juliet, darkness becomes an ally, helping the couple to consummate their love. Yet, as the play continues, darkness seems to envelop and menace the lovers. It becomes more threatening, increasingly seen as an image of the danger to their love and future together. Darkness comes to be associated with the forces that are in conflict with the lovers: the feud, Juliet's parents, the impending marriage to Paris and fate that seems their greatest enemy. This is made clear in the Prologue when Romeo and Juliet are referred to as, "A pair of star-crossed lovers".

There are many associations with light and darkness in the play. Early on Romeo refers to love as a "fire sparkling in lovers' eyes". This is an interesting image in that it brings together the idea of fire as both productive as well as destructive - ultimately fire burns itself out. Not much later Benvolio refers to Romeo's present love in derogatory terms, urging the young man to compare Rosaline to other beauties of the day. Then, he claims, Romeo will be reformed, for Benvolio promises, "I will make thee think thy swan a crow." Romeo, in answering, says, "... then turn tears to fire". In fact, this is exactly what will happen in a very short time when Romeo meets Juliet.

Their first contact is full of references to the sun, moon and stars, as well as to a fire that consumes. On first seeing Juliet, Romeo declares, "O she doth teach the torches to burn bright", an image that will continue to the end of the play. Juliet is described as being above the darkness. She is a force for life; she represents hope and the redemptive influence of love. Their love will become a holy pilgrimage, beginning at this moment and closing with the death of both in Juliet's tomb.

It is in the poetry of the balcony scene that images of light and darkness are plentiful. Juliet is associated with the sun in the east; she outshines even the moon in the darkness of night, yet they have 'night's cloak to hide' them. Romeo is so overwhelmed that he fears all this is but a delusion, "O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard, / Being in night, all this is but a dream." For Romeo, night is an ally. The scene ends with references to the restorative powers of sleep: "Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast! / Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest." Then, as Romeo leaves, he tells us he is going to his "ghostly sire's close cell". In this way sleep and death ("ghostly") are subtly linked.

The bedroom scene has frequent references to light and the darkness that is fast approaching. This is most poignantly captured in Romeo's words, "More light and light it grows, more dark and dark our woes!" From this time onwards we find the darkness of violence, sadness and secrecy become increasingly important. No longer is night associated with safety and security. Now the images indicate a more threatening force. This reaches a climax in the tomb scene. The tomb itself is seen as a "detestable maw". Romeo describes death as having taken Juliet as "his paramour", yet Romeo is determined to remain, "And never from this palace of dim night / Depart again".

All that remains is for the Prince to return to the image of light and darkness as he closes the play with the expectation that even in this time of great sorrow, there is some hope as the day dawns and the families are reconciled.

Look out for images of darkness and light in the play. Remember that darkness is initially associated with night and its ability to hide the lovers and wrap them in its secrecy. Later darkness comes to represent all that is destructive in the play and, ultimately, it is allied to death itself. Images of light heighten our awareness of the true nature of love, of the purity of Juliet and her ability to act as a healing force. Take time to note the frequent references to the sun, moon, stars, fire and, by association, love, life and hope.

nature In this play nature is seen as a healing influence. For this reason there are frequent allusions to the restorative power of nature; in contrast, destructive disease and sickness also feature as images in the play.

Early on in the play we learn that Juliet is still young and innocent. Capulet comments as follows: "Let two more summers wither in their pride, / Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride."

Later Juliet, confronted by the reality of love, sees the potential for good in her meeting with Romeo: "... this bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet." The anticipation is that love must 'flower' and bloom in the fullness of time. Ironically here the image also anticipates the demise of the young lovers: death is part of the great cycle of life - but in Romeo and Juliet young lives are unnecessarily cut short by hatred and strife.

Friar Lawrence, the peacemaker and force for reconciliation in the play, is closely associated with nature and the restorative power of plants. After noting the dawning of a new day (with references that also contain images of light and darkness), Friar Lawrence speaks of "the earth that's nature's mother is her tomb." You will note that birth and death are contained in this one statement, a reminder of the great cycle of nature of which Romeo and Juliet are also a part. As you read the play, be aware of how often the Friar is associated with the force of nature that heals and restores.

A significant moment in the play occurs when Mercutio, mortally wounded by Tybalt (and, by association, inadvertently by Romeo), cries out, "A plague a'both your houses." Later it is to be the plague that deprives Romeo of the knowledge of his wife's seeming 'death' when Friar John is unable to deliver the message in time. In fact, the love of Romeo and Juliet seems almost 'plagued' by misfortune.

Here is how Romeo speaks of Juliet in the tomb: "O my love, my wife, / Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, / Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty." Earlier, when Juliet's 'body' is discovered, her father claims, "Death lies on her like an untimely frost / Upon the sweetest flower of all the field." It is interesting to note that her father associates death with "frost" that has come too soon to destroy the 'flower', whereas Romeo uses a more intimate and romantic image to describe her death.

ACTIVITY

Look at these quotations taken from the balcony scene (Act 2, scene 2). Can you identify how the imagery contributes to our understanding and appreciation of the scene from which it is taken?

1. ROMEO: He jests at scars, that never felt a wound. But soft! what light from yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
2. JULIET: O swear not by th'inconstant moon, That monthly changes in her circled orb, Lest that thy love prove like-wise variable.
3. JULIET: This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.

Answers to ACTIVITY

1. This extract begins with images of pain and wounds, a reference to the power of love to act as a destructive force. Romeo refers to himself as scarred, implying that Mercutio can easily make fun of him because Mercutio has never been in love. The image comes from the world of sickness and disease. However, as the light appears in Juliet's window, Romeo associates the radiance with Juliet. The light heralds the coming of Juliet, and she is associated with the sun. Bearing in mind that this is night, Juliet is seen to shine forth with all the power of the sun, far outstripping the darkness and even the jealous moon. There is also the suggestion that Romeo hopes that Juliet will not keep allegiance to the moon (think of Diana, goddess of the moon and patroness of virgins). Therefore, in this extract imagery prepares the audience for Juliet's entrance and the declaration of love that will follow.

2. These words come in answer to Romeo's attempt to pledge his fidelity ('Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow ...'). Juliet picks up on the imagery about being genuine. She would rather he did not swear by the moon that is not constant but ever changing. The moon's light waxes and wanes throughout the year. Sometimes it will be strong but at other times it will completely disappear. Juliet is straightforward. Her reply is far more down-to-earth than Romeo's romantic outpouring. By using this image related to the moon and inconstancy, Juliet portrays something of the uncertainty and insecurity of first love.

3. The first thing to notice in this extract is the imagery related to growth: Juliet wishes the 'bud of love' will transform into a 'beauteous flower' when they next meet. Here summer relates to a maturing influence. This suggests that Juliet feels that their love has not yet fully developed ('flowered'). It is ironic that this will never come to full fruition: the ending of the play prevents this. There is also a suggestion here that Juliet would rather wait for their love to bloom in the fullness of time. However, the imagery also reminds us of the natural cycle of death and decay, followed by new life. This anticipates the end of the play with its sense of rejuvenation and a new beginning.

Here are three more quotations that are rich in imagery, also taken from Act 2, scene 2.

JULIET: What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

ROMEO: I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes

JULIET: My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.