GOUNOD

Roméo et Juliette

A Guide for Educators

The Metropolitan Opera HD LIVE

Roméo et Juliette

William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is filled with some of the best-known images in literature: young lovers on a balcony, bathed in moonlight as they express their newfound passion; a secret wedding that flies in the face of longstanding familial strife; a desperate plan to be together in spite of hatred and exile; and a tragic finale in a dark tomb. For Charles Gounod, a composer in 19th-century France, these indelibly dramatic scenes were the perfect seeds for an opera, and his music for *Roméo et Juliette* offers a thrilling, rapturous, and heartbreaking counterpart to Shakespeare's transcendent poetry.

In adapting *Romeo and Juliet* for the operatic stage, Gounod was taking part in a long tradition of retelling and reimagining Shakespeare's work. Yet even Shakespeare was but one link in a chain of transmission connecting an Italian novella from the first half of the 16th century to a ballet by Sergei Prokofiev, the 1957 Broadway musical *West Side Story*, and film adaptations by Franco Zeffirelli and Baz Luhrmann. Nor are Shakespeare's lovers unique in the canon of world literature: Tragic stories of impossible love are found around the globe, including the ancient Babylonian Pyramus and Thisbe, the medieval Perso-Arabic Layla and Majnun, and the rural American antics of the Hatfields and McCoys.

This guide thus invites students to take part in the long tradition of storytelling that gave us *Romeo and Juliet*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and countless other works of both page and stage. The following materials offer historical, geographic, and artistic contexts for both Shakespeare's and Gounod's works. They will also challenge students to reach beyond Shakespeare's London, Gounod's Paris, and Romeo and Juliet's Verona to develop a more expansive—and personal—understanding of this story and its enduring tropes. For with each act of retelling, *Romeo and Juliet* becomes more complex and meaningful, and this guide will empower students to add their own voices to the ongoing story.

DAMRAU   GRIGOLO   MADORE   PETRENKO

Opera in the Classroom

The Metropolitan Opera Educator Guides offer a creative, interdisciplinary introduction to opera. Designed to complement existing classroom curricula in music, the humanities, STEM fields, and the arts, these guides will help young viewers confidently engage with opera whether or not they have prior experience with the art form.

On the following pages, you'll find an array of materials designed to encourage critical thinking, deepen background knowledge, and empower students to engage with *Roméo et Juliette*'s story, music, and themes. These materials can be used in classrooms and/or via remote-learning platforms, and they can be mixed and matched to suit your students' individual academic needs.

Above all, this guide is intended to help students explore *Roméo et Juliette* through their own experiences and ideas. The diverse perspectives that your students bring to opera make the art form infinitely richer, and we hope that your students will experience opera as a space where their confidence can grow and their curiosity can flourish.

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE:

Philosophical Chairs: A series of questions that will introduce students to the opera's main themes while sparking their creativity and encouraging debate

Who's Who in *Roméo et Juliette*: An introduction to the opera's main characters and their roles in the plot

Synopsis: A complete opera synopsis for young readers

The Source: Information about the literary sources and/or historical events that inspired the opera

Timelines: One or more timelines connecting the opera to events in world history

Deep Dives: In-depth looks at various topics relating to the opera

Active Exploration: Interdisciplinary activities connecting the opera to topics in music, the humanities, STEM, and the arts

THROUGHOUT THE GUIDE, YOU'LL ALSO FIND:

Critical Inquiries: Questions and thought experiments designed to foster careful thinking

Fun Facts: Entertaining tidbits about *Roméo et Juliette*

Zeffirelli and Olivia Hussey on the set of *Romeo and Juliet*
EMILIO LARI/AGENZIA FOTOGRAFICA PIERLUIGI VIA IMS VINTAGE PHOTOS

FUN FACT

Romeo and Juliet has been adapted numerous times for the screen. One of the most famous films was directed in 1968 by Franco Zeffirelli, who also staged several operas for the Met.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS AND *ROMÉO ET JULIETTE*

This guide invites students to explore the opera through:

English
Drama
Poetry
Creative Writing
Music
Music Theory
History
Current Events
Political Science
Public Speaking
Ethics
Social and Emotional Learning

Philosophical Chairs

Philosophical Chairs is an activity designed to foster critical thinking, active inquiry, and respectful dialogue among students. To play a game of Philosophical Chairs, participants agree or disagree with a series of statements, but the game doesn't end there. The most crucial element of the game is what happens next: Participants discuss their points of view and can switch sides if their opinions change during the discussion. (For more tips on using Philosophical Chairs in a classroom or via a remote-learning platform, see the activity description in your Google Classroom.)

Each topic statement is deliberately open-ended yet ties into a number of the themes present in *Roméo et Juliette*—including social and emotional growing pains, an individual's power over their own destiny, and the potential conflict between familial loyalty and passionate young love. As you and your students explore and learn about *Roméo et Juliette*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

THE STATEMENTS

- You should obey your family's wishes.
- My life is controlled by destiny.
- People can fall in love at first sight.
- Dreams are a manifestation of your subconscious speaking to you.
- Your appearance tells the world who you are.
- Everyone has only one true love.
- Marriage will ensure families are brought together.
- Strife will never tear a family apart.
- Secrets should not be kept from family members.
- Violence may be justified.
- Nothing is unforgivable.
- Love drives out fear.
- Nothing can separate people who are in love.

Keep in mind that the *process* of this activity is just as important as the statements themselves. Imagine a world in which everyone actively listens to one another and engages in respectful dialogue, honoring others and showing respect for the wide array of diverse ideas and opinions that others hold. Philosophical Chairs fosters exactly this kind of space, encouraging students to take what they've learned and change the global landscape for generations to come.

Who's Who in *Roméo et Juliette*

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION*	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
MONTAIGUS			
Roméo A young nobleman	roh-meh-OH	tenor	A brooding young man perpetually in and out of love, Roméo is thunderstruck when he sees Juliette. Overwhelmed by passion, he soon believes that life without her is not worth living.
Mercutio Roméo's cousin and best friend	mehr-coo-shee-OH	baritone	Impulsive and irreverent, Mercutio refuses to let Tybalt insult the Montaigu family. His bellicose nature and pride will lead to disaster for all concerned.
Benvolio Roméo's cousin	ben-voh-lee-YOH	tenor	Benviolio is far less rash than his cousin Mercutio, and he is often the cautionary voice in Roméo's ear.
Stéphano Roméo's page	steh-fah-NOH	mezzo-soprano	The part of Stéphano is a "trouser role," a term used in opera for the character of a young man played by a woman. His teasing causes the duel that leads to Mercutio's and Tybalt's deaths.
CAPULETS			
Juliette A young noblewoman	zhoo-lee-ETT	soprano	Although initially disinterested in romance and marriage, Juliette falls as deeply in love with Roméo as he does with her. Unfortunately, her father has other plans for Juliette's future.
Tybalt Juliette's cousin	tee-BAHLT	tenor	Hot-tempered Tybalt seems to be more invested than anyone in the Montaigu-Capulet feud. He is outraged when he sees Roméo at the Capulet ball, and when he picks a fight with Mercutio on the streets of Verona, his fury will have a deadly outcome.

JULIETTE · ROMÉO · MERCUTIO · FRÈRE LAURENT

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION*	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Capulet Juliette's father	ka-poo-LEH	bass-baritone	Capulet and Juliette have fundamentally different ideas about what is best for her—especially when it comes to marriage.
Gertrude Juliette's nurse	zhehr-TROOD	mezzo-soprano	Juliette's nurse, Gertrude acts as a mother figure, protecting her and helping conceal her marriage to Roméo.
Pâris A count	pah-REES	baritone	A wealthy count and associate of Capulet's, Pâris wants to marry Juliette.
OTHER CHARACTERS			
Frère Laurent A priest	frehr loh-RAWN	bass	Frère Laurent hopes that Roméo and Juliette's love will end the feud between their families, and he agrees to marry them in secret. Yet when his plan to save Juliette from her marriage to Pâris goes awry, it will lead to the opera's tragic outcome.
The Duke of Verona		bass	Ruler of the city where the Montaigus and Capulets live, the Duke is outraged by the bloodshed the families' hatred has caused.

*Pronunciations and spellings in this guide follow the opera's French language and differ from the English of Shakespeare's plays.

Synopsis

A chorus tells of an endless feud between two great families, the Montaigus and the Capulets, and the young Roméo and Juliette, whose tragic love brought the feud to an end.

ACT I *Verona.*

A lavish masked ball is taking place at the Capulet palace. Tybalt, a Capulet gentleman, assures the wealthy Count Pâris that his cousin Juliette's beauty is beyond compare. When Juliette arrives, Lord Capulet presents his daughter to the guests.

Roméo, a Montaigu, sneaks in with his friends Mercutio and Benvolio. Roméo is nervous about entering the Capulet residence: He has had a strange dream that he thinks may be a premonition of some great misfortune. Mercutio dismisses the dream as mere fancy, the work of the fairy Queen Mab. Soon, however, Roméo sees Juliette. He is instantly entranced. Juliette, meanwhile, knows that her father wants her to marry Pâris, and she confides in her nurse, Gertrude, that she has no interest in marriage. But when Juliette sees Roméo, she is deeply intrigued by this handsome stranger. They find a moment to speak alone. Although they are both shocked to discover that the other is a member of the rival family, they cannot deny their mutual attraction.

Tybalt appears. Roméo puts on his mask to avoid being recognized and rushes off, but the proud, quarrelsome Tybalt has already recognized the intruder as Montaigu's son. He wishes to chase after Roméo, but Capulet restrains him, ordering the party to continue.

ACT II *Juliette's garden, that evening.*

Roméo enters the Capulets' garden looking for Juliette. When she appears on her balcony, he steps forward and declares his love. Servants briefly interrupt their encounter, but once they are alone again, they make plans for a secret wedding.

ACT III *Frère Laurent's church, dawn the following morning.*

Roméo comes to Frère Laurent's cell, followed shortly by Juliette and Gertrude. At first, Frère Laurent is shocked to see a Montaigu and a Capulet together. But finally, convinced of the strength of their love, the priest agrees to marry them. He hopes that the union will end the fighting between their families.

A street in Verona.

Outside the Capulets' palace, Roméo's page, Stéphano, sings a song mocking the Capulets, provoking the Capulets to attack him. Mercutio intercedes to protects Stéphano, and soon the skirmish escalates into a violent swordfight between Mercutio and Tybalt. Just then, Roméo

arrives on his way home from the church. He begs Tybalt and Mercutio to forget about the hatred between their families, but when Tybalt kills Mercutio, Roméo furiously stabs and kills him. The Duke of Verona arrives, with the Montaigus and Capulets hot on his heels. Both of the families are outraged and demand justice—the Montaigus for Mercutio, the Capulets for Tybalt. The Duke, for his part, is primarily concerned with preventing future skirmishes from destroying the city's peace. He refuses to execute Roméo, but he does banish the young man from the city, declaring that if Roméo is seen again inside Verona's walls, he will die.
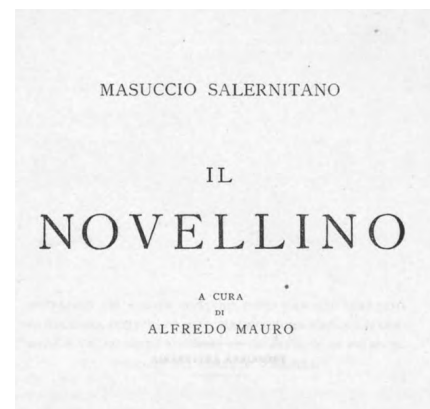
ACT IV *Juliette's bedroom, early the following morning.*
Roméo and Juliette have spent a secret wedding night together. She forgives him for killing Tybalt, and they promise to love each other forever. Then, as a lark outside the window announces the arrival of day, Roméo reluctantly leaves for his exile.

Capulet enters and tells his daughter that she must marry Pâris that very day. She tries to argue with her father, but, unmoved by his daughter's tears, Capulet angrily tells his daughter to prepare for the wedding. Juliette is left alone with Frère Laurent, whom she desperately begs to help her. Although he is at first reluctant to meddle, Frère Laurent finally gives Juliette a sleeping potion that will make her appear dead. He promises to write a letter to Roméo explaining the potion and his plan to help Juliette avoid her marriage. The letter will also invite Roméo to return secretly to Verona; when Juliette wakens, Roméo will be by her side. Together, they will flee the city and embark on a new life. Juliette is terrified, but she drinks the potion. When Capulet and the guests arrive to lead Juliet to the chapel for her wedding, she collapses.
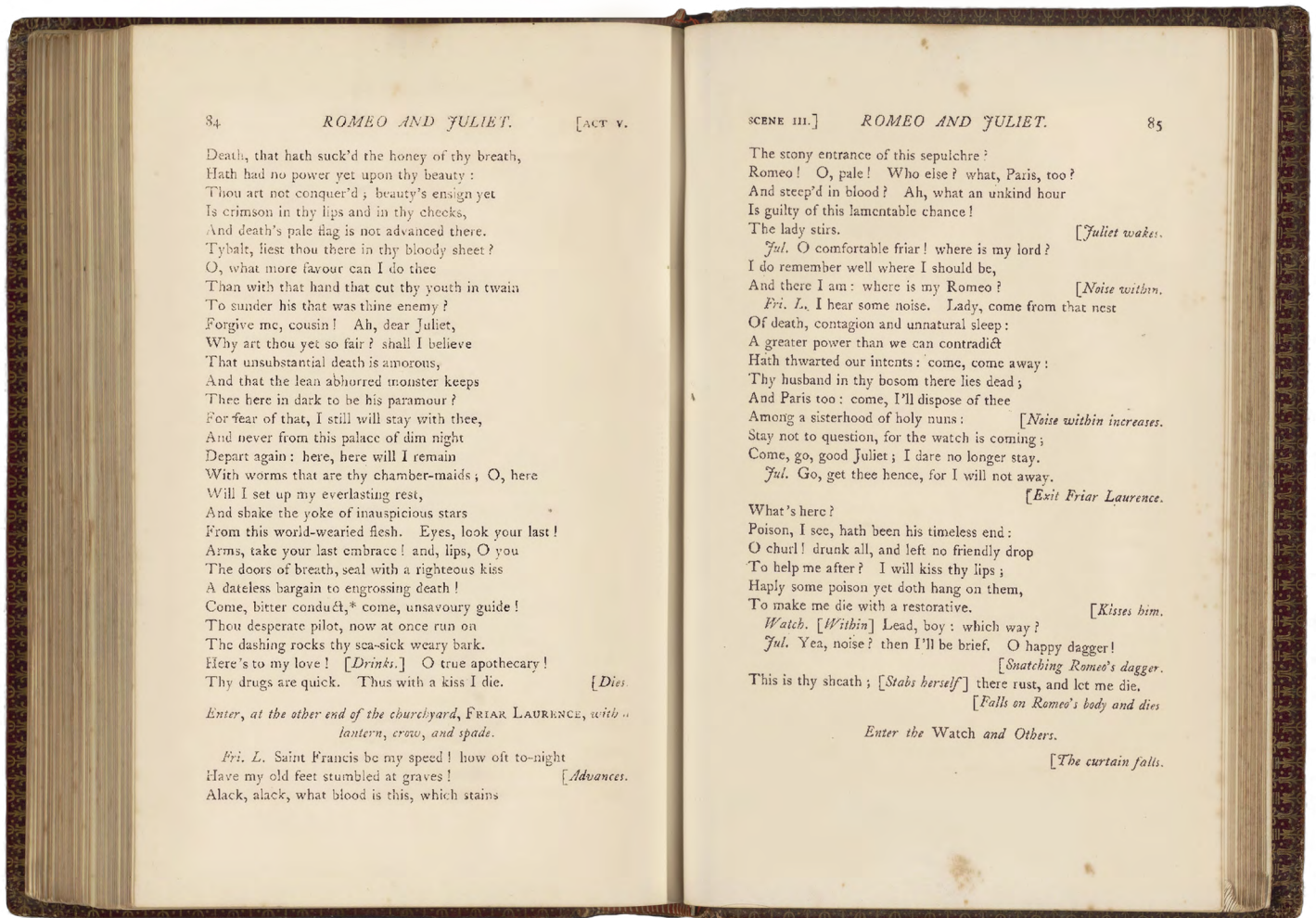
ACT IV *The Capulets' family tomb.*
Despite Frère Laurent's careful planning, his letter has gone astray, and when news reaches Roméo of Juliette's burial, he believes that she is truly dead. Crazed with grief, Roméo arrives at the Capulet crypt carrying a bottle of deadly poison. He has no desire to continue living, and he drinks the poison. At that very moment, Juliette wakes up. She is overjoyed to see Roméo, and together the young lovers imagine a happy future. Just as they are about to leave the crypt, however, Roméo staggers and falls. With horror, Juliette realizes that he is dying. Drawing a dagger from Roméo's belt, Juliette stabs herself.

MASUCCIO SALERNITANO

IL

NOVELLINO

A CURA
DI
ALFREDO MAURO

FUN FACT

Some scholars find an early version of the *Romeo and Juliet* story in a 15th-century collection of stories by the Italian Masuccio Salernitano. Like Shakespeare's play, the story features a sleeping potion, a deadly duel, and a friar. The main characters' names, however, are different; the story takes place in Siena rather than Verona; and the hero never makes it back to Siena to see his beloved in the crypt— because he is caught and beheaded on the way.

Above: Act V, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*
COMPOSITE OF TWO IMAGES
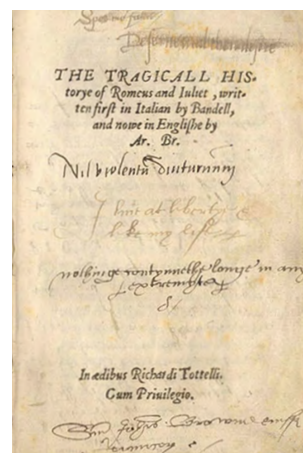RIJKSMUSEUM, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Source

THE PLAY *ROMEO AND JULIET* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

In 1530, the Italian writer Luigi da Porto published a story of two warring families. Bearing the whopping title *Historia novellamente ritrovata d'uno innamoramento: Il quale successo in Verona nel tempo del Signor Bartholomeo de la Scala: Historia jocondissima* (*A recently discovered love story: Which happened in Verona at the time of Signor Bartholomeo de la Scala: A most happy story*), the book relates how two teenagers from opposing households fell in love, chose death over separation, and thereby effected their families' reconciliation. By name-dropping the real-life Veronese nobleman Bartholomeo de la Scala in the title, da Porto implied that the book was based on a true story; he also trumpeted the story's "most happy" reconciliation rather than dwelling on the heroes' untimely deaths. Yet by the time an adaptation of da Porto's story hit the boards in London some 55 years later, this "most happy" story was destined to become one of literature's most famous tragedies, and the incidental name of Signor Bartholomeo de la Scala was eclipsed entirely by the names of the story's two young protagonists: Romeo and Juliet.

From Venice, where da Porto's story was published, a chain of writers relayed the story across western Europe to England. This path of transmission included a *Romeo e Giulietta* (1554) by the Italian Matteo Bandello; a French translation of Bandello by the writer Pierre Boiastuau (1559); and a narrative poem, based on Boiastuau, by the English writer Arthur Brooke, titled *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). It was likely Brooke's version that, in the middle of the 1590s, fell into the hands of one William Shakespeare, an up-and-coming playwright and actor working with the Lord Chamberlain's men in London. Other writers after Shakespeare, too, would take up (and in some cases claim to improve upon) Shakespeare's drama. Yet it is Shakespeare's dramatic retelling of this tragedy, rather than the narrative versions of his predecessors, that cemented Romeo and Juliet's place in literary history, the popular imagination, and the operatic canon.

Brooke's *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*
BRITISH LIBRARY

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

FUN FACT

In general, the English names for the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* are simply anglicized versions of their names in Italian: the "Montecchi" and "Cappelletti" in Luigi da Porto's narrative became the Montagues and the Capulets, "Marcuccio" became Mercutio, and "Romeo" and "Giuletta" of course became Romeo and Juliet. One translation, however, deserves more attention. In *Reynard the Fox*, a satirical medieval poem that was highly popular during the Elizabethan era, the cat "Tibert" pokes fun at the other animal characters he lives with. Tibert's name was rendered in English as "Tybalt"—the name Shakespeare gave to da Porto's "Theobaldo." Thus, when Romeo refers to Tybalt as "the Prince of Cats," he is referencing this feline forebear, as is Mercutio when, during the final duel between Mercutio and Tybalt, the quick-tongued Mercutio refers to his Capulet rival as a "ratcatcher."

Timeline

William Shakespeare
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Drawing of Gounod by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

Séminaire des Missions Étrangères
PIERRE PETIT

c. 1595

William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* premieres in London; the precise date of the play's first performance is uncertain. It will be published twice during Shakespeare's life, in 1597 and 1599, as well as in a collector's edition published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death.

1818

Charles-François Gounod is born on June 17 in Paris. His father is an accomplished painter, his mother is a pianist, and little Charles soon shows remarkable aptitude in both the visual and musical arts.

1823

Gounod's father dies, and his mother opens a piano studio to support the family. Although she hopes Charles will grow up to be a lawyer, she does permit him to leave his boarding school one day each week for music lessons.

1836

Gounod enrolls at the Paris Conservatory. Although he demonstrates reasonable skill as a tenor and pianist, his real love is composing, which is where he focuses his efforts.

1839

Gounod wins the prestigious Prix de Rome (Rome Prize), which awards him a three-year stipend to study in Rome. Gounod is extremely impressed by the art, music, and history he encounters in Italy, and the experience will spark his lifelong appreciation for Italian art.

1843

Returning to Paris, Gounod takes the position of maître de chapelle (music director) for the Séminaire des Missions Étrangères, a seminary for Catholic missionaries.

Pauline Viardot
BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

Jules Barbier
GALLICA DIGITAL LIBRARY

Michel Carré
GALLICA DIGITAL LIBRARY

1847

Intending to pursue a religious vocation, Gounod enrolls at St. Sulpice Seminary. After only one year of study, he leaves to focus on opera composition. Yet he remains committed to his Catholic faith, finding it to be a source of stability during the professional failures and emotional turbulence of his later life.

1851

Gounod's first opera, *Sapho*, premieres at the Paris Opera, the city's most celebrated opera house. Gounod's engagement by the Opera—a venue usually reserved for more established composers—is due almost entirely to the intercession of his close friend Pauline Viardot, one of Paris's most celebrated singers. Critics appreciate *Sapho*, but it is a commercial failure and closes after only six performances.

1859

Gounod's opera *Faust* premieres in Paris. Based on the play by Goethe, the opera features a libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, who will go on to collaborate with Gounod on six other works for the stage. *Faust* becomes Gounod's most popular and frequently performed opera.

1859–64

Gounod produces several operas—including *Philémon et Baucis* (1860), *La Reine de Saba* (1862), and *Mireille* (1864)—but none garners success with either audiences or critics.
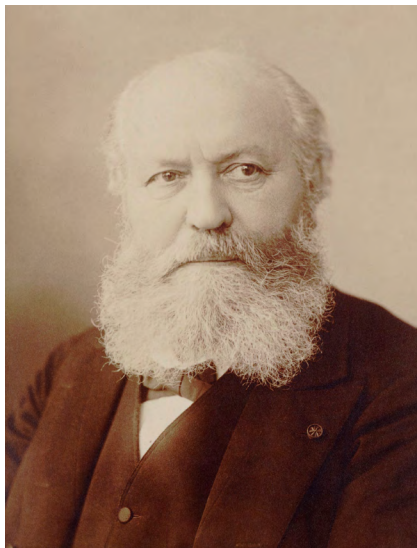
1867

Gounod's luck finally changes when *Roméo et Juliette* premieres during the Exposition Universelle, an international world's fair in Paris. The opera is a spectacular success and sells out several performances.

1870

The Franco-Prussian war breaks out. Gounod and his family flee Paris, first settling in the French countryside and then joining a wave of French immigrants to England. During the fighting, Gounod's home in Paris is destroyed. Although Gounod has traveled to England essentially as a refugee, he does enjoy a range of professional opportunities in the country, including a commission for a new composition for the opening of the Royal Albert Hall on May 1, 1871. The resulting motet, *Gallia*, features a biblical text about the destruction of Jerusalem, likely expressing Gounod's sorrow at his own recent experience of war.

Poster of Gounod's *Mireille*
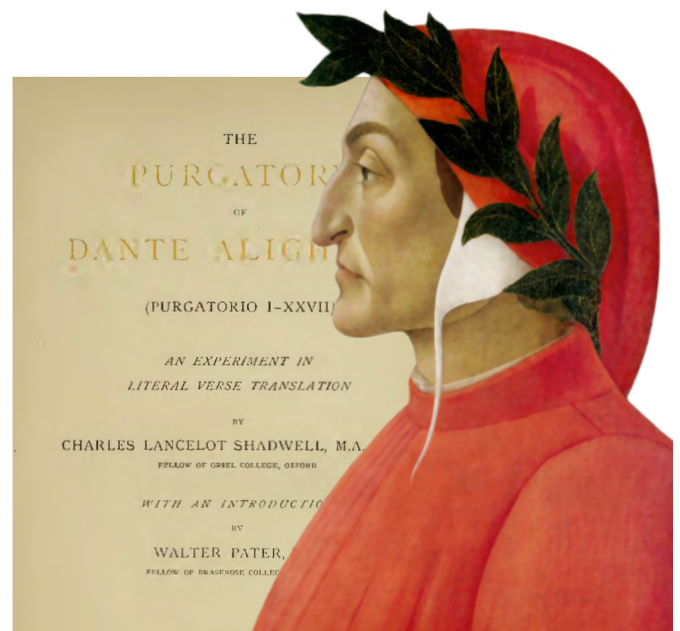GALLICA DIGITAL LIBRARY

1884

In the intervening years, Gounod has continued to write operas but struggled to find any meaningful commercial success. After a revised version of *Sapho* fails in 1884, the composer never again writes for the stage, concentrating instead on sacred music and works for piano and chamber ensembles.

Happily, Gounod does occasionally enjoy success from his older works. For instance, when *Mireille* is revived in Paris in 1889, it is well received. It soon becomes one of the most popular pieces in the company's repertoire and a staple on the French stage for the next 75 years.

1893

Gounod suffers a stroke and dies on October 18. He receives a state funeral at the Madeleine Church in Paris. In deference to his own wishes, only choral music is performed at the service.

Gounod
GALLICA DIGITAL LIBRARY

FUN FACT

The story of Romeo and Juliet is pure fiction, but there was a prominent family in Elizabethan England named Montague. In fact, they were distant relatives of Shakespeare's. Similarly, in Renaissance Italy there were real families named Montecchi and Cappelletti (the names given by da Porto and Bandello to Romeo and Juliet's families), although they hailed from different cities (Verona and Cremona, respectively) and there is no historical connection between them. Nevertheless, Shakespeare and his predecessors were not the only authors to place these families side-by-side on the page. In his 14th-century epic poem *Purgatory*, the Italian poet Dante Alighieri listed them as examples of civil strife.

Deep Dive

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

For millennia, stories of impossible love have enjoyed a prominent place in oral and literary traditions around the globe. Here is a small sampling of some of these great tragedies.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE

In this tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, two Babylonian lovers woo each other through a crack in the wall between their families' houses. They arrange to meet, but Pyramus misreads the signs at their meeting place, believes Thisbe dead, and kills himself. Thisbe finds him and follows him in death. (The story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is featured in Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was written around the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*.)

The Suicides of Pyramus and Thisbe: Thisbe and Pyramus lying dead in front of Ninus's tomb, having stabbed themselves with the sword next to them. Line engraving by V. Vangelisti after G. Reni
WELLCOME COLLECTION

LAYLA AND MAJNUN

This classic love story from the Persian and Arabic traditions recounts how a young man goes mad when the father of his beloved prevents them from marrying.

POPOCATÉPETL AND IZTACCÍHUATL

A Nahuatl legend describes two star-crossed lovers who are transformed into the two volcanoes that overlook the Valley of Mexico.

THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS

In this Chinese folktale, a young woman disguises herself as a man to pursue her academic studies but then falls in love with one of her fellow students. After dying together, the lovers are transformed into butterflies.

TRISTAN AND ISEULT

In this medieval tale, the Cornish knight Tristan is tasked with ferrying the Irish princess Iseult to marry the Cornish King Mark. On the journey to Cornwall, a love potion causes Tristan and Iseult to fall in love. When their secret is discovered, banishment and death ensue. (This story inspired Richard Wagner's 1865 opera *Tristan und Isolde*.)
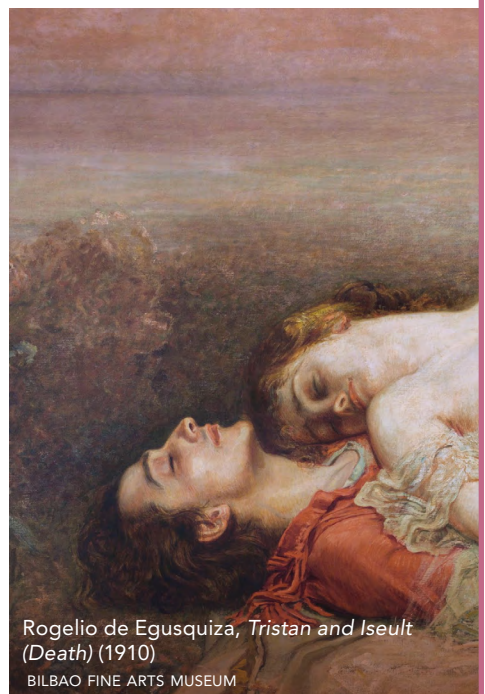
PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

The historical Francesca da Rimini, a contemporary of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, fell in love with her husband's brother, Paolo. In Dante's epic poem *The Inferno*, Francesca and Paolo have been consigned to hell because of their sinful love. It's worth noting that, in Dante's telling, Francesca and Paolo fell in love while sitting under a tree and reading the story of another (in)famous pair: Lancelot, one of King Arthur's knights of the round table, and Arthur's wife, Guinevere.

JOHNSON HATFIELD AND ROSEANNA MCCOY

The real-life courtship of these 19th-century American lovers did nothing to quell the bad blood between their feuding families, the Hatfields and McCoys of Kentucky and West Virginia.

The Fainting of Laylah and Majnun
(Second half of 16th century)
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Rogelio de Egusquiza, *Tristan and Iseult (Death)* (1910)
BILBAO FINE ARTS MUSEUM

CRITICAL INQUIRY

In general, tragic stories feature a decisive moment when everything goes wrong. Roméo and Juliette, for instance, could have lived happily forever *if only* Frère Laurent's letter had reached Roméo in time. Or perhaps they could have effected a reconciliation between their families if Stéphano hadn't upset Tybalt, which ultimately led to Mercutio and Tybalt's deaths. Think of a few ways to change the story of *Roméo et Juliette* to give it a happy ending. Then choose one of the stories above, read it, and brainstorm how you might change the characters' fates.
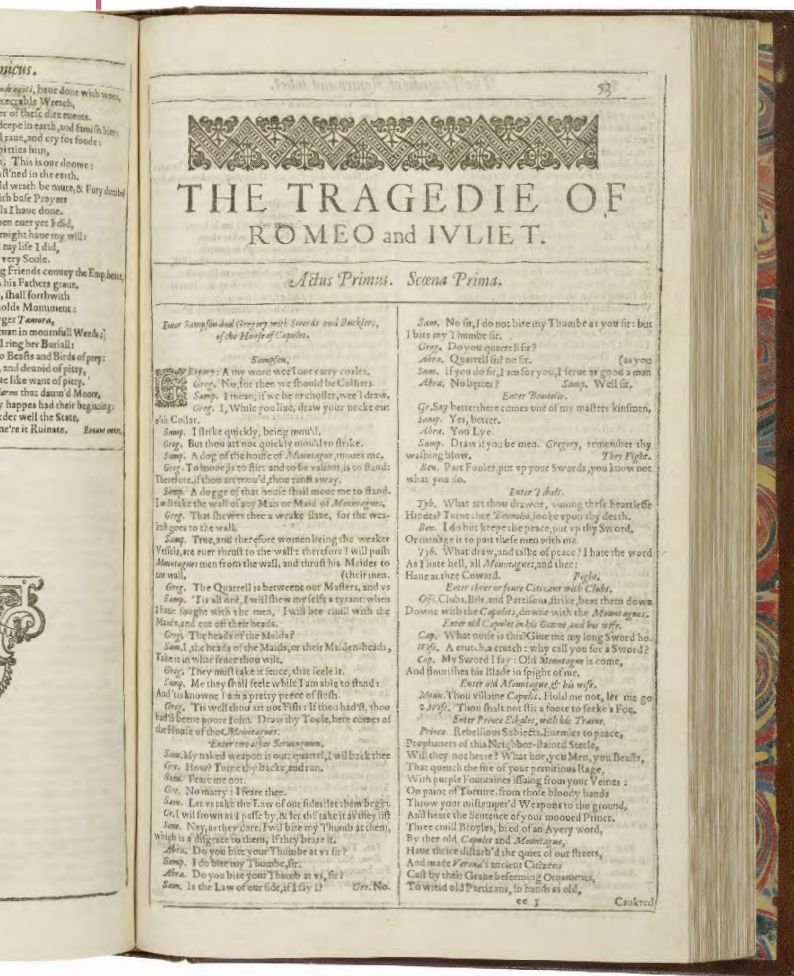
Deep Dive

WHAT'S IN A PAGE?

Almost no copies of Shakespeare's plays in his own handwriting exist today, but three publications of *Romeo and Juliet* appeared within a few decades of the play's premiere. Two of these were published during Shakespeare's lifetime: the so-called Quarto 1 (1597) and Quarto 2 (1599). Another version, in a collection of Shakespeare's plays referred to as the "First Folio," was published in 1623, seven years after the author's death. To a modern reader, these monikers may seem unnecessarily arcane, but understanding the terms "quarto" and "folio" can offer us vital insights into how books were printed and sold during Shakespeare's day.

Quartos were books made by folding pieces of paper in half (lengthwise) and then in half again (widthwise) to create four individual leaves of paper, each measuring about seven inches wide by nine inches tall; the name "quarto" refers to this four-leaf organization. Counting both front and back sides of the sheets, each printed sheet of paper would result in eight quarto-sized pages. A folio, by contrast, was made by folding the sheets of paper in half once to form two large leaves (four printed pages), resulting in a much larger book; the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, for instance, measures approximately 13 inches tall by 8 inches wide.

Quartos were relatively cheap to produce and purchase, costing roughly sixpence a piece (around $5.00 in modern currency), and their small size made them easy to handle and transport. Folios, by contrast, cost between 15 and 18 shillings ($150 to $180 in modern terms). Treated as collector's items, folios were generally used only for highly respected work, and the decision by Shakespeare's former colleagues to print his plays in folio form is a clear indication of both their respect for his writing and their desire to keep monetizing his output even after his death.

For more information about cost and uses of quartos and folios, see William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Peter Holland (New York: Penguin, 2000), xxv.

First page of Shakespeare's
Romeo and Juliet in the First Folio
FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

CRITICAL INQUIRY

What are some of the cheapest forms of media and entertainment you consume today? What are some of the most expensive?

Active Exploration

The following activities will help familiarize your students with the plot of *Roméo et Juliette*, forge connections between a variety of classroom subjects, and encourage creative responses to the opera. They are designed to be accessible to a wide array of ages and experience levels.

PUT UP YOUR DUKES
Lead students to consider the feud in *Roméo et Juliette* more deeply while cultivating their own tools to confront prejudice. Ask students put themselves in the shoes of the Duke of Verona and prepare a speech to persuade the Capulets and Montagues to make peace. Offer students the opportunity to consider how prejudices like those depicted in the opera and play manifest in their own communities.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN SHAKESPEAREAN ADVENTURE
Invite students to identify decisions, actions, and other moments in the opera's plot that propel the protagonists towards their doom. Inspire students to imagine, using whatever storytelling form they choose, how the ending of the opera might or might not have turned out differently if various characters had chosen alternative paths along the way.

MAKE SHAKESPEARE SING
Encourage students to dive into the world of adaptation, exploring how composer Charles Gounod and librettists Jules Barbier and Michel Carré turned Shakespeare's play into an opera. Challenge students to create their own libretto (or even score) for the final scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, which is not included in the opera.

BE THE DIRECTOR
Explore different versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, such as the various filmic adaptations of the play, *West Side Story*, and Gounod's opera. Discuss these different versions, and then invite students to develop their own vision for staging the opera.

BE THE CONDUCTOR
Gounod's harmonic language stretches beyond the typical progressions we learn in a music theory classroom. Invite students to place themselves in the role of conductor, analyzing Gounod's harmonies alongside the prologue's text as they "prepare for a performance."

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COMMON CORE STRANDS

These activities directly support the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.7
Analyze works by authors or artists who represent diverse world cultures.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7
Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)