



3 Key Adjectives

Impulsive – he falls immediately in love with Juliet and forgets Rosaline.

Devoted friend – when Mercutio is killed by Tybalt, Romeo is so enraged that he kills him too.

Passionate – he kills himself in order to be with Juliet.

Function in the play

- Matures from **adolescence to adulthood** as a result of his **love for Juliet** and his **unfortunate involvement in the feud** → develops from a comic character to a tragic figure.
- **Petrarchan lover at the start of the play**: his feelings are not reciprocated by Rosaline → uses poetic language of sonnets to express misery and frustration → exaggerated language = young & inexperienced lover → more in love with idea of ♥ than with the Rosaline herself → sees Juliet and realises the artificiality of his love for Rosaline: "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! / For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (I.5.52-53).
- As the play progresses, **Romeo's increasing maturity as a lover is marked by the change in his language**: he begins to speak in blank verse → allows his language to sound less artificial.
- **Juliet's role in Romeo's development**: her level-headed observations, such as the one about Romeo's kissing 'by the book' (i.e. artificially), inspire him to begin to speak some of the most beautiful and intense love poetry ever written.
- However, Romeo's intense passion for Juliet also highlights his **lack of moderation**: he is someone **controlled by his feelings** and Shakespeare presents the consequences of this. E.g. Love compels him to sneak into the garden of his enemy's daughter, risking death simply to catch a glimpse of her. Anger compels him to kill his wife's cousin in a reckless duel to avenge the death of his friend. Despair compels him to suicide upon hearing of Juliet's death.
- Among his friends, especially while bantering with Mercutio, Romeo shows glimpses of **his social persona**. He is intelligent, quick-witted, fond of verbal jousting (particularly about sex), loyal, and unafraid of danger.
- **Significance of Romeo's role as melancholy lover & Juliet's secret love** → Romeo belongs in a world defined by love rather than a world fractured by feud BUT Tybalt's death in Act 3, scene creates the CONFLICT between the lovers' private world and the public world of the feud.

Relevant themes:

- He reflects the different types of love present in the play:
 - Unrequited love (Rosaline) versus true love (Juliet)
 - He is a loyal friend: his guilt for Mercutio's fatal stabbing and his impetuous desire for revenge
 - Loyalty to his family is not a priority as illustrated by his lack of involvement in the opening
- **The Individual against Society**
 - On the one hand he **conforms** to the role of the Petrarchan Lover; on the other, he puts his love for Juliet before his loyalty to his family and his refusal to fight Tybalt because of this emasculates him in Mercutio's eyes.
 - Anything else?
- **Any other themes raised by Romeo's actions and feelings within the play?**



Key Quotes

Look back at the key scenes we have studied in class and decide which ones feature your chosen character.

Select one or two key quotes from each key scene. Make sure they are short and memorable.

Act 1, scene 1 – Romeo, the Petrarchan Lover
“In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman” Act1:1

Act 1, scene 5 – Romeo and Juliet fall in love

Act 2, scene 2 – The Balcony Scene

Act 3, scene 1 – The Second Fight

Act 5, scene 3 – Romeo slays Paris and Romeo’s death speech

