
Preliminary English Advanced

Module A: Comparative Study

Term 1 – Week 3

Exploring Connections

William Shakespeare's

Romeo and Juliet

&

Robert Wise and Jerome
Robbins'

West Side Story

Texts in Time

Wilfred Owen's

World War 1 Poetry

&

Joseph Heller's

Catch 22

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TERM 1 – WEEK 3

REVISION OF LESSON 2

Lesson 2 focused on your ability to analyse a key scene from both texts and draw connections between the two. An essential skill in this analysis is the ability to discuss textual features (techniques) and explain its effect. You must be able to identify and explain how language and visual features have helped a text achieve its purpose. It is this type of skill that is often tested in examinations. Once you are adept at this skill, it is much easier to answer a question that asks you to compare texts.

The mini-essay set for homework required you to identify similarities (connections) and differences between the texts by referring to the opening scenes. A major part of your essay should have been a close analysis of textual features. **The following expressions** are the type that will help you make the link between the feature and its effect.

This feature...

<i>appeals to...</i>	<i>highlights...</i>	<i>illustrates...</i>
<i>attracts attention to...</i>	<i>contrasts with...</i>	<i>implies...</i>
<i>creates empathy for...</i>	<i>promotes...</i>	<i>enhances...</i>
<i>reinforces...</i>	<i>suggests that...</i>	<i>describes...</i>
<i>tells the audience...</i>	<i>emphasises...</i>	<i>discusses...</i>
<i>involves readers in...</i>	<i>draws attention to...</i>	<i>enriches...</i>



EXAMPLES

Here is a sample paragraph that illustrates the identification and explanation of textual features. It is based on the question set for homework, focussing on a similarity between the texts.

Question: What similarities and differences have you seen in the texts so far?

In your answer make reference to the opening scenes of both texts.

PARAGRAPH 1

A significant thematic connection between the play and the film is the universal problem of youth violence. **(Topic sentence)** Both texts present a similar concern for conflict and a lack of respect for authority. The opening scene of both texts presents an audience with rival parties that are eager to promote disharmony within their respective communities. The violence on the streets of Verona is reinforced by the debased and somewhat risqué language where punning is the main source of dialogue. Sampson's '... and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall' highlights the tension between the feuding families and creates a sense of impending violent action. **(Identification of technique with example, followed by effect)** Similarly, **(a connection)** the opening scene of West Side Story focuses on two rival gangs of youths who are prepared to use violence to gain superiority. After an establishing shot that depicts a 1950s New York context, a gang of 'cool' white youths are posed together in one corner of a basketball court, clicking their fingers to the syncopated rhythm of the musical score, suggesting their unity and desire for action. **(Technique, example and effect)** They gradually break into a highly-stylised dance and then burst into a daring, high-stepping sequence of pirouettes and athletic moves that tells the audience that they are readying themselves for a brawl. They represent one side of the racial rivalry between the 'Jets' and the 'Sharks', similar to Shakespeare's tense and feuding families, the Montagues and the Capulets.

EXERCISE

With the assistance of your tutor, attempt to write a further paragraph based on the same question. The **connection** you use between the texts is up to you but remember to cite specific textual features and explain their effect.

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ROMEO AND JULIET

Read through the following scene identifying significant textual features and thematic concerns.

ACT 2 SCENE II. CAPULET'S ORCHARD.

Enter ROMEO

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

JULIET appears above at a window

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!

Metaphor depicting Romeo's attraction to Juliet

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-pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO

[Aside] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

ROMEO

I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET

What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO

By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,



Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

JULIET

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

ROMEO

Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

JULIET

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

JULIET

If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

JULIET

I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO

I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

JULIET

By whose direction found'st thou out this place?

ROMEO

By love, who first did prompt me to inquire;
He lent me counsel and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise.

JULIET

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay,'
And I will take thy word: yet if thou swear'st,
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries
Then say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse an say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

ROMEO

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops--

JULIET

O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

ROMEO

What shall I swear by?

JULIET

Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.

ROMEO

If my heart's dear love--

JULIET

Well, do not swear: although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say 'It lightens.' Sweet, good night!
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart as that within my breast!

ROMEO

O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET

What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?

ROMEO

The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

JULIET

I gave thee mine before thou didst request it:
And yet I would it were to give again.

ROMEO

Wouldst thou withdraw it? for what purpose, love?

JULIET

But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have:
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.

Nurse calls within



I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu!
Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.
Stay but a little, I will come again.

Exit, above

ROMEO

O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard.
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

Re-enter JULIET, above

JULIET

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite;
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay
And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

COMMENTARY

Some of the most poetic language is found here in the form of images, figures of speech, and the music of the lines.

Romeo's **soliloquy**, a dramatic monologue spoken aloud to reveal a character's thoughts, is found in the first part of Scene 2. The monologue conveys an idealised quality of their love and clearly describes his new feeling for Juliet in terms of brightness. He even states that the brightness of her eyes, if up in heaven, would light up the skies and make the birds think it was day. He again uses **imagery** of light and dark when he first sees Juliet on the balcony and states, "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." As Rosaline was compared to moon and night, Juliet is compared to sun, brightness, warmth, and light.

The famous lines, "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" do not mean she is looking for him, but that she is asking why he is called Romeo and a Montague. She continues her speech declaring that if he cannot give up his name, she will give up her Capulet name. She then goes on to state that it is only his name that is her enemy, but not the person. She compares their love to lightning that ceases almost as soon as it is seen and to a bud that would bloom in time. This illustrates the new meanings of love in each of their lives. Romeo is willing to face death in exchange for Juliet's love. The two lovers will repeatedly demonstrate that they prefer death to separation. Their entire relationship has been formed quickly. They have declared their love, exchanged vows, and plan to be married, all in a matter of hours. Possibly because both lovers realise the dangers of their love, they act quickly and impulsively.

Impulsive behaviour is considered to be Romeo's tragic flaw (a weakness in a character that will cause his destruction). This flaw is first seen when Romeo quickly forgets Rosaline and turns his attentions to Juliet. He not only falls deeply in love with Juliet but plans marriage, all within a matter of hours. While a certain amount of impetuosity is natural in the young, extremes can prove destructive for the characters.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the language of this scene contrast to that of the opening of the play? What is the significance of this?

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2. Identify some key images that reflect Romeo's love for Juliet.

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WEST SIDE STORY

View Scene 15 (Tonight) from the film and take note of any significant connections with the play. An obvious connection is the clandestine meeting of the characters to declare their love for each other. Also take note of key dramatic techniques and their effect.


COMMENTARY

The film follows a similar plot to the play with the conflict of the opening scene contrasting with the narrative of Tony and Maria's love. The famous balcony scene of the Shakespeare drama transpires on a fire-escape of an ugly New York tenement.

The scene outside Maria's bedroom parallels Shakespeare's balcony scene in many ways. Their illicit meeting is designed to make the viewer feel uneasy and the fact that Maria's father keeps calling her adds to this feeling (this parallels the Nurse calling for Juliet from within). They could be caught at any time. The fact that they are prepared to take such risks moves the narrative on, making the audience aware that they will be prepared to make huge sacrifices for their love.

A variety of **camera angles** are implemented in this scene to highlight the relationship between the characters. Initially, a **low angle shot** looking up to Maria on the balcony suggests her dominance over an impetuous Tony as she pleads with him to be quiet. A cut to a **high angle shot** reinforces her status as she looks down to him. When Tony climbs the stairwell he assumes a higher position, proclaiming his love and reinforcing the fact he is not afraid. These camera angles draw attention to the differences between the two in terms of their diverse backgrounds. The use of Spanish and English emphasises this difference. However, a **close-up shot** of the lovers on level terms in a physical sense encourages the viewer to see their determination to be together, despite the hostility they may encounter.

In the play Romeo refers to Juliet as "the sun" (II.ii.3), calling for her to "rise . . . and kill the envious moon" (II.ii.4). During the fire escape scene, Tony and Maria sing the song "Tonight":

Tonight, tonight, the world is full of light,

With suns and moons all over the place.



Tonight, tonight,

The world is wild and bright,

Going mad, shooting sparks into space.

This moment exemplifies the Shakespearean impact perhaps better than any other in the film, with the natural images of light, sun and moon a mirror of the play. Not to mention, before parting, both parties agree to meet the following day.

QUESTIONS

1. What plot similarities are there between the play and the film in this scene?

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2. What film techniques are used in this scene to highlight the disparity between the characters?

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HOMEWORK

Complete the following comparative chart of the main **aspects** of the play and the film that have been found so far.

Romeo and Juliet	West Side Story
Context:	Context:
Plot:	Plot:



Themes:	Themes:
Dramatic Techniques:	Film Techniques:



Values:	Values:
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End of homework