

# **Conflicting Loyalties in *Romeo and Juliet* (9<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors)**

**A three week unit for block schedule.**

**Sarah Chattin  
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### **Rationale**

#### *Conflicting Loyalties in Romeo and Juliet (9<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors)*

In November 2011 and again in early 2012, I will teach a three week unit to an Honors 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts class at North Oconee High School which will focus on examining the many conflicting loyalties in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and examining how students can evaluate and manage the conflicting loyalties present in their own lives. I have carefully chosen the text and theme, and my goals for the course will, I believe, offer students multiple interesting and useful ways to consider both.

*Romeo and Juliet* has long been a staple of American English Language Arts programs. As one of Shakespeare's more famous plays, it is, of course, canonical and culturally endorsed, though presence in the canon and cultural endorsement are not, in and of themselves, reasons to teach any work of literature – selected texts must be relevant to the students to which they are taught. I question the concept of universal relevance, however, in this case, I believe that this text and these students are a good match. Most of the students in the honors 9<sup>th</sup> grade class with which I am currently working already have experience reading Shakespeare. At the beginning of the semester, they reported having read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in middle school. They are talented readers, and, I think, ideally situated in their academic careers to evaluate another of Shakespeare's works. I believe that, though the majority of students need support reading Elizabethan drama, the students with whom I currently and will soon be working have enough experience and skill to divert some of their attention away from the language of the play and onto the issues presented therein.

And *Romeo and Juliet* is chock full of situations and themes to which students should generally be able to relate: friendship, betrayal, feuds, conflict with parents, young love, religion,

adolescent hormones, a lack of perspective, desperation, and conflicting loyalties. Students who have never been in love can relate to having a dear friend. Students whose families are not feuding with another can relate to having a conflict of interests with their parents. As Rex Gibson (1998) states, “Students of all ages can recognise and identify with such relationships. Similarly, they can explore other relationships of lovers, friends and enemies, masters and servants” (p. 2). The conflicts in this tragedy are so numerous and so varied that the vast majority of readers can walk away with something, even if that something is only an understanding of the multitude of references to the doomed young lovers that litter popular culture.

As stated above, I question the concept of any text having universal relevance, but I do think that *Romeo and Juliet* has widespread pertinence, including to middle class, predominantly White, suburban American teenagers, a category into which the majority of my students at North Oconee fall. References to *Romeo and Juliet* pop up in movies, pop songs, and art with regularity. Taylor Swift refers to the play in her hit song, “Love Story.” The Dire Straits sing about the lovers in their song, “Romeo and Juliet,” and, more recently, the Killers have covered that same song. The play shows up in films like *Shakespeare in Love*, *Gnomeo and Juliet*, and Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. It inspired the musical *West Side Story*. Blue Oyster Cult mention it in their song, “Don't Fear the Reaper.” The children in Nickelodeon's cartoon from the late 90s, *Hey Arnold*, put on a production of the play. A comedy sketch by Second City, “Sassy Gay Friend: Romeo and Juliet,” has gone viral on YouTube. And, of course, there are many, many other references to the play in art, literature, film, and music that I haven't mentioned. Certainly, these texts may be enjoyed without any prior knowledge of *Romeo and*

*Juliet*, but most people like feeling included in jokes and references. Making connections is one of the human brain's many talents, and so making connections between different texts leads to a richer experience of those texts.

Quite apart from inviting students into the “I understand some Shakespeare references” club, a study of Shakespeare's plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, is endorsed by the Common Core State Standards (2010) as a vital component of any reading program leading to “college and career readiness” (p. 35). In fact, the Standards explicitly state that, “Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare” (p. 35). As with the question of presence in the canon and cultural endorsement, explicit endorsement by the Common Core State Standards is not in and of itself a reason to teach a text, but when that reason joins with reasons like the numerous ways in which *Romeo and Juliet* is relevant to a particular group of students, as it is in this case, then the argument for teaching that particular text is compelling.

Still, despite Shakespeare's endorsement in the Standards, and despite how frequently *Romeo and Juliet* turn up in popular culture, some parents might argue that the play is controversial at best, and they may object to the sex, violence, and suicide that it contains. Though parents are quite correct to be concerned about exposing their children to these things, each one serves a purpose in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the depiction of each is not so graphic as one might fear.

Romeo and Juliet do not have sex until they are married, and, though there is some fairly bawdy discussion about the impending sex act, the sex itself is never described or depicted

onstage. The point of reading this play is not to make sure students understand every dirty joke that Shakespeare sees fit to make, so I have no intention of drawing any student's attention to jokes on the topic that he or she may have missed. But Romeo and Juliet, once they are married, must have sex, as marriage requires consummation in order to make it official in the Catholic church. Without the consummation, the characters' later choices would not have been so desperate, as an annulment would still have been an option for them.

The feud between the Montagues and Capulets is a driving force in the plot – without it and its accompanying violence, there would be no *Romeo and Juliet*. If the two families contented themselves with shouting matches and insults to make their hatred known, Romeo and Juliet would not have found themselves in quite the same predicament. The violence is necessary, but, like the sex, it is not described in detail in the play. Stage directions say only that “they fight.” Students who do not wish to see actors carrying out the “they fight” instruction will not be required to watch the film version of the play.

The suicides at the end of the play are, granted, a touchy subject, and parents would have every right to be concerned. But, here again, Shakespeare is not being gratuitous in his choice of conclusions. *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy. The main characters in tragedies are doomed from the start. Therefore, Romeo and Juliet must die somehow, and Shakespeare's use of a careful plan going horribly wrong and the lovers realizing their mistakes too late has a particularly effective impact. The play wouldn't have nearly the same frustrating emotional punch if Romeo had been put to death rather than banished and Juliet had been dragged screaming offstage as the end of the action. Furthermore Shakespeare's use of suicide in this play is not an endorsement of suicide as an option. It is used, rather, to demonstrate the unthinking, irrational nature of Romeo

and Juliet's love, and the extremes to which people will go in desperate situations.

Students whose parents still object to content in the play will not be required to watch the film version or read scenes which contain potentially questionable content. Students can still gain a useful understanding of the play without watching or reading the potentially troubling scenes.

I turn my attention now to the lens through which I have decided to teach *Romeo and Juliet* to my 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Conflicting loyalties is a specific focus, indeed, and some parents or administrators may question whether it is, in fact, too specific. Will students not miss out on numerous and interesting facets of the play if it is not taught broadly? It is a valid question. But I agree with Susan Biondo-Hench's (1993) statement in her discussion about the “need to cover everything” in *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 117). She argues that, “Less is more. There are so many layers and facets in *Romeo and Juliet* that it is best to help students sample a little and to leave them wanting to discover more on their own” (p. 117). A brief search for “Romeo and Juliet” in the University of Georgia Library's website's databases supports this view: such a search yields more than 27,000 results. If even ten percent of those results represent books and articles specifically about the play rather than merely mentioning it, then we are left with nearly three thousand items. It would take years to cover them all. Clearly, there are far more things to consider about *Romeo and Juliet* than will fit into a three week unit, and, by necessity, the majority of them must then be excluded. Therefore, examining the play through a specific, carefully chosen, relevant lens makes sense. As a student in Charlotte, North Carolina told Ellin Oliver Keene (2007), “Well, it seems like if we could just focus more on one thing and have time to talk about it, we'd *really* understand it more” (p. 31). I want my students to have the

opportunity to consider what conflicting loyalties mean to them over a period of a few weeks by looking at how that issue is presented in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Conflicting and tangled loyalties are a topic that is immediately relevant to young adolescents. High school is a time of burgeoning adulthood and developing independence, and young American teenagers typically begin to have more control over who they see and what they do. This increasing autonomy leads to inevitable conflict as teenagers must learn to evaluate and prioritize their loyalties. Parents might hate their child's friends or romantic interests. There may be a big party the night of a band competition. Practice schedules might conflict. A student might be friends with people in multiple, seemingly incompatible cliques. A friend might be in crisis and require support and advice at the same time that one's best friend's birthday party is going on. Nearby Athens offers students a multitude of temptations that might be in conflict with their values. These situations must be evaluated and managed, and, generally speaking, forewarned is forearmed. Closely evaluating the many loyalties in conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* gives the students a way to evaluate the consequences of how one prioritizes loyalties, and it offers them the chance to imagine and consider where they would stand in hypothetical situations.

In our quest to consider the question of managing conflicting loyalties, my students and I will have our pick of clashes to consider. The Capulets must balance their loyalty to their family name and feud with the Montagues against their loyalty to their daughter and her happiness. Romeo must balance his loyalty to his family, his own happiness, Mercutio, Rosaline, and Juliet. The nurse finds herself forced to choose between the wishes of her employers, Capulet and his wife, and her charge, Juliet. There are civic loyalties to consider, too: both the Montagues and

the Capulets must decide whether their feud is more important than the needs of a peaceful society and the orders of their government. Students, then, have an abundance of situations in which to imagine themselves, and about which to evaluate the characters' ultimate decisions. Furthermore, they will have opportunities to consider the wider nature of loyalty itself: how loyalties are established, how far one should go in the name of loyalty, and what nullifies a loyalty, among other questions.

In order to encourage these internal and class discussions, I have chosen four assignments for students to complete as we work through the play. The first is designing a map of each character's loyalties and how they change as the action unfolds. Successful completion of this project requires a thorough understanding of the play and the relationships within it, and the diagrams will be a visual reminder of who is allied with whom and which relationships are in tension. Students will be given the opportunity to discuss their work with a partner and the class so that misunderstandings may be resolved, and different perspectives evaluated. Work on this assignment will be ongoing through the unit.

The second project is also ongoing. I intend to require students to keep a reflective journal of their reactions to the play. Peter Smagorinsky (2008) describes the value of reflective journals as follows, "Writing used this way can serve as a tool for discovering new ideas" (p. 84). The new ideas that I particularly want students to focus on include their opinions about whether the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* have prioritized their loyalties appropriately, but students will also be welcome to write about any other reactions that they have. A few journal entries will have assigned prompts, but for the most part, they are open ended. I will provide students with a list of possible topics such as: react to important scenes; give advice to a

character about a situation in the play; to whom are you loyal?; react to songs/poems/art that refer to *Romeo and Juliet*; imagine and write an anecdote from Romeo or Juliet's childhood that gives us insight into their teenaged selves; ask and think about the answer to a significant question you have about the play; which character do you relate to and why?; decide who is most guilty for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet and why; and is all fair in love and war? Students will use their work on these journals as springboards into class discussions.

Of course, plays are meant to be performed, and one of my assignments requires students to understand and analyze how conflicting loyalties in *Romeo and Juliet* influence the action in important scenes by rewriting one scene with a collaborative group and then performing their revised scene for the class. Each scene must have one of its character's loyalties re-prioritized and his actions and their impact on the play re-imagined accordingly. For example, students might choose to write about what would happen if Juliet decides during the famous balcony scene that her most important loyalty is to her parents, not to Romeo, however disappointing that may be for her. Would she have sent him away with orders never to return? Would she have summoned the authorities to arrest him for trespassing? And how would Romeo have responded to being dismissed? Students are free to answer these questions for themselves based on their understandings of the characters.

The final project for this unit requires students to write an extended definition of the word loyalty using their ideas as developed after a few weeks spent considering loyalty. They are invited to use class discussions, journal entries, examples from their own lives, and the play as evidence for their ideas as they define loyalty from many angles. As with the reflective journal, I will provide them with possible angles to consider. Smagorinsky (2008) suggests the extended

definition as a conventional form that students can learn to produce as part of a thematic unit assessment (p. 76). He argues that, “instruction in five-paragraph themes, while perhaps teaching some lessons about paragraphing and thesis and support, too often focuses on the production of a form rather than the generation of ideas,” and I agree (p. 76). I have no interest in reading any essays merely describing a relationship in *Romeo and Juliet*; I would far rather my students have the opportunity to practice academic writing within the context of defining for themselves a concept which is of universal importance.

Completion of this unit will provide students with a deep understanding of *Romeo and Juliet*, one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, and the interplay of the many tangled relationships therein. It will also afford them opportunities to consider the role of their loyalties in their own lives, and how they believe those loyalties are best prioritized when they come into conflict. Students will develop a more thorough understanding of the nature of loyalty as a concept, which will aid them when they must make difficult decisions relating to their varying devotions. They will work on important academic skills, such as reading Shakespeare, diagramming relationships, working through reactions in exploratory writing, working with a group to write and perform a dramatic scene, and writing a traditional, thoughtful essay. I believe that this unit will teach students a great many things, and it is my hope that I have presented sufficiently compelling evidence to demonstrate the worth of studying *Romeo and Juliet* by focusing on the concept of conflicting loyalties.

## References

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### **Goals and Rubrics**

#### *Conflicting Loyalties in Romeo and Juliet (9<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors)*

#### **Tangled in a Web of Loyalties (20 points)**

*A relationship web/diagram to visually imagine and understand the competing relationships, loyalties, and obligations of the characters in Romeo and Juliet.*

*Purpose:* The purpose of this assignment is to help students identify and understand the different loyalties of each character in the play so that they can ultimately see how those loyalties influence the action. It is also intended to be a way for them to follow the plot of the play by including the changing dynamics of each relationship on their diagrams, as well as practice using textual evidence to support their ideas.

*Assignment:* This assignment will be ongoing as we work through the play. Because we are putting a lot of focus onto the issue of conflicting loyalties, it is important that we see exactly what those loyalties are and how they change throughout the play. As we read/watch each scene, you will need to find a way to visually depict the different relationships in the play, indicate which ones are the most important for each character, note how some loyalties change over the course of the play, indicate which loyalties conflict, and cite evidence from the play to support your decisions. At the end of the unit, you will hand in your map.

NB:

- ⤴ You will be given time after each section of the play to work on your loyalty maps.
- ⤴ You may work with a partner for this assignment, but each of you will need to turn in your own diagram.
- ⤴ We will, at different points, be discussing our maps as a class.
- ⤴ Feel free to be creative with how you visually represent each relationship, but be prepared to justify your choices if they do not immediately make sense.
- ⤴ If you are not a visual learner and creating your own map is a challenge, see me for help.
- ⤴ Ask for help if you need it.

*Rubric:*

CATEGORY	4 – 5	3	2	1
<b>Character Inclusion</b>	All major characters from play are included.	Most major characters from the play are included.	Some major characters from the play are included.	Few major characters from the play are included.
<b>Loyalties</b>	All significant character loyalties are depicted and updated to reflect the plot.	Most significant character loyalties are depicted and updated to reflect the plot.	Some significant character loyalties are depicted and updated to reflect the plot OR most are depicted but not updated.	Few significant character loyalties are depicted and updated to reflect the plot OR some are depicted but not updated.
<b>Evidence</b>	Each depiction of loyalty (original status and updates) is supported with evidence from the play (can be act, scene, and line numbers).	Most depictions of loyalty (original status and updates) are supported with evidence from the play (can be act, scene, and line numbers).	Some depictions of loyalty (original status and updates) are supported with evidence from the play (can be act, scene, and line numbers).	Few depictions of loyalty (original status and updates) are supported with evidence from the play (can be act, scene, and line numbers).
<b>Clarity</b>	Diagram is clear and easy to understand.	Diagram is mostly easy to understand.	Diagram has several confusing points and is not easy to understand.	Diagram is very difficult to understand.

**Class Participation and Journals (30 points)**

*Purpose:* The purpose of requiring class participation in the form of joining in class discussion and keeping a reflective journal is to give students the opportunity to talk and write about the play in a more informal context so that they can work through and develop their ideas. It is also to give them opportunities to practice class discussion, and to connect the play to their own lives in writing. The journal, additionally, is to give them enough freedom to find something personally interesting to consider rather than having every topic dictated and assigned.

*Assignment:* As we work through *Romeo and Juliet* together, you will be expected to participate. This participation will take different forms: 1) (10 points) involvement in partner, group, and

class discussions, and 2) (20 points) a reflective journal.

*Partner, Group, and Class Discussions* (10 points): You need to be an active participant in our discussions. Even if you are not the one speaking, you need to be an active listener. You also need to be respectful and supportive of your classmates. Shakespeare is not the easiest reading in the world, and misunderstandings do occur! Therefore negative comments, taunts, and laughter directed at others in the class will not be accepted. Do not be afraid to be tentative with your ideas – one of the purposes of class discussion is to work through them together. Do not feel as though you have to have THE right answer before you speak – THE right answer often doesn't exist. We need everyone's perspective to get the most out of our discussions, so be confident and contribute yours.

*Reflective Journal* (20 points): You need to keep a reflective journal with your thoughts and reactions about this unit. You may handwrite your journal, or you may use a word processor, or you may keep a blog. If you have an idea for a different format, see me to discuss it, but keep in mind that the journal needs to be primarily *written*. That said, I will accept up to two alternative entries – art, music, video, or taped responses. By the end of the three week unit, you should have at least ten entries in your journal. Some journal entry topics will be assigned, but, for the most part, you have the freedom to respond to the play as you wish. However, you must engage thoughtfully with the play; don't just summarize it. Write the prompt (either assigned or self selected) that you are responding to at the top of each entry. On days when the prompts are assigned, be prepared to discuss the journals in class the following day.

Possible journal entries:

- ⤴ React to important scenes.
- ⤴ Give advice to a character about a situation in the play. You may give advice as yourself, or you may pretend that you are that character’s friend, teacher, parent, sibling, etc.
- ⤴ To whom are you loyal?
- ⤴ React to songs that refer to *Romeo and Juliet* (I will be sharing some in class).
- ⤴ Imagine and write an anecdote from Romeo or Juliet's childhood that gives us insight into their teenaged selves.
- ⤴ Ask and think about the answer to a significant question you have about the play.
- ⤴ Which character do you relate to and why? If none, why not?
- ⤴ Decide who is most guilty for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet and why.
- ⤴ Is all fair in love and war?

NB:

- ⤴ As you read/watch and reflect on the play, consider questions to bring to class discussions and to write about in your reflective journal. These should be questions that are interesting to you (if they don't interest you, they probably won't interest us), and will allow for discussion. Basic knowledge questions are not sufficient. Asking, “Which family was Romeo a member of?” does not provoke interesting thought or discussion. Asking, “What does Romeo think of his family's feud with the Capulets, and how do we know?” will get us much farther.
- ⤴ For both the discussions and the journal, you don't have to be right, you don't have to be 100% sold on your idea, but you do have to be thoughtful.
- ⤴ If you do not wish for me to read a journal entry, put an “x” at the top of the page, and I will skip it. Make sure you do write some entries that you are okay with me reading, though, because I do have to see evidence of thought.
- ⤴ You will not be graded on spelling, grammar, or correctness, however, you will lose points if you write only surface level entries in your journal. See me if this is not clear.
- ⤴ **I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behaviors with the school counselors.**
- ⤴ Ask for help if you need it.

*Class Discussion Rubric:*

CATEGORY	4 – 5	3	2	1
<b>Quantity of Participation</b>	Student regularly participates in all class discussions (partner, group, class).	Student usually participates in class discussions (partner, group, class).	Student sometimes participates in class discussions (partner, group, class).	Student rarely participates in class discussions (partner, group, class).
<b>Respectful Participation</b>	Student is always respectful during class discussions.	Student is usually respectful during class discussions.	Student is sometimes respectful during class discussions.	Student is rarely respectful during class discussions.

*Reflective Journal Rubric:*

CATEGORY	4 – 5	3	2	1
<b>Relevance</b>	Nearly all entries respond to the prompts directly. Digressions are meaningful in context and/or demonstrate attempts to connect prior knowledge with anticipated topics.	A few entries stray from the prompts, but key thoughts remain relevant to overall unit topics.	Although relevance may be unclear at times, entries suggest some thoughtful engagement with overall unit topics.	Nearly all entries relate only remotely to overall unit topics.
<b>Details</b>	Details are consistent, effective, and original.	Details are consistent and often effective but may be imprecise. Details display some originality.	Details are present but may be superficial, clichéd, inconsistent, and/or distracting.	Entries are vague and abstract.
<b>Quantity</b>	10+ journal entries, at least half a page each.	7-9 journal entries, at least half a page each.	4-6 journal entries, at least half a page each.	1-3 journal entries, at least half a page each.

Adapted from Kelly Galloway

**Reworking a Scene With Rearranged Loyalties (20 points)**

*Purpose:* The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to poke and prod at a “sacred” work in the canon while they consider what they've learned about loyalty and how it impacts people's actions. Successful completion of this activity requires that students understand the prioritization of relationships in the original text, and that they consider how changing those structures would change the behavior of the characters. It allows them the opportunity to put their own ideas into the play, and the freedom to choose whatever relationships are most interesting to them. It also gives them a chance to try their hand at writing and performing scripts while having the support of using a familiar text as a springboard.

*Assignment:* In your group, choose an important scene from the play, and change how the characters prioritize their loyalties. Imagine the impact that the new prioritization would have on

how the scene plays out, and rewrite it so that it reflects these changes. Each group will perform its scene for the class. You will need to turn in a copy of your script.

NB:

- ⤴ Your scene does not have to make sense in the context of the whole play – obviously if we change the way the characters rank their loyalties, it will change how most of the play plays out. Don't worry about this inconsistency, and focus only on the scene you have chosen.
- ⤴ You can write it so that the character has a change of heart in your scene, you can write it as though they've felt that way all along, or you can find a different way to do it. Be creative!
- ⤴ You do not have to use Shakespearean English – modern English is fine.
- ⤴ You are welcome to memorize your lines if you can, but you don't have to.
- ⤴ Be sure to include stage directions in your scene.
- ⤴ Ask for help if you need it.

*Rubric:*

CATEGORY	4 – 5	3	2	1
<b>Writing Process</b>	Student devotes a lot of time and effort to the writing process with group. Works hard to make the scene interesting.	Student devotes sufficient time and effort to the writing process with group. Works and gets the job done.	Student devotes some time and effort to the writing process with group but was not very thorough. Does enough to get by.	Student devotes little time and effort to the writing process with group. Doesn't seem to care.
<b>Conventions of Scene</b>	The scene is well developed and clear with good use of dialogue and stage directions.	The scene is usually clear with adequate dialogue and stage directions.	The scene is not fully developed and dialogue and stage directions could use improvement.	The scene is poorly developed and lacks sufficient dialogue and/or stage directions.
<b>Group Work</b>	Student works cooperatively in group. All group members have a role and a voice.	Student mostly works cooperatively in group. Infrequently dominates discussion or opts out of discussion.	Student frequently either dominates group discussion or does not participate in discussion.	Student either takes over group completely or does not participate in writing the scene.
<b>Presentation of Scene</b>	Student acts scene confidently and	Student is clearly nervous but acts	Student does not take scene	Student refuses to participate in

	with enthusiasm with occasional signs of nervousness. Script may be used, but student is obviously already familiar with it.	the scene anyway. Script is used but the student is clearly mostly familiar with it.	seriously and participates reluctantly.	presenting the scene.
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**Final Assessment (30 points)**

*Write an essay about loyalty..*

*Purpose:* The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their thoughts about loyalty after spending a unit discussing and studying it. An essay format requires them to practice academic writing while working with a subject that requires them to make value judgments and provide support for those judgments from the play, their own lives, class discussions, and their journals. The question is open ended and looks for a demonstration of skills, not preordained “correct” answers.

*Assignment:* Write a 2-3 page, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font essay responding to the following prompt: What does loyalty mean to you? Examine the word from many angles. Use evidence from *Romeo and Juliet* to support your definition. Feel free also to use examples from your own life, evidence from class discussions, and your thoughts from your reflective journal.

Questions you might consider:

- ⤴ What is loyalty?
- ⤴ Are there different kinds of loyalty? If so, what kinds are there?
- ⤴ How do we prioritize our loyalties?
- ⤴ What kinds of loyalties do we choose, and what kinds are assigned to us?
- ⤴ What, if any, kinds of actions or events nullify (cancel out) loyalty?
- ⤴ How far do we go in the name of loyalty?
- ⤴ How do loyalties differ at different stages of life?
- ⤴ Do different people value loyalty differently? How do you know?

NB:

- ⤴ Use appropriate language for academic writing – no text speak, no slang.
- ⤴ Use your voice and engage with the topic. You may use “I.”
- ⤴ Don't forget to have a thesis, and makes sure you support it.
- ⤴ You may trade rough drafts with a partner and peer edit each other's work. If you turn in your peer edited draft including your peer's notes/suggestions and your own with your final draft, you will receive 5 bonus points.
  - Notes for peer editing:
    - You are not obliged to take your peer's suggestions.
    - If you are the editor, your goal is to help your peer write what he or she wants to write, not what you think he or she should write. Help him clarify HIS ideas – do not attempt to co-author.
- ⤴ **I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behaviors with the school counselors.**
- ⤴ Ask for help if you need it.

*Rubric:*

COMPONENT	6	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Focus</b>	Takes a clear position and supports it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples; may use persuasive strategy to convey an argument.	Takes a clear position and supports it with relevant reasons and/or examples through much of the essay.	Takes a clear position and supports it with some relevant reasons and/or examples; there is some development of the essay.	Takes a position and provides uneven support; may lack development in parts or be repetitive OR essay is no more than a well-written beginning.	Takes a position, but essay is underdeveloped.	Attempts to take a position (addresses topic), but position is very unclear OR takes a position, but provides minimal or no support; may only paraphrase the prompt.
<b>Organization</b>	Is focused and well organized, with effective use of transitions.	Is well organized, but may lack some transitions.	Is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among sections.	Is organized in parts of the essay; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.	Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the essay OR is clear, but too brief.	Exhibits little or no apparent organization.
<b>Sentence Fluency and Word Choice</b>	Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and word choice.	Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.	Most sentences are well constructed but have similar structure; word choice lacks variety or flair.	Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.	Sentences lack formal structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.	Sentences run-on and appear incomplete or rambling; word choice may be inaccurate in much or the entire essay.
<b>Conventions</b>	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.	More frequent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but they do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfering with understanding in much of the essay.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation prevent reader from fully understanding essay.

From ReadWriteThink via Kelly Galloway

## Lesson Plans

### *Week One*

#### **Day 1 – Monday (Introductory Activity)**

**3 minutes:** Attendance, housekeeping, questions.

**5 minutes:** Teacher passes out copies of the opinionnaire to each student and goes over the directions. Students are to read each statement on the opinionnaire, and rank their agreement with the statement on a sliding scale. Once they have had time to read, think about, and evaluate each statement, they will break into small groups to discuss each statement and how they ranked it. Small groups give everyone the chance to participate. After the small groups have talked about each statement, the discussion will switch to involve the whole class.

**7 minutes:** Students read and complete opinionnaire independently.

**10 minutes:** Students discuss the opinionnaire in their small groups.

**20 minutes:** The class discusses the opinionnaire. Each group reports part of their conversation to the class. If students don't jump in, teacher prompts with questions about whether there was a statement that a group had a disagreement over, or whether there was a statement that they all agreed strongly about.

**5 minutes:** At the end of the discussion, the teacher asks students to keep their thoughts about these issues in mind as they read the play, and think about how their opinions do or don't change as the unit progresses. The teacher also assigns the first reflective journal prompt for homework; choose one statement from the opinionnaire and write about why you feel as you do about it. Then the teacher transitions the activity from general thematic questions over to Shakespearean language.

**3 minutes:** Teacher distributes the Shakespeare Insult Kit and the Insulting Conversation sheet to each student, and models how to choose one word from each column on the Insult Kit to create a Shakespeare inspired insult. Teacher explains that students will spend the next several minutes circulating around the room insulting as many people as they can.

**7 minutes:** Students wander around the room insulting each other. Teacher participates.

**3 minutes:** Students return to their desks, and the teacher solicits feedback: was it fun, was it hard, how did the words feel/sound? Teacher asks students to turn now to the Insulting Conversation sheet. Teacher explains how *Romeo and Juliet* features an old family feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. These people really hate each other. They brawl in the streets. To get a feel for that, the class will be divided into two opposing groups and have a mini shouting match.

**7 minutes:** The class moves into the empty yearbook room next door so that no other classes are disturbed. Students are divided into two groups, the Montagues and the Capulets, and each group stands together with its group members and faces the other group. Students are to take turns insulting each other in unison according to the Insulting Conversation script. That is, Group A, the Montagues, will begin by chanting the first line of insult at Group B, the Capulets. Then the Capulets respond with the second line, and so on. Students are instructed to begin quietly, and to make each line slightly louder than the one before so that the noise and energy rises.

**10 minutes:** Students return to their seats, and any interested students are permitted to perform the insulting conversation for the class. Once that is finished, the class talks briefly about what they just did. Teacher asks them to compare it to the insult kit. Which was easier/better/more fun? Did they understand the insults? How do they compare to insults today? Which are more effective? Shakespeare's insults, or the things we might say to people now?

**10 minutes:** Teacher transitions to introducing *Romeo and Juliet* specifically. Chalk talk about *Romeo and Juliet* to see what students know about the play already - "Okay, so we know that you know about the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets, because we were just channeling them for our shouting match, but what else do you know? Silently come to the board and write anything related to the play that you know." Once chalk talk is complete, the teacher evaluates with the class what was written. Teacher reacts positively regardless of what is written – if students already know lots, teacher praises them for their advanced knowledge and predicts that the play will be a breeze. If not much is known, teacher speaks positively about how much the students are going to enjoy learning about the story.

## Day 2 – Tuesday

**5 minutes:** Play Montagues and Capulets by Prokofiev, housekeeping, attendance

- After song, ask students if they've heard it before and where
- Share that Muse uses it as intro to their *Uprising* album
- Pass out R&J bookmarks

**5 minutes:** Give students opportunity to share what they wrote for their journal entry with the class. Teacher also shares.

**5 minutes:** The teacher reads a humorous summary of *Romeo and Juliet* written in the style of a teenaged girl, which is included in Janet Allen's *Yellow Brick Roads*, so that students have a better idea about what they're going to be reading.

**20 minutes:** Teacher teaches a lesson about Shakespeare, Elizabethan theater, the Globe, and R&J using Powerpoint presentation.

**10 minutes:** Teacher reads prologue aloud. Together, the class discusses what it all means. Who are “these two foes”, etc. Class predicts what is going to happen in the play.

**45 minutes:** Watch Act 1 in Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (35 minutes) with occasional pauses to clarify and discuss what is going on. Students need to make a note of two questions and two comments that they have about the film to discuss tomorrow.

### Day 3 – Wednesday

**10 minutes:** Play “Love Story” by Taylor Swift, housekeeping, attendance, questions.

- Brief discussion about how song relates to play so far. What aspects of Romeo and Juliet's story does the song focus on?

**10 minutes:** Using the questions and comments that the students came up with on day two in response to the play, class discusses Act 1. What was notable? This discussion will revolve around the students' concerns and interests, not a teacher driven agenda.

**35 minutes:** Watch Act 1 Scenes 1 and 5 in Zeffirelli version of the film (the fight scene and the party). In groups, have students make a comparison chart for the two film versions. Then discuss their findings as a class. What was the same? What was different? Which version seems more effective? Which version is truer to the text? Will learn more about stage directions and director choices on Friday.

**10 minutes:** Teacher briefly outlines some of the plan for the rest of the unit, and goes over the reflective journal assignment.

**20 minutes:** Begin loyalties charts. Show students *Hamlet* sociograms as examples. Model an example on the board using student input. Start with Romeo or Juliet and then ask the class who they should be connected to. Students may discuss their charts with their tables.

**5 minutes:** Warn students that they will be discussing their reflective journals on Friday, so be sure to have written something that you don't mind sharing or at least discussing. Students may work on journals, begin reading Act 2 independently, work on loyalties chart, continue working on sonnets.

### Day 4 – Thursday

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions. Since reflective journals and loyalty charts were announced and discussed on day 3, each student should turn in a sheet of paper with any questions that he or she has. Even students with no questions need to turn in a sheet.

**10 minutes:** Play “Romeo and Juliet” by The Killers, with lyrics on the overhead screen. While

students are listening to the song, teacher reviews assignment question sheets. At the conclusion of the song, class briefly discusses which aspect of the Romeo and Juliet story this one focuses on. Then the teacher takes a few minutes to answer any questions that were turned in.

**40 minutes:** Lesson about sonnets and iambic pentameter. Point out that the prologue is written in sonnet form. Discuss parody. Students to write a sonnet parodying the prologue and following its style. May discuss in groups.

**5 minutes:** Students should share their prologue parody sonnets with a partner, and then there will be an opportunity for students to read their sonnet to the class. Teacher will also share a sonnet. Students will turn in sonnets.

**30 minutes:** Lesson about features of a play. Teacher reviews dialogue, stage directions, directors' decisions and interpretation. The teacher also points out the scarcity of stage directions in *Romeo and Juliet*. If Shakespeare writes only, "they fight," how do we decide what happens, how long they fight, what bystanders are present, and so on? Students should read balcony scene in groups, and imagine they are going to perform or film it or create a graphic novel version. How would they do it? What decisions would they make? Why? What is the emotion in the scene? How do they know? Once each group has decided how they would direct the scene, they share it with the class. Class then discusses how each group's interpretation was the same or different from others.

## Day 5 – Friday

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**10 minutes:** All students should have written at least two reflective journal entries. Student should discuss one with a partner, while teacher circulates.

**25 minutes:** Watch Act 2 of *Romeo + Juliet* with time for pauses. Pay particular attention to balcony scene. As with Act 1, students need to note two questions and two comments for later discussion.

**10 minutes:** Watch Zeffirelli's balcony scene for comparison.

**10 minutes:** Discuss the choices the Luhrmann and Zeffirelli made with that scene. How did they depict it? Was it like our depictions? Did they make good choices based on the text?

**30 minutes:** Look at rest of Act 2 in groups. Things to look at/consider: why does Friar Lawrence agree to marry R&J? Why is the nurse covering for them? What do you think about the time line: meet and marry in the space of a day? What is important from this act? Also pull from two questions and two comments. Then discuss as a class.

*Week Two***Day 6 – Monday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**5 minutes:** Recap what has happened so far. Predict what we think is going to happen in Act 3.

**30 minutes:** Now that we've spent time imagining our own interpretation of the balcony scene based on the text, and we've watched two other interpretations, we're going to re-imagine the scene. At your table, decide on a way to change the scene. Change the setting, the time period, the nationality of the characters, the ages of the characters. Leave it as is but put it into text message, or twitter messages, or facebook status updates, or a chatroom conversation. Imagine it as a comic strip. Put it into a southern accent (respectfully). Just do something new and unconventional with it. Be prepared to share your new version of the scene and why you made the changes you did. If you get far enough with it, you can perform it for us, or you can just read it or talk about it.

**40 minutes:** Watch Act 3 of Romeo + Juliet, with time allowed for pausing and discussing action.

**10 minutes:** Teacher assigns reflective journal prompt for Act 3. Students may choose one of three options.

1. In Act 3, Romeo says, “I am fortune's fool,” after he kills Tybalt. What does he mean by this? What is Shakespeare trying to tell us with this line? Why does Luhrmann have Romeo scream this line, and do you think it is effective or not? Should he have spoken it normally? Whispered it?
2. When Juliet is fighting with her parents during Act 3, they say things like, “I would the fool were married to her grave,” and “Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee.” What do they mean? Why are they so very angry with her? What do you think is going to happen with their relationship? Should Juliet have confessed to her marriage to Romeo during this fight? Why or why not?
3. Why does the nurse have a change of heart in Act 3? In Act 2, she helps Romeo and Juliet pursue their love, and she helps arrange their marriage. But once Romeo is banished, she tells Juliet to forget him and marry Paris. Do you think she always felt that way (remember her comments to Romeo when she delivers the message from Juliet, and remember her comments to Juliet about him when she delivers his reply), or has she changed her mind (despite her comments, she did help them)? What are her motivations for behaving as she does?

Students may use remaining time to begin thinking about journals or work on loyalty charts.

## Day 7 – Tuesday

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**30 minutes:** Act 3 discussion. Begin in small groups discussing responses to reflective journal prompt. What did each student write about? What did they think? Then transition into large group discussion about the prompts. Also consider such questions as whether or not Mercutio's dying wish for “a plague on both your houses” is fair given his own hotheadedness and refusal to back down from the fight. Explain things like why the priest sent Romeo to Juliet to consummate their marriage before going into exile (without consummation, their marriage could have been annulled, and therefore the situation would not have been as dire).

**15 minutes:** Watch Mercutio's death scene in Zeffirelli's version for comparison. Point out the puns he makes in the scene.

**30 minutes:** Watch Act 4 and 5 of *Romeo + Juliet*. As always, students should note two questions and two comments.

## Day 8 – Wednesday

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**10 minutes:** Listen to “Don't Fear the Reaper” by Blue Oyster Cult, with lyrics displayed on the overhead, and then discuss which aspect of the story this song focuses on. Think back to which sides of the story the other songs chose to address.

**40 minutes:** How did it come to this? Students will break into groups to discuss their reactions to Acts 4 and 5. They should use their two questions and two comments for inspiration. Then the class discusses as a whole. What did they think about the death scene? Should Romeo have come back from Mantua? Were the two lovers' deaths inevitable? Then conversation should transition into focusing on the play as a whole. So how did it come to this? Students should consider the pivotal moments in the play, and think about which ones led to the suicides. At which points could the tragedy have been averted? Are Romeo and Juliet perfect lovers or stupid kids? Is Shakespeare trying to depict an ideal love, or is he warning people about the folly of disobedience?

**35 minutes:** Teacher introduces rearranged loyalty scene assignment. Students choose groups and begin work on their scenes. Choose scene, choose how to rework it.

## Day 9 – Thursday

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**85 minutes:** Students work on their scene. Students may work in the yearbook room, the main classroom, or in Mrs. Kraft's room. Teacher circulates to make sure each group is working together, understands the assignment, and is putting together a worthwhile scene.

### **Day 10 – Friday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions. Reflective journals are due. Reflective journals may be hard copies or emailed. Scripts for each scene plus a short rationale are due.

**30 minutes:** Students will have time to work on rehearsing and finalizing their scenes.

**40 minutes:** Class moves to auditorium, and each group presents their scene. One student from each group should introduce their scene and explain the decisions that they made for it.

**15 minutes:** Teacher introduces extended definition assignment.

### ***Week Three***

#### **Day 11 – Monday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**15 minutes:** Teacher reviews the loyalty definition assignment, and answers any questions.

**50 minutes:** (Inspired by Peter Smagorinsky's work in *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction*.) We will begin exploring how to create an extended definition by defining what an ideal North Oconee Titan is. We will do this by imagining a scholarship competition for students who think they exemplify the NOHS Titan idea. We will look at the NOHS mission statement (Teach, Inspire, Transform, And Nurture Students) as well as the dictionary definition of titan. In groups, students will consider what is important to them. Are there any characteristics an ideal Titan must have? Academic achievement, athletic ability, a positive attitude, leadership, popularity, service, etc? What about qualities that would disqualify someone? Discipline problems, poor academic achievement, etc? Who is a Titan loyal to? Do ideal Titans all have the same qualities, or can there be major differences? Once students have had time to come up with a list of criteria and disqualifiers, they should share them with the class. The class should then discuss and agree on a list of criteria.

Once an agreed upon list has been established, the teacher gives the class some possible examples of students who might apply for the scholarship. Perhaps a quiet student, relatively unknown, with a high GPA, very little club participation, and an excellent discipline record wants to apply. Would they meet the criteria? What about a popular basketball player on student

council who has failed several classes? What about an average student who is in several service clubs? Using these examples, the class should clarify their criteria and disqualifiers to make sure they're comprehensive.

Once the list of criteria are complete, each student should write a paragraph defining what they think a North Oconee Titan is.

**20 minutes:** Students may work in their groups on their loyalty charts. They should also be thinking about how they can use the information on their loyalty charts as inspiration and guidance as they think about what loyalty means to them.

### **Day 12 – Tuesday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**85 minutes:** Essay prewriting day. Students may work independently, with a partner, or in groups to pre-write for their loyalty essay and work on their loyalty charts. Students should use the time to reread their relevant reflective journals about loyalty and pull out any good examples or ideas. They should consider such questions as to whom are we loyal, how do we become loyal to people, how do our loyalties influence our behaviors and decisions, and how are loyalties destroyed? What can we learn about loyalty from *Romeo and Juliet*? They should also go back to the play and examine the loyalties of different characters like Romeo, Juliet, the nurse, and Friar Lawrence. To whom is each character loyal? How do those loyalties influence their decisions? Teacher should circulate during this time to answer questions.

About halfway through the period, once students have had an opportunity to do some brainstorming, the teacher should bring everyone's attention back to the front, and discuss some of these questions as a class. In particular, who are we loyal to, what examples from the play can we think of to tell us something about loyalty, and how do loyalties influence people's decisions? Then students can use this discussion as more material to draw from.

### **Day 13 – Wednesday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**85 minutes:** Class meets in computer lab for students to work on their loyalty essays. Teacher should circulate during this time to answer questions.

### **Day 14 – Thursday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions.

**85 minutes:** Class meets in computer lab for students to work on their loyalty essays. Teacher should circulate during this time to answer questions.

### **Day 15 – Friday**

**5 minutes:** Housekeeping, attendance, questions, collect loyalty charts and loyalty essays.

**30 minutes:** Watch *The Andy Griffith Show* episode, “A Feud is a Feud.” Class should then discuss which angle of the play this show focuses on. Why does it focus on the origin and folly of the feud?

**15 minutes:** Revisit the opinionnaire. Have any of our views changed over the course of the unit?

**30 minutes:** Play *Romeo and Juliet* trivia game as fun, concluding activity. Divide class into two teams, the Montagues and the Capulets. Tell class that the winning team gets candy. At the end of the game, give everyone gets candy, but the winning team gets it first.

**10 minutes:** Give students time to complete an anonymous feedback form about the unit. What worked, what didn't, etc.

## Appendix

### Opinionnaire

*Directions:* Rank your agreement with each of the following statements according to the following scale: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral/no opinion, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree. Be prepared to talk about your responses with your small group and with the class.

- ♣ All is fair in love.
- ♣ All is fair in war.
- ♣ Teenagers should obey their parents, even if they disagree with them.
- ♣ People who are younger than 20 are too young to get married.
- ♣ Life without your soul mate is not worth living.
- ♣ Teenagers are too young to understand true love.
- ♣ Lying to your parents is acceptable if they are standing in your way.
- ♣ Loyalty to your family is the most important thing to consider.
- ♣ It is morally acceptable to ignore laws that are inconvenient.
- ♣ It is possible to fall in love at first sight.
- ♣ Love at first sight is really lust at first sight.
- ♣ We should always side with our friends, even if they are wrong.
- ♣ Harming someone is okay if they harmed you or someone you love first.

Shakespeare Insult Kit

Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with "Thou":

Column 1

artless  
 bawdy  
 beslubbering  
 bootless  
 churlish  
 cockered  
 clouted  
 craven  
 currish  
 dankish  
 dissembling  
 droning  
 errant  
 fawning  
 fobbing  
 froward  
 frothy  
 gleeking  
 goatish  
 gorbellied  
 impertinent  
 infectious  
 jarring  
 loggerheaded  
 lumpish  
 mammering  
 mangled  
 mewling  
 paunchy  
 pribbling  
 puking  
 puny  
 qualling  
 rank  
 reeky

Column 2

base-court  
 bat-fowling  
 beef-witted  
 beetle-headed  
 boil-brained  
 clapper-clawed  
 clay-brained  
 common-kissing  
 crook-pated  
 dismal-dreaming  
 dizzy-eyed  
 doghearted  
 dread-bolted  
 earth-vexing  
 elf-skinned  
 fat-kidneyed  
 fen-sucked  
 flap-mouthed  
 fly-bitten  
 folly-fallen  
 fool-born  
 full-gorged  
 guts-griping  
 half-faced  
 hasty-witted  
 hedge-born  
 hell-hated  
 Idle-headed  
 ill-breeding  
 ill-nurtured  
 knotty-pated  
 milk-livered  
 motley-minded  
 onion-eyed  
 plume-plucked

Column 3

apple-john  
 baggage  
 barnacle  
 bladder  
 boar-pig  
 bugbear  
 bum-bailey  
 canker-blossom  
 clack-dish  
 clotpole  
 coxcomb  
 codpiece  
 death-token  
 dewberry  
 flap-dragon  
 flax-wench  
 flirt-gill  
 foot-licker  
 fustilarian  
 giglet  
 gudgeon  
 haggard  
 harpy  
 hedge-pig  
 horn-beast  
 hugger-mugger  
 joithead  
 lewdster  
 lout  
 maggot-pie  
 malt-worm  
 mammet  
 measle  
 minnow  
 miscreant

### Shakespeare: An Insulting Conversation

A: Thou damned and luxurious mountain goat.

B: Let's meet as little as we can.

A: More of your conversation would infect my brain.

B: Away! Thou art poison to my bloo.

A: Why, thou clay-brained guts, thou knotty-pated fool, thou whoreson obscene greasy tallow-catch.

B: Hang yourself, you muddy conger, hang yourself!

A: Thou sodden-witted lord! Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows.

B: Go forward, and be choked with thy ambition!

A: Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou was born to signify thou came to bit the world.

B: Your heart is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride.

A: Thou art a boil, a plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood.

B: There is not yet so ugly a fiend of hell as thou shall be.

A: Ah, you whoreson loggerhead! You were born to do me shame.

B: Come, you are a tedious fool.

A: Beg that thou may have leave to hang thyself.

B: Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit; for I am sick when I do look on thee.

A: Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in they birth.

B: Go thou and fill another room in hell.

A: Heaven truly knows that thou are as false as hell.

B: Thou lump of foul deformity

A: Go to, you're a dry fool; I'll no more of you

B: Go rot!