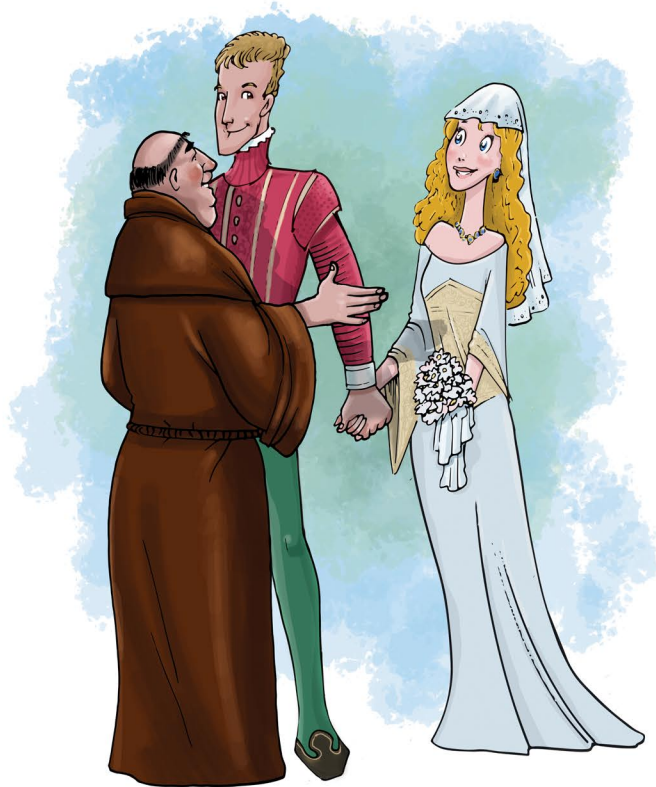


PLAYS

Romeo and Juliet Storytelling pack

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Storytelling Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet

This free downloadable resource will show you, step-by-step, how to introduce students to the Romeo and Juliet Story, using the [Storytelling Schools](#) (TM) method. The approach is suitable for KS2/3 teaching and with simplification can be adapted for teaching Shakespeare to younger children.

This resource covers three activities:

1. Telling the story to your students
2. Teaching them to tell the story in their own words
3. Deepening their understanding of the story with the creative arts.

Storytelling and deepening form one part of the Storytelling School learning cycle. Not included here is how to link telling and deepening to the writing of the story, and the creation of new story versions inspired by the tale. For more information see [Smith, Guillain and Barron \(2020\) The Storytelling Schools Method](#).

1. How to Tell Your Students the Story

The best thing for your students is if you demonstrate telling the students the story directly, from memory. This gives them the best possible example to follow. To do this, first listen to this clip of Kate Barron telling her version of the story. Click the picture below to listen.



Also, in case you prefer it, here is a text version of the story.

Romeo and Juliet

Once in Verona there lived two rich and powerful families who hated each other - the Montagues and the Capulets. The prince of Verona, outraged by the constant violence, declared, "There will be no more violence! Anyone who dares disturb the peace will be sentenced to death!"

One summer evening, the Capulets held a masked ball to which everyone was invited – except the Montagues, of course. Disguised by their masks, three young Montagues snuck in, uninvited. One of them was named Romeo. Once inside, the Montague boys danced amidst the dazzling crowd of courtly folk, all dressed in their velvets and satins. Just then, Romeo caught sight of a girl so beautiful that all the world seemed vain and worthless compared to her. He instantly fell in love with her. *'Did my heart love 'til now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.'*

As Romeo watched Juliet, entranced, a young Capulet named Tybalt, suddenly recognized him. Furious, Tybalt drew his sword to attack but was held back by Lord Capulet. Romeo, unaware, made his way to his fair lady and the two kissed, not even knowing each other's names. When they realised their families were sworn enemies, they were distraught. That night, Romeo climbed up to her balcony. *"Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized-henceforth I never will be Romeo,"* he cried.

The next morning, Romeo begged a priest named Friar Lawrence, to marry him to Juliet without delay. The priest agreed hoping that it might end the feud and so, Romeo and Juliet were married in secret.

But that very day, a dreadful thing happened. Tybalt saw Romeo and his friends in the street. He called Romeo a villain and asked him to fight. Romeo had no wish to fight his new wife's cousin, but Mercutio drew his sword. He and Tybalt fought and Mercutio was killed. When Romeo saw that this friend was dead, he forgot everything except anger at the man who had killed him, and he and Tybalt fought until Tybalt fell dead. So, on the very day of his wedding, Romeo had killed his dear Juliet's cousin, and was sentenced to be banished. Poor Juliet and her young husband met that night and parted with bitter tears and heavy hearts for they could not know when they would meet again.

Now, Juliet's father, who had no idea that she was already married, ordered her to marry another man named Paris. Desperate, she ran to Friar Lawrence for help. "Pretend to agree," he said, "then, take this potion. It will make you appear dead. When you wake up, Romeo will be there to greet you."

The morning of the wedding, Juliet's nurse could not wake her. *"Alas! Alas! Help! Help! My lady's dead! Oh, well-a-day that ever I was born!"* There lay Juliet, cold and white and lifeless. Grief-stricken, the family carried her body to the Capulet tomb. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence sent a messenger to Romeo telling him of the plan. All would have been well, only the messenger was delayed.

Meanwhile, Romeo's servant, who knew of the marriage but nothing of the plan, rushed to Romeo to tell him that his wife was dead. *"Is it so?"* cried Romeo. *"Then I defy you stars! I will haste to Verona and lie by my Juliet's side tonight."* He bought himself a poison and went straight back to Verona, to the tomb where Juliet was lying.

He knelt by Juliet, held her and kissed her cold lips, believing that she was dead, while all the while she was coming closer to the time of her awakening. He drank the poison and died beside his love. Then, poor Juliet awoke only to find her beloved husband dead beside her. Seeing that there was no poison left for her, she drew her Romeo's dagger and ended her life.

And when the families realised all that had happened, they were beside themselves. Seeing the consequences that their petty quarrel had wrought, they repented of it, and over the bodies of their dead children.

Never was there a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

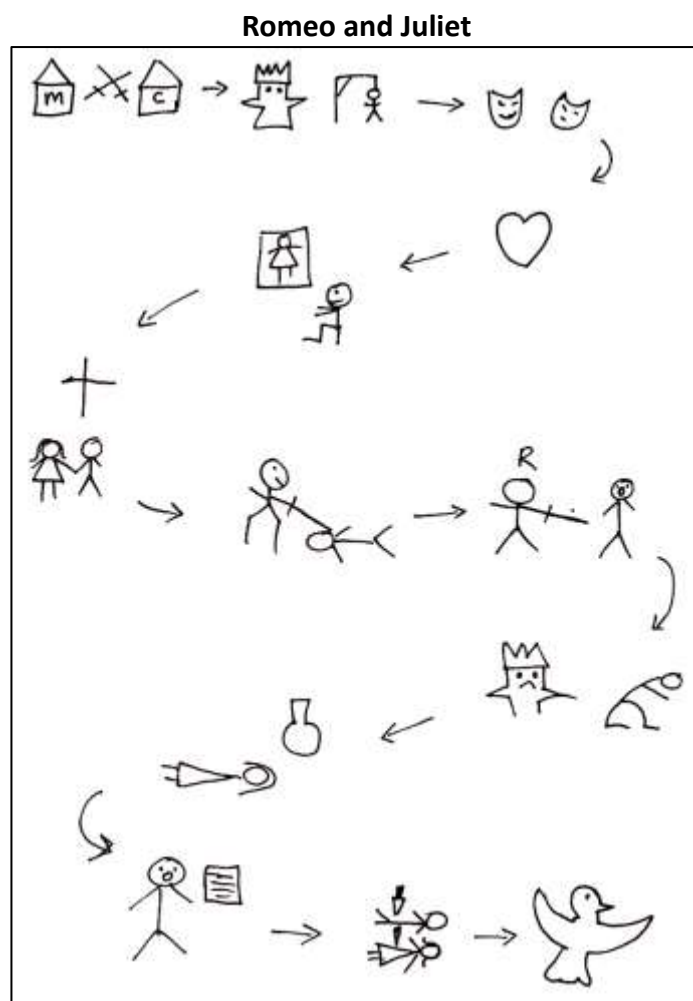
Once you have listened or read it out loud a couple of times, draw yourself a story map to help you remember the main scenes. The visual representation really helps most people remember the sequence.

The main steps in the story are:

- Romeo and Juliet fall in love at a dance, though their families are enemies
- They marry in secret
- Romeo is banished after killing someone from the other family
- Juliet hatches a plot by faking her own death so she can escape with him
- Romeo is unaware of the plan and when he finds her seemingly dead he kills himself
- Juliet wakes to find her love dead and kills herself too.

Here's an example of a story map. Have a look and then draw your own. In this way you will remember the story much more easily.

Figure 1. Story Map



Another good way to remember is to 'step' the story. To do this you can stand up and 'walk' through the story, finding a gesture and phrase for each scene. For example, gestures might include swooning, stabbing or dying. This is another effective way to remember what happens.

Once you've mapped it and stepped it, have a go at telling it by yourself from memory, using the map as a guide and the gestures to jog the memory. Practise once or twice and you will be ready to tell it.

Top Tips for Telling

- Don't try and remember all the words. Just remember what happens and retell it in your own words.
- Tell it standing up as Kate does in the video and use gestures as well as words. This makes the telling more interesting and varied for the audience.
- Make eye contact with your audience from the start
- Use the past tense, third person
- Vary voice, pace and tone to create mood and evoke character.

Some teachers may choose to read the story or show the group the clip of Kate's telling although it is better to demonstrate telling for them *in person*; it makes it exciting and memorable for everyone. However, we recognize that not all teachers will have time to do this and may choose to read the text or show the video clip.

2. Teach your Students to Tell the Story

The Storytelling Schools method of teaching storytelling is **Hear-Map-Step-Speak** (HMSS). It is the way many professional storytellers learn huge stories and is a fast and efficient way to master a story. It also appeals to various learning preferences of your students: they get to listen, discuss, then use visual cues and kinaesthetic cues which they create and adapt in their own way.

Hear It

In the first stage the students HEAR the story being told.

Map It

After that, you might create a story map with the group, like the one shown in the previous section. One way is to repeatedly ask the class 'what happens next' and get them all to think through the story scene by scene.

After that, cover up the shared map and have each student create their own. This is important so they practise accessing their own visual memory in sequence and codifying the result.

Once the students have drawn their maps, it works well to immediately 'talk the map' in pairs for concise summarising. The idea is not to tell it in too much detail, just recall the basic plot. For example, for the above map, the student might say:

At the start we find out that the Montagues and Capulets are enemies.

This is the bit where the Prince threatens to punish anyone who behaves violently.

This is the bit where the Capulets hold a masquerade ball.

This is the bit Romeo sees Juliet and instantly falls in love.

And so on ...

Step it

Now demonstrate stepping to your class, using the map to guide you. Take a step forward for each picture on the map with a clear gesture to go with each step. You might want to add a word or phrase to go with each step. Have students practise in pairs, then choose about 3 pairs to perform their steps, reinforcing the story sequence for the class. Remember to appreciate each performance to build confidence.

Speak it

In pairs or in groups, practise retelling the whole story using 'pass the mic'. The idea is that someone holds a 'talking stick' and begins telling the story then passes it on to the next person who continues telling. Often this is done in pairs first, as it reduces the time spent listening. Working in pairs takes the pressure off trying to remember the whole story. If one can't remember the stick is passed on and the next person can remember it.

After that, the exercise can be repeated with a talking circle of 4 or 5 students, who may perform to the rest of the class when they are ready. It's good to ask the class to praise their favourite moments in the story so the storytellers feel appreciated and the whole class thinks about the bits of the story that worked well, and why.

3: Deepen the Story

In our method, once the story has been learned, students explore it for a while to develop understanding, strengthen the imagination and expand vocabulary.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

- **Whole class re-enactment**
- **Phone home**
- **Plot matrix for comprehension**
- **Tweeting a summary**
- **Mood map**
- **Story Poem**
- **Story song and dance**

**For more ideas and examples see Smith, Guillain and Barron (2020) The Storytelling Schools Method.
Smith and Barron (2021) Storytelling Shakespeare (coming soon).**

A. Whole-class Re-enactment

This helps the class remember the overall story. Put the class in a circle and tell the story. Have children come up to re-enact the story as you narrate. It can be helpful to 'feed' students the dialogue a phrase/line at a time for them to copy until they get familiar enough with it to be able to improvise themselves.

You might stop the action at various key moments and ask the class questions about what characters are feeling and thinking. You can chart up any suggestions for future reference when writing.

B. Phone home

In this pairs exercise a character in the story phones a sympathetic parent and talks about what has happened. It is a way to practise retelling the whole story from a character's point of view. The parent can ask them one of four things at any stage in the conversation:

- what happened?
- what did you think?
- what did you do say?
- what did you do?

This helps to guide the other step-by-step through the story, expanding the ideas for speech and description.

C. Plot Matrix for Comprehension

This is a way of getting an overview of how the story works using the Plot Matrix which summarises the standard elements of stories. These are:

Figure 2. Plot Matrix

Where? setting	Who? character	What? problem
Setback 1 Something makes a solution harder	Setback 2 Another thing makes a solution harder	Helper character, quality or object
Solution how the problem is solved or not	Ending how the solution resolves	Learning What is the learning thread?

This is usually taught as a 3x3 grid where the teacher fills in the grid using suggestions of the students. This may be with words or pictures.

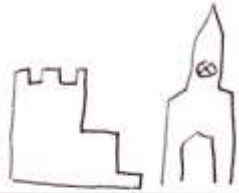
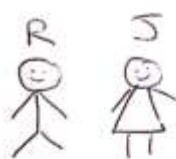



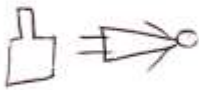



Figure 3. Plot Matrix with Words

Romeo and Juliet

<p>Where?</p> <p>Verona</p>	<p>Who?</p> <p>Romeo & Juliet</p>	<p>What? (Problem)</p> <p>They fall in love But their families are sworn enemies.</p>
<p>Setback 1</p> <p>Romeo is banished for killing Tybalt.</p>	<p>Setback 2</p> <p>Juliet's father tells her she must marry Paris.</p>	<p>Helper</p> <p>Friar Lawrence gives Juliet a potion. He tries to tell Romeo of the plan.</p>
<p>Solution</p> <p>Romeo thinks Juliet is dead, he takes his life with poison. J awakes to find R dead and takes her own life with his dagger.</p>	<p>Ending</p> <p>The grief-stricken fathers make up.</p>	<p>Learning</p> <p>Harmony. Don't hold grudges. Live together peacefully & resolve differences.</p>

Figure 4. Plot Matrix with Pictures

Plot Matrix for Comprehension
Romeo and Juliet

Where 	Who 	What Problem 
Setback 1 	Setback 2 	Helper 
Solution 	Ending 	Learning 

D. Tweeting a Summary

Summarising is a good way to practise concise writing. Here you might also ask the students to write a quick precis of the story in 70 words and 250 characters - about the length of a tweet - using the plot matrix as a guide. It might look something like this:

Romeo and Juliet are the children of two feuding families: the Montagues and the Capulets. They fall in love but marry in secret because of the rivalry. After Tybalt kills Romeo's best friend, Mercutio, Romeo then kills Tybalt in revenge. Romeo is banished. A plan to reunite them fails and they take their lives. Their deaths ultimately restore peace in Verona.

E. Mood Map

The mood map is a really useful way of thinking about how a story works and showing the overall feeling/tone of a story at a particular point. It is very useful as a means of giving storytellers something to aim for when retelling the story in words or in writing. We suggest creating one together as a shared activity with the whole class, asking the key question:

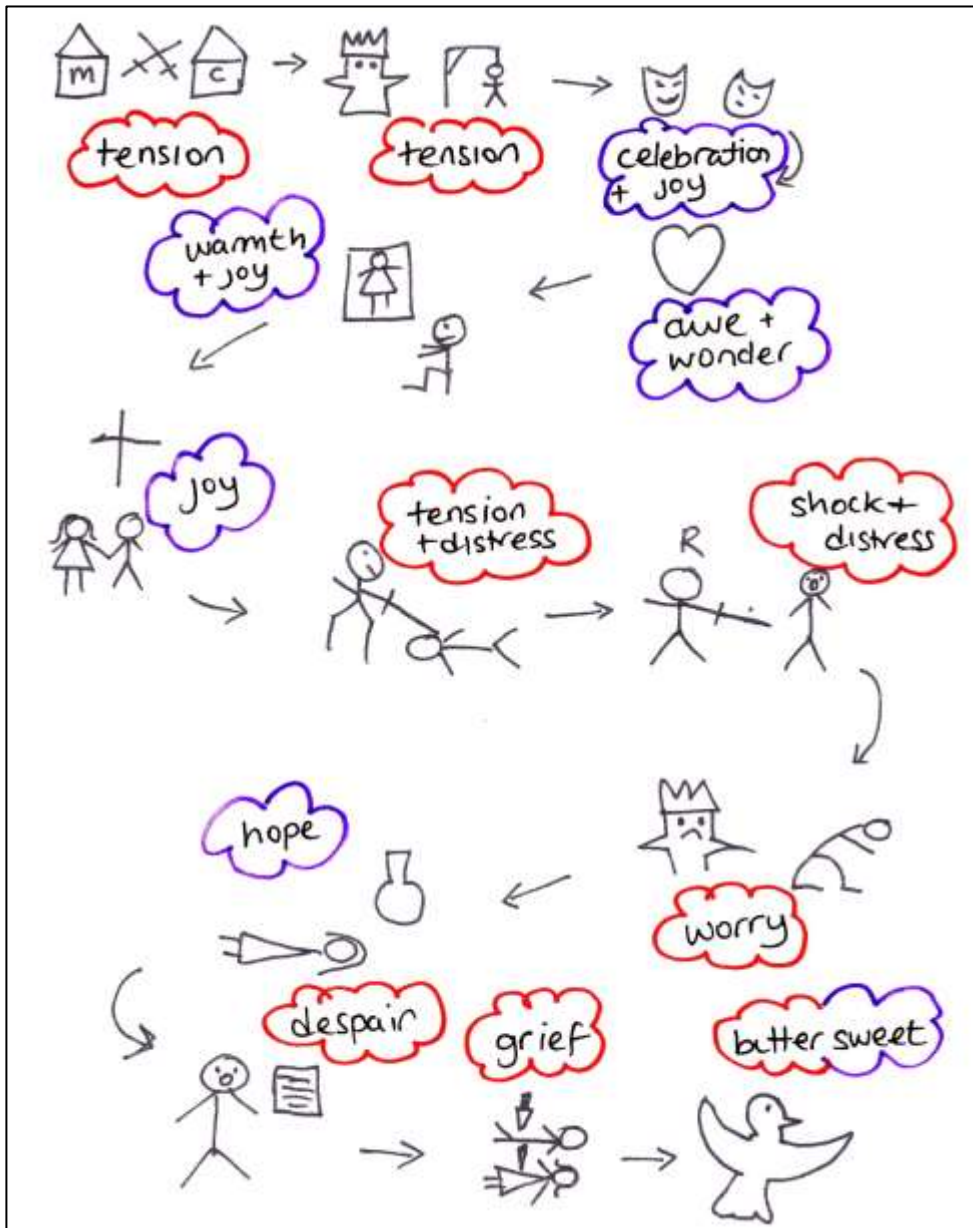
'What do you think the mood/overall feeling is at this moment in the story? Why?'

After that you might get students to create their own mood maps. It is fine if different students choose different moods as different people respond in different ways.

Below is an example of a map showing the flow of moods throughout the story. Notice that we can use our original story maps, adding a word or two to show the mood for each key scene.

Figure 5. Mood Map

Romeo and Juliet
Mood Map



TEACHER TIP

Different people may choose different moods for the same scene. The purpose is for you to clarify your intentions as the storyteller.

Your students may choose other moods to aim for in their telling.

F. Story Poem

In this exercise, each group is given a scene and uses a sensory grid to brainstorm vocabulary about what can be seen, heard, smelled and felt in each scene. Groups might create a sketch of their scene and then add descriptive labels.

Then, have each group create a 3-4-3-4 poem with an eye to vividly describing that scene using some of the language from the brainstorm. A 3-4-3-4 poem is an example of a word pattern poem which follows the structure of 3 words in the first line, 4 in the second, 3 in the third and 4 in the last. Here are two 3-4-3-4 poem examples for two scenes in the story with an emphasis on mood. **If you recite each poem in order** you will have a narrative poem of the whole story. Write it up and you have a class poem.

Scene 1: Montagues and Capulets are at war. Mood = tension

*Montagues and Capulet
Embroided in fiery feud
City in turmoil
Chaos. Violence. Bloodshed. Murder.*

Scene 3: The Capulet ball. Mood = celebration

*A sumptuous feast
Dazzling costumes, glittering masks
Laughter, music, merriment
Twirling sea of gowns*

G. Story Song and Dance

This activity follows on nicely from the 3-4-3-4 class poem. Take those stanzas and put them to a simple tune (this could be a made-up tune that you teach the class quickly or one that the class already knows). Have each group practise the verse and put actions to it. Then, bring the class back together and perform the poem again, in the correct order, as a song. Perhaps add a refrain if you wish as well so that the whole class can join in between each verse.

Once the class have performed the story as a song, why not turn it into a dance? Model taking out the lyrics and turning the actions into really clear, strong, exaggerated movements to go with a chosen piece of music. In this way, you can turn the actions into a simple dance. Have each group go off and practise putting together a dance for their verse. Then the whole story can be retold in dance by each group performing their dance piece in the right order. The rest of the class can watch or join in with the movements.

These activities are examples of ways to immerse students in the story. It's a great way to make Shakespeare accessible and fun, and get students involved in making the story their own. These activities can then be a springboard for rewriting the story in various ways if the teacher wishes.