



ROMEO AND JULIET – B1

I. About this Lesson

Activity title: The Story of Romeo and Juliet

Level: B1

Recommended Age: 15-16

Subject: English as a foreign language

Timing: 50 minutes. If need be, allot double timing for this lesson.

Resources: computer with internet access, video projector, YouTube content

Learning objectives:

By the end of this lesson, the students will be able to:

- a. understand the plot of the play and arrange it in sequential moments;
- b. practise the narrative tenses (Past Simple and Continuous, Past Perfect Simple and Continuous);
- c. write the summary of the play based on the prompts given by the teacher;
- d. assimilate the new vocabulary of the lesson.

Materials needed:

Web comic page retrieved from Good Tickle Brain at [1498430815672-LVU5E1L12LP199NG97AB \(800×1152\) \(squarespace-cdn.com\)](https://www.goodticklebrain.com/1498430815672-LVU5E1L12LP199NG97AB), infographics, poster, digital comic strips



II. Lesson Scenario

1. Instructions for the teacher

The language-based approach is highly appreciated by language teachers when they choose to introduce literature in the EFL classes, meaning that students can acquire linguistic competences and literary meaning at the same time (Carter and Long, 1991). Literature can be regarded as a blueprint of our society, by preparing the students for real-life situations and helping them get a better understanding of the world. Moreover, it is an enormous sense of achievement that you have, knowing that your students can practise English at the same time.

Shakespeare is, undoubtedly, the most famous British playwright that has ever lived. Yet, he is often avoided by the teachers of EFL as they consider his work too complex especially for lower level students. Therefore, we have tried to offer one of the most appreciated and popular play in an approachable way, inserting activities based on comic strips designed to match the teacher's goals for specific tasks. We encourage you to use small excerpts in Shakespeare's original language (sounds challenging, right?) blended with contemporary version, so that your students may gain knowledge of his linguistic mastering. Teaching Shakespeare in an EFL class requires a lot of preparation in advance, but the end result is rewarding and well worth the effort invested in designing the activity.

Preparation to do before the lesson

As mentioned in the introductory note, the Shakespearean plays can be painful to introduce to lower or intermediate students, but they can be so rewarding at the end of the lesson if they are adapted to their linguistic level and presented in an attractive manner.



Firstly, the **kinesthetic learners** would love to touch the volumes with the works of Shakespeare and leisurely look through the pages filled with generous writing. Go to your school library and book several tomes for this lesson (the older, the better) to help your students step into the Renaissance atmosphere of the play whose action is set in the 14th-15th century.

Secondly, teachers have nowadays a plethora of available material and teaching guides to make classic literature enjoyable and relevant to today's students, including a variety of materials adapted for students with special learning needs, as well. In this respect, we have prepared a comic page which englobes the action of the play in a visual and funny manner. For example, the **dyslexic students** will find out about the play reading the information in each panel by reference to the visual content.

As educators, we should not forget that, although belonging to the Middle Ages, **'Romeo and Juliet'** reflects the modern society in its different facets: love affairs, social responsibilities, feuding families, street gangs, civic rights, life and death circumstances to name but a few. Also, do not let the story (or the lesson) unfold without highlighting the importance of communication between teenagers and adults.

Introduction (10 minutes)

- a. Arouse your students' interest with a short video fragment from **'Romeo and Juliet'**. We have chosen the film version directed by F. Zeffirelli, balcony scene. You can directly go to [Romeo and Juliet \(1968\) | \(1/4\) | Balcony - YouTube](#) and play the 3:05-minute scene, without giving any information to your students.



- b. After having watched together the fragment, ask simple wh-questions to check on the students' general knowledge about the play: What is the title of the play? Who wrote it? What happened to the characters in the play?

HINT: Understanding Shakespeare's language

You should explain to your students that in Shakespeare's time, 'you' was used as a more polite form and 'thou' – which today is an obsolete form – as a more familiar form. 'You' was also used for addressing more than one person and 'thou' to address one person. Another old word is 'thy', which in modern English means 'your'; the same goes for 'art', meaning 'are'. A simple example: 'thou art' in Shakespeare's language means 'you are' in modern English.

If you wish to dive more into linguistic analysis, share with your students that the famous utterance '**O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?**' spoken by Juliet yearning for her lover, actually means '**O Romeo, Romeo, why are you Romeo**', wondering why he has to be a Montague and the enemy of her family. Despite the difficulty of understanding Shakespeare's words, it is the language of love which prevails in this scene whose script is rendered below if you wish to give it to your students.



BALCONY SCENE (excerpt)

Romeo

[Juliet appears above at a window.]

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

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!

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-puffing 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 baptised;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

- c. Appealing to students' senses: Did you have a story based on a similar theme? What did you do to show your affection for the loved ones? These could be the lead-in questions which the teacher can use to start the activity. The learners are encouraged to use the studied past tenses for events told in the past. Remind them the uses of these tenses together with how they are formed. You will find a reminder in the introduction of the worksheet. The students who are less shy and more confident in their speaking skills share with the class their romantic relationships or gestures of affection for someone they cared about. Below are given three possible examples shared in the classroom:



We had met at the school canteen a week ago before I asked her to go out with me. At first she said she had loads of homework to do, but eventually she accepted the invitation. I bought her flowers and a box of chocolates the first time we went to the cinema together. We were head over hills in love with each other.

Once I met our neighbours' daughter, she was younger than me and she seemed so childish. But I enjoyed talking to her anyway, though we didn't have serious topics. I used to give her comic books and read together the comic strips. She remained a close friend, that's all.

Last year on Mother's Day I offered my mom a silk scarf and some flowers as a sign of appreciation. I had been collecting my pocket money for three weeks before I could buy that scarf. She was really impressed! My mom is the best in the whole world!



- d. The audience will listen carefully to the stories and mark the narrative tenses they hear, then all the students discuss about the tenses and the vocabulary used. The speakers **can be recorded** for better access to their discourses.

Practice (20 minutes)

- a. Once the narrative tenses were reviewed, the students are asked to fill the blank spaces in a comic strip (Worksheet – exercise 1) with the correct tense indicated by the actions which took place in the past. They work individually, in pairs or small groups. Two students – Danny and Tom – can role-play the dialogue to enhance speaking and listening skills.
- b. They fill in the speech bubbles and come up with the following answers.
Answers to exercise 1: went; saw; had; fell; had; met; were crossing; heard; was; ran; could; did; do; made; called; had been dreaming; wanted; had asked, left
- c. For the second exercise, the teacher introduces a minimal vocabulary about relationships and gives students instructions to complete the task. The students have to copy the phrases in their notebooks and find the correspondent definition. They can receive individual copy sheets or they can have the infographic displayed on a screen.



Answers to exercise 2:

- to become friends with someone again = to make it up
- to separate or end a relationship = to split up
- to argue with somebody = to fall out with
- someone who you know, but not very well = acquaintance
- someone who you like very much and know very well = close friend
- to have a pleasant relationship, to date someone = to go out with
- to continue a romantic relationship with someone = to get on with
- to be very attracted to someone = to fall in love with

HINT: RELATIONSHIPS vocabulary in Worksheet 2

Although some words belong to an upper level, i.e. 'acquaintance', we used it so that the students make the difference between this word and 'close friend'.

'Acquaintance' is not a close friend, and you might have a surprise to see that some of the students do not know the exact meaning of this word relating to human society.

Produce (20 minutes)

- a. In order to make the students familiar with the plot of '**Romeo and Juliet**', the teacher brings into the class a web comic page (worksheet – exercise 3) which unveils the story and the tragic fate of the two lovers. The students are asked to use narrative tenses instead of the present tense in each panel.





HINT: COMIC PAGE vocabulary

Some of the vocabulary used might not be familiar to students, so the teacher uses examples to introduce the new lexical items:

- madly = in a crazy way
- banish = to force someone to live a country
- friar = member of a religious order; monk
- potion = a liquid which can give the drinker different effects
- tomb = a home or house for the dead
- duel = an arranged fight in the past with swords or guns between two people
- poison = a substance causing death or harm when drinking it
- stab = to injure or kill someone or oneself with a knife

- Individually or in pairs, the students write down the meaning of the unknown words. They can assimilate the vocabulary by matching the words to their meaning or they can build up sentences.
- 12 students will take turns to read out the scene in each panel.
- Next, they turn the present tense used by the author into narrative tenses. They can use a ready-to-use storyboard paper or they can draw one in their notebooks. If the students are not very cooperative when it comes to drawing, they can only write down the sentences for each panel.



Answers to exercise 3:

SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3
The Montague and the Capulet families hated each other.	Montague's son, Romeo, fell madly in love with Capulet's daughter, Juliet.	Romeo and Juliet were secretly married by Friar Laurence.
SCENE 4	SCENE 5	SCENE 6
Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, killed Romeo's best friend, Mercutio, in a fight.	This made Romeo really, really mad, and he killed Tybalt.	Romeo was banished from Verona.
SCENE 7	SCENE 8	SCENE 9
Capulet, not knowing Juliet had already been married, forced her to marry a rich guy named Paris.	To help Juliet escape, Friar Laurence gave her a sleeping potion that would make her appear to be dead.	Friar Laurence sent Romeo a message explaining this, but it didn't reach Romeo.
SCENE 10	SCENE 11	SCENE 12
Romeo thought Juliet was dead, went to her tomb, killed Paris in a duel, then poisoned himself.	Juliet woke up , saw Romeo was dead, and then stabbed herself.	The Montague and Capulet families decided to stop hating each other.



- e. In exercise 4, the students are asked to fill each scene in the comic strip with the corresponding events. They can work individually or in pairs to accomplish the task. The sentence provided should contain the phrase indicated in bold and narrative tenses. The students may practise **speaking** by answering the questions on top of each panel and **writing** using the space below each panel.

Answers' examples to exercise 4:

- SCENE 2: Romeo **fell** deeply **in love with** Juliet.
- SCENE 4: Tybalt, Romeo's cousin, **fell out with** Mercutio and killed him in a fight.
- SCENE 8: Juliet drank a potion to make her sleep because she wanted **to go out with** Romeo.
- SCENE 12: The two families finally **made it up** after the tragic event.

Evaluation

In written, the students will work on the storyboard of 'Romeo and Juliet' and try to retell the whole story of the play. They pay attention to the tenses, vocabulary and the chronological unwinding of the events. If it is difficult for them to deal with the whole storyboard at once, the teacher may break it into 4 strips, according to the original comic page.



2. Worksheet for the student

INTRODUCTION

Grammar points:

PAST SIMPLE is used for actions which started and finished at a specific time in the past. **Form: SUBJECT + PAST TENSE**

PAST CONTINUOUS is used for continuous actions happening at a particular point in the past. **Form: SUBJECT + BE (PAST) + VERB -ING**

PAST PERFECT SIMPLE is used for actions which occurred before another action in the past. **Form: SUBJECT + HAD + PAST PARTICIPLE**

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS is used for actions which started and continued in the past before another action in the past.

Form: SUBJECT + HAD + BEEN + VERB -ING

EXERCISE 1:

Fill in the speech bubbles with the correct past tense.

Danny tells Tom about his camp adventure...

Last month I _____ (go) to a school camp. There I _____ (see) the girl I _____ (have) a crush on. We _____ (talk) a lot about books and films. I _____ (fall) madly in love with her. I _____ never _____ (meet) met a girl like her!



One day we _____ (cross) a river when she suddenly _____ (hear) a noise under a tree. It _____ (be) a poisonous snake! We _____ (run) as fast as we _____ (can) back to the campsite. We _____ (be) so frightened!

And what _____ you _____ (do) next?





EXERCISE 2:

Relationships

close friend

acquaintance

to go out with

to fall in love with

to make it up


to fall out with

to get on with

to split up

Match the phrase to the correct definition!













- To become friends with someone again
- To separate or end a relationship
- To argue with somebody
- Someone who you know, but not very well
- Someone who you like very much and know very well
- To have a pleasant relationship, to date someone
- To continue a romantic relationship with someone
- To be very attracted to someone



EXERCISE 3:

Read the comic strip below and turn the present tense into narrative tenses.



ROMEO AND JULIET: ONE PAGE SUMMARY

<p>The Montague and Capulet families hate each other.</p> 	<p>Montague's son, Romeo, falls madly in love with Capulet's daughter, Juliet.</p> 	<p>Romeo and Juliet are secretly married by Friar Laurence.</p> 
<p>Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, kills Romeo's best friend, Mercutio, in a fight.</p> 	<p>This makes Romeo really, really mad, and he kills Tybalt.</p> 	<p>Romeo is banished from Verona.</p> 
<p>Capulet, not knowing Juliet is already married, forces her to marry a rich guy named Paris.</p> 	<p>To help Juliet escape, Friar Laurence gives her a sleeping potion that will make her appear to be dead.</p> 	<p>Friar Laurence sends Romeo a message explaining this, but it doesn't reach Romeo.</p> 
<p>Romeo thinks Juliet is dead, goes to her tomb, kills Paris in a duel, then poisons himself.</p> 	<p>Juliet wakes up, sees Romeo is dead, and then stabs herself.</p> 	<p>The Montague and Capulet families decide to stop hating each other.</p> 

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EXERCISE 4:

SCENE 2	SCENE 4
What happened in this scene?	What facts do you remember?
<p data-bbox="305 562 743 646">She's the most beautiful girl in Verona! I love her!</p> 	<p data-bbox="873 562 1247 646">Hi, I'm Juliet's cousin! Terrible facts in this scene!</p> 
Use to fall in love in your sentence:	Use to fall out with in your sentence:
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

SCENE 8

What did Juliet do here?

I confess I had to do a strange thing for my love.



Use **to go out with** in your sentence:

SCENE 12

What did the two families do?

The tragedy of our children reunited our families and our fight ended.



Use **to make it up** in your sentence:



III. Modification and Differentiation ideas

If you plan to give your students Romeo and Juliet as a reading assignment, make sure you have either parallel texts or adaptations of the play for B1 level and also for the students who are below this grade level. The latter category can outline the events of the play instead of giving detailed summaries. Plan your lesson beforehand purposefully and responsibly. Explain the narrative tenses again by providing clear definitions and rules for students to apply.

IV. References

Carter L., Long M. N. (1991). Teaching Literature. Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Digital comics tools: www.canva.com, www.storyboardthat.com, www.pixton.com

Digital comic page: [1498430815672-LVU5E1L12LP199NG97AB \(800×1152\)](https://www.squarespace-cdn.com/1498430815672-LVU5E1L12LP199NG97AB)

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