

**Subject area/course:** English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band:** 9-12

**Task source:** Center for Collaborative Education (CCE); Task Author: Jon Olkovikas

## Romeo and Juliet: Transposed

### STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

#### **A. Task context:**

In this task you will answer the following essential question: How can you make *Romeo and Juliet*'s theme and characters relevant to a modern audience? From "Pyramus and Thisbe" to *Romeo and Juliet* to High School Musical, we are fascinated with the tale of family feuding and forbidden love. Mostly, this is because of the timelessness of the theme, connecting with each new generation in a culturally relevant way. Your group will need to transpose a scene from Shakespeare for a modern audience.

After reading *Romeo and Juliet* and studying various performances, you will select a key scene to transpose for your performance. Transposition is to take Shakespeare's words and stage it in a modern setting appropriate to the play's original context.

#### **Part 1: *Romeo and Juliet* (text and movie)**

- The class will read and comprehend *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Character motivation and relationships will be followed through the play.

#### **Part 2: Performance**

- Several short scenes will be performed while reading the play to emphasize the use of voice, facial expressions, gesture, and blocking.

#### **Part 3: Transposition**

- Several short scenes will be analyzed for their transposition to a modern audience. Most notably will be the balcony scene from several sources (i.e., Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story*, and *High School Musical*).
- Your group will need to choose one of the scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* to recreate in a modern setting, maintaining the characterization and subtext of the scene. A new script for your scene needs to be written with lines edited and any additional lines added to provide context. The performance can be done live or recorded, and it should be three to five minutes in length, using appropriate costuming, blocking, props, and music.

Additionally, each member of the group is responsible for a 300 to 500-word artist statement, which explains how your transposition reflects the characters and themes of the original play. In other words, explain your thinking about how each character in your presentation reflects the characters and themes of the original play.



The statement should not retell the plot of the scene you present. It should address each character in your scene and explain how that individual character reflects the character from the original play. For example, what characteristics do both characters share, and how are these characteristics shown in both the original and in your adaptation? What is the overall theme of the original scene, and how does your theme reflect the original theme?

The artist's statement should go through the entire writing process: plan, draft, revision, editing, proofreading. Be sure to cite the original play correctly. Turn in all pieces of the process with the final typed copy. Your work will be scored using the Romeo and Juliet Project Rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.

- Suggested Scenes

BITE MY THUMB	1.1.1-98	4-8 actors
UNREQUITED LOVE	1.1.154-233	2 actors
HEARING ABOUT THE PARTY	1.2.46-103	3 actors
MOTHER DAUGHTER TALK	1.3	3 actors
PARTY	1.5.40-143	4 actors
BALCONY	2.2 (cut significantly)	2 actors
WORD OF ROMEO'S LOVE	2.5	2 actors
MURDER IN THE STREET	3.1.32-13	4 actors
BANISHED	3.3 (cut significantly)	3 actors
LOVERS PART WAYS	3.5.1-64	2 actors
DISOBEYING FATHER'S WILL	3.5.126-204	4 actors
THE BRIDE IS DEAD	4.5.1-98	5 actors + corpse
TRAGEDY! GET POISON!	5.1	2 actors
PARIS VS. ROMEO	5.3 (cut significantly)	2-4 actors

## **B. Final product:**

You will complete a 3-5 minute group performance (live or recorded) of a transposed scene from *Romeo and Juliet* that includes appropriate costuming, blocking, props, and music. Your group will submit the script for your scene and individually you are responsible for writing a 300–500 word artist statement.



## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **C. Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**

- Know the story of *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Be familiar with other tellings of *Romeo and Juliet*-type stories, both before and after Shakespeare.
- Be familiar with transposition.
- Read and analyze important speeches to understand characters and motivations.
- Perform a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* transposed to a modern situation.

### **D. Materials needed:**

- A copy of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*
- Your teacher will provide you with modern adaptations of chosen scenes

### **E. Time requirements:**

You will have one and half to two weeks to complete this final transposition assessment. Your teacher will provide you with specific dates.

### **F. Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the Romeo and Juliet Project Rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.