



ROMEO AND JULIET: FATE AND FREE WILL: MODEL ANSWER

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ROMEO AND JULIET: FATE AND FREE WILL: QUESTION

Read this extract from *Romeo and* then answer the question that follows.

This extract is from prologue, where the chorus informs the audience of the events that are to come in the play.

Enter Chorus.

Two households, both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which, if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
Chorus exits.

Starting with this extract, how does Shakespeare presents fate and free will.
Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents fate and free will in this extract.
- how Shakespeare presents fate and free will in the rest of the play.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]





ROMEO AND JULIET: FATE AND FREE WILL: 100% MODEL ANSWER OUTLINE

Introduction

Hook (quote, question, metaphor, shocking fact/statistic)	Shakespeare's play about Romeo and Juliet of Verona is probably the most famous story of doomed and tragic young love ever written.
Building sentences (some background/contextual info)	Additionally, the popularity of tragedy as an early-modern form seems to reflect a cultural and historical interest in the question of agency.
Thesis statement (your position on the argument you are presenting)	Philosophies of causation in this period move from providential, theocentric ideas of Medieval Christianity (things happen because God makes them happen) via Machiavelli's unflinching stress on human significance and ingenuity and come out somewhere around the philosopher Thomas Hobbs writing that states things happen because people and individuals in particular behave in self-interested ways.

Body paragraph 1(a)

Topic sentence (introduce what this paragraph is about)	Shakespeare's prologues do many things, but none other does what <i>Romeo and Juliet's</i> does; it previews the plot, broadly speaking, in its entirety.
Supporting sentences (your your analytical and contextual evidence)	From one point of view, the prologue would have helped the audience transition from the turbulent world of the playhouse into the fictional world of the play. On the other hand, however, we now know what will happen, making the play strongly teleological, heading inexorably towards a conclusion that is already clearly written. The chorus tells us that it is only through the death of the children that the parents' feud will be ended, and we know that we have to get to that point. Additionally, the prologue's language appears to be powerfully deterministic; the 'fatal loins' of the families contains the idea of fated as well as deadly; the lovers are 'star crossed', astrologically fated; they are misadventured, unlucky, and their love is 'death-mark'd' even before it begins. Thus, the lovers are dead, in our experience of the play, even before we meet them and it appears they are introduced to us, only to carry out this fatalistic plot. Even the sonnet's rhythmical structure serves the same purpose as its language; the





alternate end-rhymes form a kind of microcosmic version of inevitability at the level of the syntax or form of the rhymes. Once the pattern is established, we are just waiting for the rhyme. The rhyme comes inexorably where each positive or relatively neutral term turns bad; 'dignity' becomes 'mutiny'; 'scene' becomes 'unclean'; 'foes' becomes 'overthrows', and 'life' becomes 'strife'. The language of the prologue, both in its formal structure and in its fatalistic content serves to underline the proleptic or spoiler-like presence of the opening sonnet.

Concluding sentence(s)
(final thoughts this paragraph)

This also anticipates later elements within the play which have a prophetic or proleptic element, such as Romeo's premonition, just before the Capulet ball: 'I fear too early for my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars.'

Body paragraph 2 (b)

Topic sentence
(introduce what this paragraph is about)

Yet the atmosphere of the first half of Romeo and Juliet is in many ways like that of one of Shakespeare's comedies.

Supporting sentences
(your your analytical and contextual evidence)

There are young lovers with tiresome parents, comic servants, fighting and masquing and jesting and dancing. Romeo and Juliet's love is portrayed as idyllic, even more so than the relationships of Bassanio and Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice' or Orlando and Rosalind in 'As You Like It'. However, the play's focus on love is overshadowed by constant references to fate. Even on the way to the Capulet feast Romeo feels 'tis no wit to go' and his 'mind misgives Some consequence yet hanging in the stars', which will lead to his 'untimely death'. Tybalt too forecasts that Romeo's 'seeming-sweet' escapade at the feast will turn to 'bitterest gall'. Even at his wedding Romeo envisages and det1es 'love-devouring death', and when Mercutio is slain he foresees a train of disasters: 'This but begins the woe others must end'. Romeo does not blame his own clumsy intervention for Mercutio's death and, when he kills Tybalt, blames Fortune: 'O I am fortune's fool!'. Friar Lawrence seems correct in describing Romeo as 'wedded to calamity' - bound with a life-long inescapable tie. However, Shakespeare leaves the audience to decide whether the protagonists' ends are as a result of them determining their end, or being victims of fate; it is ambiguous. When Romeo hears of Juliet's supposed death, he cries, 'Then I defy you stars', and dashes off to Verona to kill himself, as being the only way to escape from the 'yoke of inauspicious stars' which has been so literally disastrous. Soon afterward, Juliet stabs herself through her heart with Romeo's dagger.

Concluding sentence(s)
(final thoughts this paragraph)

Both protagonists have decided not to live without one another. Their suicides are prompted by the belief that both have lost the person they cherish most in all the world, and both have contemplated suicide every time their plans come close to be thwarted throughout the play. However, Juliet likely sees herself as particularly





without options at this point and her death recalls the moment she first threatens suicide when she believes her parents will force her to marry Paris.

Body paragraph 3 (OPTIONAL)

<p>Topic sentence (introduce what this paragraph is about)</p>	
<p>Supporting sentences (your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	
<p>Concluding sentence(s) (final thoughts this paragraph)</p>	

Conclusion

<p>Restated thesis (your position of the argument you are presenting)</p>	<p>In conclusion, although the play appears to be overshadowed by fate, the deaths of the protagonists, perhaps, serve to expose Shakespeare’s criticism of a deeper problem in early modern society;</p>
<p>Summary of controlling concept (central theme)</p>	<p>an elaborate cult of honour had exerted a powerful grip, and its effects extended beyond the ideals of love to all other aspects of life, including identity, which is the central obstacle to Romeo and Juliet’s marriage. Juliet recognises this in her profound ‘what’s in a name?’ soliloquy, which questions the true value of names, the object of Capulets and Montagues’ feud. On the contrary, Juliet suggests that a name is simply a label to distinguish something from another. It does not create worth nor does it create true meaning. What is important is the worth of the individual or thing because ‘that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet.’ Juliet likens the rose to Romeo - Romeo is still the man she loves had he a different name; Romeo’s name does not define him as a man. Just as he does through Samson and Gregory,</p>
<p>Author’s purpose (why the author wrote the text)</p>	<p>Shakespeare uses Juliet here to expose the ridiculousness of the feud between the two families over, simply, who they are. What the feud is about is, therefore, unknown and irrelevant. Juliet’s soliloquy suggests that Shakespeare believed that a name means little - it is the worth of the individual that counts; however, he illustrates how even the most trivial of obstacles can result in the most regrettable tragedy and, perhaps, therefore, Shakespeare wants us to see the play as a criticism and warning about going to extremes in beliefs such as the Early Modern beliefs about honour.</p>
<p>Final thought</p>	<p>In essence, he suggests that obsessions with honour were meaningless, and, ultimately, an unnecessary obstacle to happiness. The reconciliation at the end</p>





(What key idea(s) do we learn?)

between the two families, therefore, can be seen as the lesson of the play; peace is only achievable when we put our pride aside and see each other as family, not enemies by look beyond superficial qualities such as names, to see the true worth of people.

MAKE SURE YOUR ESSAY CONTAINS ALL OF THESE QUALITIES

Tick these off when you have added them to your essay

- Methods - author's techniques
- Context
- Effects of the author's methods on the audience/reader
- Link to another part of the text - talk about the meaning of the connection
- Symbolism
- Themes
- Author's purpose

MCELSTA





ROMEO AND JULIET: FATE AND FREE WILL:: 100% MODEL ANSWER

HOW DOES SHAKESPEARE PRESENT FATE AND FREE WILL?

Shakespeare's play about Romeo and Juliet of Verona is probably the most famous story of doomed and tragic young love ever written. Additionally, the popularity of tragedy as an early-modern form seems to reflect a cultural and historical interest in the question of agency. Philosophies of causation in this period move from providential, theocentric ideas of Medieval Christianity (things happen because God makes them happen) via Machiavelli's unflinching stress on human significance and ingenuity and come out somewhere around the philosopher Thomas Hobbs writing that states things happen because people and individuals in particular behave in self-interested ways.

Shakespeare's prologues do many things, but none other does what *Romeo and Juliet's* does; it previews the plot, broadly speaking, in its entirety. From one point of view, the prologue would have helped the audience transition from the turbulent world of the playhouse into the fictional world of the play. On the other hand, however, we now know what will happen, making the play strongly teleological, heading inexorably towards a conclusion that is already clearly written. The chorus tells us that it is only through the death of the children that the parents' feud will be ended, and we know that we have to get to that point. Additionally, the prologue's language appears to be powerfully deterministic; the 'fatal loins' of the families contains the idea of fated as well as deadly; the lovers are 'star crossed', astrologically fated; they are misadventured, unlucky, and their love is 'death-mark'd' even before it begins. Thus, the lovers are dead, in our experience of the play, even before we meet them and it appears they are introduced to us, only to carry out this fatalistic plot. Even the sonnet's rhythmical structure serves the same purpose as its language; the alternate end-rhymes form a kind of microcosmic version of inevitability at the level of the syntax or form of the rhymes. Once the pattern is established, we are just waiting for the rhyme. The rhyme comes inexorably where each positive or relatively neutral term turns bad; 'dignity' becomes 'mutiny'; 'scene' becomes 'unclean'; 'foes' becomes 'overthrows', and 'life' becomes 'strife'. The language of the prologue, both in its formal structure and in its fatalistic content serves to underline the proleptic or spoiler-like presence of the opening sonnet. This also anticipates later elements within the play which have a prophetic or proleptic element, such as Romeo's premonition, just before the Capulet ball: 'I fear too early for my mind misgives / Some consequence yet hanging in the stars.'

Yet the atmosphere of the first half of *Romeo and Juliet* is in many ways like that of one of Shakespeare's comedies. There are young lovers with tiresome parents, comic servants, fighting and masquing and jesting and dancing. Romeo and Juliet's love is portrayed as idyllic, even more so than the relationships of Bassanio and Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice' or Orlando and Rosalind in 'As You Like It'. However, the play's focus on love is overshadowed by constant references to fate. Even on the way to the Capulet feast Romeo feels 'tis no wit to go' and his 'mind misgives Some consequence yet hanging in the stars', which will lead to his 'untimely death'. Tybalt too forecasts that Romeo's 'seeming-sweet' escapade at the feast will turn to 'bitterest gall'. Even at his wedding Romeo envisages and det1es 'love-devouring death', and when Mercutio is slain he foresees a train of disasters: 'This but begins the woe others must end'. Romeo does not blame his own clumsy intervention for Mercutio's death and, when he kills Tybalt, blames Fortune: 'O I am fortune's fool!'. Friar Lawrence seems correct in describing Romeo as 'wedded to calamity' - bound with a life-long inescapable tie. However, Shakespeare leaves the audience to decide whether the protagonists' ends are as a result of them determining their end, or being victims of fate; it is ambiguous. When Romeo hears of Juliet's supposed death, he cries, 'Then I defy you stars', and dashes off to Verona to kill himself, as being the only way to escape from the 'yoke of inauspicious stars' which has been so literally disastrous. Soon afterward, Juliet stabs herself through her heart with Romeo's dagger. Both protagonists have decided not to live without one another. Their suicides are prompted by the belief that both have lost the person they cherish most in all the world, and both have contemplated suicide every time their plans come close to be thwarted throughout the play. However, Juliet likely sees herself as particularly without options at





this point and her death recalls the moment she first threatens suicide when she believes her parents will force her to marry Paris.

In conclusion, although the play appears to be overshadowed by fate, the deaths of the protagonists, perhaps, serve to expose Shakespeare's criticism of a deeper problem in early modern society; an elaborate cult of honour had exerted a powerful grip, and its effects extended beyond the ideals of love to all other aspects of life, including identity, which is the central obstacle to Romeo and Juliet's marriage. Juliet recognises this in her profound 'what's in a name?' soliloquy, which questions the true value of names, the object of Capulets and Montagues' feud. On the contrary, Juliet suggests that a name is simply a label to distinguish something from another. It does not create worth nor does it create true meaning. What is important is the worth of the individual or thing because 'that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet.' Juliet likens the rose to Romeo - Romeo is still the man she loves had he a different name; Romeo's name does not define him as a man. Just as he does through Samson and Gregory, Shakespeare uses Juliet here to expose the ridiculousness of the feud between the two families over, simply, who they are. What the feud is about is, therefore, unknown and irrelevant. Juliet's soliloquy suggests that Shakespeare believed that a name means little - it is the worth of the individual that counts; however, he illustrates how even the most trivial of obstacles can result in the most regrettable tragedy and, perhaps, therefore, Shakespeare wants us to see the play as a criticism and warning about going to extremes in beliefs such as the Early Modern beliefs about honour. In essence, he suggests that obsessions with honour were meaningless, and, ultimately, an unnecessary obstacle to happiness. The reconciliation at the end between the two families, therefore, can be seen as the lesson of the play; peace is only achievable when we put our pride aside and see each other as family, not enemies by look beyond superficial qualities such as names, to see the true worth of people.



