**Romeo & Juliet**

**William Shakespeare (April 23, 1564 – April 23, 1616**

* Born in Stratford-upon Avon, England to wealthy parents
* Married Anne Hathaway; marriage was an unhappy one
* Children: Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith; Hamnet died at the age of eleven
* Buried in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford
* Wrote thirty-seven plays in his lifetime and R&J was one of his early ones (were they ALL his?)

**Romeo and Juliet:**

* Romeo and Juliet was written in 1594 when Europe was just getting over the Black Plague.
* 10,000 people died in London as a result of the Black Plague.
* Shakespeare did not invent the story of Romeo and Juliet. He probably heard it via a poem: Romeus and Juliet (1562) written by a poet called Arthur Brooks. It was ‘a long and plodding poem’, but ‘many of the details of Shakespeare’s plot are lifted directly from Brooks’s poem, including the meeting at the ball, the secret marriage, Romeo’s fight with Tybalt, the sleeping potion, and the lovers’ eventual suicides.’ Such taking from other stories is typical of Shakespeare, who often wrote plays based on well-known stories. But Shakespeare made it more exciting by adding the character of Mercutio, and by fitting the story into four frantic days. Shakespeare may also have known of the Italian version *Giulietta e Romeo* (1530) by Luigi da Porto who set the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* in Verona in Italy.
* Shakespeare wrote in a period called ‘The Renaissance’ (the word means ‘rebirth’), a time when art and literature flourished. Renaissance writers tried to recreate the glories of the Greeks and Romans; in particular, they thought deeply about human nature, and things like love and honor – and this comes out in *Romeo and Juliet*. The play is set in Verona – in Renaissance Italy - considered the height of fashion in Elizabethan England.
* Romeo and Juliet is the first-ever play about romantic love, and contains the first romantic stage kiss.
* Men played all roles, even females, since women weren’t allowed on stage until the 1800s.

**Ted Talk:**

* [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-aAUwAFZlQ**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-aAUwAFZlQ)

**The Globe Theatre**:

A white flag was flown above The Globe Theater to show that there was a performance that day.

* **The Globe Theater held 1,500 people and the poor people would stand in the courtyard (groundlings); rich people would sit in the covered balcony.**
* In 1613, the original Globe Theatre burned to the ground when a cannon shot during a performance of *Henry VIII* ignited the thatched roof of the gallery. The company completed a new Globe on the foundations of its predecessor before Shakespeare's death. It continued operating until 1642, when the Puritans closed it down (and all the other theatres, as well as any place, for that matter, where people might be entertained). Puritans razed the building two years later in 1644
* The foundations of the Globe were rediscovered in 1989, rekindling interest in a fitful attempt to erect a modern version of the amphitheater. Led by the vision of the late Sam Wanamaker, workers began construction in 1993 on the new theatre near the site of the original. The latest Globe Theatre was completed in 1996; Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the theatre on June 12, 1997 with a production of *Henry V*. The Globe is as faithful a reproduction as possible to the Elizabethan model, seating 1,500 people between the galleries and the "groundlings." In its initial 1997 season, the theatre attracted 210,000 patrons.

**Literary Terms:**

**drama:** a play; all lines are written in dialogue

**monologue:** speech or performance given completely by one character

**soliloquy:** given by an actor alone on the stage; it reveals the character’s thoughts, hopes, dreams, goals

**prologue**: an introductory speech that mentions the theme and possibly the main characters

**oxymoron:** two words beside each other with opposite meaning

**pun**: when the author uses the different meaning of a word (ex: “grave” can mean a burial place or serious; when Mercutio is dying in Romeo and Juliet, he says “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a ‘grave’ man)

**simile:** comparison of two things using “like” or “as”

**metaphor:** comparison of two things without using “like” or “as”

**tragedy:** literary work that ends in catastrophe for the main character, usually due to a tragic flaw or weakness

**tragic flaw:** also called “hamartia”; it is the character defect that causes the downfall of a character

**dramatic irony:** contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows to be true

***Romeo and Juliet***

**Montagues**:

Lord Montague

Lady Montague

Romeo, son of Montague

Benvolio, nephew of Montague and friend to Romeo

Balthasar, servant of Romeo

Abram, servant of Montague

**Capulets**:

Lord Capulet

Lady Capulet

Juliet, daughter of Capulet

Tybalt, nephew of Lady Capulet

Nurse, to Juliet

Peter, servant to Nurse

Sampson and Gregory, servants of Capulet

**The Others**:

Prince Escalus, ruler of Verona

Mercutio, a relative of the Prince and friend to Romeo

Friar Laurence, a Franciscan priest

Friar John, another Franciscan priest

Count Paris, a young noblemen a relative of the Prince

An Apothecary, a druggist

Citizens of Verona, Relatives of both families, Maskers, Guards,

Three Watchmen (Act 5), Attendants

Scenes: Verona and Mantua, cities in Northern Italy

**Note**: For in-class reading, we will need a narrator for the italicized parts of the literature book and a second narrator to read the summaries for parts of the play that we skip.