

Romeo: Rash or Responsible?

<p>Grade Level: 9</p> <p>Character Education Focus: Responsibility</p> <p>Summary</p> <p>This lesson focuses on Romeo’s decisions in Shakespeare’s <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>. After reading the play, students will work collaboratively to analyze the choices Romeo makes and the consequences that his decisions have on himself and other characters in the play. In preparation for writing an essay of literary analysis, students will differentiate between responsible and irresponsible decisions, propose alternative decisions, and explore the impact of their suggested alternatives upon the characters in the play. Students will reflect upon their own personal experiences making a difficult decision and its outcome (at least two 60-minute class sessions).</p>	<p>Materials Needed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Romeo’s Choices” handout (one per student; can be made into a transparency) 2. “Romeo’s Responsibilities: Essay Prompt and Rubric” handout 3. A class set of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (any version)
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Academic-Character Education Objectives

Students will:

1. Reflect upon and write about a personal decision and the consequence of that decision on themselves and others.
2. Differentiate between responsible and irresponsible decisions by analyzing Romeo’s decisions and consequences of his decisions upon himself and other characters in the play.
3. Propose alternative decisions that Romeo could have made and determine how these would affect the plot and the other characters in the play.
4. Cite evidence from the text to support their responses.
5. Work collaboratively with other students to complete a pre-writing activity using a graphic organizer.
6. Formulate a thesis statement for an essay using the information from their character analysis and evidence that supports their responses.
7. Write an essay of literary analysis using appropriate essay format and citations embedded within the essay.

California English-Language Arts Standards Addressed

Reading

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

- 3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot.
- 3.4 Determine characters' traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy.

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

- 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.
- 1.7 Use appropriate conventions for documentation in the text, notes, and bibliographies by adhering to those in style manuals.

2.0 Writing Applications

- 2.2 Write responses to literature:
 - a. Demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the significant ideas of literary works.
 - b. Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text or to other works.
 - c. Demonstrate awareness of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created.
 - d. Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text.

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Lesson Procedures

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Day One

1. Explain to students that the purpose of this lesson is to identify and discuss the consequences of Romeo's decisions and determine whether they are rash or responsible. Tell them that they will be working with their classmates to discuss Romeo's decision-making and identify his responsible and irresponsible choices. Then, they will write an essay that has a thesis statement and uses evidence from the play (text) to formulate their analysis of the character's thoughts and actions.
2. Ask students first to respond in writing to the following prompt:

Write about a difficult decision you had to make when you chose to be responsible. Reflect on why you made that choice and the result of your decision for yourself and others.
3. As appropriate, ask students to share their reflections with the class.
4. Remind students of the definition of *responsibility* (*being accountable for my own actions, choices, and their consequences without blaming others*). Ask students to provide examples and non-examples of being responsible. Distribute student copies of the graphic organizer handout "Romeo's Choices." Explain that after reading the play, they will analyze Romeo's actions to see how the story's outcome might have been different if he had made alternate decisions. They will focus on Romeo and how his choices led to the tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet.
5. Explain to students that they will be divided into pre-selected groups to identify Romeo's decisions - good and bad - throughout the story. Use the overhead and transparency of the

handout “Romeo’s Choices” to explain what the groups will need to accomplish together and individually:

- a. Assign roles to group members to promote collaboration. Suggested roles are gatekeeper (who makes sure everyone participates), taskmaster (who makes sure the team stays on the topic), reflector (who makes sure the team occasionally reflects on its progress and its use of social skills, and a cheerleader (who makes sure the group stops and celebrates its accomplishments) (*Kagan 2004; Cooperative Roles p. 1*).
 - b. Students will chart at least two of Romeo’s irresponsible decisions, describe the situation, state the decision that he made, and explain the results of his decision. Then they will explain how the decision was irresponsible. The chart provides columns for each of these topics. The last column of the chart asks for an alternate decision. Ask students to discuss this with their groups, and then write in the last column what Romeo could have done differently to lead to a less tragic ending.
 - c. Remind the students to use the text and include appropriate quotes from the play with scene and line numbers on their chart as evidence to support their responses. (Students should also have a copy of the play so that they may quote from the play accurately and include correct citations.)
 - d. Each student will need to complete his or her own chart after their group discussion. The ideas may be the same, but each individual will turn in his or her own work. During group work, teacher should walk around classroom to monitor progress.
 - e. This activity will prepare students to write their essays.
6. Leave 10 minutes at the end of class for each group to share their ideas from their charts with the class.
 7. If desired, collect and review the group charts. Return them to the students so that they can use the chart responses to guide the writing of the in-class essay.

Day Two

8. Students will write their in-class essay of literary analysis. Remind them to use their completed handout “Romeo’s Choices” to guide their writing. Distribute the handout “Romeo’s Responsibilities: Essay Prompt and Rubric”. Review the prompt and rubric answering any questions that may arise. Be available for students to conference about their essays during the class period.

Essay Prompt: Which of Romeo’s choices were irresponsible? Choose two of his pivotal decisions and discuss how his choices were irresponsible. Offer suggestions for other choices he could have made. Discuss the two decisions you explored in your “Romeo’s Choices” chart in two separate sections of your essay.

9. After students complete a draft, you may want to engage them in a process called Responding to Writing (see ICE lesson support material at <http://charactered.ocde.us/ICE/Lessons/index.asp>). In a group of three or four, students read their writing aloud, and listeners respond to what they hear, provide specific praise, respond to the author’s questions, and finally make specific suggestions. Responding may be divided into two stages -- the first to examine the content and organization and the second stage to examine word choice, clarity and tone. The revision that follows a peer response may require another response and further revision. For a more detailed explanation of the process, see the section Responding to Writing.

Academic–Character Education Assessment

The response to the writing prompts can be assessed using the rubric, A Rubric for Writing in Response to Journal Prompts (see ICE lesson support material at <http://charactered.ocde.us/ICE/Lessons/index.asp>)

The completeness and detail of the responses can be assessed on the handout “Romeo’s Choices.” Students should choose two pivotal decisions and recognize Romeo’s poor judgment, providing alternative (more responsible) choices.

Both teacher and students can assess the essay using the attached rubric in the handout “Romeo’s Responsibilities: Essay Prompt and Rubric.”

Assessment of cooperative skills can occur during class as teacher monitors student groups and team roles while they work. To process the group work use these prompts:

- *What worked well in your group?*
- *What could be improved?*
- *What did you contribute to the team?*
- *How did team members show respect and responsibility?*

Reflective Journaling Prompts

- Often adults decry the lack of responsibility among young people today. Write a reflection about how teenagers demonstrate responsibility and what they can do to be more responsible.
- Choose an author or poet whose works students have been reading (i.e., William Shakespeare) and write a profile highlighting how that writer was responsible in the choices he or she made throughout life.
- Discuss the following quote by Winston Churchill, “The price of greatness is responsibility.”

Extensions and Variations

Students might use the same concept in a social studies class. Instead of using a character from literature, students can analyze a historical figure using the same organizing elements of the handout “Romeo’s Choices.”

Students can write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about how teenagers demonstrate responsibility and contribute to their community by making good choices.

Teacher Notes or References

I have found that students come up with some great alternate decisions for Romeo. One adjustment you can make is having them write a story of their own, with all the characters making responsible choices.

Based on a lesson by Annie Pierini
Edited by Janet Ewell

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Romeo: Rash or Responsible? **Romeo's Choices**

Refer to the text of the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, to complete the chart on Romeo's decisions. Select two of Romeo's pivotal decisions that were irresponsible. Respond to each question about that decision. Include evidence from the text to support your responses. This activity will prepare you to write an essay about his irresponsible decisions and how they affected the outcome of the play. A definition of responsibility: *being accountable for one's own actions and choices (and their consequences) without blaming others.*

What Is the Situation?	What Is the Decision or Choice?	What Is the Result of the Decision?	How Is this Decision Irresponsible?	What Could Be an Alternate Decision?
1.				
2.				

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Romeo: Rash or Responsible? Romeo's Responsibilities: Essay Prompt and Rubric



Use your responses from the "Romeo's Choices" chart to develop a thesis statement first and then write an essay that builds upon your thesis. Your essay should respond to the essay prompt. The rubric below is your guide for the requirements of the essay.

Essay Prompt

Which of Romeo's choices were irresponsible? Choose two of his pivotal decisions and discuss how his choices were irresponsible. Offer suggestions for other choices he could have made. Discuss the two decisions you explored in your "Romeo's Choices" chart in two separate sections of your essay.

Essay Rubric

Your Score Possible Points

The essay of literary analysis should:

- | | | |
|-------|----|---|
| _____ | 10 | Address the prompt and be written in the present tense, third person point-of-view with no first or second person pronouns. |
| _____ | 10 | Have an opening thesis statement (paragraph) with at least two supporting paragraphs and a concluding paragraph; the title and author of the play discussed should be cited. |
| _____ | 15 | Have a thesis paragraph which includes a "hook" and précis statement (<i>a précis is a summary statement in miniature of the essay in which you express the complete argument about both choices you will discuss; it is not a personal interpretation of a work or an expression of your opinion of the idea</i>). |
| _____ | 20 | Describe two of Romeo's choices and their consequences, one choice per paragraph with 8-10 sentences in each paragraph. |
| _____ | 10 | Have paragraphs with logically-ordered ideas, thoughtful concrete detail and commentary which includes quotations from the text with page numbers. |
| _____ | 10 | Have a concluding paragraph that wraps up the essay giving it a finished feeling and convincing the reader that your argument is valid. |
| _____ | 10 | Do not start a sentence with a quote, but appropriately use the TLQ (Transition, Lead-in, Quote) pattern. Here is a sample:

<i>For example (T), Romeo shows his fickleness when he inquires about Juliet in his statement (L), "What lady's that which doth enrich the hand of yonder knight" (1.5.41-42) (Q).</i> |
| _____ | 15 | Use the Modern Language Association (MLA) format: Heading, page numbers, one-inch margins, original title of text with correct punctuation, indentation of paragraphs, double spacing, citations for quotations. |

_____ 100 Possible Points