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World Literature

Date

Violent Delights

William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is a cautionary tale of young love. In the tragedy, the title characters fall in love, despite their families’ sworn hatred for the other. Although their passion is genuine, Romeo and Juliet do not make the most mature decisions. Thus, Friar Laurence, a confidant of Romeo’s, attempts to counsel the young couple about their relationship. In Act II, he agrees to their plan of marriage, but cautions them about the pace of their courtship. Friar Laurence warns, “These violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which as they kiss consume: the sweetest honey / Is loathsome in his own deliciousness / And in the taste confounds the appetite: / Therefore love moderately; long love doth so; / Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow” (2.6.9-15). Laurence’s words conjure up the explosiveness of fire and gun powder when they unite, like the explosive and destructive nature of this forbidden love. He also reminds them that love which begins too quickly will die out just as quickly. If only the lovers would have heeded his warning and taken things a bit more slowly, perhaps their lives would not have been consumed by these “violent delights.”

MLA Heading

Title (italicized) and author

Plot Summary

Embedded Quote

Analysis

Conclusion

Student Name

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World Literature

8 October 2015

Tough Questions in Romeo and Juliet

In William Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, the titular couple faces difficulties because they have fallen in love with their families' sworn enemies. Because of their families' decades-long feud, Romeo and Juliet both face the tough question of what they will do next: should they act on their feelings or deny them? After they meet at a Capulet party, Juliet looks out over her balcony and wonders what to do next. She asks, "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? / Deny thy father and refuse thy name, / Or, if though wilt not, be but sworn my love, / And I'll no longer be a Capulet" (2.2.36-39). Here, Juliet is torn between her love for Romeo and her loyalty to her family. What is more important, Shakespeare seems to ask, love or loyalty? If Romeo and Juliet act on their feelings, and publicly reveal their love, the news could provoke a war between their families. If they choose to deny their feelings, however, they may miss out on a chance at true love. Ultimately, this tough question reveals the central conflicts in the play: the internal conflicts faced by Romeo and Juliet as well as the external conflict between the Montagues and Capulets. In fact, Romeo and Juliet's answer to this tough question—their plan to run away to be together—leads to their unfortunate but perhaps inevitable tragic deaths.

MLA Heading

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