

IGCSE Edexcel (9-1) English Literature

Romeo and Juliet: Themes *Isolation*

Isolation

Although many of the scenes in Romeo and Juliet portray the interaction of characters, there are many in which the characters are in **physical isolation**. This isolation is used by the characters to help **process their thoughts and emotions**.

It's important to consider how a character would look to an audience on stage alone. They would suddenly seem very **vulnerable**. It is often these moments that the audience finds out the **inner feelings** of the character (perhaps through a soliloquy) which makes them more **relatable**.

The separation and isolation of the characters isn't only physical, it is also **reflected in the language they use**.

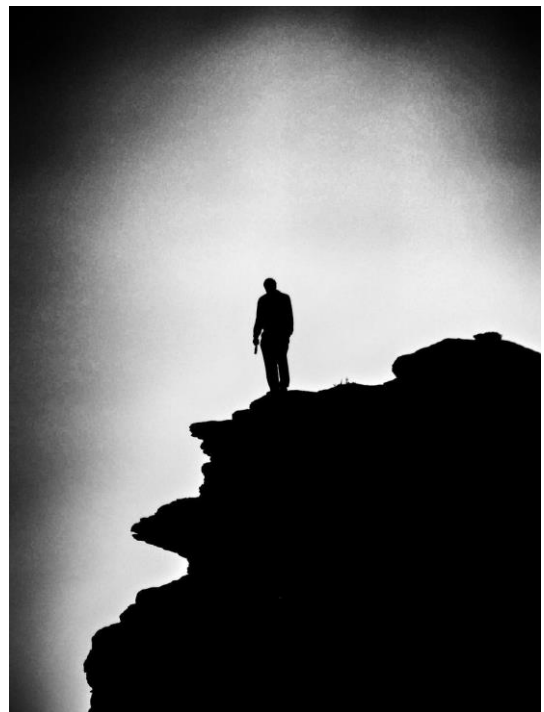
Juliet

Separation is symbolised by the **contrast between day and night**. She notes that much of their relationship occurs during the night, the darkness hiding their forbidden love.

- She describes how **blind love** **"best agrees with night"**.
- Her description of night being **"love-performing"** highlights the **secretcy** of their love and emphasises how separate it is from the rest of the world.
- Juliet says that by letting day in, the window must **"let life out"**, which shows the separation that daylight brings to the couple.

With daylight holding connotations of **realisation** and **truth**, this could be Shakespeare suggesting that it is the reality of the world they live in, a world that is full of **societal expectations** and **family feuds**, that is holding them apart.

As Juliet asks the Nurse and Lady Capulet to **"let [her] now be left alone"**, we see her **final detachment** from the two **maternal figures** of her life as she asserts her independence and growth into a new level of emotional maturity. We see once more her lack of dependence on the people she previously relied on as she reached out to call the Nurse but then decided that she **"must act alone"**.



Romeo

At the beginning of the play Romeo spends much of his time alone as he **despairs over his unrequited love** for Rosaline.

He is also portrayed by Shakespeare as being separate from the other male characters in the play. He tries to avoid getting caught up in the male fighting which takes place and in doing so separates himself from the **hypermasculine persona** the male characters exhibit.

As Romeo gets ready to kill himself to be with Juliet he acknowledges that his intents are **"savage-wild"**, showing his **detachment from his humanity**, isolating himself from everything that previously made him Romeo.