

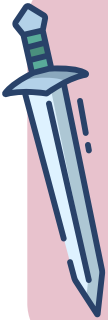
# ROMEO AND JULIET

The activity addresses PA Academic Standards 9.2.12.A, D, E, I, J, L, 9.3.12.F, 9.3.12.G and National Core Arts Standards MU:Pr4.2.8a, MU:Pr4.2.8c, MU:Re7.2.8a, MU:Re7.2.8b, MU:Re8.1.7a, MU:Re9.1.8a

## Fortune's Fool

### Composition Analysis

The narrative arc of *Romeo and Juliet* reaches its peak with a pair of duels, first between Tybalt and Mercutio, then between Romeo and Tybalt. In this activity, listeners take a deep dive into Prokofiev's interpretation of these two duels as told by Shakespeare.



### What You Will Need

- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (script)
- *Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 64, No. 32-36 by Sergei Prokofiev
  - Recommended recording by London Symphony Orchestra, André Previn, conductor; [full album](#) is available on YouTube

### STEP 1: Listen to Prokofiev's music for these pivotal conflicts (12 min listen)

No. 32: Tybalt Meets Mercutio

No. 33: Tybalt and Mercutio Fight

No. 34: The Death of Mercutio

No. 35: Romeo Decides to Avenge Mercutio's Death

No. 36: Finale

### As you listen, notice when the music sounds like:

Speaking – threatening

Sparring

Stabbing

Speaking – lovingly

Walking

Heartbeat

Death

Prancing

Write down what you envision as you listen to the music, so that you end up with a sequenced list of actions. Use the actions above and any others that come to mind.



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**STEP 2: Read Shakespeare's text for act 3, scene 1 of *Romeo & Juliet* (10 min read)**

Note the lines in Shakespeare's text that correspond with each of Prokofiev's movements:

No. 32: Tybalt Meets Mercutio = Lines \_\_\_\_\_

No. 33: Tybalt and Mercutio Fight = Lines \_\_\_\_\_

No. 34: The Death of Mercutio = Lines \_\_\_\_\_

No. 35: Romeo Decides to Avenge Mercutio's Death = Lines \_\_\_\_\_

No. 36: Finale = Lines \_\_\_\_\_

### STEP 3: Create a composition map pairing Prokofiev's music and Shakespeare's text

Combine the sequence of actions conveyed by Prokofiev from step 1 and Shakespeare's text from step 2 to create a composition map. You can create the map however you like – as an illustrated drawing, Excel worksheet, handwritten table, or another format.

Note the timestamp in the recording that corresponds with each action. Add notes about specific musical devices Prokofiev uses to represent details of the conflicts. Cite any specific lines in Shakespeare's text that you hear in the music.

#### Consider the following as you build your map:

- How does Prokofiev represent Tybalt, "King of Cats," in the music?
- How does Prokofiev represent Romeo's attempt to stop Tybalt and Mercutio from fighting? What instrument represents Romeo? How does the music change?
- How many times does Romeo attempt to stop the fighting as heard in Prokofiev's music? How does Prokofiev communicate that Romeo does not succeed in stopping Tybalt and Mercutio from fighting?
- What music accompanies the duel between Tybalt and Mercutio? What musical choices convey that the characters are fighting?
- How does the music convey that Tybalt hits Mercutio? What happens next?
- At what specific moment in the music does Mercutio die? How do you know?
- How does the music change when Romeo decides to avenge Mercutio's death? What line(s) in the text support this musical change?
- What music accompanies the fight between Romeo and Tybalt? How does it sound compared to the music that accompanied Tybalt and Mercutio's duel?
- At what specific moment in the music does Tybalt die? How do you know?
- Where in Shakespeare's text does Prokofiev end act 2 of the ballet? Justify your answer with musical details.



### Optional Extension:

Prokofiev ends act 2 of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* with the duels between Mercutio, Tybalt, and Romeo. By contrast, Shakespeare ends act 2 with Romeo and Juliet meeting at Friar Laurence's to be married and then opens act 3 with these same conflicts. How does the placement of the duels affect your experience of them? Which approach do you find more compelling? Why? Discuss as a group.



Edwin Austin Abbey, *The Death of Mercutio*