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Chorus: “Now old desire doth in his deathbed lie,” Explanation: This suggests that Romeo’s old love for Rosaline has died; it’s no longer a part of him. Literary technique: The metaphor “deathbed” compares Romeo’s fading desire for Rosaline to something dying, suggesting the end of an emotional attachment. “And young affection gapes to be his heir.” Explanation: Now, a new love—his affection for Juliet—has emerged, ready to take the place of his former love. Literary technique: The metaphor of “gaping” (wide opening like a mouth) implies eagerness or hunger for the new affection to replace the old one. “That fair for which love groaned for and would die,” Explanation: Romeo had once loved Rosaline so deeply that he would have died for her. “Fair” refers to the beauty or goodness he saw in her. Literary technique: Hyperbole is used here, exaggerating Romeo’s feelings for Rosaline (he would “die” for her). “With tender Juliet matched, is now not fair.” Explanation: Juliet, who Romeo loves now, is even more beautiful and tender than Rosaline. This suggests his love for Juliet has surpassed his former love. Literary technique: The word “tender” implies a softer, more affectionate love, contrasting with the previous one. “Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,” Explanation: Romeo is now in love again, and this love is returned by Juliet. Literary technique: Repetition of “loves” shows the mutual nature of the love between Romeo and Juliet. “Alike bewitchèd by the charm of looks,” Explanation: Both Romeo and Juliet are captivated by each other’s beauty. Literary technique: “Bewitched” suggests that their attraction is almost magical, as if they have been put under a spell. “But to his foe supposed he must complain,” Explanation: Romeo must now express his feelings for Juliet, even though they are from families that are enemies. Literary technique: “Foe supposed” refers to the belief that Juliet is an enemy because of the family feud. The irony here is that Romeo is in love with the daughter of his enemy. “And she steal love’s sweet bait from fearful hooks.” Explanation: Juliet, as a Capulet, is not supposed to love Romeo, but her love “steals” his heart, defying the family feud. Literary technique: “Steal” suggests that Juliet’s love is somehow illicit or forbidden. “Bait” and “hooks” refer to the metaphor of love being a trap, where Juliet takes the sweet prize. “Being held a foe, he may not have access” Explanation: Romeo cannot freely approach Juliet because they are considered enemies. Literary technique: The idea of being “held a foe” adds to the tension and difficulty of their love. “To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,” Explanation: Romeo cannot openly declare his love for Juliet because of the family feud. Literary technique: “Breathe such vows” is a metaphor for saying promises of love or oaths, showing how Romeo is restricted from being open about his feelings. “And she as much in love, her means much less” Explanation: Juliet is equally in love, but because of her family, she has fewer ways or opportunities to express it. Literary technique: This line emphasizes the imbalance in their ability to love openly because of their family conflict. “To meet her new belovèd anywhere.” Explanation: Juliet has less freedom to meet Romeo because of the dangers posed by their families’ hatred. Literary technique: “Anywhere” highlights Juliet’s restriction; she cannot freely go to Romeo, further emphasizing the secrecy and difficulty of their love. “But passion lends them power, time means, to meet,” Explanation: Despite all these obstacles, their intense passion for each other gives them the strength and the opportunity to find a way to be together. Literary technique: “Passion lends them power” is a metaphor, meaning that their emotions (passion) give them the strength to overcome difficulties. “Temp’ring extremities with extreme sweet.” Explanation: Their intense emotions (extremes) are balanced by the sweetness of love, meaning that even though the situation is difficult, their love makes it all worthwhile. Literary technique: “Temp’ring” means to balance or mix, suggesting the way their love helps them endure hardship. Chorus exits. Scene 1: Enter Romeo alone. ROMEO: “Can I go forward when my heart is here?” Explanation: Romeo is conflicted. He’s physically at a certain place, but his heart is still with Juliet. Literary technique: This line uses a rhetorical question to express his inner turmoil. “Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out.” Explanation: Romeo feels like he’s lost. He wants to go back to a point where he can find his true purpose or center again. Literary technique: “Dull earth” is an insult to the world around him, showing his frustration. The idea of finding one’s “center” refers to reorienting oneself emotionally or spiritually. He withdraws. Enter Benvolio with Mercutio. BENVOLIO: “Romeo, my cousin Romeo, Romeo!” Explanation: Benvolio is calling for Romeo, expressing concern that he’s missing. Literary technique: Repetition of “Romeo” shows urgency and emotion. MERCUTIO: “He is wise, And, on my life, hath stol’n him home to bed.” Explanation: Mercutio jokes that Romeo is avoiding them and has gone to bed, perhaps because he’s heartbroken. Literary technique: The phrase “stol’n him home to bed” implies that Romeo is avoiding them because he’s too upset. BENVOLIO: “He ran this way and leapt this orchard wall. Call, good Mercutio.” Explanation: Benvolio says that Romeo recently ran off and climbed the orchard wall, and now they should call out for him. Literary technique: The action of climbing the wall suggests Romeo’s desire to escape and be free. MERCUTIO: “Nay, I’ll conjure too. Romeo! Humors! Madman! Passion! Lover! Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh.” Explanation: Mercutio jokes that he’ll “conjure” Romeo up, calling him various emotional names, such as madman and lover. Literary technique: This is an example of Mercutio’s playful tone, and he uses a series of exclamatory nouns (humors, madman, passion, lover) to mock Romeo’s emotional state. “Speak but one rhyme and I am satisfied. Cry but ‘Ay me,’ pronounce but ‘love’ and ‘dove.’ Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word, One nickname for her purblind son and heir, Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so trim When King Cophetua loved the beggar maid.” Explanation: Mercutio continues his playful mockery, saying that if Romeo says a single poetic line, Mercutio will be satisfied. He references Venus and Cupid to make fun of Romeo’s lovesick state. Literary technique: Mercutio uses references to mythology (Venus, Cupid) and King Cophetua’s legendary love story to illustrate Romeo’s unreasonably romantic behavior. “He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not.” Explanation: Romeo is unresponsive, and Mercutio continues to call out, frustrated. Literary technique: The repetition of “not” emphasizes how completely unresponsive Romeo is. “The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.” Explanation: Mercutio jokes that the “ape” (his own playful term for Romeo) is dead, so now he must conjure him up like a spirit. Literary technique: The word “ape” is a playful insult, showing how Mercutio mocks Romeo. “I conjure thee by Rosaline’s bright eyes, By her high forehead, and her scarlet lip, By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh, And the demesnes that there adjacent lie, That in thy likeness thou appear to us.” Explanation: Mercutio pretends to “summon” Romeo by describing Rosaline’s beauty to invoke Romeo’s memory of her. Literary technique: Mercutio uses vivid imagery to describe Rosaline’s beauty in exaggerated detail. The physical descriptions highlight Romeo’s past obsession with her. BENVOLIO: “An if he hear thee, thou wilt anger him.” Explanation: Benvolio warns that if Romeo hears Mercutio, he might become angry. MERCUTIO: “This cannot anger him. ’Twould anger him To raise a spirit in his mistress’ circle Of some strange nature, letting it there stand Till she had laid it and conjured it down. That were some spite. My invocation Is fair and honest. In his mistress’ name, I conjure only but to raise up him.” Explanation: Mercutio argues that his mock invocation won’t anger Romeo; in fact, he says raising a “spirit” of someone strange (like a rival lover) would anger Romeo. He believes his intentions are harmless. Literary technique: The reference to conjuring “spirits” ties into the supernatural language and Mercutio’s humorous manipulation of magic. BENVOLIO: “Come, he hath hid himself among these trees To be consorted with the humorous night. Blind is his love and best befits the dark.” Explanation: Benvolio suggests that Romeo is hiding in the night because he is so consumed by love. Literary technique: “Humorous night” refers to the night being a place of changing emotions, and “blind love” continues the idea of love making Romeo irrational. MERCUTIO: “If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.” Explanation: Mercutio makes a witty remark, suggesting that if love is blind, it cannot “hit” or achieve its goal, implying that Romeo’s love for Rosaline was misguided. Literary technique: This is a clever play on the idea of “blindness” and “hitting the mark,” showing Mercutio’s humor. “Now will he sit under a medlar tree And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.” Explanation: Mercutio mocks Romeo, saying that Romeo would sit under a tree and wish Juliet were a medlar fruit, which has a reputation for being the subject of jokes about sexual innuendo. Literary technique: “Medlar” is a symbol of a fruit that’s ripe when it’s overripe or decayed, and it’s used here as a crude sexual joke. “O Romeo, that she were, O, that she were An open-arse, thou a pop’rin pear.” Explanation: Mercutio continues his crude jokes, wishing Juliet were an open fruit and Romeo a pear, referring to an explicit sexual innuendo. Literary technique: This exaggeration uses humor and crudeness to mock Romeo’s idealized view of love. Romeo, good night. I’ll to my truckle bed; This field-bed is too cold for me to sleep.—Come, shall we go?” Explanation: Mercutio bids Romeo good night, deciding that the field is too cold for him to stay in. Literary technique: “Truckle bed” refers to a small, low bed, indicating Mercutio’s informal, carefree attitude. BENVOLIO: “Go, then, for ’tis in vain To seek him here that means not to be found.” Explanation: Benvolio agrees with Mercutio, saying it’s pointless to keep looking for Romeo if he doesn’t want to be found. Literary technique: This is a straightforward comment, but it hints at Romeo’s reluctance to be found due to his emotional state. They exit. Explanation: The scene ends as they give up searching for Romeo. A hidden, implicit or implied comparison between two seemingly unrelated things is called a metaphor. In other words, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which two strikingly different concepts or things are compared to one another based on a single common characteristic. Within dramatic plays, metaphors are incorporated to facilitate readers or audience to gain a better and deeper understanding of a particular thing, idea or individual.By affording a visual comparison, metaphors enable the audience to gain insight or clarity about an idea or thing that would otherwise be difficult to understand. Let’s take a look at metaphor meaning and examples in “Romeo and Juliet,” that are used effectively to simplify both the concrete and the abstract ideas about certain characters. Some of these metaphors are discussed below:Metaphors in “Romeo and Juliet”Example #1“Peer’d forth the golden window of the east…”(I. i. 121)In this exquisitely graphic metaphor, Benvolio is comparing the startling sun to a spectacular golden window of the east. This colorful comparison serves to emphasize the exotic energy and brightness of the sun. Since the sun rises in the east, the metaphor of a window implies that the sun or the emergence of a new day acts as a wonderful opening to magnificent opportunities and new beginnings. It also emphasizes the life-enhancing qualities of the sun.Example #2“This precious book of love, this unbound lover,To beautify him only lacks a cover.”(I. iii. 93-94)In this vividly evocative metaphor, Lady Capulet uses the metaphor of a book to highlight the depth and beauty of Paris’ character as well as to emphasize the countless benefits that can be derived by a marital union with him. In an attempt to persuade her daughter, Juliet, to marry Paris, Lady Capulet maintains that the privileges of marrying Paris are many. He is like a flawlessly written book only in need of a cover. By comparing Paris to a book, Lady Capulet is implying that only Juliet can serve to complement Paris’ unique personality that exudes love.Example #3“My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready standTo smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.”(I. v. 106-107)This heartfelt and sentimental metaphorical expression is delivered by Romeo and compares Romeo’s trembling lips to two devoted pilgrims eager to kiss their holy object of worship. Hence, this graphic comparison implies that Romeo perceives Juliet as a demi-goddess and regards himself as her blind follower – a follower whose lips are desperate to plant a passionately reverential kiss on their holy shrine.Example #4“It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be”(II. ii. 125-126)In this particular quote, Juliet uses lightning as a metaphor for love in order to emphasize the unpredictable aspect of love. Delivered during the famous balcony scene, this visual metaphor serves to reinforce Juliet’s premise about love’s transience, inconsistency, and abruptness. From a dramatic perspective, this comparison of Romeo’s ardent expression of love with the fast flicker of lightning highlights Juliet’s maturity and her understanding of the fact that pledges made in a moment of passion do not always have an enduring quality.Example #5“But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?It is the East, and Juliet is the sun.”(II. ii. 2-3)This verse is another beautiful exchange that takes place between Romeo and Juliet during the famous balcony scene. In these beautiful and vivid verses, Romeo compares Juliet to the sun. This metaphor implies that Romeo perceives Juliet as being incredibly bright, radiant and glorious. Moreover, the sun is regarded as the life-giving element of the universe. The comparison between the sun and Juliet illustrates that Romeo sees Juliet as the quintessential life-giving being.Example #6 “O, I am Fortune’s fool!”(III. i. 142)Delivered by Romeo after his hasty killing of Tybalt, this verse highlights Romeo’s remorse since he regards himself as a cruel victim of fate using the metaphor of “fortune’s fool”. It is noteworthy that by equating himself to a naïve individual who has been deceived and who commits a crime in a moment of unblinking passion. Romeo is reinforcing the unthinking and careless aspect of his personality – the one that seldom thinks before committing an action. Moreover, this metaphor implies Romeo’s conviction in the fact that sometimes fate deceives us in inconceivable ways.Example #7 “Thy eyes’ windows fall…”(IV. i. 102-103)In this particular phrase, Friar Lawrence is comparing the drooping of Juliet’s eyelids to the shutting of windows. This metaphor implies that the sleeping potion will have the same effect on Juliet’s eyes as the closing of windows. Since windows provide visual access to the outside world, the falling or closing of Juliet’s eyelids highlights that the drinking potion will prevent Juliet from observing or viewing the world around her.Example #8“Death is my son-in-law; Death is my heir.”(IV. v. 44)In this tragic verse, Capulet uses the metaphors of son-in-law and heir to emphasize how the specter of death incessantly haunts him and his loved ones. After seeing Juliet deep asleep and mistaking her for the dead, Capulet maintains that Juliet has been eternally wedded to the horrifying phenomenon of death. Hence, Capulet’s only abiding legacy would be death.Example #9“The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fadeTo paly ashes…”(IV. i. 101)Delivered by Friar Lawrence, this verse highlights the death-like state Juliet would be in after drinking the sleeping potion. By equating the color of Juliet’s cheeks and lips with roses, the Friar is implying that the potion will induce death-like symptoms thereby draining Juliet’s lips and cheeks of their rosy hue. Moreover, the metaphor of ashes signifies that as a result of drinking the potion, Juliet’s face will turn deathly-pale.Example #10 “Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death…”(V. iii. 45)This metaphorical phrase is delivered by Romeo as he visits Juliet’s resting place in the tomb. “Detestable maw” refers to the jaws of a hungry beast. By equating the tomb to a deathly womb and the jaws of a petrifying beast, Romeo is implying that a tomb is a place that merely harbors destruction, decay, and death. In William Shakespeare’s tragic play “Romeo and Juliet,” metaphors are used extensively to add depth and emotion to the story. These metaphor examples not only convey the intense love and passion between the two main characters but also depict their struggles and fate. They enhance the poetic language and symbolism throughout the play, helping readers and viewers to connect with the timeless themes of love, destiny, and conflict. The following examples highlight some of the standout metaphors in this iconic piece of literature. What is the Best Example of Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet? Perhaps one of the best and most famous examples of metaphor in “Romeo and Juliet” is found in Act 2, Scene 2, known as the balcony scene. In this scene, Romeo compares Juliet to the sun, saying: “But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.” This metaphor not only encapsulates the passion and ardor that Romeo feels for Juliet but also conveys her importance to him. By likening Juliet to the sun, Romeo elevates her above everything else, emphasizing her warmth, light, and the way she illuminates his life. It’s a powerful metaphor that resonates with the theme of transcendent love that runs throughout the play. Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act Scenes Size: 128 KB Download Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act 1 Scene 1 – “Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs.” (Romeo) – “Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers’ tears.” (Romeo) – “What is else? A madness most discreet.” (Romeo) Scene 2 – “One fire burns out another’s burning.” (Benvolio) Scene 4 – “Love’s wings” (Romeo) Scene 5 – “You have dancing shoes / With nimble soles.” (Romeo) Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act 2 Scene 2 – “Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon.” (Romeo) – “O, speak again, bright angel!” (Romeo) – “This bud of love, by summer’s ripening breath, may prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.” (Juliet) – “Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven.” (Romeo) Scene 3 – “The earth that’s nature’s mother is her tomb.” (Friar Laurence) – “Dew-dropping south” (Friar Laurence) Scene 6 – “These violent delights have violent ends.” (Friar Laurence) Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act 3 Scene 1 – “Fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!” (Romeo) Scene 2 – “Lovers can see to do their amorous rites by their own beauties.” (Juliet) – “Beautiful tyrant! Fiend angelical!” (Juliet) – “Dove-feathered raven, wolfish ravening lamb.” (Juliet) Scene 5 – “I must be gone and live, or stay and die.” (Romeo) Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act 4 Scene 1 – “As rich shall Romeo’s by his lady’s lie; poor sacrifices of our enmity!” (Capulet) Scene 3 – “Shall I not, then, be stifled in the vault.” (Juliet) – “And I, this three hours’ wife, have mangled it.” (Juliet) Scene 5 – “Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir.” (Capulet) – “Death lies on her like an untimely frost.” (Capulet) Metaphor in Romeo and Juliet Act 5 Scene 1 – “I defy you, stars.” (Romeo) – “Is it even so? Then I defy you, stars!” (Romeo) Scene 3 – “Death’s pale flag is not advanced there.” (Balthasar) – “With worms that are thy chamber-maids.” (Romeo) – “Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death.” (Romeo) – “Flattering truth of sleep.” (Paris) How Shakespeare used Metaphors in Romeo and Juliet These metaphorical expressions contribute greatly to the understanding of characters, themes, and emotions in the play, adding depth and texture to the tragic love story. You may also See Metaphors in PDF. Shakespeare’s use of metaphors in “Romeo and Juliet” is integral to the understanding of the characters and the themes that are central to this tragic love story. Here’s an analysis of the significance of metaphors in the play: Expression of Emotion: Shakespeare uses metaphors to give voice to the intense and often conflicting emotions of the characters. For instance, Romeo’s comparison of Juliet to the sun (“Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon”) conveys his passion and the way Juliet illuminates his world. Character Development: Through metaphor, Shakespeare provides insight into the characters’ personalities and their states of mind. Juliet’s description of Romeo as a “beautiful tyrant” and “dove-feathered raven” captures her confusion and conflict when she learns of Tybalt’s death at Romeo’s hands. Enhancement of Themes: Metaphors contribute to the understanding of the major themes of the play, such as love, fate, youth, and death. The metaphor “These violent delights have violent ends” speaks to the play’s overarching theme of the fleeting nature of passionate love. Poetic Beauty: The use of metaphor adds a poetic quality to the dialogue, enhancing the aesthetics of the play. It elevates the language, making it more vivid and resonant, as in Romeo’s line, “Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs.” Symbolism and Imagery: The metaphors often carry symbolic meanings that resonate throughout the play. The repeated metaphor of stars and celestial imagery, for instance, underscores the idea of destiny and the cosmic forces at work in the characters’ lives. Contrast and Paradox: Shakespeare often employs metaphors to highlight contrasts and paradoxes within the story, as with Juliet’s juxtaposition of a “dove-feathered raven” and “wolfish ravening lamb.” These metaphors capture the complexity and ambiguity of love and human nature. Connection to Elizabethan Audience: The use of familiar metaphors and imagery would have helped Shakespeare’s contemporary audience connect with the play’s universal themes. They would have understood the symbolism and references within the metaphors, making the play more accessible and resonant. In summary, the metaphors in “Romeo and Juliet” are not mere decorative elements but essential tools that Shakespeare employs to deepen the audience’s understanding of the characters and the story. They add richness, complexity, and beauty to the text, and their thoughtful and creative use is a testament to Shakespeare’s genius as a writer. Add Tone Friendly Formal Casual Instructive Professional Empathetic Humorous Serious Optimistic Neutral 10 Examples of Public speaking 20 Examples of Gas lighting An explanation of the “dull earth” metaphor in Act 2, Scene 1 of myShakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. [The Capulet’s party has ended, and Romeo is headed home down a lane that runs alongside the orchard behind the Capulet mansion. A wall separates the lane from the orchard.] Can I go forward when my heart is here? Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out. Here, Romeo metaphorically describes himself as dull, heavy earth, or dirt., which falls toward the center of the earth by gravity. But in another sense, Romeo is comparing his body to dull or listless dirt, which is drawn toward its center of attraction: Juliet. (Which echoes the old biblical notion of our bodies returning to the earth upon death: "dust to dust.") Enter ROMEO alone. ROMEO 1. here: Capulet's house. Romeo has just left the party where he met Juliet. 2. dull earth: i.e., his body. center: i.e., Juliet. In Romeo's metaphor, Juliet is his center of gravity, around which he must revolve. 1 Can I go forward when my heart is here? 2 Turn back, dull earth, and find thy center out. Enter BENVOLIO with MERCUTIO. BENVOLIO 3 Romeo! my cousin Romeo! Romeo! [Romeo leaps the wall into Capulet's orchard.] MERCUTIO 3 He is wise; 4 And, on my life, hath stol'n him home to bed. BENVOLIO 5 He ran this way, and leap'd this orchard wall. 6 Call, good Mercutio. MERCUTIO 6. conjure: call up a spirit [Romeo's]. 6 Nay, I'll conjure too. 7 Romeo! humours! madman! passion! lover! 8 Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh! 9 Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied; 10 Cry but "Ay me!" pronounce but "love" and "dove"; 11 Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word, 12 One nick-name for her purblind son and heir, 13 Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so trim, 14 When King Cophetua loved the beggar-maid! 15 He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not; 16. ape: "Ape," like "monkey" today, could be used as a mocking term of endearment. 16 The ape is dead, and I must conjure him. 17 I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes, 18 By her high forehead and her scarlet lip, 19 By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh 20. demesnes: estates. 20 And the demesnes that there adjacent lie, 21 That in thy likeness thou appear to us! BENVOLIO 22. And if: if. 22 And if he hear thee, thou wilt anger him. MERCUTIO 23 This cannot anger him: 'twould anger him 24 To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle 25 Of some strange nature, letting it there stand 26 Till she had laid it and conjured it down. 27 That were some spite: my invocation 28 Is fair and honest, and in his mistress' name 29 I conjure only but to raise up him. BENVOLIO 30 Come, he hath hid himself among these trees, 31. consorted with the humorous: associated with the moody [night]. 31 To be consorted with the humorous night: 32 Blind is his love and best befits the dark. MERCUTIO 33 If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark. 34 Now will he sit under a medlar tree, 35 And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit 36 As maids call medlars, when they laugh alone. 37 O, Romeo, that she were, O, that she were 38. open et caetera: pop'rin pear: Flemish pear of phallic shape. 39. truckle-bed: low bed, made to fit under a larger one. Mercutio is saying that he'd rather sleep anywhere warm, than continue to stay outside in the cold. 38 An open et caetera, thou a pop'rin pear! 39 Romeo, good night: I'll to my truckle-bed; 40 This field-bed is too cold for me to sleep: 41 Come, shall we go? BENVOLIO 41 Go, then; for 'tis in vain 42 To seek him here that means not to be found. Exit [with Mercutio].