

Does Shakespeare appeal to today's youth? Well, sort of

O Romeo, O, Like, Wow

From COLUMBUS DISPATCH
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AT THE end of the school year, my 14-year-old daughter's English class tackled Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and she had to give an oral report. Having listened to her talk on the phone, I can all too easily imagine just how it went.

THIS is like a real super-sad play about this dude Romeo and this dudette Juliet. They had names like that 'cause it was like the real old days, before MTV. So, no one had cool names like Heather or Brandon or Shawna. They all had really geeky names like Benvolio and Tybalt and Mercutio.

Anyway, these two families, see, the Montagues and Capulets, really



hate each other. I mean, they can't even walk down the street without thrashing on each other, 'cause, like, that's what happens right at the beginning.

This dude, Sampson, who works

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for old man Capulet, he sees this other dude, Abraham, who hangs with Montague, and he bites his thumb. I mean, like, Sampson bites his own thumb, not Abraham's thumb, which in the old days was like saying "Your mama!" And Abraham says, "Are you dissing me?" So they start beating down. But it gets broken up before anybody's really messed, you know. And the Prince - he's like the principal of this whole town - he says, "Yo, next time you people get in each other's face, I'm gonna twist someone's head around so their cap's on straight."

So then Juliet's old man decides he's going to have this party. But he has to send this servant out to tell everybody, 'cause, like, they didn't even have phones then. But this servant is like dyslexic or something, and he can't make out the names on the list, so he stops someone to help him read it. *Duh!* It's Romeo.

So Romeo looks at the list, and there's all these names of dweebs, freaks, jocks, stoners, nerds, goobs and motorheads. But then he sees Rosaline's name. She's this chick he thinks is really fly, so he decides to crash the party, which is easy, see, 'cause it's a masquerade party.

Meanwhile, Juliet's mom, she's trying to fix Juliet up with this guy named Paris. Is that a dorky name or what? I mean, I thought Dweezil and Moon Unit were weird. But Paris? I guess he's lucky he wasn't born in, like, Fort Wayne.

Romeo goes to the party even though he's totally bummed because

he loves Rosaline and thinks she, like, doesn't love him. But Romeo's homey, Mercutio, tells him: "Chill. Just go. Party down. There's going to be some fly babes there."

So Romeo gets to the party and starts checking out the chicks. He sees Juliet and he goes, "Who is that babe?" And she goes, "Who is that hunk?" Which is bad, see, 'cause, like, Shakespeare already said they got "fatal loins," whatever that means, and they're "star cross'd," which means both of them are Aquarians, I think.

But that don't stop them. So Romeo starts hitting on her, and they hold hands for a while and, like, he goes, "O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do." And he kisses her, and it's, like, super rad, I mean totally awesome for both of them. But then Juliet's nurse pulls her away, 'cause, like, in the old days they really had a cow if they caught you sucking face.

Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, sees that Romeo is trying to ease in on a Capulet, even though he's a Montague, so Tyb says, "Yo, hand me that sword." But Juliet's dad says, "Be cool."

Then it's curfew or something 'cause everybody has to leave, but Romeo jumps over this big fence into Juliet's yard. He's like creepin' in the trees and he looks up at Juliet's bedroom and goes, "Who left that light on?" or something like that, and she goes, "O, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" And it's like, *duh*, 'cause he's standing right un-

uer ner balcony. But maybe, like, she took her contacts out to go to bed.

So he goes, "Do you want to get married?" and she goes, "Yeah." So they do... only in secret.

But then, like, right after this, Juliet's pushy cousin Tybalt shows up again and starts getting in Romeo's face. See, he don't know they're married 'cause he didn't get an invitation or nothing. And, like, he should be happy, because he didn't have to buy an electric can opener or anything. He wants to kill Romeo. But Romeo won't fight him, so Tybalt jumps in Mercutio's face, and him and Mercutio start thrashing on each other. Mercutio gets killed, so Romeo kills Tybalt, which is, like, dumb, 'cause now him and Juliet ain't gonna get *any* wedding presents.

Then the Prince exiles Romeo, which is, like, being grounded but like in a whole nother state or something.

So Romeo and Juliet have to split for a while. Juliet goes, "O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?" 'cause some guys act like they like you a bunch at school but then they never call you up. You know?

Romeo leaves and Juliet is really bummin' 'cause her old man wants her to marry Paris. *Duh!* She's al-

ready married. But her parents are still planning a wedding, so it looks like she's going to get an electric can opener one way or another, or maybe even a microwave. But then this priest guy gives Juliet this stuff to drink so that everyone will think she's, like, dead until Romeo can get back from being grounded. But this stuff is so good that everybody thinks she really is dead, and they put her in this tomb thing, you know.

Then Romeo dreams Juliet has found him dead, and even though he's grounded in another state, he says: "Later. I'm outta here." He takes off to see Juliet, but he stops, like at a drugstore, for some poison. So he misses this letter that the priest sent that says: "Juliet isn't dead. She's, like, sleeping."

But then Romeo sees Juliet and he goes, "Ah, dear Juliet, why art thou yet so fair?" 'cause, you know, if she was dead she ought to be green and starting to smell funny. And that totally bums him, so he takes the poison. *Duh!* Then you'll never guess this part. She wakes up and sees Romeo and goes, "O happy dagger!" and kills herself.

I mean, are these people serious, or, like, what?

Confidence Man. I flew to Tampa, Fla., to give a speech entitled "You Are an Ad" to 500 people. I had given this talk so many times I knew it by heart. When a driver picked me up at the airport to escort me to the meeting site, I passed the time by chatting with him. "Who will I be speaking to this afternoon?" I asked casually.

"The same group you spoke to last year when you gave the 'You Are an Ad' speech," he replied.

- Joey Reiman, *Success, the Original Handbook* (Longstreet)

