

Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*

Directions: On a separate sheet of notebook paper answer the following prompts as you watch Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Your responses should be thorough and show critical thinking.

ACT 1:

1. List some adjectives to describe how the servants from the Montague household are portrayed in the film. How are the Capulet servants portrayed? Is Luhrmann using a literary device in his film? Explain.
2. In Shakespeare's R+J, Romeo and Benvolio learn about the Capulet's party from an illiterate servant. In Luhrmann's version, Romeo and Benvolio learn about the party from a report on the news. Explain why this change was or was not necessary for the film.
3. In Juliet's bedroom, the Nurse's monologue about Juliet as a baby is not included. In the play, this monologue helps the audience understand that there are no secrets between the Nurse and Juliet; they have a very close relationship. Explain how the film tries to show their close relationship. Is it successful?
4. Do Romeo and his friends "crash" the party in the film? Explain.
5. In the film, Luhrmann transformed the setting in Act 1 scene 4 into one that resembles a group of friends going to a rave party. This film was released in 1996. Rave culture was very popular among teenagers in the mid to late 1990s and drugs were a part of that culture. One of the most common drugs in the rave scene was MDMA, commonly called Ecstasy or "E." The "high" a user of the drug gets is due to the increased release of a chemical called serotonin from neurons within the user's brain. Serotonin is responsible for helping people regulate their mood, appetite, sleep, dreams, and the flow of thoughts and information to one's brain. A person under the influence of MDMA typically experiences a heightened mood (extreme feelings associated with happiness, friendship, and love). When the drug wears off, the receptors in the user's brain that are stimulated by serotonin become insensitive to the chemical. This typically results in feelings of depression, anxiety, a lack of motivation, and a feeling of emptiness. (theDEA.org).

In the film, Mercutio takes an "E" pill out of a metal case during his famous Queen Mab monologue. What is Luhrmann trying to emphasize by including this drug in the Queen Mab monologue? Additionally, at the end of the scene Romeo takes the drug. Why would Luhrmann have Romeo take a drug like MDMA? Is it necessary? Explain.

6. Compare and contrast Romeo and Juliet's interactions at the Capulet's party in Luhrmann's film to Shakespeare's play. Use a Venn Diagram to organize your examples.