

Comparative Study of
Romeo and Juliet and
West Side Story:
a student work ebook



Lessons and exercises based on developing skills in undertaking a comparative study of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare and *West Side Story* by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise

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and Juliet* and *West Side Story*:
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1. The relationships among texts

In this work ebook you will be exploring the relationships among texts between different types of texts from different time periods. The texts you will be studying are the play, *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, written between 1591 and 1595, and the film, *West Side Story*, directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, released in 1961.

Another simple way of looking at the relationships between texts is to compare particular aspects. What do you think it means to compare texts in an academic sense? If you were to write an analytical response comparing texts, what would you write about? Jot down your ideas below:

You may have come up with ideas such as comparing texts means to identify and explore the similarities and differences between texts and the connections between texts. When we compare texts there are a number of aspects we look at. These include the similarities and differences between:

- the social, historical and cultural context
- purpose and audience
- narrative elements such as characters, plot, setting, themes and structure
- language and style of writing
- the form or medium, for example, a play or film.

So why do we compare texts in an academic sense? What do we hope to achieve? Jot down your ideas below:

There are a number of reasons why we compare texts. You may have come up with some of the following:

- to gain a greater understanding of texts and why they were created
- to understand how particular texts are influenced by other texts
- to make connections between texts
- to understand and appreciate literature and other texts
- to understand the values and attitudes represented in texts.

Comparing visual texts

You are now going to compare examples of front covers from *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*.

Below are a number of links to various versions advertising *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story*. Study the front covers of the texts and complete the exercise below.

Romeo and Juliet

<http://www.thefoxisblack.com/2011/12/14/christopher-porter-wins-the-romeo-and-juliet-re-covered-books-contest/>

<http://www.more.com/entertainment/celebrities-movies-tv-music/love-first-movie-sight>

West Side Story

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:West_Side_Story_poster.jpg

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:West_Side_001.jpg

Exercise 1: Comparing visual texts

1. Before you begin to compare the texts, first understand the text in more detail. Choose one front cover from *Romeo and Juliet* and one front cover from *West Side Story*. Fill in the graphic organisers for each text with information about the text. You may need to infer information.

Text: _____

Purpose and audience

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Narrative elements

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Language and style of writing

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Form or medium

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Values and attitudes

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Social, historical and cultural context

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The top and bottom edges of the box have a decorative, jagged red border.

Text: _____

Purpose and audience

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Purpose and audience'.

Narrative elements

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Narrative elements'.

Language and style of writing

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Language and style of writing'.

Form or medium

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Form or medium'.

Values and attitudes

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Values and attitudes'.

Social, historical and cultural context

A red arrow-shaped box with a white interior, pointing to the right. The box is outlined in red and has a red arrowhead on the right side. It is positioned below the text 'Social, historical and cultural context'.

2. Now that you know the front covers in more detail, make comparisons, by identifying the similarities and differences between the front covers. Fill in the graphic organiser below.

