Romeo and Juliet

*Romeo and Juliet* is a famous play by William Shakespeare. In the play a young man named Romeo falls in love with a young woman named Juliet. They hide their love and their relationship, because their families are enemies. During the story, Romeo and Juliet die. The play *Romeo and Juliet* is known as a tragedy, because it is a serious story with an ending that is very unhappy.
Play Beginning

The first scene starts with Will walking onto the empty stage while musicians begin to play a song. As Will walks around the stage and thinks about what he could write in a play, several doors open and the rest of the cast walks onto the stage.

Actors’ Voices

The actors in the play speak differently than we do now.
Music

Actors play musical instruments and sing songs in *Shakespeare in Love*. Music plays between each scene. Sometimes the music is soft, sometimes the music is loud. The songs are brief.

The character named Fennyman yells at the musicians to “Shut it!” several times, so the musicians will stop playing music.
Writing a Play

In the play *Shakespeare in Love*, Will Shakespeare struggles to write a new play. When he begins to write his new play, some of the characters become actors who rehearse and then perform in Will's new play. The new play is called *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter*. Later, the new play is called *Romeo and Juliet*.

Dog

There is a real dog in this play. He appears two times in the first act and once in the second act. The dog barks.
Violence

Some characters will pretend to fight or pretend to hurt other characters in this play. Every person who is on the People’s Light stage is always safe and has practiced many times to learn every movement in a way that no one gets hurt.

Some characters practice the fights which are part of practicing the play *Romeo and Juliet*.

Some characters become angry with each other and use swords and their hands to fight.
Love Scene & Romance

When they meet at a party, Will and Viola start to love each other. They kiss and embrace each other to show their affection for one another. Will and Viola kiss for the first time when Viola is pretending to be “Thomas Kent” the actor. Will does not know he is kissing Viola.

Lord Wessex wants to marry Viola, but Viola does not want to marry him. Viola does not love Lord Wessex. When Lord Wessex tries to kiss and embrace Viola, she refuses to kiss and embrace him.

Here is a link to a resource for teaching human sexuality.
Some actors perform as more than one character. For example, the actor who plays Viola’s father also plays the Boatman.

Sometimes actors perform in roles that are meant to be played by a gender different from their own.
Death

A character explains that Kit Marlowe was stabbed and killed in a tavern. We do not see his death on stage. Lord Wessex mistakenly thinks Will is the playwright who died and tells Viola that Will has died. She is upset and faints.

At the end of the play, Kit walks back on stage. Will is frightened and tells him, “They said you were dead,” to which Kit responds, “Yes, they say that.” This is a reference to the rumor that the historical Kit Marlowe faked his death in 1593 and continued to publish plays under Shakespeare’s name. Whether he is dead or not in the play is left up to your imagination.

When Will and Viola are performing Romeo and Juliet, they pretend to die. Romeo pretends to die with poison. Juliet pretends to die from stabbing herself.