

Romeo and Juliet Sample Answer
2011 Exam
Hero, Heroine or Villain

Sample answer 2: 2011 examination – based on *Romeo and Juliet*

1. Identify a hero, heroine or villain from a play you have studied. Explain why, in your opinion, this character deserves the title hero, heroine or villain. Support your answer with reference to the play. (30)

Note: This answer is longer than you would be expected to write in the exam but it is no harm to see what can be said on the topic.

Plan:

1. Name of play and playwright – Romeo is hero
2. Introduction is not particularly promising – moody and melodramatic – teens relate?
3. True love for Juliet
4. Tries to become a better man – seeks peace with Tybalt
5. Not perfect. Reverts to immaturity when banished
6. Pulls self together and shows great bravery when hears J is dead.
7. Shows magnanimity towards Paris
8. Copes with dignity and courage and shows true love and loyalty – admirable hero

The play I have studied as part of my Junior Cert course is William Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', and the character of Romeo in this play is, I believe, an engaging and credible hero to whom audiences can still relate hundreds of years after his character was first created. Admittedly, our introduction to Romeo's character does not mark him out as particularly heroic. Indeed, our first impression of him is of a moody and immature young man who avoids company much of the time:


*'And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,*



And makes himself an artificial night.'

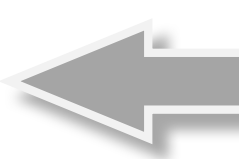
Even when he is with his friends, Romeo mopes and seems unwilling to make any effort to enjoy himself. He goes to the Capulets' party under protest, making it plain that he will not have fun: 'I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.' The reason for Romeo's low spirits and melodrama is his love for a girl who does not seem to care for him. All in all, Romeo seems far from heroic at this stage in the play, but his flaws make him human and it is not difficult for most teenagers to relate to his behaviour! We may not admire Romeo yet, but we do find him a very realistic character and we begin to wonder how his situation will be resolved.

Once Romeo meets Juliet, all thoughts of Rosaline are driven from his mind. His change of heart is quite startling: 'Did my heart love till now?' Like his love for Rosaline, Romeo's love for Juliet is initially described in flowery terms: 'O she doeth teach the torches to burn bright'; but unlike his lack of action in his previous romance, Romeo now becomes brave and fearless. He risks his safety by searching the Capulets' orchard for Juliet, and when Juliet points this out to him, he does not seem to care: 'there lies more peril in thine eye / Than twenty of their swords.' This new, vital Romeo is an attractive and compelling character and his willingness to risk all for true love makes him a heroic figure in our eyes.

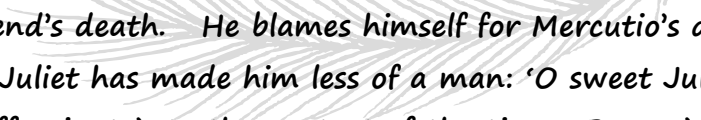


Link all your points back to the question.

Another admirable aspect of Romeo's character after he meets Juliet is his willingness to make peace with the Capulets, even though they are his family's sworn enemies. He does his best to reason with Tybalt when that impetuous young man seeks a fight with him, even saying that he loves Tybalt 'better than thou canst devise.' Despite Romeo's efforts, however, a fight becomes inevitable when Tybalt kills Mercutio. Yet his subsequent killing of Tybalt does not make Romeo less heroic in our eyes; he had little choice but



If you have to change or add a word in the quotation so that it makes sense in the context of your sentence, put the changed or added word in square brackets.

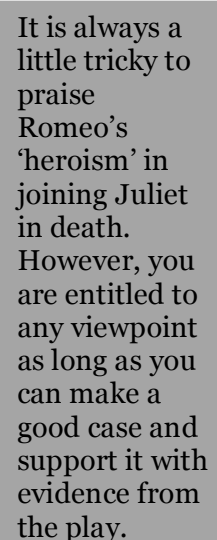


to avenge his friend's death. He blames himself for Mercutio's death and fears that his love for Juliet has made him less of a man: 'O sweet Juliet, / thy beauty hath made me effeminate.' In the context of the times, Romeo's challenge to Tybalt shows his heroic qualities. He avenges his friend and shows great courage in so doing. He does not fear death, saying to Tybalt that 'Either thou or I, or both, must go with [Mercutio]:'

Although Romeo may be improved by his love for Juliet, and may have tried his best to make peace with Tybalt, he is by no means perfect. He is still a very young man, and when he learns of his banishment, he acts like an immature teenager again, running to the Friar and weeping hysterically. He even says it would be better to be dead: 'Ha, banishment! Be merciful, say "death!"' While this melodramatic and childish behaviour is not admirable, it does remind us that Romeo has much to contend with and that he does not have the age or experience of life to enable him to cope with such challenges rationally. We can certainly sympathise with his distress, and we wonder how on earth he will manage to overcome the obstacles in his path to happiness with Juliet.

Romeo does not disappoint us at the end of the play. The challenges he has had to face may have defeated him, but he has tried his best to deal with them in the most dignified and courageous way possible. When he hears that Juliet is dead, he does not rush to others for help and comfort, but instead resolves to end his own life so he can be with her. We may not agree with his decision, but his determination and focus are admirable. Nothing can stand in his way.

Unfortunately for Paris, he does try to stand in Romeo's way, and is killed by him as a result. Even in the midst of his anguish, Romeo behaves with magnanimity towards Paris when he recognises who he has slain. He accedes to Paris' last request to be



It is always a little tricky to praise Romeo's 'heroism' in joining Juliet in death. However, you are entitled to any viewpoint as long as you can make a good case and support it with evidence from the play.




laid in the tomb with Juliet, calling him 'noble County Paris' and promising to 'bury thee in a triumphant grave.'

Romeo's resolve to take his own life does not waver, and he is determined to follow Juliet into the afterlife so he can be her protector and guard her against the 'abhorred monster' of death which wants to keep her for himself: 'I still will stay with thee, / And never from this place of dim night / Depart again.' His love for Juliet is so deep that he cannot bear to live without her. His last thoughts are of her and he kisses her one last time: 'Thus with a kiss I die.'

The name Romeo is synonymous with passionate, fiercely loyal love, and it is not difficult to see why, having read the play. His adoration for Juliet makes him a

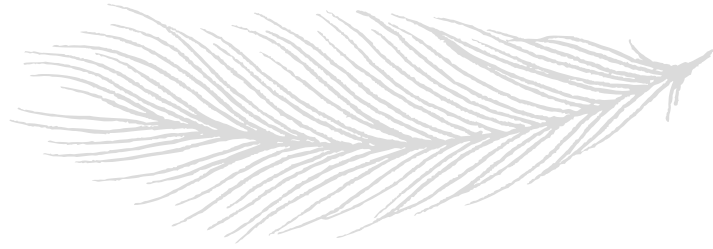
When you are making a case, you may wish to use strong and emotive language to support the points being made. Refer to your notes on discursive writing to help you in this.



better person, and when he believes she is dead, he does not think life is worth living any more. The teenager whose self-professed love for Rosaline at the beginning of the play was marked by melancholy, inaction and self-obsession has now become a brave, dignified young man who is determined to stay with his wife even if that means joining her in death.

Romeo is truly a remarkable and unforgettable hero whose fortunes we follow with the

greatest of interest from his first meeting with the love of his life to his tragic and untimely death in her arms.



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