

Handout (page 1)

Juliet Trumps Laura: Shakespeare and the Petrarchan Sonnet

Romeo:

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet:

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo:

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Juliet:

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Romeo:

Oh then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.
They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Juliet:

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Romeo:

Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged.

Juliet:

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Romeo:

Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.

Juliet:

You kiss by th' book.

Nurse:

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

Handout (page 2)

Juliet Trumps Laura: Shakespeare and the Petrarchan Sonnet

Directions:

1. Number the lines. Where does the end of the complete sonnet come?
2. Where does a new sonnet seem to begin?
3. Circle all the words with religious meanings or connotations.
4. Write stage directions for actors beside the passages that suggest them. For example:
 - a. What is Romeo doing when he says his first line? How is Juliet reacting, even before she speaks?
 - b. When Juliet says "palm to palm" does she hold her hands in prayer, or put her palm against Romeo's? Or first one, then the other?
 - c. Mark places where Romeo may be leaning towards Juliet as if to kiss her and places where Juliet may be stalling. What body language might she use?
 - d. At what points does Romeo kiss Juliet? (Does she kiss back?)
5. Once you have seen two people up performing the scene, decide how you would describe Juliet at this point in the play. How willing a partner is she? How is she different from "a lady on a pedestal"? What language can you use as evidence for your conclusions?

Directions for Teachers (page 1)

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This exercise takes about 20 minutes, including a brief explanation of "Petrarchanism."

1. Explain who Petrarch was. Be sure to mention his sonnets to Laura and his influence on English poetry.
2. Read through Romeo and Juliet 1.5 aloud, one line per student, to hear the language and note the religious terminology.
3. Assign two students to "be" Romeo and Juliet at the end of the ball scene in 1.5. They will act out the words, but not say them. Ask two other students to read the lines aloud, slowly enough so that the two actors have time to move and gesture.
4. The rest of the class can take notes on actions they think might be changed or added to the performance.
5. After the scene, ask the class what they noticed about the interaction between Romeo and Juliet.
6. Time permitting, run the scene again.

Directions for Teachers (page 2)

Juliet Trumps Laura: Shakespeare and the Petrarchan Sonnet

Romeo: [taking Juliet's hand]

- 1 If I profane with my unwortheist hand *religious language throughout*
2 This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
3 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand *Petrarchan pick-up line*
4 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet:

- 5 Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, *Juliet picks up theme*
6 Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
7 For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, *enlarges on it, wittily*
8 And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss. *puts her right palm against his (?)*

Romeo:

- 9 Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too? *What does he do here?*

Juliet:

- 10 Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer. *What does she do now?*

Romeo:

- 11 Oh then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.
12 They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair. *Does he put her palms together?*

Juliet:

- 13 Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake. *What's her body language?*

Romeo:

- 14 Then move not while my prayer's effect I take. [He kisses her]
1 Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged. *Pace speeds up*

Juliet: They alternate lines

- 2 Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Romeo:

- 3 Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
4 Give me my sin again. [He kisses her] *The line is shared, like their feelings*

Juliet:

You kiss by th' book. *Is this a compliment? A joke?*

Nurse:

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.
[Juliet moves toward her mother.]