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<div align="center">Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet</div>

Replicating an original masterpiece is deceptively challenging. From anime to musicals and live performances, a seemingly endless line of people have tried their hand at depicting the tragic love story written by Shakespeare.The original play of Romeo and Juliet is much more than a simple story of two young people with unlucky fates. Through this work, Shakespeare portrays many important themes, such as the role of fate in one's life and ambiguity of certain events (nothing is purely good of bad). Most people are familiar with this romantic tragedy, and each individual has their own interpretation of the storyline. In his movie, director Luhrmann includes his own unique representation of this tale of star-crossed lovers. But, in his ambition to "modernize" the plot and setting, Luhrmann distorts key features of the play- taking away some of the essence Shakespeare meant to portray through his work.

Many people try to modernize certain pieces of art from the past in order to make them more "relatable" to the public, but some pieces aren't meant to be changed, since it takes away from the original intent. Starting with a TV anchor reporting on the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, and cutting to two tall skyscrapers with signs reading "Capulet" and "Montague", viewers can instantly see this movie isn't a typical old-fashioned Romeo and Juliet adaptation. Neglecting swords in favor of Sword- brand handguns, and having the families' feud reduced to a "turf battle between the Montague Boys… and Capulet Boys", the film desperately tries to "update" the plot in an effort to reach out to the audience (Ebert). Most everything about the setting and some characters is changed, with Mercutio a drag queen, the rest of the feuding families

portrayed as gangsters, and Capulet's party a kind of Halloween ball with guests wearing ostentatious costumes. This is such a sharp contrast to what is actually portrayed in Shakespeare's play, as the author wants to show Romeo and Juliet's story more of as realistic lesson to all of us. However, in the movie it is represented as a kind of whirlwind romance, with Romeo and Juliet pledging their undying love to each other after only a few hours at the party, and getting married after just one day- leading the viewer to think it's just a fling resulting from "teenage hormones". Also, the famous balcony scene is changed to a dip in the pool, and loses some of its symbolism. This is because in the original play, Romeo is trying to get to Juliet by climbing up the wall, which symbolizes how both of them (especially Romeo), are willing to take the risk just to be with each other. Some of this meaning is lost when the balcony scene is changed to a swimming pool, since no physical obstacles are really portrayed between the two characters. All of this combined really takes away from the romance aspect of the relationship, since in the play it has a deeper meaning that doesn't come across to the viewer in the movie.

The first thing I thought after seeing the movie was that the film itself was very confused. Yes, not confusing, but *confused*. You see, in some ways the film is desperately trying to update itself, but on the other hand, is too meek to really cut off from its literary roots, since however "modern" the film may seem, the actors still talk in Victorian English. A major problem with this part is that it takes away from the meaning of the play in general. The average American doesn't speak, or even really understand that type of language. Think back to the time when you were in school being forced to read one of Shakespeare's plays. Did you *really* understand what was being said, or did you just follow along in a haze or try to SparkNotes the content? What makes it even worse is that most of the dialogue is either being shouted incomprehensibly during fights,

or just being recited by actors either stoically or with exaggerated drama. As a result, the *dialogue* in the movie really lacks feeling and the astounding effect it could have had on the viewer. Take for example Mercutio's speech after he is stabbed. If you look deeper, it is a very heartfelt speech of someone victim to the feud, much like the two star-crossed lovers. But, with the dialogue being recited like at a high-school performance, the lines lack the emotion and clarity that could have led to that realization in the viewer. Another effect of having this modern and old-fashioned mixed together is that it makes the movie an even more overwhelming smoothie of plots, characters, and fast-paced scenes. Much of the movie is committed to violent scenes and seemingly trivial car chases between the two gangs. Coupled with haphazard camera angles and in most cases- incomprehensible lines, the action-packed scenes leave the viewer's mind reeling from overload. Overall, this overpowers the actual plot of the story and only shows the viewer a surface-deep representation of the story, when in fact, the play displays a more profound meaning.

This adaptation of Shakespeare's classic play provides a new spin on a traditional storyline, that- although refreshing- takes away from the true meaning of the tale. The acting of both main characters is great, with their charismatic natures highlighting some iconic scenes from the play. But, with the influx of overwhelmingly fast-paced scenes and a clash between modern and traditional, the movie lacks the deeper meaning that the original play portrays. For Shakespeare fans wanting to see an authentic portrayal of a well-loved classic, they should stick to the books- or in this case- play. As an admirer of Shakespeare's masterful literary techniques and plots, this movie was unique, but unfortunately a disappointment.

Rules:

- When you are writing a review, include specific details from the movie to add to your credibility. Knowing specific places or events shows the reader you "know your stuff" and are knowledgeable enough to be critiquing a certain film. Also, if the movie is based on an original work, like a book or play, include information about it in the review. This gives the reader a sense of what the original is like and helps them better understand when you say a specific scene in the movie was completely changed and either positively or negatively impacted the storyline.

- Instead of just focusing on the relationship between the main characters, also critique elements of the movie, such as the storyline and setting. This allows you to give a review of the overall movie instead and further prove your point on how good or bad a certain film was.

- If reviewing a movie based on an original work, include major themes the author wanted to portray through their work. This helps you show how the adaptation measures up to the original, and how it either effectively portrays them, or distorts the meaning. When choosing to watch a movie adaptation of an original work, viewers are interested in knowing if a specific movie portrays the same deeper meaning and themes as the book or play does, so including this information both helps the reader, and sparks interest in the review.

- When critiquing the film, don't use overly harsh words and write off the film as a complete wreck. Fist of all, this makes you seem biased, since it seems like all you're doing is ranting about how horrible the film is. Doing so implies that the review is just a personal opinion, and shouldn't really be taken seriously,reducing your credibility as a reviewer, since it seems like you're just another angry opponent of the film. Also, this reduces the quality of the review,

leaving less room for an intelligent assessment of the movie, and instead focusing on denouncing the film.

- Include your personal experience when reviewing a film, and say what *you* thought about the overall quality of the movie. The audience is probably reading the review to decide whether or not to watch a specific movie. So, they want to know if other people who have watched the movie like it or not. Also, if you are reviewing a Marvel movie, for example, say that you are a Marvel fan. This helps the reader in their decision to watch the movie, since they think "if a MArvel liked the movie, maybe I'll like too, since I'm also a Marvel fan", this helps you" the author (you) also connect more with the audience.