Love Across Lines

Fate, language, and adaptation in Romeo and Juliet

12.CL.1.a "Read, analyze, and evaluate a play by William Shakespeare, including an examination of its contributions to the English language and its influences on other works of literature."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two places where the passage weighs fate against human choices. Circle a Shakespearean phrase that remains in use, then number two ways a later play changes his story.

Who Keeps the Lovers Apart?

1. Before Romeo and Juliet meet, a speaker called the Chorus announces that "A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life." Shakespeare gives the audience the ending before the action begins. The phrase "star-cross'd" suggests that the stars have marked the lovers for disaster, a belief some Elizabethan audiences would have recognized. Yet the play does not leave everything to fate. Romeo is a Montague, Juliet a Capulet, and their families' feud makes an ordinary courtship dangerous. By revealing the ending early, the Chorus shifts our attention from what will happen to how adults and young people help bring it about.

2. At the Capulets' party, Juliet learns Romeo's identity and cries, "My only love sprung from my only hate!" The tight contrast between "love" and "hate" makes the feud sound as if it has invaded her own thoughts. Later she asks, "What's in a name?" and argues that a rose would smell as sweet under another name. Her reasoning challenges the idea that a family name determines a person's worth, but neither household abandons its hostility in time to protect the lovers. Today, "star-crossed lovers" is a familiar expression for a couple kept apart by forces beyond their control. Its survival shows how Shakespeare's language still shapes descriptions of love.

3. The 1957 stage musical *West Side Story* reworks the feud: Tony is a former Jet, and Maria is linked to the Sharks through her brother. The rival groups fight over territory in New York City, not family honor in Verona. Tony dies, but Maria survives, confronting the people whose violence destroyed their future. That change gives the surviving lover a voice Shakespeare's ending denies Juliet. The musical retains the danger of group hatred while shifting attention from a foretold fate toward decisions a community might still change. Its new setting suggests that an old play can expose conflicts far beyond its original world.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Chorus's announcement change what the audience watches for, and what two possible causes of the tragedy does the passage present?

2. How do Juliet's words at the party and her question about names challenge the feud?

3. What does “star-cross'd” imply in the play, and how does the phrase's later use show Shakespeare's contribution to English?

4. How does Maria's survival change the effect of the ending in *West Side Story* while preserving a central concern of *Romeo and Juliet*?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a program note for your own stage adaptation. In one paragraph, describe a new setting and rival groups, explain how you would reinterpret “star-cross'd lovers,” and judge whether your ending preserves or changes the play's warning about hatred.

ANSWER KEY

Love Across Lines

GRADE 12 · 12.CL.1.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two places where the passage weighs fate against human choices. Circle a Shakespearean phrase that remains in use, then number two ways a later play changes his story. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Chorus's announcement change what the audience watches for, and what two possible causes of the tragedy does the passage present?	**Because the audience knows the lovers will die, it watches how that outcome comes about. The passage weighs fate against the choices of the lovers and their feuding families.**
2	How do Juliet's words at the party and her question about names challenge the feud?	**Her contrast between love and hate shows the feud intruding on her feelings. Her question about names argues that Romeo's family name does not determine his worth.**
3	What does “star-cross'd” imply in the play, and how does the phrase's later use show Shakespeare's contribution to English?	**It implies that the stars have marked the lovers for disaster. The continuing use of “star-crossed lovers” shows that Shakespeare's phrasing still shapes how people describe love obstructed by outside forces.**
4	How does Maria's survival change the effect of the ending in *West Side Story* while preserving a central concern of *Romeo and Juliet*?	**Maria can confront those responsible for the violence, shifting attention toward choices the community could change. Both works show the destructive effects of group hatred.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My adaptation takes place on two space stations whose leaders refuse to share dwindling supplies. A technician from each station falls in love after secretly repairing a communication link. “Star-cross'd” describes both their location among the stars and the danger created by their leaders. One lover dies during a raid, but the other broadcasts proof that cooperation could have saved both stations. Like the play's feuding families, the leaders learn the cost of hatred too late. The broadcast changes the ending by giving the survivor a chance to prevent further deaths.

Accept interpretations of fate and choice that use details from the passage. For the program note, look for a distinct adaptation, a meaningful use of “star-cross'd,” and a judgment about the effect of its ending.