

# Example by StudyDriver

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## Cause of Tragedy Romeo and Juliet Example

Romeo and Juliet is widely known to be a tragedy, but what caused the atrocity for which it is so renowned? Some may argue fate was to blame for Romeo's and Juliet's deaths, that the situations these young lovers faced were depicted as being out of their control. Could Romeo have refused to attend the Capulet masque? Was Romeo destined to duel the raging Tybalt? Did Romeo and Juliet truly have to kill themselves? If one considers the specific circumstances and causes of these situations, the fact that all scenarios are the result of choice rather than chance, and the notion that the characters were never left without options, only one conclusion can be determined. It was unarguably the decisions made by characters, not those made by fate, that were responsible for the tragedy in Romeo and Juliet.

To fully comprehend how fate and destiny had no role in the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet, the terms "fate", "destiny", and "tragedy must first be understood. Fate can be defined as being "a power that determines and controls everything that is or happens," (Newfeldt (Ed.) p.431) while destiny can be described as "what is predetermined to happen in spite of all efforts to change or prevent it." (Newfeldt (Ed.) p.321) Therefore, fate is the entity that decides all that will occur, and destiny is the decision made by fate.

Tragedy can be defined as the dramatic representation of serious and important actions that turn out disastrously for the main character. This indicates that the tragedies in Romeo and Juliet were the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, and to say fate and destiny were not responsible for these tragedies, is to say the characters of the play, rather than some intangible force, were aware and in control of the actions that caused Romeo's and Juliet's deaths.

Of all the events that preluded to the joining and eventual deaths of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo's attendance at the Capulet masque was paramount, with all other events being derived from this choice. This occurrence was not destiny; it was the contemplated decision made by Romeo to do something irresponsible. Upon being presented with the opportunity to go to the party, it can be seen that Romeo foresaw his demise when he said:

I fear, too early; for my mind misgives  
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,  
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date  
With this night's revels, and expire the term  
Of a despised life closed in my breast  
By some vile forfeit of untimely death. (Romeo and Juliet 1.4.106-111)

However, even with this knowledge that he would die as result of going to the masque, he consciously decided to venture out and disregard his safety. Immediately after recognizing his possible death, he went on to say "But He that hath the steerage of my course/ Direct my sail?"

(Romeo and Juliet 1.4.112-113) Not only did Romeo actively choose to do nothing to alter this grim destiny, he deliberately submitted to follow the path on which he was doomed. Fate, or some other power, presented Romeo with this vision of his death that he could use to prevent disaster, yet he chose to let tragedy befall him.

Following the party where Romeo and Juliet first met, beginning their tragic relationship, Romeo continued, and Juliet started, to demonstrate self-destructive acts. Romeo desired to be with his love interest, and so sought her despite the dangers such action entailed. He chose to re-enter the Capulet's domain, abandoning this friends, in order to find Juliet. Romeo's decision perpetuated his and Juliet's relationship, which could have ended at this

point, as the two were not likely to see one another without forced action.

With Romeo arriving at her balcony, Juliet made a choice that was severely against her best interests, increasing the likeliness of a terrible end. She stated "I have no joy of this contract tonight./ It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden..." (Romeo and Juliet 2.2.117-118) showing she recognized the folly of swearing her love to Romeo. The choice she made with this knowledge, however, lead towards her and Romeo's destruction; she told Romeo "If that thy bent of love be honourable,/Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,.../ And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay,..." (Romeo and Juliet 2.2.143-147), thus making the decision to marry Romeo, and do what so recently seemed irrational to her. This built up the potential for Romeo and Juliet to meet with untimely death, further leading to the fatal tragedy of Romeo and Juliet.

The deaths of Romeo and Juliet were brought about by their marriage and their refusal to be without one another; when they decided to be wed, blame must be placed upon them for their decisions, but also on Friar Laurence, who married them.

While Friar Laurence would not have married the two youths had they not chosen to do so, conversely, if the Friar had not decided to join them in marriage, Romeo and Juliet could not have become husband and wife. Friar Laurence demonstrated that he knew how ill-advised the marriage was when he informed Romeo and Juliet "These violent delights have violent ends, / And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which as they kiss consume." (Romeo and Juliet 2.6.9-11), and yet he proceeded to marry the young lovers. With his wisdom in this regard, Laurence should have known not to wed the couple; he should have known it would lead to catastrophe. Therefore, the marriage of Romeo and Juliet was not destined to happen; it was determined by an individual, Friar Laurence.

However, it was not only love and marriage that were initiated when Romeo went to the Capulet masque; hatred and murder were incited as well. By attending the party, Romeo provoked Tybalt's anger and became the target of this furious Capulet's wrath. Tybalt did not randomly become enraged with Romeo and suddenly engage in a fight with him; he chose to battle Romeo well ahead of the event, even sending Romeo a letter to inform him of his

intent to duel. It must also be recognized that, as both the Montague and Capulet families were well known to despise each other, Romeo would have known it very illogical to enter the Capulet celebration. Being a Montague himself, Romeo was surely aware his act would entail some sort of punishment, yet he once again took control of his destiny, misusing information that could potentially be used for his salvation.

The choices made by Romeo and Tybalt had obvious detrimental effects that, easily seen by these two, resulted in the deaths of Tybalt and Mercutio, the banishment of Romeo, and progressively coerced Romeo towards his possible demise.

Following the banishment of Romeo, the final events preceding the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet took place. Juliet, condemned to marrying the County Paris by the will of her father, chose to seek out Friar Laurence. He would devise a plan that would rid the disease of a second marriage from Juliet and reunite her and Romeo. The Friar elected to help the young woman, creating a plan that was far too complicated and dangerous to work effectively. Juliet took upon herself the form of death by drinking a potion; this would surely cause Romeo to fall into despair should he be fooled by his love's state. Although the Friar intended to inform the banished Montague, he did not attempt to do so until after the plan was put into effect, and did not convey the gravity of the situation to his messenger, Friar John. When Juliet herself took action on the plan formed by Friar Laurence, she glimpsed an ominous vision of what may happen as she to drink the potion; she foresaw either her true death or insanity's crescendo upon her mind. It was this final decision to drink the elixir, again made against foresight of hazard, that invariably lead to the scenario where Romeo and Juliet were faced with their possible deaths.

## Conclusion

Finally, it must be recognized that, ultimately, Romeo and Juliet were responsible for each of their own deaths. The young lovers were not murdered by an enemy, they were not victims to an accident, nor did they fall ill with some deadly pestilence; they simply committed suicide. Romeo chose to take his life over living without Juliet, drinking the fatal poison he had purchased. Likewise was the case for Juliet, who, like Romeo, was the sole possessor of blame for her death. In this final situation, she was prey only to herself, with no force or individual

controlling and conspiring against her. It was her hand that drove the dagger into her body, tragically ending the love she and Romeo briefly knew. There were no destinies for Romeo and Juliet other than those which they determined for themselves.

To take one's own life is the sole choice of the one committing suicide; it is not the responsibility of fate, as only the individual is in control of his or her own life. Romeo's and Juliet's deaths were the final results of a long series of consequential choices and actions. The possibility of tragedy was established with Romeo attending the Capulet's masque, and with Romeo and Juliet swearing their love in marriage with help of Friar Laurence. The likeliness of their deaths was augmented with Tybalt battling Romeo, Romeo's banishment, and Juliet's and Friar Laurence's plan to reunite the lovers. The tragedy ultimately took form when Romeo and Juliet were faced with the decisions to kill themselves. At no point in the sequence of events were Romeo, Juliet, the Friar, or anyone else left without an alternate choice to their actual deeds. They were always conscious of what was happening around them, and had good ideas as to what may come about from their actions. There was no intricately designed destiny, leading to a bitter halt, that could not have been prevented; Romeo and Juliet's road to destruction was paved simply by the poor choices made by themselves, their own fates.