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### Example Search

In need a synopsis of the 'greatest love story ever told'

The screenshot shows the Oxford Reference Online Premium website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, ADVANCED SEARCH, SUBJECTS & BOOKS, TIMELINES, BROWSE, LINKS, LOG OUT, and HELP. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Welcome, Find out more, What's new, New user?, Subscriber services, Credits, and Contact us.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Quick search:** A search bar containing the text "greatest love story ever told". Below the search bar are buttons for "Advanced search", "GO", and "HELP".
- English Dictionaries & Reference:** A section with sub-links for "English Dictionaries & Thesauruses" and "English Language Reference".
- Bilingual Dictionaries:** A link with a double arrow icon.
- Quotations:** A link with a double arrow icon.
- Maps & illustrations:** A link with a double arrow icon.
- Timelines:** A link with a double arrow icon.
- Encyclopedia:** A link with a double arrow icon.
- Subject Reference:** A list of subject categories including Art & Architecture, Biological Sciences, Classics, Computing, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Economics & Business, Food & Drink, History, Law, Literature, Medicine, Military History, Mythology & Folklore, Names & Places, Performing Arts, Physical Sciences & Mathematics, Politics & Social Sciences, Religion & Philosophy, and Science.
- Subjects & books:** A section with sub-sections for "What's new" and "New user?".
- Log out:** A link at the bottom left.
- Fact of the day:** A banner with the text "How old was Bill Gates when he founded Microsoft?" and a "Sign up now" link.
- Online access to the world's most trusted reference collection:** A banner with an image of bookshelves.

A callout box with a black border and white background points to the search bar. It contains the text: "Enter word (s) If a phrase, then use quotation marks. Example 'greatest love story ever told' and click GO".

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Quick Search  GO

HOME | ADVANCED SEARCH | SUBJECTS & BOOKS | TIMELINES | BROWSE | LINKS | LOG OUT | HELP

Results from your search for "greatest love story ever told"

PRINT SEARCH RESULTS | EMAIL SEARCH RESULTS | WIDEN YOUR SEARCH | SEARCH TIPS

REORDER THESE RESULTS ALPHABETICALLY

Results per page 25 per page GO

Search level: All search terms in full text [info]  
Subjects searched: All  
Displaying 1 of 1 result

1. **Romeo and Juliet**  
Shakespeare composed his definitive version of what is often called 'the greatest love story ever told' during the lyrical period of his career which also produced *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, probably in the same year as these two ...  
(from *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare in Literature*)

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A list of is returned, including an overview and book the information comes from

Click on the heading to view the full entry

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The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet

CROSS-REFERENCE

Search results

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Synopsis  
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Critical history  
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Bibliography

See also  
Anderson, Mary  
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ballet  
Bardello, Matteo  
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Barymore family  
Belleforest, François de  
Berlioz, Hector  
Betterson, Thomas  
Bloom, Claire  
Boas, Frederick Samuel  
Brooke, Arthur

**Romeo and Juliet** Shakespeare composed his definitive version of what is often called 'the greatest love story ever told' during the lyrical period of his career which also produced *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, probably in the same year as these two plays, 1595. The play first appeared in print in 1597, in an unlicensed quarto edition apparently produced from a reported text assembled by actors who had played *Romeo and Paris*. The title page proclaims that *Romeo and Juliet* has 'been often (with great applause) played publicly, by the Right Honourable Lord Hunston his servants' since Shakespeare's company was renamed the Lord Chamberlain's Men as of 17 March 1597, this edition must have gone to press before then. Furthermore, the work of producing it was interrupted by the seizure of its original printer's presses, an event which took place between 9 February and 27 March 1597, by which time the first four sheets had already been printed. Allowing time for the play's reportedly numerous performances and the compilation from memory of the manuscript, *Romeo and Juliet* could not very well have been written before late 1596. Its influence on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, particularly visible in the changes Shakespeare made to his source for 'Pyramus and Thisbe', would place it just before that play. In any event the play cannot be earlier than 1593, since it shows the influence of English translations of two poems by Du Bartas only published in that year (in John Eliot's *Oritho-Egia Gallica*). The dating of *Romeo and Juliet* to 1595 is perhaps confirmed by the Nurse's remark that 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years' (1.3.25), which may be a topical allusion to the earthquake which shook England in 1584.

**Text**  
A second quarto, which calls the play *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, appeared in 1599, fuller and more reliable than the first: its variations in speech-prefixes, permissive stage directions, and accidental preservations of deleted false starts show that it was produced from Shakespeare's rough draft of the play, which his compositors, unfortunately, had trouble deciphering, sometimes resorting to the illicit first quarto for guidance. This edition was reprinted in 1609, 1623, and 1637, and a copy of the 1609 reprint served as the basis for the text published in the Folio in 1623, though some improvements to speech prefixes and stage directions suggest that this copy had been annotated by reference to a promptbook. Most recent editions of the play are based on the second quarto, but supplement it by reference both to the first quarto and to the Folio, particularly over details of staging.

**Sources**  
Although it is undeniably more romantic to pretend that Shakespeare either made up the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* or transcribed it more or less directly from his own experience (as did the popular film *Shakespeare in Love*), the story of Verona's star-crossed couple had been popular throughout Europe for half a century before Shakespeare's dramatization. Tales of ill-fated aristocratic lovers proliferated in the Italian Renaissance: one early anticipation of the *Romeo and Juliet* story is that by Masuccio Salernitano, published in *Il novellino* (1474), but the first to use the names *Romeo* and *Giuletta*, and to set the tale in Verona against the backdrop of a feud between Montagues and Capulets, is Luigi da Porto's *Historia novellamente abovata di due nobile amanti* (1536). This story was adapted by *Bardello*, whose version appeared in *Le novelle di Bardello* (1560); his novella was translated into English in *William Painter's Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7), and was the source of a French version by Pierre Boastreau, published in *Belleforest's Histories tragiques* (1559-62).

The French prose tale supplied the basis for Shakespeare's principal direct source, an English poem by *Arthur Brooke*, *The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet* (1562), which Shakespeare had already used when composing an earlier play with the same setting, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. (Brooke's preface refers to a now-lost English play on the same subject, but there is no evidence to suggest that Shakespeare knew this dramatic precedent.) Shakespeare's emphasis on fate which Brooke had imported from *Plautus*, *Terence* and *Seneca*, securing some of Brooke's imagery, suggests some of the poem's motifs which they enjoy in most other ver...

Print or email the information

Quick search for next word or phrase across the whole database or just this book

# Advanced Search

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Global

**Advanced Search**

Refine your Search: Full Text, Full Text, Entry Headings, People, Dates

Select subjects to search: [SELECT ALL] [CLEAR ALL]

- Art & Architecture
- Bilingual Dictionaries
- Biological Sciences
- Classics
- Computing
- Earth & Environmental Sciences
- Economics & Business
- Encyclopedia
- English Dictionaries & Thesauruses
- English Language Reference
- Food & Drink
- History
- Law
- Literature
- Maps & Illustrations
- Medicine
- Military History
- Mythology & Folklore
- Names & Places
- Performing Arts
- Physical Sciences & Mathematics
- Politics & Social Sciences
- Quotations
- Religion & Philosophy
- Science

List of subjects and books

Standard search: This basic concept search will find plurals and derivatives of a term. Example: world will find matches for this search term, but will also find world first, world-system, world-wide web, and First World War. [Help](#)

Boolean search: Example: Cubist NOT Picasso will find articles on the art movement that do not mention Picasso. [Help](#)

Pattern search: This will find exact and similar matches to your search term, and can be useful if you are unsure of the spelling. Examples: bacon will find Bacon and impenetrable will find impenetrable. [Help](#)

# Other features

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Advanced search

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English Dictionaries & Thesauruses  
English Language Reference

Bilingual Dictionaries ++

Quotations ++

Maps & Illustrations ++

Timelines ++

Encyclopedia ++

Subject Reference

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Biological Sciences  
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