**What does the story of ‘Romeo and Juliet’ mean to us?**

* Brainstorm as a class

**What do you think of these statements made by people when asked that question?**

* Intensity and passion (young love which doesn’t last)
* Youth
* It has cultural relevance (we all know young people from different ethnic groups whose
* parents want to either arrange a marriage, or prevent a relationship)
* The division and opposition of generations (the conflict between parents and children)
* Girls finding their independence and standing up for themselves
* Gang warfare
* Young people having to carry the burden of ancient quarrels
* Universal theme of love and passion

**The Film:** **The Created World**

To enhance and de-mystify Shakespeare’s language, Baz Luhrmann set ‘Romeo and Juliet’ in what he calls a created world; a collage of modern and classical images drawn from religion,theatre, folklore, technology and pop culture. The idea behind this is that "…it's a made-up world comprising twentieth-century icons" says Luhrmann "and these images are there to clarify what's being said, because once you understand it the power and the beauty of the language works its magic on you. The idea was to find icons that everybody comprehends, that are overtly clear. The hope was that by associating the characters and places with those images the language would be freed from its cage of obscurity." Luhrmann and his scriptwriting partner, Craig Pearce, decided that, although they didn’t want to set the film against an Elizabethan backdrop, they agreed that the social, religious and political aspects of Shakespeare's time certainly influenced the play. Pearce explains the process:

"When we started to describe the created world we considered Shakespeare's views on Verona. In the research we found that he was not historically or geographically accurate in his depiction of Verona. To Shakespeare and to Elizabethan audiences, Verona was a hot, sexy, violent, Catholic country. So we needed to find a place that exists in an equivalent way for our audience. It didn't necessarily have to be naturalistic but we wanted it to ring true. Essentially, we wanted to create heightened circumstances where the characters do the real things."

The filmmakers finally decided on Mexico as the location for the created world. Pearce continues:

*"There are textual facts in 'Romeo and Juliet' connected with Elizabethan society that exist in Mexico. For instance, during Shakespeare's time religion was involved in politics and there was a very small percentage of great wealth with a large population of poor. It was violent and people*

*were openly armed. We've interpreted all of these Elizabethan things in the context of the modern created world. In fact, much of this occurs in modern-day Mexico, in varying degrees…It has a mysticism about it and for me it's exotic."*