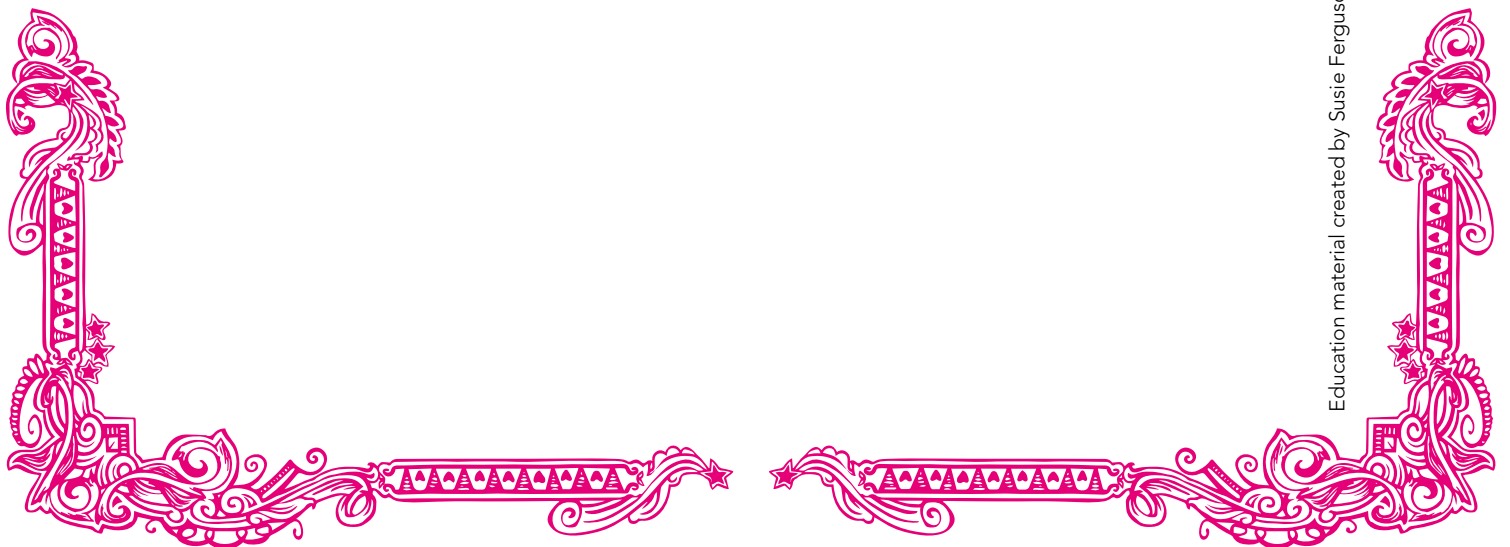




**Writing about**

*Juliet*





## Writing about design in & Juliet



When writing about the live production that you have seen, you need to make sure that your reader can imagine what you saw, just by reading what you have told them! Therefore, remember to:

- Use technical terminology where possible
- Select **specific** moments to write about **what** was done, **how** it was done and **why** it was or wasn't effective
- Most importantly **EVALUATE**. Give your personal response to what you saw, and consider what the audience **thought** and **felt** as a response to what happened on stage

To help you, relevant key terms are at the top of each of the sections in this pack which contains information about:

- ★ **Writing about what you saw: top tips**
- ★ **Writing about set**
- ★ **Writing about costume**
- ★ **Writing about sound**
- ★ **Writing about lighting**
- ★ **Writing about projections**

There are also some key names of the creative team that will be helpful in answering specific questions. They are:

Max Martin:	Music & Lyrics
David West Read:	Book
Luke Sheppard:	Director
Jennifer Weber:	Choreographer
Soutra Gilmour:	Set designer
Paloma Young:	Costume designer
Bill Sherman:	Music supervisor, orchestrator & arranger
Howard Hudson:	Lighting designer
Gareth Owen:	Sound designer
Andrzej Goulding:	Video & projection designer
Linda McKnight:	Wig designer

Note to teachers: These notes are intended to introduce students to the skills required to write about live productions. They can be used in conjunction with the Performance Resource which encourages students to make notes about specific aspects of the show. The material that follows is designed to stimulate thoughts and ideas that will help students access examination mark schemes in conjunction with teacher input.



## Writing about what you saw



Regardless of the question, your introductory paragraph needs to provide the basic information, and end with a direct link to the question that you are answering. For example:

*Analyse and evaluate how the set design creates a sense of location in one non-naturalistic production that you have seen.*

*On 22nd November, I saw *& Juliet* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. The production is a **musical** and is **non-naturalistic**. It tells the story of what happens if Juliet does not die at the end of Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, and sees Juliet travel to Paris with her friends and discover what is truly important to her. Soutra Gilmour's set designs were very successful in creating a strong sense of location.*

Remember that this is only the introduction, so a one or two sentence summary of the plot is helpful (but don't tell the entire story – you don't have time!). Ending your paragraph with an evaluative statement linked directly to what the question is asking (in this case about how location was created through set design) sets you up to start talking about **what**, **how** and **why**, straight away! Notice that we've used the name of the designer, too. Remember, even in the introduction, you can use technical terms, particularly when talking about the style and genre of the production that you've seen.

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## Remember!

Although different designers work on different elements of the show, it's vital that all of these elements work together to create the look and feel of a show.

One example of this is the signage that's used to communicate the themes of the show. At the beginning, the sign says *& Juliet*.



The word Romeo is added later and towards the end of the show the order of the wording changes to suggest the way in which Juliet has found her own identity rather than simply being associated with Romeo. This sign will therefore have to link with the colour palette of the set, lighting and costume designs, as well as being part of what the performers do (when they change the signs).

**When you're analysing a show, it's important that you focus on the element that the question is asking about, but don't forget to consider how it interacts with other designs.**

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## Writing about set

### Key terms:

Location: exterior, interior

Set: scale, colour, space, size, style, shape

Stage configuration: proscenium arch, traverse, thrust, in the round, promenade, immersive, site specific, sight lines

Set change: transitions

There are several different locations in *West End* & *Juliet*. The set is non-naturalistic. The designer Soutra Gilmour has used several different techniques to ensure that the changes in setting are clear in this fast-paced show.

### For example,

*The journey to Paris from Verona was depicted through the use of the revolve and a number of models of iconic French landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, a Metro station and the Moulin Rouge. A model of a castle is also shown, which later turns out to be the Du Bois castle in which Francois and Lance live. Signposts are also used, for example, "Paris, 600 miles" and "Bienvenue a Paris". Whilst the revolve turned, the carriage remained **centre stage** and the characters responded to what they could see, pointing, smiling and stretching to **create a sense of excitement**. This was effective because the journey was portrayed quickly but the audience laughed because the stereotypical tourist attractions were shown and we enjoyed seeing Juliet arriving in Paris like a typical tourist.*



Another reason why this technique was effective was because it helped create a new location without detracting from the emotional content of the song and dialogue that took place during the transition. Juliet was singing the lyrics, "Show me love, show me life, baby show what it's all about" and so the transition was successful in showing the journey whilst allowing the audience to focus Juliet's feelings about leaving Verona and the adventure ahead of her.

& Juliet has a lavish set, with a lot of detail so it can be difficult to focus on very specific elements, but it's important that you do! Have a look at the production photographs that are available online. Are there small details that you didn't spot when you saw the show?



For example, in the garden scene between May and Francois, did you notice that the 'fruit' on the tree **stage right** were individually lit bulbs? This was particularly effective because it gave a sense of romance to the scene.



Now it's over to you!

Using the information below, write one or two paragraphs describing what you saw. As well as **describing** what you saw, make sure that you **ANALYSE** and **EVALUATE** why it was effective. What did it make the audience **THINK** and **FEEL**?

1. **The carriage.** Wooden wheels painted burgundy and turquoise, and pulled by a bicycle (pedalled by Shakespeare and it still has stabilisers....) but with a fairground carousel horse on the front to suggest it's pulled by a horse. Similar design to a gypsy caravan. The number plate reads 2bn2b VD which is a reference to the famous 'To be or not to be' speech from Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Impact on audience: Comedy, creating sense of location, colourful, creates excitement and adventure for the characters who are leaving Verona for the first time.

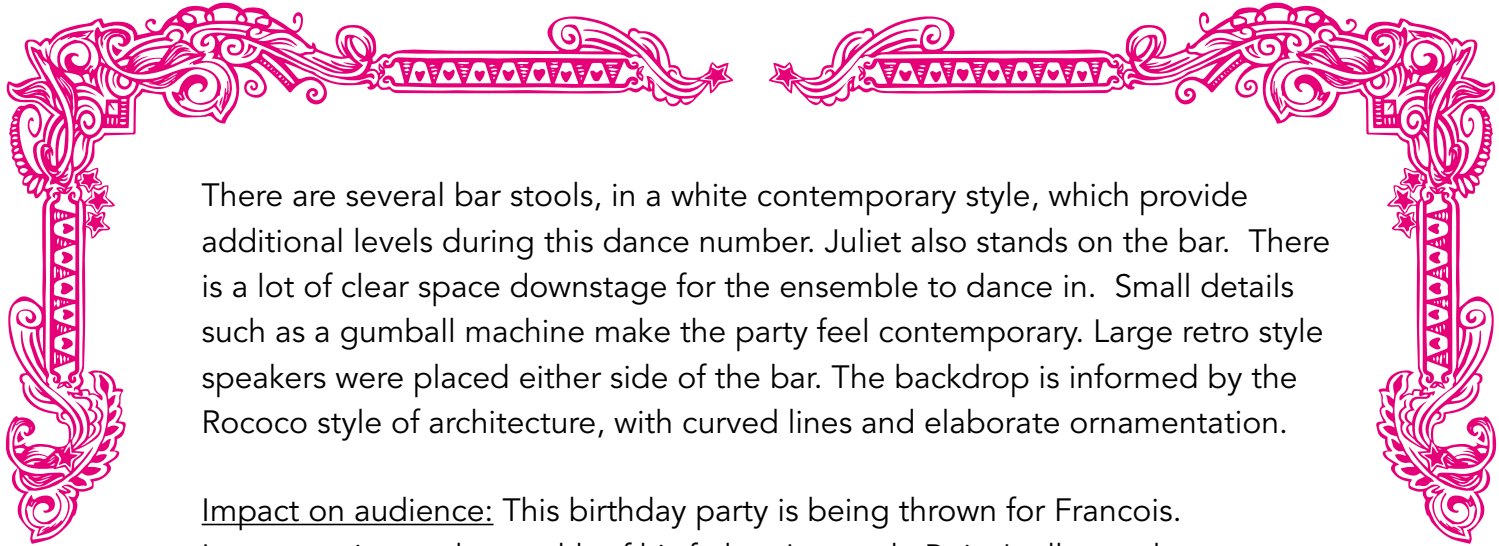
2. **Outside the party.** The queue to get into the party was created with several people standing in a line. There were some stanchions (short poles and a horizontal rope). This all took place downstage. It created an **external location**.

Impact on audience: We were just about to go into the party with Juliet so it was effective that we saw her trying to get into the party with her friends. The action took place **downstage** which made this action closer to the audience, which made us feel more involved. Because they were gatecrashing a party that they weren't invited to, the audience felt like they were doing it too because we were closer to the cast. Once they had finally sneaked in, a curtain was **flown out** to reveal the Du Bois party.

3. **Inside the party.**

This is one of the most spectacular designs in the production. A 3-tiered chandelier is suspended centre stage and becomes integral to the choreography during *Blow*.





There are several bar stools, in a white contemporary style, which provide additional levels during this dance number. Juliet also stands on the bar. There is a lot of clear space downstage for the ensemble to dance in. Small details such as a gumball machine make the party feel contemporary. Large retro style speakers were placed either side of the bar. The backdrop is informed by the Rococo style of architecture, with curved lines and elaborate ornamentation.

Impact on audience: This birthday party is being thrown for Francois. It communicates the wealth of his father, Lance du Bois. It allows a lot of movement from the ensemble which also make the scene appear very busy. During the party, both Francois and May both show how overwhelmed they feel and the set helps to communicate why they might feel so pressured!





## Writing about costume



Paloma Young has designed costumes that are both contemporary and have reference back to the Elizabethan period in which *Romeo and Juliet* was written. She describes it as “**a mash up between fashion and the period.**” It would be helpful for you to research Elizabethan clothing so that you can make comparisons between the historical references and the modern day influences of pop music and fashion culture.

As well as the main costumes, consider how the characters use accessories to suggest character. For example, May, Juliet and April all have rucksacks when they start their journey to Paris. Nurse carries a bum bag! Think about jewellery and headgear, too.

For Juliet, Young says, “We didn’t want her to be a soft figure in a window. We wanted an iconic piece.”



### When writing about Juliet’s costumes, you might like to focus on:

- Her developing independence – look in particular at the shape and cut of the costumes, which are always feminine but as Juliet’s confidence grows, the stereotypical girls-wear changes and becomes much more individual to her more confident personality.
- Strong and bold colours, including blue pin striped trousers, a pink and white souvenir jacket (an American style jacket many might associate with high school students) which also has gold embroidery detail on it.
- Remember that this musical uses the music of Max Martin, and so the influence of music videos and pop concerts is also very clear.

When you’re writing about costume, your reader should be able to imagine or even sketch what you’re describing. In addition to **colour**, you should also write about **fit, shape, texture, fabric, cut, distressed/broken down, hair, make up, accessories, hats, shoes, bags.**

### Juliet's costumes:

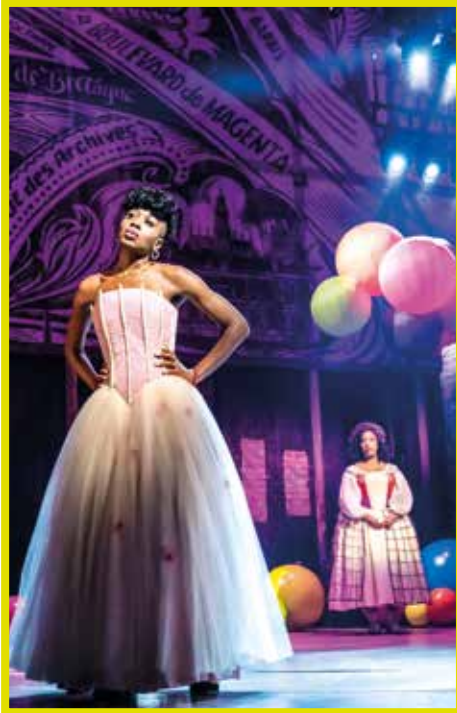
- One of Juliet's first costumes is a pink and white jacket – pink front and back with white **mutton leg** sleeves, decorated with a band of **gold cord** on each sleeve. The jacket has pink, gold and yellow embroidery and trim. She wears a white vest underneath a deep pink **bodice** or **corset**. Her skirt is skater length. She wears yellow and pink socks with white trainers. Her look is therefore contemporary, youthful and feminine.

- In the tomb, Juliet wears an **ankle length** pale pink skirt, with a white undershirt and the same bodice as above. She looks very vulnerable here – there's also a sense that she is very cold, as she is in the underground Capulet tomb from the original Romeo and Juliet play.

- For Romeo's funeral, Juliet wears a dress that we would associate with the Elizabethan period: a grey and pink long-sleeved gown, with a red and black **forepart** in the skirt (the panel which forms the front part of the long skirt). It is appropriate that Juliet's dress is more traditional here – she is still in her 'old life' and it also makes her seem separate from the other three women who claim to have been in love with him at the funeral. They are in much more contemporary costumes, including puffball skirts (often associated with disco), striped shorts and skinny jeans.

- In Act Two, Juliet wears a blue floral fabric **corset** with blue studded **trim** at the top and bottom of the bodice. The vertical 'bones' are in the same fabric. Juliet wears blue trousers that have a black vertical **pinstripe**. She wears blue **cuffs** at the tops of her arms, gold necklaces and hoop earrings. This costume indicates to the audience that she is becoming much more independent and adventurous.





- Juliet's wedding dress is a beautiful traditional style dress. It has a pale pink corset with white **boning**, a white, full ankle length **tulle** skirt. The skirt is dotted with single pink flowers. Although it is stunning, it is interesting that it is very different to the individual style of some of Juliet's other costumes during the show. She is having doubts about the wedding and so it is appropriate that the dress does not quite match the other elements of her personality or image.

- Juliet's final costume demonstrates to the audience the complete change that Juliet has made. She is a strong, independent woman, comfortable in her choices and relationships. She wears black boots (over the knee), with a pink puffball skirt, a gold and pink **bodice** with a gold feather detail across the front (diagonally from waist to the top of the bodice).



HINT: Lord and Lady Capulet appear in several scenes. Their costumes are very structured, with sharp lines and a sense of height. How does this compare to the softness and shape of Juliet's clothing? What might this suggest about the relationship between Juliet and her parents?

### Romeo's costumes:

- A **faded** or **distressed** black leather jacket which is embroidered with pink roses and green stems. (Perhaps a reference to the roses that might have been growing across Juliet's balcony, as well as showing a Romantic influence to his costume). The sleeves of the jacket appear to be attached at the shoulder with cord.

This is a reference to the way in which Elizabethan sleeves were detachable and could be worn with a variety of different jerkins or jackets.

Romeo also wears a **faded** grey T shirt (which is also printed with a pink floral pattern across the front) under a **Romantic** style (and **loose fitting**) shirt which has a ruffled collar. The shirt is untucked and he wears **blue skinny jeans** with **black biker boots**.

All of this detail combines to create a character who appears confident but also has a softer or stereotypically more feminine side, as well as combining the look of a rock or pop star.





### Anne Hathaway / April's costumes:

- A green dress with brown **trim** and **belt** with rose detail. A sleeveless light green denim jacket with embroidered flowers in pink and yellow, which will eventually show her affinity and friendship with Juliet who has similar colours on her own jacket. Anne's yellow Dr Marten boots provide a contemporary feel. DM boots are also associated with hard work and being very hard wearing, so you might consider what that suggests about Anne's own life, looking after young children, travelling to London and also being quite trendy!

- The night before Juliet's wedding to Francois, April wears a simple white nightdress. It provides a sense of closeness and trust between April and Juliet. They are talking late at night and being very emotionally honest with each other and so it is effective and appropriate that April's costume is very simple.

- Anne also wears a delicate green dress, with an embroidered detail towards and around the collar. The dress also has a wide turquoise cinch belt which has a corset shape. She also wears knee-high boots.

The fabric is chiffon and has several layers. Anne's character has become softer and more emotionally vulnerable towards William Shakespeare and the change in costume communicates this.



HINT: Anne Hathaway is instrumental in changing Juliet's story. Anne herself is frustrated, lonely and keen to gain some independence and confidence. How do the costumes for Anne and the costumes for April – her chosen character within Juliet's new narrative – contrast with each other? How does it communicate the changes that Anne makes in her life and in her sense of who she is?

### William Shakespeare's costumes:

- The show presents Shakespeare as the pop star of his age, and so his costume reflects this. He wears several gold chains, including one with a quill shaped pendant. He also wears:

- A **jerkin** (sleeveless jacket) which is **fitted** and has **sharp, clear lines**. Yellow, gold and russet panels in the front of the jerkin help created his sharp **shape**. It suggests his success as a playwright, as if a designer has made this especially for him. Shakespeare also wears blue jeans, a white collarless **linen shirt** that is untucked, and white trainers.



### Nurse's costumes:

- Nurse is one of the older characters in the play and so her costumes have a slightly different **shape** and **fit**. She has a calf length skirt in pink and orange, and a scarf tied around her hair: the red and gold pattern on the scarf communicates a lively personality to the audience. The bodice is a burgundy red colour. She also has a bum bag once she decides to accompany Juliet and her friends to Paris. This is partly a reference to fashion trends but there is also a suggestion of practicality to this **accessory**.



- Another costume worn by Nurse is a white, wide necked blouse, with **full-length sleeves** coupled with a pink and white bodice. The skirt is also white with a black square lattice frame or hoop over the top.

- Note that Nurse also has a cropped velour hoodie which is a blue-grey colour. When worn in the same scene as Juliet wears her blue trousers, there is a strong sense of loyalty and connection with Juliet.

### May's costumes:

- The costume for May is particularly important, as they are a character who is currently reflecting on their own identity and image. May wears a delicate gold wire crown – it forms  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the circle leaving May's forehead clear. This delicate accessory also matches the wide gold wire **cuffs** worn by May. May's blue trousers end just above the ankle. A **wide belt** and **open neck** shirt has **puffed sleeves**. There is a clear softness to the shape and cut of all of May's costumes, indicating a sensitive and vulnerable element to the character. White socks and trainers finish the ensemble.

- As a member of the boy band, May's costume remains soft in shape and fit. They wear a **yellow untucked shirt** with a **frilled V-neck collar**, with **puffed full-length** sleeves. May wears **grey skinny jeans**, shin height boots (boxing style) with the crown that they have worn throughout the show.



### Francois' costumes:

- As part of the boy band, Francois wears blue and silver trainers and a grey baseball cap which he wears backwards. His **doublet** is blue and purple with a **fleur de lis** pattern (which matches elements of Lance's costume and suggests wealth) as well as large, square buckles on the front. The doublet has a **high collar** with a **stud detail**. Underneath the doublet is a grey Hawaiian style shirt with a **floral pattern**.

- Francois is a comic character. He appears before the wedding wearing the armoured chest plate that Lance has told him is a family heirloom. Although it is a comic element – it is very restrictive and too small for him – it also suggests to the audience that Francois feels very trapped and restricted by the expectations placed upon him by Lance.

HINT: The relationship between May and Francois is very important. How do the two characters' costumes complement each other? Look particularly at the contrast in Lance's costume before the wedding, and May's softer outfit. Although May is still seeking out elements of their identity, there is a greater sense of confidence than in what Francois wears (still with the patterns and prints associated with his father).

#### Lance's costumes:

- Lance is an older character who has a lot of status and a lot of self-confidence. He must seem attractive to Nurse, and their romance is important to the plot. Therefore, his costume needs to communicate his wealth and his strong self-image. He wears:

- Burnished gold fitted trousers, with a gold fleur de lis codpiece. His shirt is a white Romantic style shirt with frilled cuffs at the wrist. He wears a doublet with gold vertical striped detail and a high collar.



HINT: Look at the way in which Lance and Francois' costumes complement or contrast with each other. What does that suggest about their relationship?



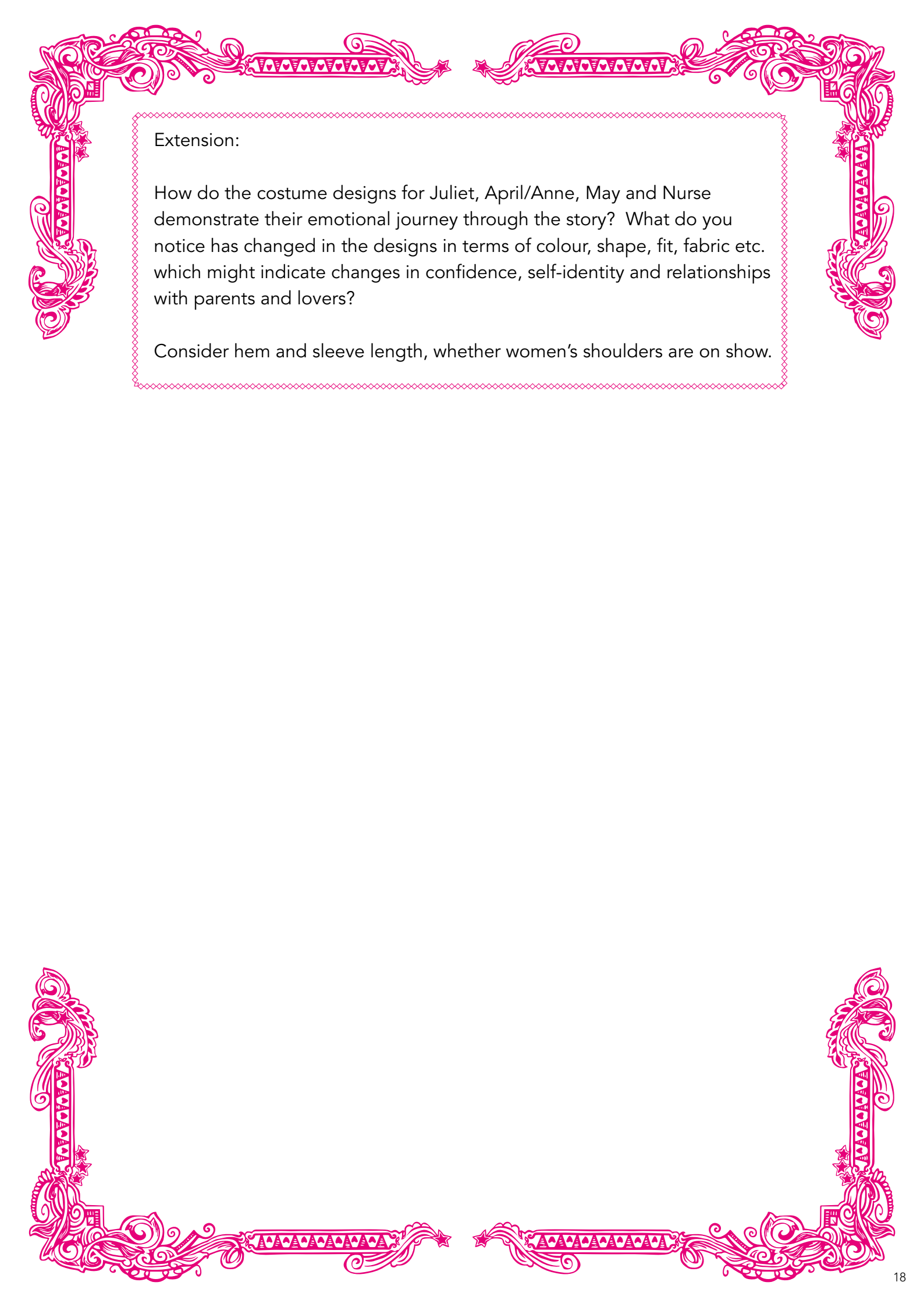
### Costuming the ensemble:

In many of the scenes in *& Juliet*, the ensemble is vital in creating a sense of location, mood, atmosphere and relationships with the key characters. Think carefully about how a party atmosphere is created through costume, as well as exploring how these outfits have been influenced by pop culture.



The ensemble portray Shakespeare's actors at the beginning of the production, guests at Francois' party, passers by on the streets of Paris, wedding guests etc. There needs to be a sense of cohesion with the costumes, as well as being individually designed for the various characters. Paloma Young has therefore used:

- **Brown shoulder trims**
- **Orange skinny jeans**
- **Knee high socks, often white**
- **White trainers, pumps or boxing boots**
- **A palette of green, yellow, orange and deep reds to create a sense of unity between the different designs**
- **Used corsets, jerkins, doublets (traditional Elizabethan clothing) as well as jeans, coloured tights worn under shorts, bodices and corsets, puffball skirts, denim and leather jackets**



Extension:

How do the costume designs for Juliet, April/Anne, May and Nurse demonstrate their emotional journey through the story? What do you notice has changed in the designs in terms of colour, shape, fit, fabric etc. which might indicate changes in confidence, self-identity and relationships with parents and lovers?

Consider hem and sleeve length, whether women's shoulders are on show.



## Writing about sound



"YOU HEAR MY VOICE, YOU HEAR THAT SOUND LIKE THUNDER,  
GONNA SHAKE YOUR GROUND"

### Key terms:

Music, sound effect, soundscape, levels, fade, reverb, speakers, amplifier, routing, echo, microphone, live, recorded, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, distortion

**Writing about sound is always easier when you know the technical specifications that have been used! Sound designer Gareth Owen tells us more:**

- There are about 100 **speakers** in the auditorium and 20 on the stage
- We're using a very small microphone for the cast: a 6066 boom mic which sits on the cheek near the mouth. These are each attached to a Shure Axient radio mic **transmitter**. This is the case for both the sung numbers and dialogue. This ensures that there are no strange 'jolts' when there is a switch between the two. Speech is amplified to ensure clarity for the audience.
- There's a range of **live** and **recorded sound effects** in the show. Many are shaped using sound bites from Max Martin's recording sessions. Listen out for the 'lights on and lights off' sound effect which uses a recording of Britney Spears breathing in and out.

• Sound design in numbers such as *Roar*, *Blow* and *It's My Life* are important in terms of narrative as well as entertainment, and can even have a physical effect on the audience. **Volume** and **sub energy** are used to convey the excitement of the moment, with the intention that the audience feels as if they are in a pop concert. **Low frequency** energy is used to deliberately shake the audience, which makes them feel as if they are in a stadium. This is teamed with full **surround sound** to make the audience feel the sound is coming from all around them.



• Whilst the sound design for dialogue remains consistent throughout the show, there are moments where effects are applied. For example, when Romeo shouts, "Juliet!" at the end of Act One, or the effect applied to Lance's voice during the wedding scene to make the microphones sound cheaper and more in line with a wedding rather than professional performance.

• During songs, more effects are applied than with dialogue. This ranges from the use of **echo** and **delay**, to **reverb** to make the singers sound more like they might in a recording studio. **Autotune** is also used. This is not an attempt to make the singers sound better, but instead to apply the distinctive autotune effect that's very common in many modern pop songs.



## Writing about lighting



### “I RUN THIS SHOW SO LEAVE THE LIGHTS ON”

**Key terms:**

Mood, atmosphere, focus, levels, lantern, strobe, Fresnel, spotlight, LED, parcan, birdie, shadow, snap, fade, house lights

Howard Hudson, the lighting designer, is responsible for painting the picture that the audience sees. He must decide what they see, but also anything that needs to be hidden! Lighting plays a vital role in controlling exactly what the audience see on stage.

Lighting in *& Juliet* can suggest vital information like the time of day or location. There are a number of very different settings in the show, from internal locations such as bedrooms, a tomb, clubs and a rehearsal room, to external locations such as gardens and a town square in Paris.

As well as these elements, the designer also needs to respond to the music and choreography of individual numbers. Certain moments can be accented, as can visual pictures which help drive the action and narrative. Consider how a song is structured, how it moves to a chorus or climax, and consider what lighting changes took place to enhance this. Everything is focussed on audience experience, as well as the integration of the different creative elements that are used to tell a story on stage.

Lighting designers have various tools at their disposal to hide scene changes, such as the use of smoke and walls of light. There's a quick change in *Roar* which is hidden using these techniques so that the change appears utterly magical! Another moment in which the lighter designer has employed techniques to hide or distract from what's happening on stage is Juliet's reveal at the beginning of the show. The rest of the company are lit very specifically to ensure that the audience don't see her at the tomb until we're meant to.



### Lighting different musical numbers:

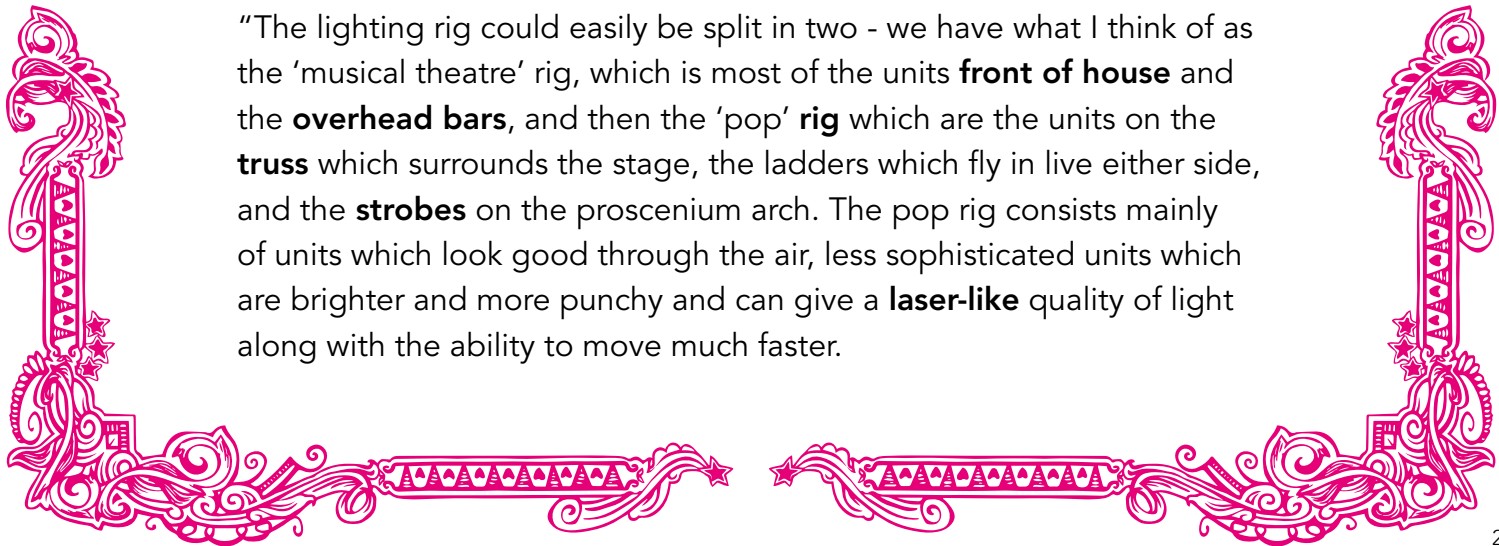
Max Martin's music presents a wide variety of musical styles and therefore each number needs a visual 'hook' in the same way that a songwriter would find in a song. If you are designing for a performance, you will need to consider your **intentions** very clearly and carefully.

Let's look at how we might write about how this works in a specific number:

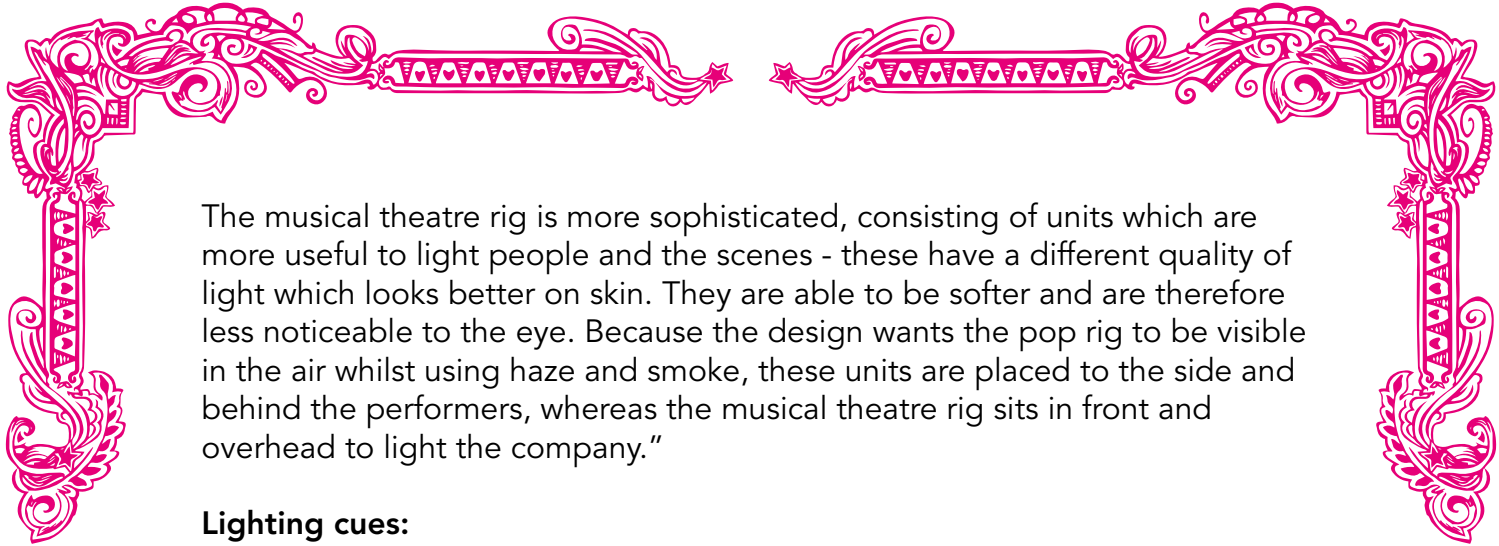
In *Blow*, the number builds in intensity and action. The audience first see a static picture as Juliet and her friends enter the club, and then with the first chorus, moving lights are added as well as an explosion of colour. The lighting then responds to the way in which the number moves into a more narrative section in which the principal characters enter the club, and the key moment where Francois and May meet for the first time. This lighting focuses on action rather than choreography at this point. As the final choruses continue to build, there is more intricate cueing and the application of more colour. In an effort to incorporate the audience into the action and atmosphere, the lighting then extends into the auditorium so that they feel part of the club themselves.

Romeo makes his entrance at the end of Act One, with *It's My Life*. This song has a similar narrative structure to *Blow*, with a chorus, narrative sections and the two final choruses that end with Romeo and Juliet meeting again. As the number progresses, the level and detail of the lighting is increased and strobos are used to accentuate the pop concert feel.

### Howard Hudson explains the lighting specifications:



"The lighting rig could easily be split in two - we have what I think of as the 'musical theatre' rig, which is most of the units **front of house** and the **overhead bars**, and then the 'pop' **rig** which are the units on the **truss** which surrounds the stage, the ladders which fly in live either side, and the **strobos** on the proscenium arch. The pop rig consists mainly of units which look good through the air, less sophisticated units which are brighter and more punchy and can give a **laser-like** quality of light along with the ability to move much faster.



The musical theatre rig is more sophisticated, consisting of units which are more useful to light people and the scenes - these have a different quality of light which looks better on skin. They are able to be softer and are therefore less noticeable to the eye. Because the design wants the pop rig to be visible in the air whilst using haze and smoke, these units are placed to the side and behind the performers, whereas the musical theatre rig sits in front and overhead to light the company."

### Lighting cues:

Some of the slower songs may only be between 10 and 20 cues. However, the more upbeat pop numbers could exceed 100 cues per song! The style of the song, the staging of the number and the moments that need accenting/ concealing will all influence the number of cues within each number.

### Lighting and projection:

Whilst designing the lighting, Hudson has also worked closely with Andrzej Goulding, the video and projection designer for *& Juliet*. The projections cover three surfaces and there is also an **LED screen** at the back. Therefore there are two different qualities of video. There is a careful balancing act involved in ensuring that the projectors can cut through the lighting which requires the levels to be lowered, whilst the LED screen can be much brighter than the lights. Designers using these techniques need to find a middle ground to ensure that the **audience** can see and read anything that they need to. Ensuring that the designers are using the same colour palette in their design for a scene or number is also important!



## Writing about choreography



### “JUST DANCE, DANCE, DANCE”

**Top tip:** When writing about choreography in a musical such as *& Juliet* it can be tempting to simply name the steps and the style without considering why the number has been created in the way that it has. Focus on the impact on the **audience**. What information/narrative/emotions are being communicated through the way in which the dance is performed?

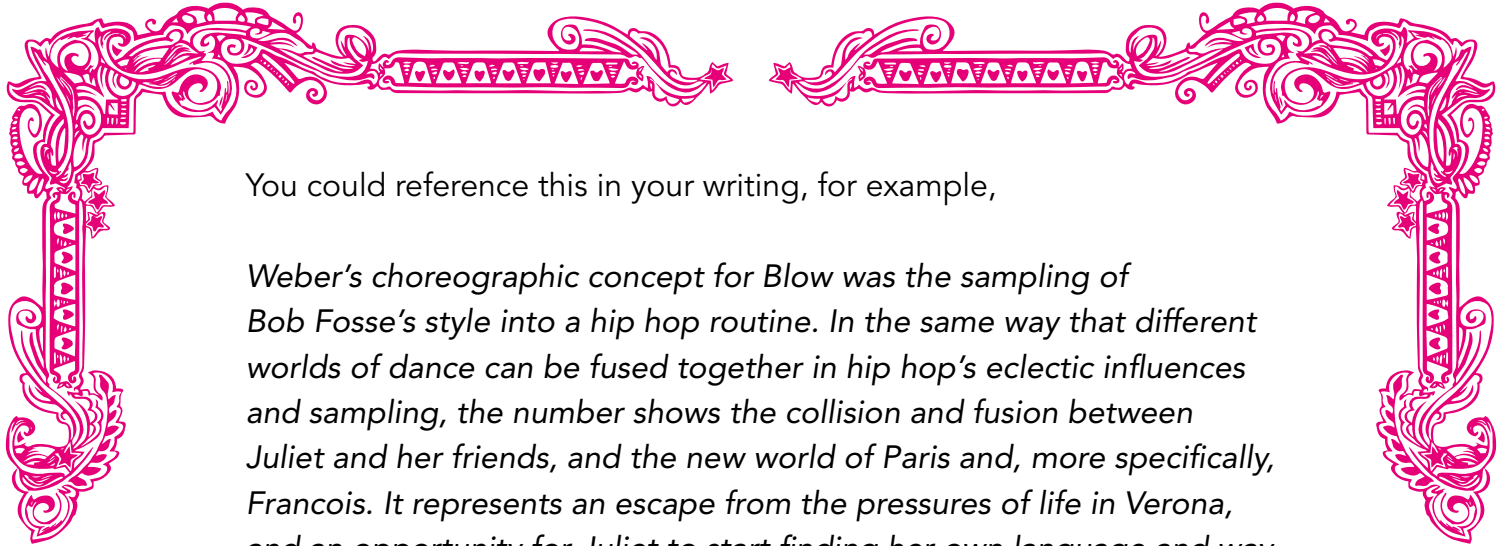
When writing about dance in the show, focus on the way it is used to aid the **storytelling** within a particular number. It is also a way of **focussing the audience’s attention** on particular moments or characters. In a film, this would be done with camera angles and the use of techniques such as close ups. However, in the theatre there isn’t a camera but we do have the use of **shape, groupings, levels** and **movements** to achieve that instead. In each of the songs that you write about, consider what and who you were encouraged to look at during key moments.

#### Blow

One of the important numbers in the show in terms of storytelling is *Blow*. It shows Juliet and her friends entering the party, it communicates the new location of Paris and is our introduction to the world in which Francois lives.

Hip hop has a culture of **sampling** other cultures. In the same way that a DJ samples beats from other tracks and loops them, for example, hip hop has the same tradition of referencing other cultures and styles. It might borrow from martial arts, tap dance, African dance and even Charleston. Jennifer Weber has followed that tradition in her choreography for *Blow* by sampling the work of **Bob Fosse**. Fosse was an American musical theatre choreographer, famous for shows such as *Chicago*, *Cabaret* and *Sweet Charity*.





You could reference this in your writing, for example,

*Weber's choreographic concept for Blow was the sampling of Bob Fosse's style into a hip hop routine. In the same way that different worlds of dance can be fused together in hip hop's eclectic influences and sampling, the number shows the collision and fusion between Juliet and her friends, and the new world of Paris and, more specifically, Francois. It represents an escape from the pressures of life in Verona, and an opportunity for Juliet to start finding her own language and way of expressing herself.*

Jennifer Weber, who choreographed & *Juliet* explains, "When Luke (Director) and I work together we create an outline of the scene/ number. For *Blow*, for example, we identified what happens when Juliet walks into the club. How does the story build, and what is its climax? Once we have the skeleton of the story, the work on specific choreography can begin."

Now that you have more insight into the choreographic process and concept for *Blow*, make sure that you refer to:

- Specific narrative moments in the dance number
- Groupings and use of levels
- Particular shapes and movements, particularly those that might be inspired by Bob Fosse
- How the audience's attention is focused on particular moments and people at key times in the number. What is the narrative here?

**Extension:**

Weber says that the big explosive moments of the number are actually the easiest to choreograph. Instead, the difficulty comes from the smaller moments, for individuals or smaller groupings. Why do you think this is the case?



Research opportunity:

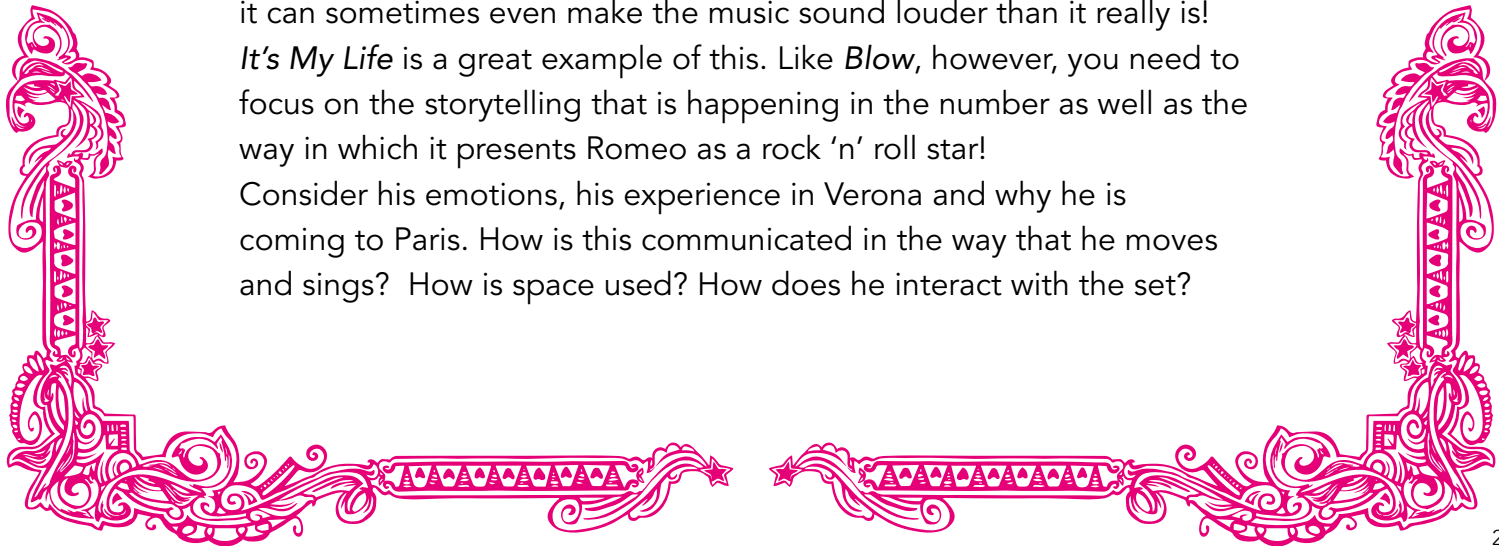
Choreographer Jennifer Weber's background is in hip hop. She says, "Hip hop is actually an umbrella term for a range of different styles. It includes old school styles such as breaking, locking and popping, as well as the new contemporary styles which have been influenced by hip hop, such as the commercial dance that we see".

Research the different styles named above. What are the similarities and differences between each one?

### **It's My Life**

During the creative process, this number went through several versions! This isn't unusual for a new show. In this case the key to unlocking it was the realisation that it needed to communicate Romeo's journey from Verona to Paris in a parallel way to the way in which *Show Me Love* achieves this for Juliet earlier in the act. The song and choreography introduce the character of Romeo (late in Act One) very quickly and the choreography embodies the physicality and spirit of Romeo.

When writing about *It's My Life*, consider hip hop and its eclectic influence and referencing. The number has a rock 'n' roll feel, with iconic moves and shapes from the genre, but to a hip hop rhythm. Weber explains, "Hip hop moves often embody the drumbeat and therefore it's like amplifying sounds with the body and movement." This is the case in *It's My Life*. It's important to consider how the music, sound design and choreographic moves combine to achieve this. When the dancers embody the beats in the way that they move, it can sometimes even make the music sound louder than it really is! *It's My Life* is a great example of this. Like *Blow*, however, you need to focus on the storytelling that is happening in the number as well as the way in which it presents Romeo as a rock 'n' roll star! Consider his emotions, his experience in Verona and why he is coming to Paris. How is this communicated in the way that he moves and sings? How is space used? How does he interact with the set?





## Roar

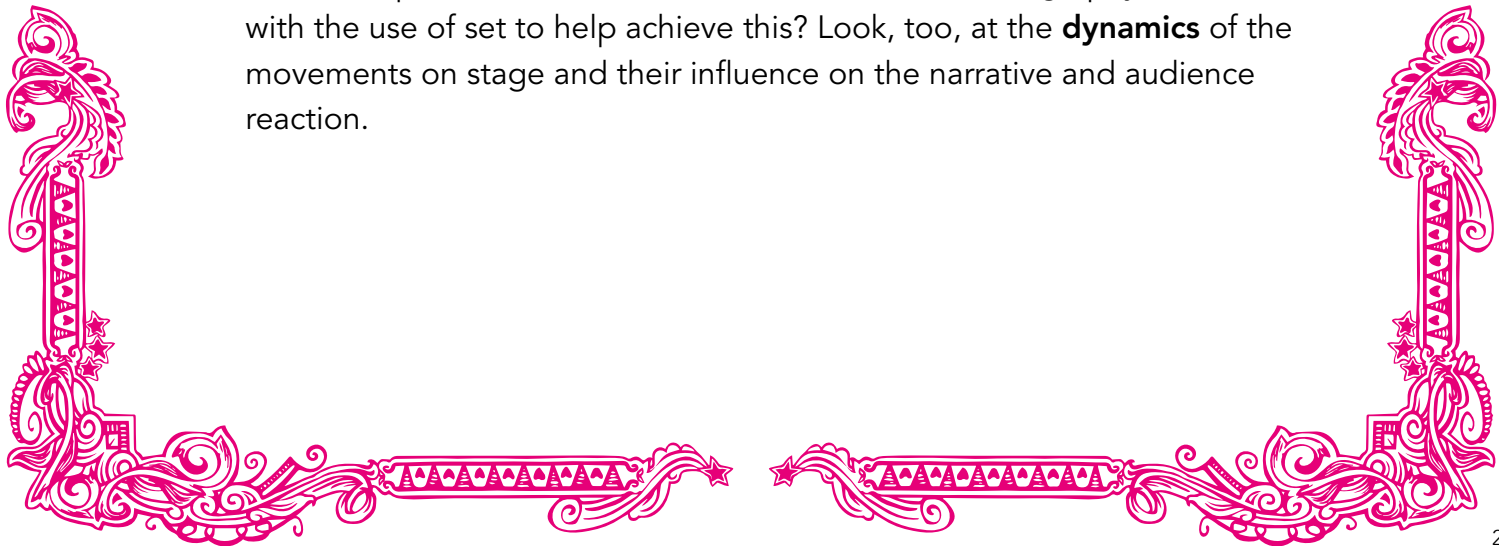
The final explosive number in *& Juliet* is *Roar*. It plays an important role in Juliet's narrative arc and the tearing up of the scripts to create the confetti is a metaphor for the way in which Juliet is tearing up the original story of her destiny and creating a new one!

Note the use of the platform on which Juliet sings much of the song. Not only does it reference a pop concert style delivery, but it also samples that iconic Juliet balcony from the original *Romeo and Juliet*. Juliet is rewriting her life story: she's no longer performing for one man, but instead she is performing for the audience and most importantly, herself. Juliet now owns her own story.

When writing about *Roar*, narrative still plays an important role. Whilst the nature of the song is naturally buoyant and **empowering**, **storytelling** is still important. Here it is the use of emotion and for Juliet, it's emotion that begins externally – when she is performing – but progresses to an internal place of emotion as she realises her true worth and is empowered.

Much of this number is about unity but note that there are small moments (a count of eight) in which individuals are in their own spotlight. Why do you think Weber has made that choice? Consider the overall message of the show, in particular valuing everyone as an individual. How does the choreography support that? How do the performers deliver their own moments?

This number elicits very strong audience reactions and provides an electrifying finale to the show. When writing about the number, make sure that you refer to how the audience responded. What was the mood and atmosphere in the auditorium? How did the choreography combine with the use of set to help achieve this? Look, too, at the **dynamics** of the movements on stage and their influence on the narrative and audience reaction.





**Focus on hip hop:**

Weber points out that many people think that hip hop is a style of dance only used behind popstars. However, in your research you will find that the culture and history of hip hop makes it the perfect medium through which to tell stories. There is a great deal of power in it, and it allows choreographers and directors, along with their creative teams, to communicate clearly and creatively. Many people are actually much more familiar with hip hop than other dance styles such as ballet. Weber hopes that students seeing this production will understand and be inspired by the power of the hip hop language to tell stories and communicate with audiences.

**Extension:** There are references to a range of dance styles during *& Juliet*. There is a moment in the show where Shakespeare and Anne dance a tango. There is a strong element of lead and follow, which is a perfect expression of the dynamic between William and Anne. Who has the power and determination in the relationship? How does this choice of choreography support what the characters are saying and singing?

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A final note to students and teachers:

This pack aims to provide key information and ideas for students seeing *& Juliet* and writing about what they have seen. We encourage them to consistently refer to their own, individual response and consider how all of the different elements covered in this resource **work together** to fully tell the story of *& Juliet*.

Good luck!

**"I GOT THE EYE OF THE TIGER, A FIGHTER  
DANCING THROUGH THE FIRE '  
'CAUSE I AM THE CHAMPION,  
AND YOU'RE GONNA HEAR ME ROAR!"**

With grateful thanks to Jennifer Weber, Gareth Owen, Paloma Young and Howard Hudson for their input into this resource.