



Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet

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[Adrian Jackson](#) [3]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This beautifully produced picture book presents Shakespeare's play in shortened form by mixing substantial snatches of the original with prose recount. In the main, Ray's illustrations do not attempt to respond to Shakespeare's vividly visual imagination but are more in the form of decoration and conventional pictures of the characters, although one or two are nicely intricate, such as the apothecary in his study surrounded by the elements of his work. It is strangely muted as a response to the text (the Queen Mab speech sounds an obvious invitation). In the text too, Rosen avoids creating a new voice, except in topping and tailing the telling where he more directly addresses the reader. His chosen role is to fill in the missing narrative and allow the text to speak for itself. But it is a curious hybrid where his contributions are mostly a slightly flat recount ('then... later... soon after... meanwhile... back at the house') with occasional shifts into something more engagingly colloquial: 'Meanwhile the news on the street... larking about'. The past tense undercuts the immediacy of the action and the flatness works against the bursts of emotion and the energy and liveliness of the characters themselves. It has a natural distance and coolness which is very much the style of this whole presentation, elegant as it all is.

Running Order:

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