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Poisons in Romeo and Juliet

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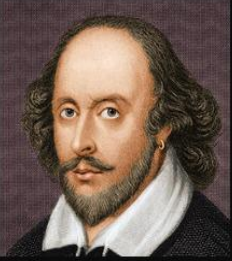
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Poison in *Romeo and Juliet*

William Shakespeare



ROMEO There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls, Doing more murders in this loathsome world, Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell. I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none. Farewell: buy food, and get thyself in flesh. Come, cordial and not poison, go with me To Juliet's grave; for there must I use thee.

Quality	Relativity (in text or otherwise)	Ranking
Fast Acting	"O true apothecary! Thy drugs are <u>quick</u> . Thus with a kiss, I die."	1 (Most Important)
Availability in the 16 th century	Romeo and Juliet was written in 1594-96 and published in 1597.	4
High toxicity in low dosages	"Hold, there is forty ducats: let me have a dram of poison." One fluid dram is roughly equal to 0.000976563 of US liquid gallon	2
Water soluble	"Put this in any liquid thing you will, and drink it off; and, if you had the strength of twenty men, it would dispatch you straight."	3

Poison	Origins	Fast Acting	High Toxicity in Low Dosages	Water Soluble	Availability in the 16 th century
Arsenic	By product of copper and lead refining	Is fatal within several hours	140 mg is fatal (0.0790135 dram)	It is soluble in water	It was sold to women in Sicily during the 1600s
Atropine "Belladonna"	Juice of berries from the deadly nightshade bush	Is fatal within days	The drops from a few berries is considered fatal	It is soluble in water	Was a typical poison of Medieval Europe murderers
Cyanide	Seeds of apples, cherries, almonds, and apricots Naturally occurring chemical	Is fatal within minutes Fastest acting of all poisons	100 mg is fatal (0.0564382 dram)	It is soluble in water	Not recorded until 1782
Ricin	Castor beans	Is fatal within days	"A dose the size of a single grain of sand is enough to kill."	It is soluble in water	Not recorded until 1888

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