



# YOUTH SUPPORT AND SHAKESPEARE



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Our first encounter with Shakespeare often dates back to high school, sometimes middle school. Either way, our teenage selves were confronted to the playwright through translated words, making it easier (or not so much) to relate to Romeo, Hamlet, or Henry.

It may be fair to say that we remember those years to be rather difficult, sometimes overwhelming, and they are even more so for some teenagers, whether because of their identity, their sexuality, or because of hardships they are going through.

They find themselves banished from their home because of who they are, or come to contemplate suicide as the only alternative. Thankfully associations such as Le Refuge or Fil Santé Jeunes are ready to help young people in need.

## LE REFUGE

### ROMEO

Ha, banishment! *Be merciful, say 'death,'*  
*For exile hath more terror in his look,*  
*Much more than death.* Do not say 'banishment'.  
*Romeo and Juliet, Act III, scene 3 (italics added)*

Upon hearing his punishment, Romeo immediately thinks that banishment and alienation are worse than death. Yet, today, like Romeo but for different reasons, more and more teenagers find themselves homeless, forced to fend for themselves in the streets.

LGBT+ teenagers are the most likely to be thrown out of their home, forced to be homeless at a young age and to feel what Romeo rightfully describes as "terror" – hunger, fear, loneliness and desperation.

Because the number of LGBT+ teens without a roof keeps increasing in France, the association Le Refuge (which can be translated as "the shelter") tries to help those children thrown out in the streets because of their identity or their sexual orientation by

offering them food, a roof above their heads, as well as psychological help. They can also provide them with just the possibility to talk and offer emotional support.

## FIL SANTE JEUNES

### HAMLET

To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? *To die: to sleep;*  
*No more;*

Hamlet's issues lead him to what seems to be a point of no-return, contemplating suicide. Yet, in his soliloquy, Hamlet ends up coming to the conclusion that death is nothing but nothingness and avoids suicide, unlike Ophelia, who - because she is deprived of father, friend, lover, and cannot be heard - falls right into Thanátos's arms.



Millais, John Everett, *Ophelia*, Oil on canvas, 1851-2, Tate Gallery, London.

Focused on teenagers' safety and well-being, the association Fil Santé Jeunes lends an attentive ear to those who need help. Doctors and psychologists are ready to converse and maybe find a solution, either on the phone, or via dedicated chatrooms, so that young people do not feel compelled to live in darkness and loneliness.

Both in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, young people find themselves alone and left to their own devices in seemingly unsolvable situations, from which the only way out appears to be suicide. Adolescence is already a tough period in one's life, and confronted to overwhelming situations, like the protagonists of those two plays, teenagers may feel lost, abandoned, and hopeless. But associations, such as those we mentioned, are ready to reach to them and help them, whether physically (a shelter for the homeless for instance) or through the emotional support of somebody ready to listen.

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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