

# Characters in *Romeo and Juliet*

(Setting: Verona, Northern Italy; late 1500s)

## **Romeo**

The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. Though impulsive and immature, his idealism and passion make him an extremely likable character. He lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets, but he is not at all interested in violence. His only interest is love, and he goes to extremes to prove the seriousness of his feelings.

## **Juliet**

The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child who has thought little about love and marriage, but she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family's great enemy. Because she is a girl in an aristocratic family, she has none of the freedom Romeo has to roam around the city, climb over walls in the middle of the night, or get into swordfights. Juliet's closest friend and confidant is her Nurse.

## **Friar Lawrence**

A priest, friend to both Romeo and Juliet. Kind, civic-minded, a proponent of moderation, and always ready with a plan, Friar Lawrence secretly marries the impassioned lovers in hopes that the union might eventually bring peace to Verona. As well as being a Catholic holy man, Friar Lawrence is also an expert in the use of seemingly mystical potions and herbs.

## **Mercutio**

A kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo's close friend. He's a bit eccentric and enjoys having a good time, but he can be quite hotheaded. Nonetheless, he is courageous and very loyal to Romeo.

## **Benvolio**

Montague's nephew, Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend. He makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places, though Mercutio accuses him of having a nasty temper in private.

## **The Nurse**

Juliet's Nurse (nanny), who is closer to Juliet than her mother is; she nursed baby Juliet. She is a comical character who mourns over her lost daughter and husband yet is talkative and playful, often making vulgar jokes. The Nurse also provides support for Juliet and until a disagreement near the play's end, the Nurse is Juliet's faithful confidante and loyal helper.

## **Tybalt**

A Capulet, Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. Once drawn, his sword is something to be feared. He loathes Montagues.

## **Capulet**

The patriarch of the Capulet family, father of Juliet, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy, for unexplained reasons, of Montague. He loves his daughter but is not well acquainted with Juliet's thoughts or feelings. He becomes convinced that what is best for her is a "good" match with Paris. Often prudent, he commands respect and propriety, but he is liable to fly into a rage when either is lacking.

**Lady Capulet**

Juliet's mother, Capulet's wife. A woman who herself married young, she is eager to see her daughter marry Paris. She is an ineffectual mother, relying on the Nurse for moral and pragmatic support.

**Montague**

Romeo's father, the patriarch of the Montague clan and bitter enemy of Capulet. At the beginning of the play, he is chiefly concerned about Romeo's state of depression.

**Lady Montague**

Romeo's mother, Montague's wife.

**Paris**

A relative of the Prince, and the suitor of Juliet most preferred by the Capulets. He is handsome, young and wealthy.

**Prince Escalus**

The ruler of Verona and related to both Mercutio and Paris. He is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs.

**Friar John**

Another priest charged by Friar Lawrence with taking the news of Juliet's false death to Romeo in Mantua. Friar John is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo.

**Balthasar**

Romeo's dedicated servant, who brings Romeo the news of Juliet's death, unaware that her death is a ruse.

**Sampson and Gregory**

Two servants of the house of Capulet, who, like their master, hate the Montagues. At the outset of the play, they successfully provoke some Montague men into a fight.

**Abraham**

Montague's servant, who fights with Sampson and Gregory in the first scene of the play.

**The Apothecary**

An apothecary in Mantua. Had he been wealthier, he might have been able to afford to value his morals more than money, and refused to sell poison to Romeo.

**Peter**

A Capulet servant whose main duty is to serve the Nurse.

**Rosaline**

The woman with whom Romeo is infatuated at the beginning of the play. Rosaline never appears onstage, but it is said by other characters that she is very beautiful and has sworn to live a life of chastity.

**The Chorus**

The Chorus is a single character who functions as a narrator offering commentary on the play's plot and themes.

# *The Two Feuding Households*

Think M for Male (Romeo = Male)

“Capulet” rhymes with Juliet (sort of)



On the *Montague* side

**Romeo &**

Mercutio, Benvolio, Balthasar,  
Lord and Lady Montague,  
Abraham



On the *Capulet* side

**Juliet &**

Nurse, Tybalt, Peter, Lord and  
Lady Capulet, Paris, Sampson  
and Gregory,



*Neutral Parties*

**Prince Escalus**

(who has one relative on each side)

**Friar Lawrence**