

# ROMEO & JULIET

## Character Notes

### PRINCE ESCALUS

Prince Escalus is the governor of Verona. Escalus is weary of his subjects' never-ending feud, which has seemingly split his dukedom in two. Every citizen is aligned to either one of the feuding households: Montague or Capulet. He is a firm leader and his exasperation with the feud makes him bring in a harsh law – he threatens the death sentence on the next person to break the peace. In spite of this, he shows mercy to Romeo after he slays Tybalt – banishing rather than executing him.

### PARIS

Paris is a young count whom Juliet's parents have arranged for her to marry. He is arrogant and assumes Juliet must be infatuated with him, finding her disdain hard to believe.

### MONTAGUE

Montague is head of the family and father of Romeo. He and his wife are concerned about Romeo's melancholy at the beginning of the play.

### CAPULET

Capulet is the head of the opposing family and father of Juliet. Although he shows no restraint in the market place, Capulet appears gracious and gentlemanly at his ball, preventing Tybalt from attacking Romeo in front of his guests. Nonetheless, he is tyrannical in his demand that Juliet will obey him and marry Paris, and shows his short temper when she tries to refuse.

### ROMEO

Romeo is the son of Montague, though it's not clear if he is the heir. At the start of the play, Romeo is in love with Rosalind and seems inconsolable until he meets Juliet, making him appear young and immature. He is motivated by strong passions, is loyal to his friends and has a romantic view of women. He is impulsive and has little thought for the consequences of his actions. His lack of thought leads him to avenge his friend Mercutio's death by killing Tybalt, which results in his banishment. He is sincere in his love for Juliet.

## **MERCUTIO**

Mercutio is a close friend and confidante of Romeo. He is quick to start a fight, and does not share Romeo's view of love and romance. He considers any feelings between men and women to be purely sexual. He is a skilled swordsman, but is killed by Tybalt in a brawl shortly after Romeo has secretly married Juliet.

## **BENVOLIO**

Benvolio is Romeo's cousin and thoughtful friend. He is an avid peace keeper and he makes a genuine effort to break apart fights and diffuse violence in public places. He is witness to the fight in which Tybalt kills Mercutio, and Romeo kills Tybalt.

## **TYBALT**

Tybalt is Juliet's cousin on her mother's side. He despises the Montagues and searches for a fight at any opportunity. He is a skilled swordsman and is violent and aggressive in his demeanor. He kills Mercutio and is killed by Romeo as a result.

## **JULIET**

Juliet is the only daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. She is a beautiful and innocent 13-year-old who has been promised by her parents to Paris, though she abhors him. She falls in love with Romeo immediately upon seeing him, and is not daunted that he is a Montague, sworn as enemies of the Capulets. As an aristocrat, Juliet is constantly under the watchful eye of her nurse and family and is restricted in the decisions she is allowed to make for herself. Her closest friend and confidante is her nurse.

## **NURSE**

Juliet's Nurse has cared for her since she was born. She frequently provides comic relief with her flippant remarks and often vulgar attitude. She does not view love in the romantic sense that Juliet does, and cannot understand why Juliet is willing to sacrifice herself for it. Nonetheless, she is Juliet's faithful confidante in her affair with Romeo.

## **LADY MONTAGUE**

Lady Montague is Romeo's mother. She dies of sorrow after Romeo is exiled from Verona.

### **LADY CAPULET**

Lady Capulet is Juliet's mother. She is anxious for Juliet to marry Paris, despite her daughter's personal wishes. She is rather uncomfortable in her position as a mother, and relies on the Nurse for support in raising Juliet.

### **FRIAR LAWRENCE**

Friar Lawrence is a Franciscan holy man who is friends to both Romeo and Juliet. He secretly marries them to one another in the hope that their love will eventually bring peace to Verona. He is also an expert in potions and herbs.

### **FRIAR JOHN**

Friar John is meant to deliver the news of Juliet's false death to Romeo in Mantua. However, he is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo. As a result Romeo assumes Juliet is dead and kills himself at her tomb.

### **BALTHAZAR**

Balthazar is Romeo's loyal servant. He delivers the news of Juliet's death, unaware that her death is false.

### **SAMPSON AND GREGORY**

Sampson and Gregory are servants of the house of Capulet. They openly hate the Montagues and are eager for a fight.

### **ABRAHAM**

Abraham is a servant of Montague. He fights with Sampson and Gregory at the beginning of the play.

### **AN APOTHECARY**

An apothecary in Mantua sells poison to Romeo.

### **CITIZENS, REVELLERS, OTHERS**