



Who's Who in *Romeo & Juliet*

The play concerns a feud between two families in Verona, the Capulets and the Montagues.

The Capulet Family:

Lord Capulet is the head of the Capulet family and seems want to pick up a sword and fight the Montagues at the beginning of the play. However, Capulet does not want Tybalt to fight with Romeo during the Capulet's ball, and instead says complimentary things about Romeo.

Lady Capulet is married to Capulet. Lady Capulet seems to lack confidence when it's time to talk to Juliet about marriage and desires the Nurse's company. When Tybalt, a member of the Capulet family is killed in a street fight, Lady Capulet expresses the desire for violent revenge.

Juliet is the Capulets' only child. Not quite fourteen years old, Juliet attends a party, falls in love, marries in secret, fakes suicide, then dies by suicide, all in the space of a few days.

Tybalt is Juliet's cousin. Described as 'fiery' and as the 'Prince of cats,' Tybalt seems eager to engage in street fighting against the Montagues and their friends. Tybalt is killed in such a fight.

The **Nurse** is Juliet's companion and confidante. Similar to a nanny or chaperone, the Nurse delivers messages between Juliet and Romeo.

Sampson, Gregory, Peter, and others are servants in the Capulet household. They often have pivotal roles in moving the plot forward, like starting the fight at the beginning of the play or inadvertently sharing information about the Capulet's ball with the Montagues.

The Montague Family:

Lord Montague is the head of the Montague family but appears in just a few scenes. After the fighting at the beginning of the play, Montague tries to find out what is troubling Romeo. Montague makes a brief appearance in the aftermath of the fight that kills Mercutio and Tybalt, and in the final scene of the play.

Lady Montague is married to Montague. Lady Montague also expresses concern about Romeo's wellbeing early in the play. We then hear in the final scene that Lady Montague has died of grief that Romeo was banished.

Romeo seems to be the Montague's only child. Romeo begins the play suffering from unrequited love for Rosaline and has therefore missed the opening fight. Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet at the Capulet's ball. Shortly after Romeo and Juliet are secretly married, Romeo gets pulled into a street fight and kills Juliet's cousin Tybalt. Romeo is banished, hears unreliable information that Juliet is dead, returns to Verona, and dies by suicide.

Benvolio is Romeo's cousin. Benvolio tries to stop the fight in the first scene, tries to cheer Romeo up, and tries to keep Mercutio from fighting. Benvolio's name translates to 'good will'.

Balthasar is Romeo's servant who travels to Mantua to tell Romeo that Juliet is dead.

Abraham is a Capulet servant involved in the brawl at the beginning of the play.

People from neither family:

Prince Escalus, ruler of Verona, appears at the beginning of the play to stop the opening brawl, in the middle of the play to banish Romeo for killing Tybalt, and at the end of the play to have the last word.

A relative of the Prince and a Count, **Paris** gets consent from Lord Capulet to marry Juliet. However, Paris arrives on the wedding day to find Juliet apparently dead. Paris goes to the Capulet tomb to mourn Juliet and dies there after a fight with Romeo.

Romeo's friend **Mercutio** is also related to the Prince. Mercutio speaks in vivid, sometimes shocking images and seems to find fighting fun. Mercutio is killed in a fight with Tybalt that goes wrong.

Friar Laurence is a Franciscan monk who offers friendship and guidance to Romeo. Friar Laurence agrees to marry Romeo and Juliet, then devises the plan for Juliet to feign death to avoid marrying Paris.

Friar John is another Franciscan whom Friar Laurence has charged with delivering a letter to Romeo that explains the plan. Friar John is detained and fails to deliver the letter.

An **Apothecary**, struggling in poverty in Mantua, sells Romeo an illegal poison.

Citizens participate in and witness various public scenes in the play.

A **Chorus** introduces the play to the audience and sets the scene.

A note about our style:

In the Discovery Zone resources, we've done our best to provide descriptions of the plays' characters and events that are as open as possible to your interpretations. We hope this will make room for you to identify with more characters and imagine the stories in ways that resonate for you.

For an overview of what these characters experience in the play, please see our Discovery Zone resource, *What Happens in Romeo & Juliet*.

Questions for you to consider:

- Which characters are most interesting to you? Who do you want to know more about? What makes you want to know more?
- How would you distinguish between the Capulet family, the Montague family, and the others in the play? What might the characters wear? How might they move? What might they care about? How is each group distinct, and yet part of the same play?
- As you continue to learn about the characters, think about how you might cast actors to play them. You could take a realistic approach, casting people you know. Or you could take a fantasy approach and include famous people. Who would your dream cast be?